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## Ethnic Structure of Contemporary Ukraine\*

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### Introductory remarks

The Soviet nationalities policy, aiming to shape one “Soviet nation”, had weakened to great extent the sense of national identity and of cultural and religious distinctiveness of both the Ukrainians and representatives of national minorities. As A. Fedorenko points out, “The Soviet Union established a solid structure, allowing it to conduct the efficient policy and creating its own version of national identity by the complex network of schools of all levels and the system of mass media”. The Soviet regime encouraged creating the imperial identity amongst the majority of the Ukrainians, and “for a significant group of average citizens of this mighty power enjoying the international prestige, identifying with it was something ordinary and obvious, especially while presented in the circumstances of ambitious, yet as it turned out, utopian perspectives, unimaginable social and cultural achievements”<sup>1</sup>.

It was only in independent Ukraine, in the conditions of freedom and democracy, that the sense of national identity<sup>2</sup> of a remarkable part of its citizens was revealed and revived, which was manifested most of all in the increase of language, educational and religious needs of ethnic Ukrainians and members of minority groups. Ukrainian researchers call this phenomenon either “ethnic renaissance” or “ethnic awakening”<sup>3</sup>. However, as M. Rabchuk remarks, at the same time a significant part of the society stayed aside of these pro-

<sup>2</sup> The national (ethnic) identity is the state of awareness of one’s belonging to one or another ethnic community, which is based on common language, historic experience, culture, place of inhabitation and the type of economy Т. Пилипенко, *Реалізація освітніх потреб представників національних меншин в Україні: стан, проблеми, перспективи* [in:] *Актуальні питання вітчизняної етнополітики: шляхи модернізації, врахування міжнародного досвіду*, Київ 2004, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> В.Б. Євтух, В.П. Трощинський, *Етнонаціональний структура сучасного українського суспільства: деякі аспекти системного бачення її розвитку* [in:] *Етнонаціональна структура українського суспільства. Довідник*, Київ 2004, pp. 15–25; В. Романцов, В. Євтух, В.П. Трощинський *et al.*, *Етнополітична структура українського суспільства. Довідник*, Київ 2006, pp. 12–16.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Fedorenko, *Problemy integracji kulturowej społeczeństwa ukraińskiego po odzyskaniu niepodległości* [in:] *Problemy społeczne i ekonomiczne*, vol. 1, Kęty 2001, p. 74.

cesses – with the lack of an explicit language and culture identity, but also characterized with a general lack of the world-view determination and disorientation<sup>4</sup>.

According to the official census from the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2001 Ukraine has a population of 48 million 457 thousand inhabitants representing 130 nationalities. The most numerous one is made of Ukrainians, with 37.5 million people according to the census, which make 77.8% of the overall population. The number of representatives of national minorities was adequately 10.7 million people, i.e. 22.2%<sup>5</sup>. The exact data concerning the numbers of particular nationalities is presented in table 1.

The results of the census conducted in 2001 showed also a number of such national groups as: Boykos, Hutsuls, Lemkos, Polishchuks and Ruthenians, i.e. ethnographic groups of Ukrainian ethnos, which are recognized by Ukrainian researchers as national minorities. The overall number was 32.4 thousand people, most of who were Hutsuls – 21.4 thousand (66%) and Ruthenians – 10.2% (31.4%). They lived mainly in two oblasts of western Ukraine – Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast – 21.5 thousand (66.3%) and Zakarpattia Oblast – 10.2 thousand (31.5%)<sup>6</sup>.

Russians make the second largest ethnic group in Ukraine, with 8334.1 thousand people in 2001, which

Table 1. The ethnic structure of Ukraine in 1989 and 2001.

