

# From law to language use practices

## A case study on Hungarian-speakers in Austria<sup>1</sup>

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### 1 Introduction

Austria is home to two formally recognised Hungarian communities, namely the autochthonous minority in Burgenland and the more recent migrant groups in Vienna that have arrived in different waves and from various Hungarian-speaking regions of the Carpathian Basin. Although both Hungarians in Burgenland and in Vienna are both treated as part of the Hungarian ethnic group, due to the fact that Austrian minority rights are not harmonized on the various territorial levels<sup>2</sup>, the two groups do not enjoy the same level of protection, which is most dominant with regard to mother tongue instruction and official language use. It is also due to these differences that the language use patterns of Hungarian-speakers in Burgenland significantly differ from those living in Vienna. It has further been argued that although the existing regulations of minority language protection in Austria are extensive, their implementation has not been achieved without shortfalls. Therefore, by drawing from a recent case study, the aim of the present paper is to discuss whether and how minority language rights influence actual language use practices as reported by the speakers themselves.

As Romaine (2002) rightly argues, the impact of language policies, especially those on minority languages, are difficult to assess as there is no straightforward causal relationship between policies and language use. She further maintains that language policy is only one of the many factors that influence language use patterns. Therefore, it is not the aim of the present paper to extensively evaluate the efficacy of the language related policies, but rather to investigate whether and to what extent the existing regulations influence actual language use practices and their impact on language maintenance. What this study thus strives to provide is an insight into the language use patterns of Hungarian-speakers in Austria and to relate this to the existing legal framework of minority rights protection.

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<sup>1</sup> The present paper is based on research conducted within the interdisciplinary and international FP7 project ELDIA (European Language Diversity for All, [www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org)) and draws from the joint work of Johanna Laakso, Angelika Parfuss, Hajnalka Berényi-Kiss (*Hungarian-speakers in Austria. A case-specific report*) and Csiszár Rita (*Hungarian in Austria: an overview of a language in context*), as well as from the study of Deva Zwitter (*Legal and Institutional Framework Analysis: Hungarian in Austria.*). For details consult the list of reference works. Special thanks are due to Sarah Stephan and Sergiu Constantin for their constructive comments on earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Due to the federal structure of the state, there are discrepancies between laws on the national level, on the level of the *Länder* as well as on the local levels.

## 2 Demographic composition: Hungarians in numbers

In Austria the census provides the only official data on the number of Hungarians living in the country. The most recent census was conducted in 2011; however, unlike in the previous years, data was gathered based on existing registers and databanks<sup>3</sup> only, without the traditional method of surveying. Consequently, no information was gathered on the population's mother tongues or ethnic affiliations. According to these statistics 40,088 individuals born in Hungary live in Austria of which 25,975 are Hungarian citizens. Of these forty-thousand Hungarians 14,643 – that is, nearly one third – are registered in the capital. These figures, however, cannot be considered as fully accurate for they disregard the autochthonous minority as well as the descendants of Hungarian-speaking migrants (both those from Hungary and other Hungarian-speaking areas). The last census that took language into consideration was conducted in 2001. Yet, as opposed to other countries, the Austrian census does not account for the population's mother tongues but for their 'language of habitual use' (*Umgangssprache*). Although this category denotes the language most frequently used in the private domains, i.e. with family and friends, respondents usually associate it with the mother tongue (Szépfalusi 1992: 397). In the year 2001 40,583 individuals declared Hungarian as (one of) their 'language of habitual use'. The distributions according to the provinces are summarized in table 1 below.

Province	Number of Hungarian-speakers
Burgenland	6,641
Carinthia	738
Lower-Austria	8,083
Upper-Austria	3,849
Salzburg	1,095
Styria	3,115
Tyrol	956
Vorarlberg	671
Vienna	15,435
<b>Total in Austria</b>	<b>40,583</b>

**Table 1.** *The distribution of speakers of Hungarian throughout the provinces based on the 2001 census<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> The new census method is referred to as *Registerzählung*. As opposed to traditional census data collection, Austrian inhabitants did not fill out a questionnaire; instead authorities evaluated already existing data. See for example <http://www.staedtebund.gv.at/oegz/oegz-beitraege/jahresarchiv/details/artikel/von-der-volkszaehlung-zur-registerzaehlung.html> (last accessed Nov. 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Source: Statistics Austria, [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_en/statistics/population/population\\_censuses/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/population/population_censuses/index.html) (last accessed Aug. 2012).

Other data on the number of Hungarians in Austria are based on mere estimations. The Central Association of Hungarian Organisations (*Központi Szövetség/Zentralverband*) values the size of the Austrian Hungarian community<sup>5</sup> to be between 55,000 and 60,000<sup>6</sup>.

The present study is concerned with two substantial Hungarian communities, namely the autochthonous minority of Burgenland and the more recent migrant groups in Vienna. Together they make up one of the six officially recognised ethnic groups (*Volksgruppen*) in Austria. Beside the Hungarians in Burgenland, the 1976 Federal Law on Ethnic Groups (*Volksgruppengesetz*, hereafter Law on Ethnic Groups) acknowledges the Croats in Burgenland, the Slovenes in Carinthia and in Styria, the Roma, and the Czechs and the Slovaks in Vienna; however, it does not include the Hungarians in Vienna. The Hungarians living in the capital were recognised as a part of the Hungarian ethnic group in only 1992 (Baumgartner 1995). In practice, their recognition is acknowledged by the fact that 8 of the 16 Hungarian members of the ethnic advisory board are from Vienna and that organisations may apply for state funding.

The two communities came into being at different points in history and under very different circumstances. The members of the autochthonous group in Burgenland are the descendants of the Hungarians settled in Western Hungary in the 10-12th centuries to act as border guards. The areas traditionally inhabited by these Hungarians came under Austrian control in 1921 as a result of the territorial regulations of the Trianon Peace Treaty (Csiszár 2007a, Szoták 2004). Since then Burgenland has repeatedly accommodated Hungarian-speakers from Hungary, but also from other Hungarian-speaking areas, which has obviously changed the demographic composition of the population.

Hungarians in Vienna have been continuously present already from the second half of the 16th century (Deák 2000), yet the first waves of Hungarians who constitute the present-day diaspora arrived to Austria in several waves from the Second World War onwards. Larger groups settled in the country between 1944 and 1945, in 1956, in the 1980s as well as in the early 1990s, while the past twenty years were characterised by continuous fluctuation due to the freedom of movement in the EU. Up until the late 1980s and early 1990s the majority of Hungarian-speaking migrants arrived to Austria as political refugees due to the political regimes of their home countries, predominantly from Hungary, but also from other traditionally Hungarian-speaking regions of the Carpathian Basin, especially from the countries of former Yugoslavia and Romania. Consequently, Vienna hosts larger communities of Transylvanian and Vojvodinian

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<sup>5</sup> Note, however, that although the term '*community*' is frequently used to denote the Hungarian minority in Austria, they do not constitute a unified group but form various groups based on their diverse backgrounds.