Specification	The census from 1989		The census from 2001		Change in the number of population 1989–2001	
	The number of people (in thousands)	% of the overall number of people	The number of people	% of the overall number of people	In thousands	In %
Overall	51 452,0	100,0	48 240,0	100,0	-3 212, 0	-6,2
Particular nationalities:						
1. Ukrainians	37 419,1	72,7	37 541,7	77,8	122,6	0,3
2. Russians	11 355,6	22,1	8 334,1	17,3	-3 021,5	-26,6
3. Belarusians	440,0	0,9	275,8	0,6	-164,2	-37,3
4. Moldavians	324,5	0,6	258,6	0,5	-65,9	-20,3
5. Crimean Tatars	46,8	0,1	248,2	0,5	201,3	430,2
6. Bulgarians	233,8	0,5	204,6	0,4	-29,2	-12,5
7. Hungarians	163,1	0,3	156,6	0,3	-6,5	-4,0
8. Romanians	134,8	0,3	151,0	0,3	16,1	12,0
9. Poles	219,2	0,4	144,1	0,3	-75,0	-34,2
10. Jews	486,3	0,9	103,6	0,2	-382,7	-78,7
11. Armenians	54,2	0,1	99,9	0,2	45,6	84,3
12. Greeks	98,5	0,2	91,5	0,2	-7,0	-7,1
13. Tatars	86,8	0,2	73,3	0,2	-13,5	-15,6
14. Gypsies	47,9	0,1	47,6	0,1	-0,3	-0,7
15. Azerbaijanis	36,9	0,1	45,2	0,1	8,2	22,2
16. Georgians	23,5	0,04	34,2	0,1	10,6	45,3
17. Germans	37,8	0,1	33,3	0,1	-4,5	-12,0
18. Gagauz people	31,9	0,1	31,9	0,1	-0,04	-0,1
19. Koreans	8,6	0,01	12,7	0,03	4,1	32,2
20. Uzbeks	20,3	0,04	12,4	0,03	-7,9	-38,9
21. Lithuanians	11,2	0,02	7,2	0,01	-4,0	-35,7
22. Slovaks	7,9	0,01	6,4	0,01	-1,5	-19,5
23. Czechs	9,1	0,02	5,8	0,01	-3,2	-35,1
24. Kazakhs	10,5	0,02	5,5	0,01	-5,0	-47,6
25. Latvians	7,1	0,01	5,1	0,01	-2,0	-28,1

The source: the author's own elaboration based on: *Всероссийная перепись населения 1989 г. Распределение населения Украинской ССР по национальностям и языку*, [http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_lan\\_89\\_uk.php](http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_lan_89_uk.php); *Про кількість та склад населення України за підсумками Всеукраїнського перепису населення 2001 р.*, Derżawna służba statystyki, <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua>.

<sup>4</sup> M. Rabchuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, Wrocław 2004, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> О.В. Антонюк, *Основи етнополітики*, Київ 2005, pp. 180–183.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 183; P. Andrusieczko, *Zmiany struktury narodowościowej i językowej na Ukrainie w kontekście wyników spisu powszechnego z 2001 roku*, *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 2004, nr 24–25, p. 202.

compared to the census of 1989 is diminished of 3021.5 thousand people, i.e. 26.6%. Apart from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, where Russians are the majority (adequately 58.3% and 771.6% of all inhabitants), their biggest number lived in the following oblasts: Donetsk (1844.4 thousand, which made 38.2% of all the inhabitants), Luhansk (991.8 thousand, 39.0%), Kharkiv (742 thousand, 25.6%), Dnipropetrovsk (627.5 thousand, 17.6%), Odessa (508.5 thousand, 20.7%), and Zaporizhia (467.7 thousand, 24.7%). In these oblasts altogether there lived almost 80% of Russian minority in Ukraine. Additionally, large numbers of Russians lived in the following oblasts: Mykolaiv, Kherson, as well as the city of Kiev. The only region in Ukraine where Russian population prevails is Crimea.

Belarusians make the third largest ethnic group in Ukraine (275.8 thousand). They live mainly in north-eastern, border areas of the country, and big cities of eastern Ukraine and Crimea. The biggest number dwells in Donetsk Oblast (44.5 thousand) and Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (29.5 thousand). The number of Moldavians in Ukraine is 258.6 thousand. Almost 75% of them are inhabitants of Odessa Oblast – 127 thousand (47.8% of the overall number of Moldavians in Ukraine and 5.0% of the inhabitants of the oblast) and Chernivtsi Oblast – 67.2 thousand (adequately 26.0% and 7.3%). The community of Crimean Tatars in Ukraine consists mainly of those repatriated that have been gradually coming back to Crimea since the mid 1980s. According to the 2001 census their number was 248.2 thousand, 245.2 of which inhabited Crimea (with Sevastopol). Bulgarian minority, with 204.6 thousand people in Ukraine, like Moldavian minority, live mainly in Odessa Oblast (150.6 thousand) where it makes 6.1% of the whole population. The next largest ethnic groups in Ukraine are Hungarians (156.6 thousand). They live mainly in tight-knit groups in the areas nearby Ukrainian–Hungarian border, in the south-eastern part of Zakarpattia Oblast (151.5 thousand), where they make 12.1% of the overall population<sup>7</sup>. Romanians inhabit mainly northern Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, i.e. the areas that in some periods of history belonged to Romania. Now these areas are in Chernivtsi Oblast, where the number of Romanians is 114.6 thousand (912.5% of the oblast inhabitants). The census in 2001 also showed 144.1 thousand Poles living in Ukraine (0.3% of the country population). The Poles inhabit