<sup>6</sup> Deák (1981:124) reported the same in the 1980s.

Hungarians.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, there is no reliable data on the number of ethnic Hungarians as in official records they are kept merely as citizens of their country of origin without reference to their ethnicity or mother tongues. The number of Hungarians from the former Yugoslavia is estimated to be around 15.000 in Austria, of which roughly 5,000 settled down in and around the capital, whereas Transylvanian Hungarians constitute a group of 3,500-4,000 individuals Austria-wide (Berényi-Kiss, Laasko & Parfuss forthcoming). Although the Viennese community is more than double the size of that in Burgenland, their presence is much less visible in the city due to their low ratio. Deák (1982) calls the Viennese Hungarians an “invisible minority” and it seems that the members of the community see themselves in a similar way.

### 3 Legal frames: Linguistic rights on paper<sup>8</sup>

It is not the aim of this paper to give a detailed account of the linguistic rights enjoyed by the Hungarians in Austria. Rather, it attempts to provide a brief but comprehensive overview of the existing regulations while focusing on the discrepancies between rights available for the autochthonous group in Burgenland and the diaspora in Vienna in order to identify how far opportunities provided by law can influence the actual language use practices of the speakers. As Vörös (2002: 53) maintains, language policies regulate what language use patterns should be followed or refrained from by a certain group of citizens in the communicative practices arising from their particular situation. Therefore it seems reasonable to argue that “[t]he formal recognition of minorities [and accordingly their languages] is crucial for their status and an essential factor for their effective protection and promotion” (Zwitter 2012: 14). However, legal norms do not influence the language choices within the family which is often more crucial for the maintenance of a language than the possibility to practice it in public context (Romaine 2002, Fishman 2001). The influence of policies protecting minority languages essentially depends on cultural variables, belief systems as well as attitudes about language (Schiffman 1996). Thus, from a sociolinguistic perspective, a range of various factors must be taken into account when examining language use patterns. In this vein, although focusing on language use in public domains, this study cannot disregard other related factors that determine speakers’ language choices.

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<sup>7</sup> Transylvanian Hungarians left Romania in large numbers between 1985-1888 at the time of the Romanian Revolution, and around the regime change in 1989 (Csiszár 2011, Szépfalusi 1992). The first Hungarians from Vojvodina settled down in Austria as guest workers in the second half of 19060s, while the next waves arrived as refugees in 1992/93 (Csiszár *ibid.*).

<sup>8</sup> This section is predominantly based on the legal research of Deva Zwitter (2012) and on Rita Csiszár’s (2011) case-specific report, both being substantial elements in the ELDIA research.

### 3.1 Regulations in a nutshell

Regarding language use outside the home, laws that support or restrict the use of a certain language or variety may have a paramount effect. In the Austrian context it seems to be even more so for “language is seen as an area regulated by law” (Zwitter 2012: 3). Accordingly, for linguistic minorities legal support is essential. In 1920 with the Federal Constitutional Act<sup>9</sup> German became the official language of the Republic, “notwithstanding the rights granted to linguistic minorities by way of federal law”. In practice this means that “legislative, judicial and administrative organs are obliged to use the German language in their internal communication and in their official dealings with other people, except for cases in which the use of a minority language is allowed by law” (Zwitter 2012: 3-4).

Even though – unlike Hungarian minorities in other countries – the Hungarians of Burgenland “have not been objects of obvious and sustained discriminative policies or practices” (Gal 2008: 220), it has been argued that in the past Austria’s minority policy had no long-term strategy (Szoták 2003: 206). The first attempt to secure equal legal rights for all minorities in Austria was the Law on Ethnic Groups of 1976 (*Volksgruppengesetz*)<sup>10</sup>, which recognised the Burgenland Hungarians as an autochthonous group and is seen as a milestone in the legal and political treatment of minorities. The law provides that the “members of the autochthonous minority groups are defined as having a non-German mother tongue, traditionally living (*beheimatet*) in the territory of the country, having their own ethnic traditions (*Volkstum*), and possessing Austrian citizenship” (Csiszár 2011: 3)<sup>11</sup>. On the one hand the definition underlines the fact that language plays an important role in defining minority groups, while on the other it reflects the territorial nature of the Austrian minority policy. Because minority policy is based on the territorial principle, linguistic rights granted by law apply only in the autochthonous settlement areas. With regard to the Hungarian minority, this excludes the Viennese diaspora and Hungarians living in other parts of the country. The official use of Hungarian is regulated in Burgenland only with the Ordinance on Hungarian as an Official Language of 2000 (*Amtssprachenverordnung-Ungarisch*). The Ordinance provides that in the political districts of Oberpullendorf and Oberwart, which include the settlements Oberpullendorf/Felsőpulya, Oberwart/Felsőőr, Siget in der Wart/Sziget and Unterwart/Alsóőr, Hungarian may be used as an additional official language beside German in the communication with public authorities, including district offices (*Bezirks-hauptmannschaften*), local police stations (*Gendarmerieposten*) and district courts (*Bezirksgerichte*). There is, however, no corresponding regulation as concerns the Hungarian speakers in Vienna. The Viennese Hungarians were recognised as a part of the Hungarian ethnic group only in 1992 with the acknowledgement of

<sup>9</sup> Art. 8(1) Federal Constitutional Act.

<sup>10</sup> Earlier domestic regulations on ethnic minorities include the 1955 State treaty of Vienna (*Österreichischer Staatsvertrag*), yet this only covered the Slovenes in Carinthia and the Croats in Burgenland.

<sup>11</sup> Art. 1(2) Law on Ethnic Groups.

Vienna as an autochthonous settlement of Hungarians (cf. Bericht Volksgruppenförderung 2011: 68, Bericht Charta 2011)<sup>12</sup> only after extensive lobbying of the local Hungarian organisations. However, although recognized, the legal status of the Viennese Hungarians seems to be unclear as there is no law per se that directly acknowledges them as an ethnic group.

The most relevant legislations on the education of the Hungarian minorities are the Act on the Kindergartens of Burgenland of 1990 and the Minority-School Act for Burgenland of 1994. The former “regulates bilingual education in kindergartens, crèches and day schools”, while the latter “provides comprehensive regulation connected to mother tongue instruction from kindergarten to the secondary school leaving exam including all types of schools” (Csiszár 2011: 3). The Minority-School Act provides that the right to Hungarian (and Croatian) mother tongue education in Burgenland is granted to all Austrian citizens belonging to the named ethnic groups. As formulated in the text of the regulation, education can follow either a monolingual Hungarian or a bilingual Hungarian-German model, the latter meaning having both languages as the language of instruction (*Unterrichtssprache*)<sup>13</sup>. In practice, however, the Hungarian-only model is not applied. Instead, students have the opportunity to enrol in bilingual schools (or optionally attend bilingual classes) or choose to learn Hungarian as a second modern foreign language, either as a compulsory (assessed) or as an optional (not assessed) subject<sup>14</sup>.

The scope of the Austrian minority right protection regime is further defined by two international instruments. The Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) was ratified in 1995, entering into force in 1998. Yet, Austria applies the convention to only those minorities that were defined in the 1976 Law on Ethnic Groups, disregarding the diaspora in the capital and elsewhere in the country. However, the Viennese Hungarians fall under the scope of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), ratified in 2001. Nevertheless, although both communities are object to the Charter, here too, a clear differentiation is made between Hungarians in Burgenland and the Viennese diaspora. As Zwitter (2012: 43) explains, Austria chose to ratify only the minimum of 35 provisions that apply to the six autochthonous minorities, including “Hungarian in the Hungarian language area in the Land Burgenland”, while for the protection of “Hungarian in the Land Vienna” separate provisions were chosen from section III.

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<sup>12</sup> In these documents Vienna (*Land Wien*) is mentioned as an autochthonous settlement.

<sup>13</sup> From a pedagogic perspective, it is a serious drawback of both the Minority-school Act and the Ordinances on the Curricula that the concept of bilingual education is not defined (cf. Csiszár 2007a: 147) and therefore in practice it has various manifestations depending on the institution, the teachers and the learners.

<sup>14</sup> Ordinance of the Federal Minister for Education and Art of 14 November 1984 on the Curricula of Secondary Schools and Ordinance of the Federal Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs by which the Curricula for Primary Schools and Special Education Schools are Enacted.

Despite these regulations it seems that Austria holds no clear governmental strategy and long-term language policy that would guarantee the maintenance and even less so the development of minority languages (Zwitter 2012: 117). The application of various instruments, including the Law on Ethnic Groups and the regulations of minority language teaching as well as the above mentioned international documents, shows that the Austrian minority policy combines a variety of approaches (cf. Bericht Charta 2011: 15), but also hints at the fact that legislation on the various levels is not unified. On the whole,

Austria has a long legal and political tradition in dealing with minorities and with languages, but has an equally long tradition of persisting minority problems, which is being perpetuated until the very day. Despite traditional legal and political activities in the field of minority protection, the treatment of minorities has to a large extent been unsatisfactory. (Zwitter 2012: 13)

Zwitter (2012: 117) has argued that although minority rights legislation is stable, the application of relevant acts often varies from municipality to municipality. Similarly, “with regard to the use of Hungarian in relation to administrative authorities and courts, the rights granted to minority members are not effectively implemented, meaning that they do not produce the desired result” (ibid). A further major problem is that regulations are not harmonized on the national, *Länder* and local levels (cf. Csiszár 2011; Zwitter 2012) which causes clear discrepancies between the treatment of the various Hungarian groups in Austria. The partly inadequate legal framework also has a clear impact on Hungarian-speakers’ language use practices. In sum it seems that “[t]he legal framework for the protection of minorities is extremely fragmented and non-transparent” and “legal provisions are sometimes [even] incoherent and contradictory” (Zwitter 2012: 117). Thus, the difference between language use patterns of the autochthonous minority and the Viennese diaspora, especially in the various public domains, is rooted in the fact that several laws are lacking in the capital. The following section will, therefore, give a brief overview of the existing inconsistencies.

### **3.2 Discrepancies between Burgenland and Vienna: The difference that matters**

Because Austrian minority rights legislation is based on the territoriality principle, Hungarian-speakers living outside the autochthonous areas hold no special rights. Even though Viennese Hungarians are recognised as a part of the Hungarian ethnic group, they enjoy only partial legal support. The most notable differences between the rights of the autochthonous community and the Viennese diaspora manifest themselves on the level of official language use and in the opportunities of mother tongue education. Due to the lack of several regulations applicable in Burgenland, in Vienna there is no possibility to use Hungarian with public authorities, while mother tongue education can only be organised in special extracurricular forms.

This being the case, the Council of Europe suggested that Austria introduces a structured policy for the protection and promotion of minority languages protected under the ECMRL, especially in Vienna. The suggestion further points to the need of creating opportunities to the public use of these languages (Bericht Charta 2011: 15). Similarly, Csiszár (2011: 5) maintains, “the minority-political concept, developed for ethnic minorities originally living close together in compact settlement structures, is not equipped to deal with the situation in big cities, and especially in the capital”. In the latest Report of Austria on the application of ECRML it has been argued that the situation of the Viennese ethnic groups (in general) is in essence very different from those living in Burgenland or Carinthia, for in the capital they make up only a very small proportion of the population (Bericht Charta 2011: 42), and accordingly, up-to-date, Hungarian-speakers in Vienna have no opportunities to use their language for official communication.

For the same reason there is also no mother tongue education similar to that available in Burgenland. The responsible authorities have argued (ibid.) that due to the existing linguistic diversity, such a model of education is not appropriate in Vienna. Given the special circumstances, focused and special form of language education programmes are deemed to be suitable. Accordingly, based on their rights granted by the 1976 law on Ethnic Groups, Viennese Hungarian associations may apply for state funds in order to organize mother tongue education programmes with the aim of language maintenance (Csiszár 2011: 4). At present, the resources provided for the organization of these programmes are distributed by the Central Association of Hungarian Organisations. Also, until very recently, it was this organization that coordinated the Viennese Hungarian School (*Bécsi Magyar Iskola*)<sup>15</sup>, the probably most popular institution of Hungarian mother tongue education with a continuously growing student population. The school is partly maintained from grants allocated from public funds and partly financed by parents. Although the school offers a quite comprehensive teaching programme, it is not comparable to the education models available in Burgenland. The Viennese Hungarian School is a weekend school with only three lessons every second weekend.<sup>16</sup>

Beside this form of education Hungarian can be learned in public schools as a second modern foreign language or as a mother tongue. The latter subject is not integrated into the regular schedule<sup>17</sup>, and can be taken either as an obligatory subject (*Verbindliche Übung*, assessed) or as an optional subject (*Uhnverbindliche Übung*, without any form of assessment). Also, because not every school offers these programmes learners often need to attend the lessons in a different institution. Thus, mother tongue education is provided in the form of extracurricular lessons. Often, however, it has more resemblance

<sup>15</sup> Currently there is a lack of clarity about the ownership of the institution. For details, see <http://volksgruppen.orf.at/magyarok/aktualis/stories/165952/> (last accessed Aug. 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Beside this institution, the Collegium Hungaricum also runs a Hungarian language teaching programme, though this is financed by the Hungarian government and its target groups are not only native speakers of the language.

<sup>17</sup> This means that students have to attend the language lessons in the afternoons, in addition to their normal school activities.



to foreign language teaching than actual mother tongue teaching due to the highly mixed groups (not only in terms of age, but also in terms of competence). As provided by the Ordinance on Curricula, mother tongue lessons are designed for all students attending an Austrian school who have a non-German mother tongue, regardless of their nationality. Importantly, the aim of the subject is to develop and maintain the existing bilingualism of the learners. Further, as has often been pointed out, the aim of the mother tongue education in Austria is to create a basis for the acquisition of German rather than to maintain the minority language as an end in itself. Thus, as Csiszár (2007: 146) puts it, from a pedagogic perspective Hungarians in Vienna have access only to the “weakest form, the so-called language teaching model”.