mainly in villages of Zhytomyr Oblast (49 thousand which makes 3.5% of the overall population) and Khmelnytskyi Oblast (23 thousand, 1.6% of the overall population of oblast). In other oblasts the percentage of Polish people is much lower, e.g. in Lviv Oblast it is merely 0.7% (18.9 thousand), Chernivtsi – 0.4% (3.3 thousand), Ternopil – 0.3% (3.8 thousand), Vinnytsia – 0.2% (3.7 thousand) and in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea – 0.2% (3.8 thousand). Quite a large group of Poles (6.9 thousand) lives in Kiev<sup>8</sup>. The 2001 census showed also 103.6 thousand of representatives of Jewish minority. They live mainly in Kiev (17.9 thousand), Odessa, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Donetsk. The following minorities are relatively numerous too: Armenians, Greeks and Tatars. Armenians (99.9 thousand) live mainly in eastern oblasts: Donetsk – 15.7 thousand and Dnipropetrovsk – 10.6 thousand, as well as in the south of the country: in Autonomous Republic of Crimea – 8.7 thousand and Odessa Oblast – 7.4 thousand. Greeks (91.5 thousand) inhabit mainly Donetsk Oblast (77.5 thousand). There also lives a significant part of Tatars – 19.1 thousand. Their large groups are also in Autonomous Republic of Crimea – 11 thousand, as well as in other eastern and southern oblasts<sup>9</sup>.

According to the research carried out in 1993 by the Institute of Sociology of the Science Academy of Ukraine among the representatives of national communities of over 100 thousand people<sup>10</sup> comes out that the state of their national identity varied a lot – the shaped sense of national identity was declared by 74% of Poles, 66% of Hungarians, 62% of Tatars, 56% of Ukrainians, 52% of Russians, 45% of Moldavians, 45% of Jews, and 43% of Bulgarians.<sup>11</sup> The research showed that Poles, Hungarians and Tatars represent much higher level of national identity than Ukrainians, who are characterized by a significant regional differentiation concerning the level of national identity – its exaggeration in the West and the lack of it in the East of the country. The presence of Russian element and its influence on the state of the national identity of Ukrainians is an additional factor differentiating East and West Ukraine. The

<sup>8</sup> P. Eberhardt, *Polacy na Ukrainie. Liczebność i rozmieszczenie ludności polskiej według ostatnich spisów powszechnych*, <http://www.wspolnota-polska.org.pl>.

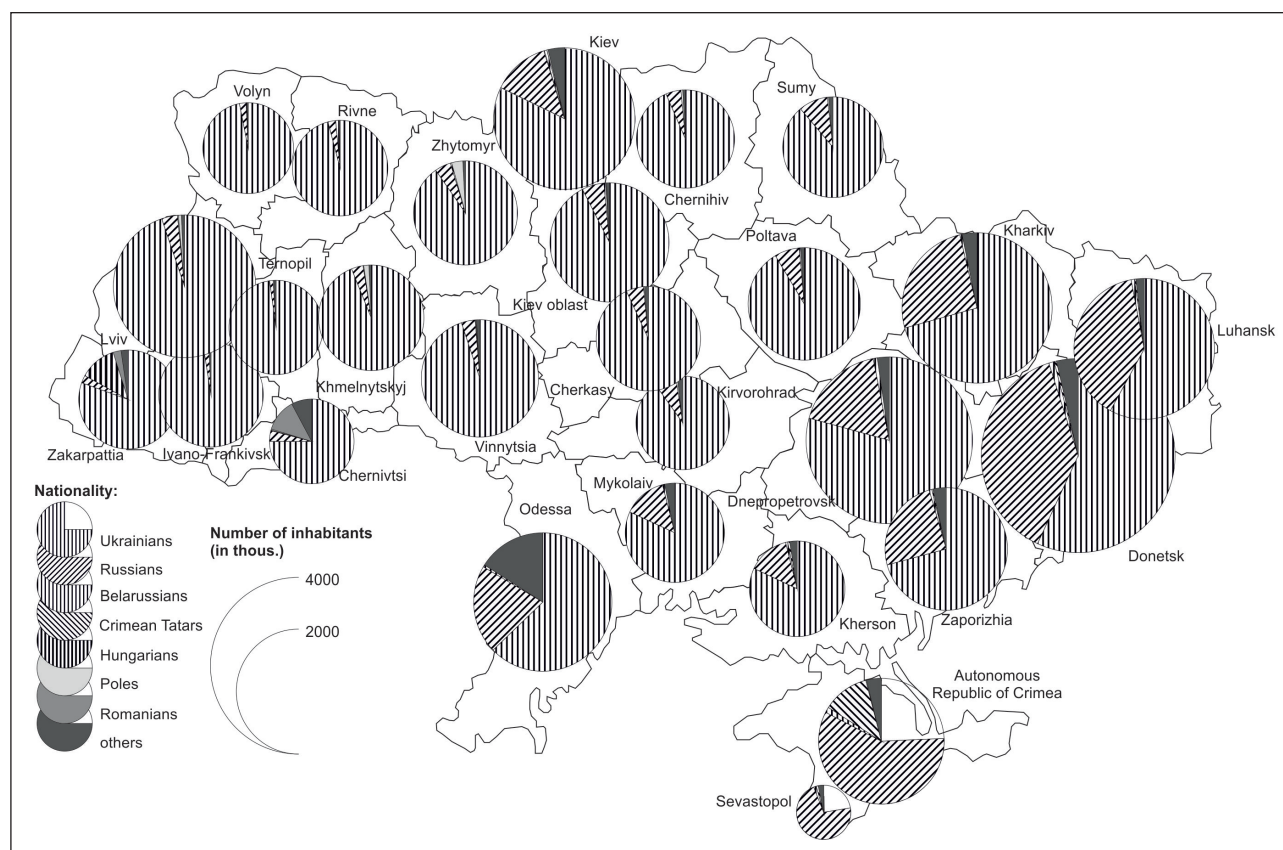
<sup>9</sup> *Про кількість та склад населення...*