Comparing the language rights provided by law, it appears that Viennese Hungarians have far less opportunities to use their language in the public domains. The following section will, therefore, examine the actual language use practices of the speakers in order to see whether and to what extent do regulations influence the language choice of the minority members.

## 4 Reality check: Language use practices

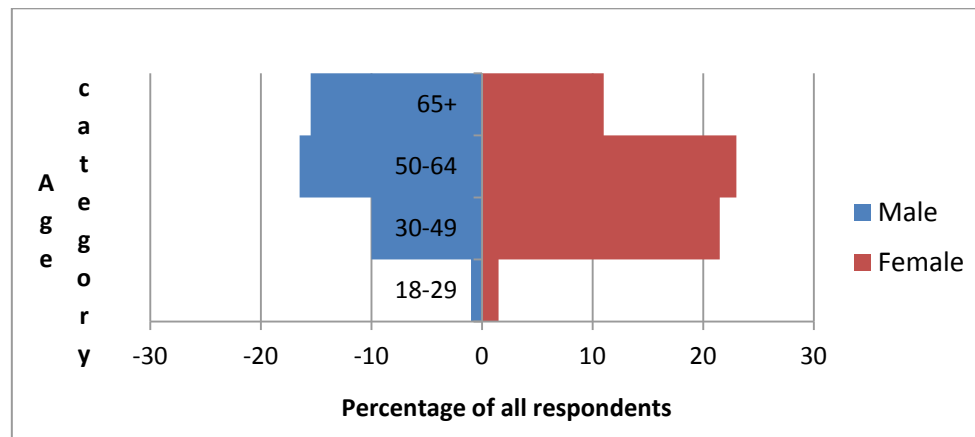
The present case study draws from the research carried out within the frameworks of ELDIA, an interdisciplinary and international project focusing on the issues of European multilingualism on various levels. The data collection in Austria was conducted between 2010 and 2011 in a form of a traditional mail survey on the one hand and in the form of qualitative interviews on the other. The mail survey served as the main tool for the study and was destined to assess Hungarian-speakers' perception of the current state and standing of the language as well as its use. The qualitative material gathered in the form of individual and focus group interviews meant to complement the data gained from the survey. As the latter inevitably results in some loss of depth, qualitative methods (individual and focus group interviews) were used to add to the richness of the data, especially with regard to issues that could not be addressed in the survey in a satisfactory manner. The questionnaire was distributed both in Burgenland and Vienna and the return rates, although relatively low, are roughly in proportional accordance with the size of the two communities.<sup>18</sup>

The sample of the survey was inherently biased because, as figure 1 demonstrates, age cohorts 50-64 and 65+ constitute a substantial majority. Whether and to what extent this dominance of older generations truly reflects the situation of Hungarian-speakers in Austria is difficult to say. However, studies from the 1980s and 1990s (Cserján, Győri &

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<sup>18</sup> In sum, from the 573 addressed individuals, 200 returned the questionnaire, which results in a return rate of 35%. The response rates are somewhat different in Burgenland and Vienna, the percentages being 33% and 40% respectively. Altogether 127 Viennese and 73 Burgenland Hungarians returned a fully or partly completed questionnaire, which means that in the sample 6 out of 10 respondents are from the capital and 4 from Burgenland.

Szabó 1999, Lichtblau 1987) yielded similar results, indicating that the Hungarian minority in Austria is, in general, characterised by both a relatively high level of education and by the dominance of older generations. On the other hand, more recent migration from Hungary<sup>19</sup> may have brought a substantial influx of younger people and families with children.



**Figure 1.** *Gender and age distribution of the survey respondents*

The composition of the sample further seems to reflect the diversity of the Hungarian community regarding the countries of origin. In sum 13.5% of the informants are ethnic Hungarians from Hungarian-speaking areas outside Hungary. Roughly 22% of the informants from Burgenland are migrants mainly from Hungary and Romania; of this about 8% can be denoted as more recent migrants with 4-9 years spent in Austria. Similarly, about 10% of the Viennese respondents also arrived less than 10 years ago (varying from 0.5-11 years). This variation in backgrounds is relevant both from the perspective of legal recognition of Hungarians, but also from the view point of language use patterns.

#### 4.1 Mother tongue(s) and language learning

The substantial majority of the respondents, nearly 80%, reported Hungarian as their single mother tongue, while only 9% noted German as their first language. Importantly, the differences between reported mother tongue(s) in Burgenland and Vienna are quite eloquent. As shown in table 2, nearly 90% of the Viennese informants indicated Hungarian as their single mother tongue, whereas only about 64% of the Burgenland respondents did the same. Further, proportionally seen, the values for German as a single mother tongue are ten times higher in Burgenland than in the capital and the number of Hungarian-German bilinguals is also considerably higher. It is also essential to note that almost a third of those Burgenland respondents who reported Hungarian as

<sup>19</sup> Especially since the opening of the Austrian labour market in May 2011.

their mother tongue migrated to the province from other Hungarian-speaking areas, mainly from Hungary and Romania. In practical terms this means that from the whole Burgenland sample only about 45% of the autochthonous Hungarian-speakers consider Hungarian as their single mother tongue.

Language(s)	Burgenland	Vienna
Hungarian	63.9 %	88.1 %
German	20.8 %	2.4 %
Hungarian & German	12.5 %	7.1 %
Hungarian & Other*	2.8 %	0.8 %
Multilingual**	0 %	1.6 %

\* The category 'other' here covers languages other than German, mainly those of the heritage countries of ethnic Hungarians from outside Hungary.

\*\* Multilingual denotes speakers who reported a third or fourth language beside Hungarian and German.

**Table 2.** *Reported mother tongue distributed by region*

Notably, language use within the nuclear family was Hungarian for the majority of the respondents. The dominant language used with both parents and grandparents was unambiguously Hungarian and it also remains the main instrument of communication with children.<sup>20</sup> However, a substantial proportion of informants report the increasing use of German with grandchildren and a notable number of the interviewees pointed out that their grandchildren often have only passive knowledge of Hungarian, if any. This then points to a slow shift towards the use of German instead of the heritage language, which seems particularly pervasive in Vienna.

In general, the self-reported level of fluency in both Hungarian and German is high and the percentages are fairly similar in all four competences<sup>21</sup>, which seems to indicate that most of the respondents can be considered relatively balanced bilinguals.<sup>22</sup> The data shows some divergence between the competences of the Viennese and the Burgenland informants. The former have somewhat higher competences in Hungarian, while the latter reported having better skills in German. Nevertheless, the Viennese still reported a remarkably high proficiency in German. As has been confirmed in most of the interviews, Hungarians with migrant background strive to "fit in" in order not to be regarded as foreigners. Consequently they attach a particularly high value to the knowledge of German (Berényi-Kiss, Laakso & Parfuss forthcoming), most probably

<sup>20</sup> These results are not surprising as most of the informants come from other Hungarian-speaking areas, most frequently from Hungarian monolingual families.

<sup>21</sup> The survey investigated both the perceptive (understanding and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills in Hungarian and German likewise.

<sup>22</sup> Note, however, that any form of self-assessment is inherently subjective and therefore must be treated with great caution.

because in Austria German competence is considered to be the most important requirement of integration (Zwitter 2012).

What the data also reveals is that Hungarian is rather acquired than learned, and therefore the family plays a crucial role in language transmission. As shown in table 3, regardless of whether speakers are born and raised in Austria or arrive there as migrants, Hungarian is acquired from parents or occasionally from grandparents.

	Austria	Burgenland	Vienna
at home	90.7 %	91.7 %	90.1 %
through education	2.6 %	2.8 %	2.5 %
home & education	6.8 %	5.6 %	7.4 %

**Table 3.** *Acquisition of Hungarian*

Those who reported learning Hungarian through some form of institutional education, either at school or in language courses, make up even less than 3% of the whole sample. Given the diverse backgrounds of the two communities, the figures must be considered separately, and therefore the implications here are also twofold. Regarding the Viennese respondents the low percentage for the educational context seems remarkable as the overwhelming majority attended Hungarian monolingual schools in their home countries. However, this might hint at the speakers' subjective perception of how the mother tongue is learned, namely that it is essentially "inherited from parents". Importantly, in these contexts, before coming to Austria, speakers were extensively exposed to the language outside the home and mother tongue education was predominantly given, serving the purpose to bring speakers to higher levels of proficiency rather than to ensure language maintenance. In this sense, for speakers who come from traditionally Hungarian-speaking areas as adults<sup>23</sup>, education only plays a secondary role for language learning. In contrast, although intergenerational language transmission is most crucial in minority settings<sup>24</sup>, for younger generations who have limited opportunities to use the language outside the home context, education is of vital importance. Language education not only assists maintenance in that it supports acquisition, it simultaneously legitimises the use of the minority language in public spaces. Unfortunately, however, Viennese Hungarians have access only to mother tongue education in a very limited and mostly unsatisfactory form. Even though Hungarian-speakers in Burgenland have access to more extended forms of mother tongue education, they too reported the family context as the principal source of their Hungarian competence. However, this presumably has other reasons than the one pointed out for the Viennese diaspora. On the one hand, the majority of the respondents

<sup>23</sup> Recall that the significant majority of the respondents, especially those with migrant backgrounds, belong to the 50-64 and 65+ age group.

<sup>24</sup> Several cases from Europe (e.g. Edwards 2010, Fishman 2001) have demonstrated that without intergenerational language transmission in the family language education alone cannot ensure language maintenance and often not even active competence in the given variety.

belonged to the older age cohorts, which means that at the time when they attended compulsory education, mother tongue education was not regulated<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, despite the fact that the law now provides for Hungarian education in Burgenland, in practice only a very small proportion of the Hungarian-speaking pupils attend bilingual education, while the number of those who take Hungarian as an optional subject (without any form of assessment) is remarkably higher (Csiszár 2007b: 140-142). The latter form of Hungarian education is often insufficient and, from a pedagogic perspective, not as extensive as to ensure language maintenance on the long run. On the whole, it seems that the promotion of Hungarian mother tongue education is seriously deficient and fails to sufficiently support language maintenance. Further, the fact that Hungarian-speakers in Burgenland are fairly integrated into their German-speaking environment (Bodó 2005: 241) unambiguously assists the shift towards the majority language. This was also confirmed by the relatively large number of those Hungarian-speakers from Burgenland who reported German as their single mother tongue. Thus, due to its inadequacies, education does not seem to be optimal and reach the expected results as regards language maintenance. This is also supported by the younger generations' preference of German over Hungarian which indicates a slow but certain shift towards the majority language.

## 4.2 Domain specific language use

The language use patterns of the Viennese and Burgenland informants seem to be quite disparate in the various domains. Figures 2-3 and 4-5 illustrate informants' self-reported language use patterns for Hungarian and German respectively. Importantly, as the values reveal, the use of Hungarian in the private domains, especially with the nuclear family and relatives, but also with friends, is much more frequent with Viennese Hungarian-speakers than with those from Burgenland. About 80% of the individuals from the capital would mostly use Hungarian in their homes and 90% reported talking to their relatives in this language either always or often. In contrast, the percentages for the Burgenland informants are significantly lower. Only 50% indicated to use Hungarian always or often in their homes and 70% claimed the same about the communication with relatives. Naturally, the use of German in the family context is therefore markedly higher in the autochthonous community. 80% of the Burgenland Hungarians accounted for using German at home, yet only 55% reported the same in the capital. On the whole, respondents from the Viennese diaspora seem to show a much higher tendency to use Hungarian in private domains than those from the autochthonous area. It is essential to note, however, that the use of German within the family, may it be the nuclear or the extended family, does not exclude the use of Hungarian and vice versa. Evidence from our data on cross- and intergenerational language use shows that there is an increasing tendency to use multiple languages with family members (cf. Berényi-Kiss, Laakso & Parfuss forthcoming). Yet, because of the

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<sup>25</sup> The Minority-School Act for Burgenland was passed only in 1994.

overwhelming dominance of German in all areas of life, it is essential that the minority language receives special attention for the sake of its maintenance. Taking into consideration that about 20% of the Burgenland respondents are immigrants from other Hungarian-speaking areas, and in 80% of the cases report themselves as Hungarian-speaking monolinguals<sup>26</sup>, it becomes apparent that on the whole the autochthonous minority in Burgenland tends to use Hungarian even less frequently than what the values given above suggest. For them the use of German is therefore naturally more frequent in these contexts.

As we move away from the home, however, the dominance of German seems to increase in both communities. For instance, communication with neighbours is in German for the most part. 90% of the Viennese talk exclusively German to their neighbours, and about 60% reported never to use Hungarian in this context. In contrast, although in Burgenland nearly 80% accounted for using German in the same domain, 45% would still frequently speak Hungarian to their neighbours, which is clearly due to the fact that certain areas in Burgenland are much more densely inhabited by Hungarian-speakers than in the capital.