<sup>10</sup> The research covered Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, Tatars, and Moldavians, excluding Belarusian and Romanian minorities.

<sup>11</sup> W. Baluk, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej Ukrainy. Tradycje i współczesność*, Wrocław 2002, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Про кількість та склад населення...*

Drawing 1. The ethnic structure of Ukraine in 2001 according to oblasts



Source: Author's own elaboration based on *Про кількість та склад населення...*

result of the research quoted by A. Wilson indicated that given a wider range of possible identities, only 56% of respondents considers themselves to be “exclusively Ukrainians”, even less since 11% “exclusively Russian”, whereas almost 27% described themselves as “both Ukrainian and Russian”, including 7.4% “more Ukrainian than Russian”, 14.3% “as Ukrainian as Russian”, and 4.9% “more Russian than Ukrainian”<sup>12</sup>. This am-

bivalence characterizes mainly the inhabitants of eastern Ukraine.

### Language as an indicator of national and ethnic identity

One of the basic factors affecting the sense of national or ethnic identity is a language. Basing on the data of the latest census from December 2001 (table 2) one may state that when it comes to language issues there was a certain change advantageous for the Ukrainian language, compared to 1989 – 67% of Ukrainian population pointed at this language as their mother tongue, which was 2.8% more than according to the census of 1989. At the same time the Russian language was pointed at as the mother tongue by 29.6 % of inhabitants of Ukraine and this rate decreased compared to 1989. Other than Ukrainian or Russian languages mother tongue was pointed at by 2.9% of Ukrainian citizens, what means the increase of 0.4%. The Ukrainian language appeared to be the mother tongue for 85.2 ethnic Ukrainians, whereas for 14.8 % of Ukrainians the Russian language is their mother tongue. At the same

<sup>12</sup> A. Wilson, *Ukraińcy*, Warszawa 2002, p. 232. Analyzing the above-mentioned outcome of the research M. Rabchuk states that “two-thirds (of the group under the research) are neither Russians nor Ukrainians, they are “locals”, “indigenous”, people being on the pre-national stage of development. Potentially they might become either Russians, or Ukrainians” – M. Rabchuk, *Od Małorosji do Ukrainy*, Kraków 2002, p. 139. This phenomenon is most frequently explained as consequence of the nationalities policy of the USSR, yet the explanation given by N. Nežurina-Kuzničnaja on the basis of psychology seems interesting. She explains double national identity of this group as follows: “when there are no apparent differences between groups, the group accepts a man, even when he is “a stranger” according to the national origin. Such a carefree and easygoing choice of their ethnic identity prevails amongst Belarusians, Russians, and Ukrainians, whose culture is exceptionally close” – Н. Нежурин-Кузничная, *Потулярная этнопсихология*, Minsk 2004, p. 124.



time as many as 95.9 % of Russians in Ukraine considered Russian as their mother tongue, and only 3.9 % of representatives of this national minority thinks the same of the Ukrainian language<sup>13</sup>, which makes Russians the national group the least willing to assimilate in the Ukrainian society.

sians, and 44% of representatives of other nationalities. Only 43.5% of representatives of national minorities (except Russians), urban dwellers, considered their nation's language to be their mother tongue<sup>15</sup>. The regional differentiation is of importance as well. While in the West the percentage of people considering Russian as

Table 2. The language structure of Ukraine in 2001.

Specification	% of representatives of a particular national group, considering as their mother tongue adequately:			
	Their national language	The Ukrainian language	The Russian language	Other language
Ukrainians	85,2	–	14,8	0,0
Russians	95,9	3,9	–	0,2
Belarusians	19,8	17,5	62,5	0,2
Moldavians	70,0	10,7	17,6	1,7
Crimean Tatars	92,0	0,1	6,1	1,8
Bulgarians	64,2	5,0	30,3	0,5
Hungarians	95,4	3,4	1,0	0,2
Romanians	91,7	6,2	1,5	0,6
Poles	12,9	71,0	15,6	0,5
Jews	3,1	13,4	83,0	0,5
Armenians	50,4	5,8	43,2	0,6
Greeks	6,4	4,8	88,5	0,3
Tatars	35,2	4,5	58,7	1,6
Gypsies	44,7	21,1	13,4	20,8
Azerbaijanis	53,0	7,1	37,6	2,3
Georgians	36,7	8,2	54,4	0,7
Germans	12,2	22,1	64,7	1,0
Gagauz people	71,5	3,5	22,7	2,3
Other nations	32,6	12,5	49,7	5,2

Source: The National Comity of Ukraine for Statistics <http://www.ukrcensus.gov.ua>.

The actual national-language situation in Ukraine is much more complicated than it might be concluded from the above-presented data. First of all, the relations are different for urban population<sup>14</sup>, playing main part in political and cultural processes. The Ukrainian language is the mother tongue for only 58.5 of urban dwellers, including 78% of Ukrainians, 3.5 % of the Russians, and 12.5 % of other national groups. The Russian language is considered the mother tongue by 39.5% city dwellers, including 22% of Ukrainians, 96.5% of Rus-

their mother tongue is 5%, and in the centre 10%, in the east it grows to 32% in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, to 44–48% in Kharkiv and Zaporizhia, and even 69–75% in Luhansk and Donetsk. In the south the number of Russian speaking inhabitants varies between 25 to 29% in Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts, to 42% in Odessa Oblast and up to 79% in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea<sup>16</sup>.

Most of all it should be noted that in case of Ukraine it is not just a simple ethno-division into Ukrainians and Russians. Following A. Wilson we can distinguish here at least three main language – ethnic groups (not including the other, but Russian, ethnic minorities), i.e.: Russian speaking Russians (20–21%), Russian speaking Ukrainians (33–34%), and Ukrainian speak-

<sup>13</sup> P. Andrusieczko, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–204.

<sup>14</sup> Formal acquiring of independence and proclaiming the Ukrainian language as the “state” one did not change the situation of the Ukrainian – speaking inhabitants in the majority of cities. As M. Rabchuk points out, “the world of the Ukrainian language in fact is an equivalent of “the third world” within one state – the world of lower social, economic and cultural development, [...] while the world of the Russian language is “the first world” of urban culture, education, business, and of course, the state bureaucracy of all levels” – M. Rabchuk, *Od Małorosji ...*, p. 110.

<sup>15</sup> В. Нахманович, *Динаміка етнонаціональних процесів в Україні і завдання державної етнополітики* [in:] *Актуальні питання вітчизняної етнополітики: шляхи модернізації, врахування міжнародного досвіду*, Київ 2004, p. 93.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 94.

ing Ukrainians (around 40%)<sup>17</sup>. One may state here that instead of an explicitly Ukrainian (ethnic) majority and Russian (ethnic) minority there are two comparable, when it comes to the size, groups in Ukraine, which are referred to by A. Rabchuk as “Ukrainophiles” and “Russophiles”, and the lines of the language and ethnic division do not coincide due to the high degree of Russification amongst Ukrainians<sup>18</sup>.

The results of the census did not draw the attention to two other language groups present amongst inhabitants of Ukraine – the bilingual population and the people using so called “surzhyk”, which means variations of Ukrainian – Russian and Russian – Ukrainian dialects, which had entirely dominated the central Ukraine. While analyzing the issue of the language correctness it turns out that 40% of the Ukrainian inhabitants speak “more or less correct Ukrainian”, 42% “more or less correct Russian”, whereas different varieties of “surzhyk” are spoken by as many as 18% of the Ukrainian citizens<sup>19</sup>. Referring to that T. Woźniak distinguishes within the Ukrainian society three basic language communities: Ukrainian, Russian, and “surzhyk” one, whose representatives have shifting, inexplicit, or double national identity<sup>20</sup>.