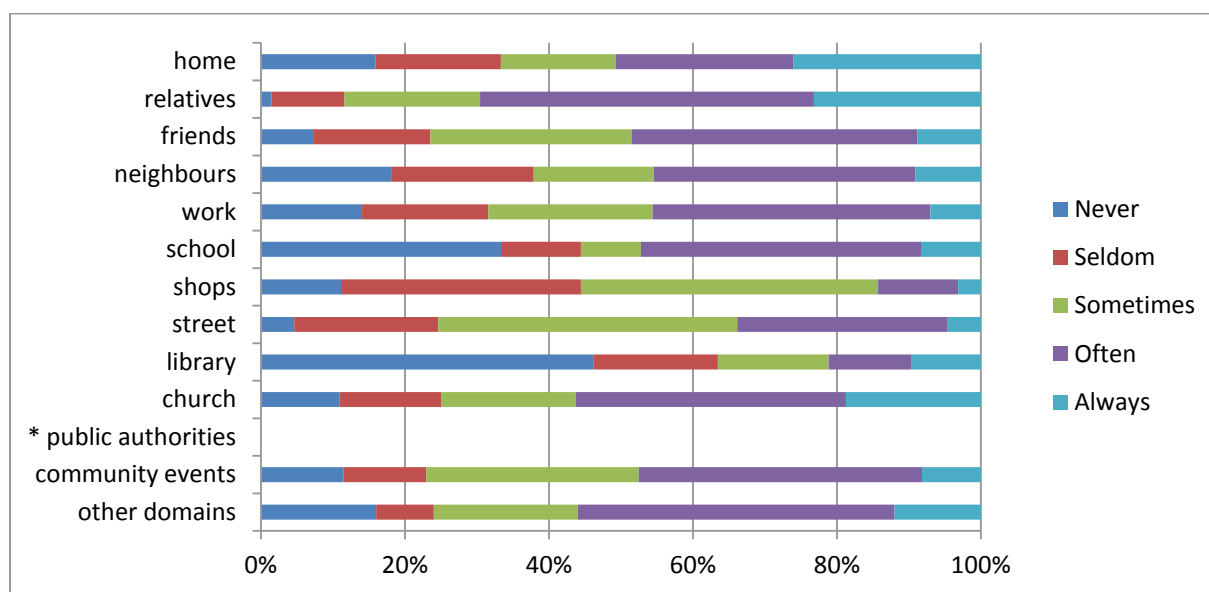
In more public domains Hungarian is significantly more in use in Burgenland. The difference is clearly identifiable within domains such as work, school, shops and streets, while other items in the scales show approximately the same values. Further, comparing German language use across the various public domains<sup>27</sup> in the two communities, it becomes obvious that German is extensively used both in Vienna and in Burgenland. Importantly, 60-80% of the Viennese accounted for always talking German in these contexts but only 40-53% reported the same in Burgenland. This implies that in Burgenland there is clearly more opportunity to use Hungarian than in the capital. Although the extent to which the two languages co-occur may vary from situation to situation, it is clear that in some domains they are rather complementary than mutually exclusive. This difference in language use in public domains between the two *Länder* might have several reasons. Obviously, population differences play a great role as this determines whether and how often the language can be used with other interlocutors. The data here implies that although there are less Hungarian-speakers in Burgenland they are geographically more concentrated and thus have more opportunities to use the language outside their homes, whereas speakers in the capital are much more scattered and thus need to seek opportunities to talk Hungarian. For instance nearly 40% of the informants from Burgenland would often use Hungarian at work, while only 4.6% of the Viennese respondents report using Hungarian in this domain. Similarly, almost 30% from Burgenland claim to speak Hungarian on the streets but only 6% of the Viennese report the same. Nevertheless, the fact that these are self-reported language use patterns, and not actual practices, must be kept in mind, and accordingly given some consideration. Reflecting on both Hungarian and German language use patterns and

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<sup>26</sup> The remaining 20% are either German-Hungarian bilinguals or the speakers of the language of their country of origin.

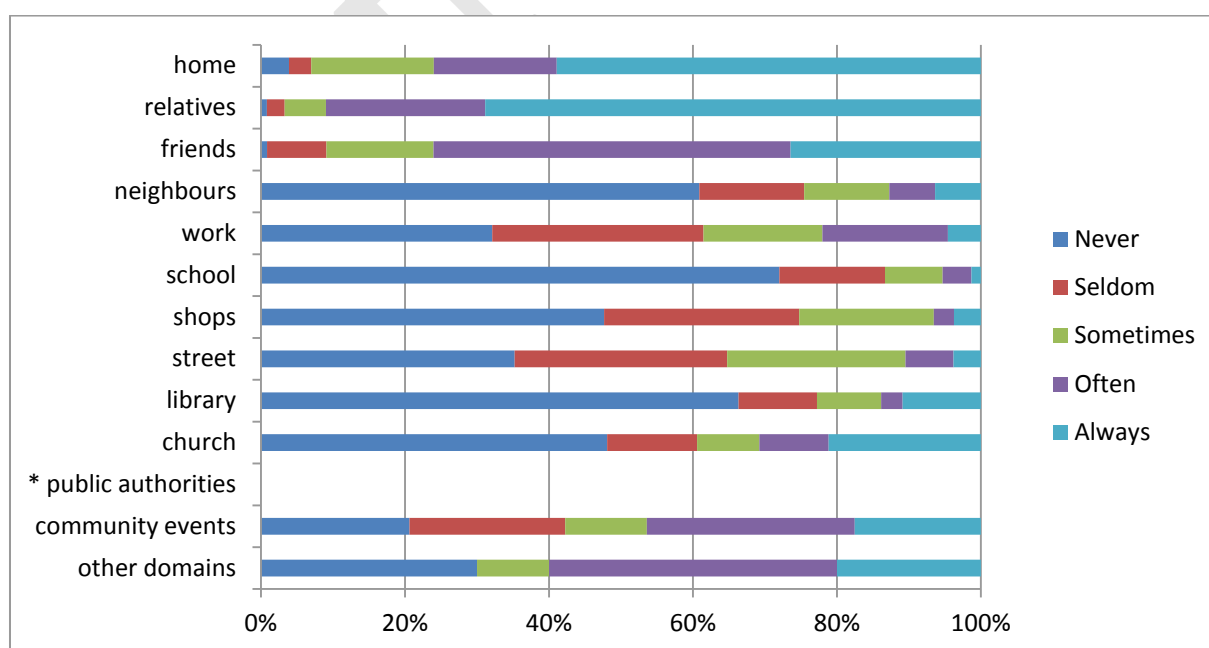
<sup>27</sup> Including the workplace, the school, shops, the streets, libraries and the church.

taking into account that speakers from Burgenland are more likely to use a mixed code, it seems reasonable to assume that the use of German does not exclude or attenuates the use of Hungarian. Nevertheless, if there are no or only very scarce opportunities to use the minority language, chances are good that the majority language will eventually replace it. Thus, a more equal position for the minority language is only then attainable if its use is supported by law.