In case of some part of Ukrainians language plays a particular role in their self-identification by opposition to the Russian speaking population, or to surzhyk

– speaking locals, however the significance of the language in the self – identification of Ukrainians seems to be overrated. The research of public opinion indicated that merely 3.9% of respondents agree with the statement that it is the Ukrainian language that is the indicator of the Ukrainian factor<sup>21</sup>, and communicating in a particular language is of a smaller significance than positive or negative attitude towards it<sup>22</sup>.

Among national minorities Poles are the one that is Ukrainized in the highest degree – according to the census as many as 71% of the Poles recognized the Ukrainian language as their mother tongue, only 12.9% pointed at the Polish language, while 15.6% chose Russian as their mother tongue. It results from the fact that the majority of Poles live in the Ukrainian language area and deeper than expected assimilation processes had undergone there. At the same time the Poles are the only national minority in Ukraine, whose majority recognizes the Ukrainian language as their mother tongue, although also the Czechs (42.5%) and Slovaks (41.5%) present high level of identification with the Ukrainian language<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> The numbers, quoted after the sociological research, differ significantly from the ones in official census. A. Wilson explains this difference as a methodological mistake of the census authors, who ask traditionally about “mother tongue”, which for many people means the language of childhood, of parents, whereas sociologists ask about the language of everyday contacts, the one in which it is easier for a respondent to communicate. Such a question is more correct, however according to M. Rabchuk the received responses are not entirely objective either, since a lot of inhabitants of the Russian language speaking cities simply do not have opportunity to speak Ukrainian on “daily basis”, even if it is spoken by their families. Hence number 33–34% is most probably a bit too high, although no doubt the real number of the Russian language speaking Ukrainians is closer to this number than to the official data; M. Rabchuk, *Od Małorosji ...*, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> M. Rabchuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, p. 39. According to M. Rabchuk, “it is this transition group of Ukrainians – Russophones that makes the most amorphous, undetermined politically and culturally group of population, with a wide range of various, often mixed identities: Russian, Ukrainian, Little Russian, Soviet, local; *Od Małorosji ...*, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup> M. Rabchuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, p. 39.

<sup>20</sup> T. Woźniak, *Sprzeniewierzona Ukraina. Przyczynek do kształtowania się ukraińskiego narodu politycznego* [in:] *Ukraina*, ed. B.J. Albin, W. Baluk, Wrocław 2002, p. 192.

<sup>21</sup> Others as the factor determining being Ukrainian decided to be: “realizing their own Ukrainian history” – 4.9%, having “Ukrainian ancestors” – 22.7%, “citizenship” – 17.3%, and most of all “realizing that one is Ukrainian” – 40.4%. 10.7% of the respondents were not able to give a clear answer; M. Rabchuk, *Dwie Ukrainy*, p. 39; M. Rabchuk considers such an attitude of respondents to be the correct one, stating that, “in a free, independent state language cannot and should not be the sign of patriotism [...] and the decisive factor of being Ukrainian is not the language but self-awareness”, M. Rabchuk, *Дилеми українського Фауста: громадянське суспільство і „розбудова держави”*, Kyjiw 2000, p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> Therefore M. Rabchuk suggests yet another division of the Ukrainian society into, 1) Ukrainians – as members of Ukrainian political nation, who do not necessarily have to be ethnic Ukrainians and may even be Russian -speaking, but they respect both Ukrainian language and culture, and do recognize their Ukrainian identity; 2) Russians – as members of the Russian political nation, who do not necessarily have to be ethnic Russians and may even be not Russian – speaking, but always feel superior towards the Ukrainian language and culture, and most importantly, identify with Russia, and the Russian nation (or its imperial substitute – “the Soviet nation”, and 3) “Little Russians” (so called “chochly”) – as the ethnic substitute, which has not become a modern nation – either Russian or Ukrainian, but still remains in the state of “locals”. M. Rabchuk, *Od Małorosji ...*, pp. 141–142.

<sup>23</sup> B. Нахманович, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

On the other hand, the highest Russified communities are the Jews (93%) and Greeks (88.5%)<sup>24</sup>, whereas also Crimean Karaites (78%), Germans (65%), Belarusians (62.5%), Tatars (59%), Lithuanians (58%), Armenians (43%), Czechs and Albanians (36%) present high level of Russian language identity. It ought to be noted here that among the above mentioned minorities the Russian speaking part has increased as compared to 1989 by approximately 10%, increasing, however, among the Poles (5%) and Romanians (6.5%)<sup>25</sup>.

In case of some ethnic minorities we can say about the language renaissance – the percentage of other languages considered to be national during the discussed period has increased by 0.4% and now makes 2.9% of the whole. Traditionally, high level of language national identification is present among Hungarians, 95.5% of whom considers the Hungarian language as their mother tongue. Amongst other minorities those are Crimean Tatars who are most inclined toward recognizing their national language as their mother tongue (92%), which results mainly from the repatriation of the low assimilated population from the Middle Asia, and Romanians (91.7%). It is particularly among the Romanians that the language re-assimilation can be noticed – the percentage of people considering the Romanian language their mother tongue increased in the period between 1989 and 2001 from 62% to 92%, including the rise among the urban dwellers from 63.5% to 80.5%, whereas among the inhabitants of rural areas (78.5% of the whole community) from 62% to 95%<sup>26</sup>.

A relatively high percentage of people considering the language of their nationality as their mother tongue can also be noted among Moldavians, although between 1989 and 2001 it decreased from 78% to 70%, as well as Bulgarians, among whom this indicator decreased from 69.5% to 64%. During the discussed period the share of those who consider their national language as their mother tongue decreased also among Gypsies (from 58.5% to 44.5%), Tatars (from 49% to 35%),

Lithuanians (from 48% to 27%), Germans (from 23% to 12%), Greeks (from 18.5% to 6.5%), Crimean Karaites (9.5% to 6%) and Jews (7% to 3%). As mentioned before, the level of the language self-identification is also very low among the Poles – 12.9%, although during the studied period the general number did not decrease due to the process of re-assimilation among the rural part of Polish population in Ukraine<sup>27</sup>.

The above quoted data of the census present significant discrepancies between ethnic and language groups – beside national communities, whose members preserved the language of their nationalities as a rule; there are the ones that almost entirely acquire languages of other ethnic groups. The degree of national language preservation depended mainly on the character of the location of particular minorities (focused, which fosters preserving national languages, or dispersed, which on the other hand fosters acquiring the languages of other nations) as well as the place of dwelling (the majority of rural population among the members of a given nationality influenced the preservation of a language in a positive way).

### Religion as a factor of national and ethnic identity

Religious factor had always played a significant role in shaping up national and ethnic identity<sup>28</sup>. It is true that it's significance has decreased since the times of the Soviet Union, when in the multi-religious Ukrainian society the process of its atheization had reached deep. Today, however, in independent Ukraine we can notice amazingly rapid revival of religious life (the collapse of the communist ideology caused the increase of the society interest in religion, which on the other hand stimulated the activity of Orthodox churches and churches), and it is this factor that frequently determines or helps to determine the national identity. Distinctive dominance of one denomination has a particular significance in case

<sup>24</sup> When it comes to the Jews, they usually inhabit large Russian language cities, whereas Greeks inhabit russified to a great extent southern oblasts of Ukraine.

<sup>25</sup> В. Нахманович, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

<sup>26</sup> It is due to the fact that among the Romanians a significant level of assimilation with the Moldavians can be noted, which does not only mean ethnic assimilation but also the language one (in 1989 24.5% of Romanians recognized the Moldavian language as their mother tongue, 4% of Moldavians from Bukovina pointed at the Romanian as their mother tongue in 2001); *Ibidem*, p. 102.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> As S.I. Zdioruk claims that, “ethno-confessional specifics of religion is stimulated by the need of a nation to own its own religious structure, since it updates its awareness as own value and fullness”. Therefore the awareness of religious factors is so significant for shaping national awareness and the processes of confirmation of ethnic pluralism. С.І. Здіорук, *Етноконфесійні аспекти етнополітики в Україні* [in:] *Етнополітологія в Україні: здобитки, проблеми, перспективи*, ed. І.Ф. Курас, Київ 2004, p. 49.

of the Poles, since it helped them to preserve their national identity on high level, despite the significant language and culture assimilation with the Ukrainian society. Likewise, the religious factor played positive role on case of Jews (Judaism) and Crimea Tatars (Islam).

5643 parishes, Muslim and Judaism churches analogically 1163 (1001 of which were in Crimea) and 270 communities, while Jehovah's Witnesses 1056 centers of their cult<sup>29</sup>. In Ukraine the following have also been registered: 98 parishes of Reformed Church of Carpath-

Table 3. The organizational structure of the largest Churches according to regions in 2010.