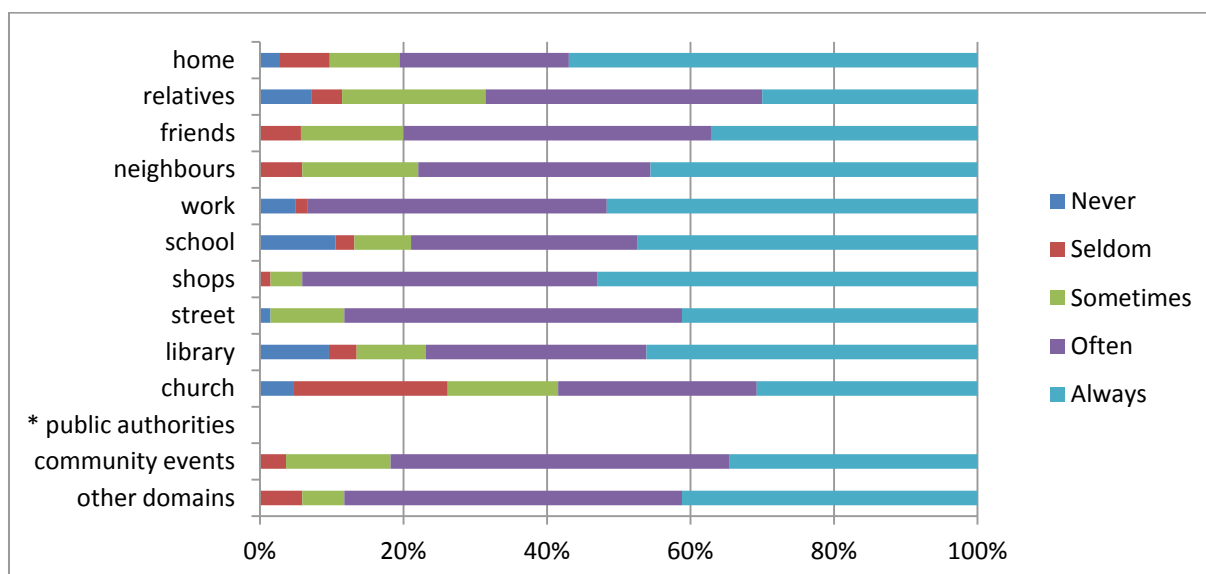
\* Data was evaluated separately (see footnote 29).

**Figure 2. BURGENLAND: Use of Hungarian in various domains**



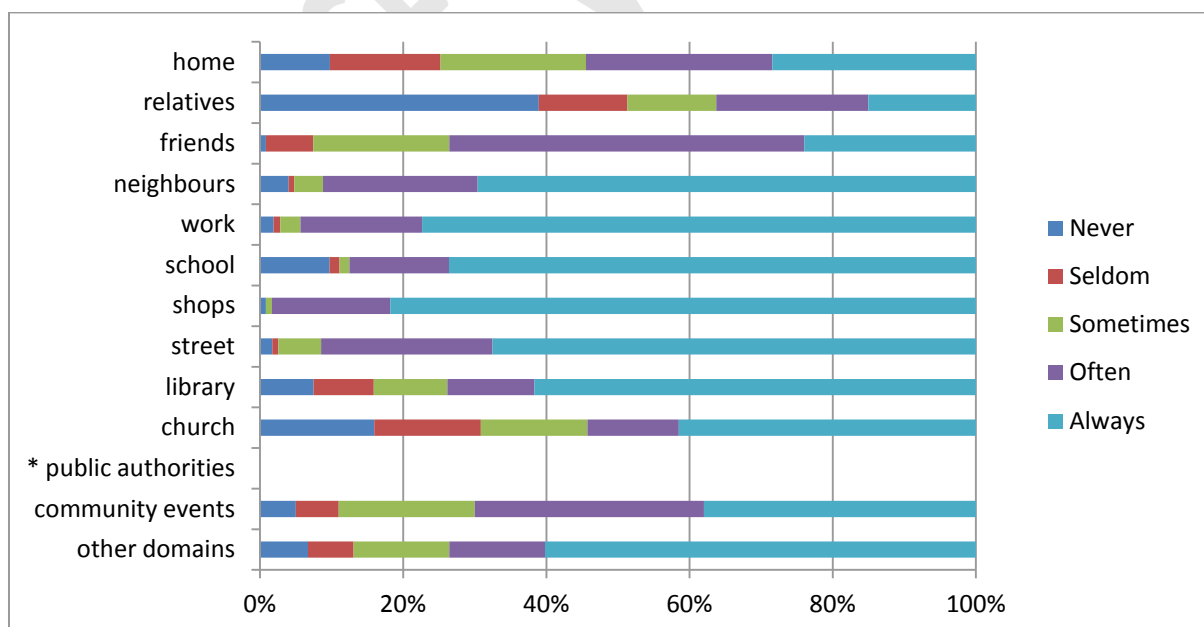
\* Data was evaluated separately (see footnote 29).

**Figure 3. VIENNA: Use of Hungarian in various domains**



\* Data was evaluated separately (see footnote 29).

**Figure 4. BURGENLAND: Use of German in various domains**

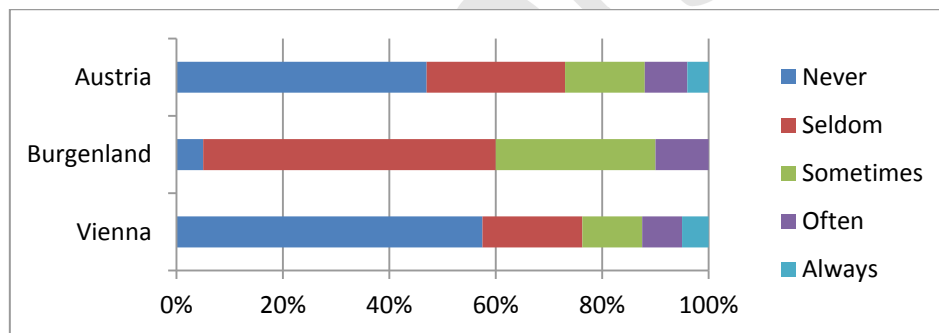


\* Data was evaluated separately (see footnote 29).

**Figure 5. VIENNA: Use of German in various domains**



Regarding the domain of public authorities, the data had to be analysed separately due to an error in the German language questionnaire<sup>28</sup> and values for the item were separately calculated from the Hungarian language questionnaires only<sup>29</sup>. Even if these reported frequencies strongly depend on the subjective evaluation of respondents, they provide us with a good insight into how speakers of the minority language perceive the practical implementation of legal regulations concerning language use. As outlined above, due to the lack of certain regulations, Viennese Hungarians have no access to public services in Hungarian. As figure 6 illustrates, values show a clear disparity between responses from Burgenland and Vienna. While almost 60% of the Viennese would never use Hungarian with public authorities, only 5% in Burgenland report the same. Clearly, the remaining 95% (i.e. roughly 9 of 10) would, at least occasionally, use the language in public institutions. In contrast, just 4 in 10 Hungarian-speakers in Vienna use Hungarian in the same manner. Notably, 5% in the capital reported always speaking Hungarian in such situations, whereas none accounted for the same in Burgenland. Note, however, that this 5% in reality denotes 4 individuals in a sample of 80 responses. As to why these informants reported always using Hungarian with public authorities is not clear, as in Vienna there are scarce opportunities to do so.<sup>30</sup>



NOTE: Hungarian language questionnaires only.

**Figure 6.** *Use of Hungarian with public authorities (%)*

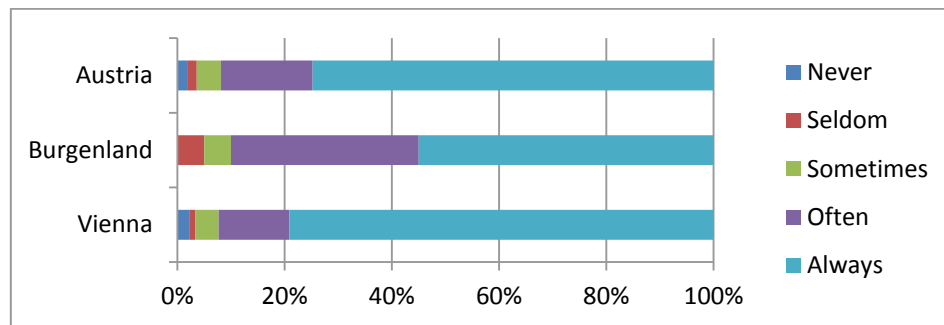
This variation between the provinces implies that in practice Hungarian-speakers in Burgenland have significantly more opportunities to use Hungarian in bureaucratic

<sup>28</sup> To provide informants with the possibility to choose the language in which they wish to fill in the questionnaire they received it both in the minority and majority language and were instructed to freely decide which version they wanted to use.

<sup>29</sup> A minor but nevertheless relevant error occurred in the question set on language use. In the German version of the questionnaire one item in Q32 was doubled which eventuated in the loss of the following item. The question inquired about how often informants use Hungarian, German or another language in certain locales and situations. Among others, the list of items included *church* and *public authorities*. In the Hungarian version of the questionnaire both items occur, whereas in the German version the item *church* was doubled and consequently the item *public authorities* was eliminated. Accordingly, the complete data set yielded by Q32 cannot be considered as fully accurate and supplementary calculations were required to gain valid data.

<sup>30</sup> One possible explanation is that respondents misinterpreted the question. Accordingly, those who are still Hungarian citizens might have referred to Hungarian authorities instead the local ones.

affairs and it seems reasonable to believe that this is the result of the legal disparities addressed in section 3.2. Naturally, there are a great many other factors that influence language choice in such situations; nevertheless, as these values include only those respondents' replies who opted for the Hungarian-language questionnaire, it seems likely that the same speakers would also prefer using Hungarian with public authorities if the opportunity was given.



NOTE: Hungarian language questionnaires only.

**Figure 7.** *Use of German with public authorities (%)*

The comparison further shows that informants from Burgenland would use German somewhat less frequently than those from the capital. This implies that for the former there is, in theory, more room for the use of Hungarian, or optionally another local language. Contrasted with the values of Hungarian language use, it can be concluded that those who report often or even always using German would nevertheless speak Hungarian occasionally in this context.

It is also relevant to mention that the Hungarian-speakers of Burgenland are clearly more aware of existing legislation and have more confidence in the effects of law and institutional support. Informants further often highlighted the two most relevant differences between Vienna and Burgenland, namely the regulations concerning mother tongue education in Burgenland which has no equivalent in Vienna or other parts of Austria, and the opportunity to use Hungarian with authorities in Burgenland. The latter was often claimed not to function or be sufficiently available. An informant, for example, pointed to the fact that “the right to use the language is given but there is no opportunity to use the language everywhere because officials/public employees don’t speak the language”<sup>31</sup>. A further deficit that has been highlighted is that “the support secured by minority right legislation is held up only through a minimal number of adequate institutions”<sup>32</sup>, i.e. in practice there is no sufficient institutional framework to implement the existing legal provisions. Notably, the respondents often made no distinction between legislation proper and other areas of administrative and

<sup>31</sup> The original comment in Hungarian reads as follows: „A nyelv használatának joga adott, de nincs mindenütt lehetőség rá, mert a hivatalnokok nem beszélnek a nyelvet”.

<sup>32</sup> The original comment in Hungarian reads as follows: “A kisebbségi törvényben biztosított támogatás minimális megfelelő intézményekkel biztosítva! különösképpen regionális viszonylatban!”

institutional support or social practices (for instance, the activities of schools or organisations; discrimination, tolerance, or other attitudes towards speakers of different languages), which underpins Zwitter's (2012: 114) argument according to which the members of the minority perceive legal provisions as non-transparent.

## 5 Concluding remarks

The implications drawn from the comparison of existing rights for language use and actual practices are many. What speakers' accounts reveal is that a significant deficit of the Austrian legal and institutional framework of minority rights, one that has already been addressed by scholars (e.g. Csiszár 2007a, 2011; Zwitter 2012). The survey data indicates that although minorities are granted language rights, these cannot be practiced, often due to only partial or insufficient implementation. The speakers themselves confirmed that even if Hungarian can be theoretically used with public authorities in certain localities in Burgenland, often there is no possibility to do so due to the lack of Hungarian-speaking officials. On the other hand, even though appropriate forms of mother tongue education exist, these are not promoted and as a result the majority of the Hungarian-speaking pupils attend only language lessons instead of participating in more extensive mother tongue instruction programmes.

Further, although the two discussed groups possess the same legal status, they are treated differently which effects how and to what extent language is used in certain domains. The lack of regulations that would allow the use of Hungarian in official communication and that would provide more extensive mother tongue education clearly deprives the Viennese Hungarians of using their language outside private contexts. Further, the fact that Burgenland Hungarians are more confident and better informed about legislation on language use and its potential for language maintenance indicates that the public visibility of the minority language and clear regulations on its role in the school system are of crucial importance. Also, Austrian Hungarians generally strive to acquire and use both Hungarian and German, yet on the whole for the maintenance of the heritage language there is clearly less opportunity. The fact that German is seen as the key prerequisite for integration (especially for the members of the diaspora), accompanied by the fact that Hungarian-speakers generally attach high value to "fitting in" and a good competence of German may contribute to the fact that younger generations are decreasingly competent in their heritage language. In this sense language policy proves to be inefficient (Zwitter 2012: 117). Based on the very limited data discussed in the present paper it is difficult to evaluate the actual impact of language policies, however, it is clear that the lack of rights restrict the use of the minority language, decreasing its chances of maintenance. As Romaine (2002: 7) rightly argues, "demographically weak languages [such as the Viennese Hungarian] "need pro-active policies in order to survive". Unlike in Burgenland, there seems to be no appropriate promotion of the minority language and Hungarian remains "invisible".

On the whole, a better implementation of the existing legislation would be desirable in order to achieve positive effects with regard to language use. Further, striving towards long term language policies that not only acknowledge but also promote the minority language for the sake of its maintenance would be of vital importance to improve the situation of the linguistic groups. Granting equal rights to speakers belonging to the same ethnic group should be the first step towards a more harmonized minority rights system. However, language rights provide speakers only with particular public spaces for language use, which are not necessarily sufficient for successful maintenance. As has been pointed out, intergenerational language transmission is essential and although law cannot influence this directly, a more focused language policy can raise awareness about the importance of language acquisition within the family.

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