Oblast or other administration unit	The number of registered Christian religious communities				
	UOC MP	UOC KP	UGCC	UAOC	RCC
Kharkiv	304	617	6	11	7
Kherson	357	75	25	44	15
Khmelnyskyi	910	217	48	77	128
Cherkasy	528	167	4	54	7
Chernihiv	536	114	2	0	4
Chernivtsi	412	154	25	4	30
Dnipropetrovsk	555	125	7	9	8
Donetsk	630	76	29	4	14
Ivano-Frankivsk	29	286	650	141	31
Kiev	647	355	15	23	21
Kirovohrad	214	73	4	10	3
Lviv	60	450	1 496	371	130
Luhansk	376	27	3	6	1
Mykolaiv	279	132	11	9	9
Odessa	533	113	20	7	16
Poltava	436	169	8	0	5
Rivne	617	320	8	23	14
Sumy	388	134	4	0	4
Ternopil	119	232	769	279	81
Vinnysia	940	228	15	49	115
Volyn	626	339	16	17	24
Zakarpattia	586	35	393	2	92
Zaporizhia	333	103	4	8	10
Zhytomyr	598	194	11	16	118
Autonomous Republic	558	40	12	10	14
Crimea					
City of Kiev	219	106	14	23	8
Together:	11 790	3 599	4 281	1 197	909

The source: Author's own elaboration based on: *Релігія і влада в Україні: проблеми взаємовідносин. Інформаційно-аналітичні матеріали до Круглого столу на тему «Державно-конфесійні відносини в Україні, їх особливості і тенденції розвитку. 9 лютого 2001 р.*, Centr Razumkova, Kiiv 2011, pp. 3–17.

The description of used terms:

UOC MP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate), UGCC (Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), UOC KP (Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kyivan Patriarchate), UAOC (Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church), RCC – Roman Catholic Church.

In 2010, there were over 35 thousand religious communities functioning in Ukraine, which represent over 50 religious congregations. The ones with the most developed church infrastructure (table 4) allowing the direct creation of religious identity, and indirectly influencing cultural tradition and national identity are: UOC MP (having 117910 parishes), UGCC (with 4281 parishes), UOC KP (with 3599 parishes), UAOC (with 1197 parishes) and Roman Catholic Church (909 parishes). Moreover, protestant churches of Baptists, Evangelical Church and Adventists have overall

ian Ruthenia (so called Hungarian), 28 German Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession parishes, 15 Armenian churches, as well as 4 religious communities of Crimean Karaites and Krymchaks<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Релігія і влада в Україні: проблеми взаємовідносин. Інформаційно-аналітичні матеріали до Круглого столу на тему «Державно-конфесійні відносини в Україні, їх особливості і тенденції розвитку. 9 лютого 2001 р.*, Centr Razumkova, Kiiv 2011, pp. 3–28.

<sup>30</sup> W. Baluk, *Koncepcje...*, p. 32.



The majority of Ukrainian population, including a major part of national minorities (Russian, Belarusians, Moldavians, Romanians, Bulgarians, and Greeks) are members of the Orthodox Church. Nowadays there are three Orthodox Churches in Ukraine<sup>31</sup>: UOC MP (where liturgy is in the Church Slavonic language and Russian), UOC KP (where the languages of liturgy are Ukrainian and the Church Slavonic language) and UAOC (with the Ukrainian language)<sup>32</sup>. UOC MP aims to promote the concept of ethnic and religious indivisibility of Russian Orthodox Church in the Moscow version, being in Ukraine not only the stronghold of Russian political, religious, and cultural influences, but also of the language ones.

UGCC, joined partly in the 1990s by UAOC and UOC KP, remains traditionally Ukrainian. The position of UGCC is particularly strong in western oblasts of Ukraine. Recently it has been the most active in the process of creating independent Ukraine and encouraged the spiritual and cultural revival the Ukrainian nation, at the same time expanding its influence on other regions of the country<sup>33</sup>.

In the Roman Catholic Church, whose members are mainly the representatives of the Polish minority, the Polish and Ukrainian languages are mainly used during the liturgy, and in some eastern regions also Russian. The Roman Catholic Church has an immense influence on the strengthening of the national identity of the Poles, encourages establishing their national associations and at the same time being the bridge between the Polish minority in Ukraine and Poland. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine is spreading, however, not only on the Poles, but also some part of Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, and Ukrainians, using their national languages during masses.

Apart from the Roman Catholic Church there are in Ukraine several other religious organizations closely associated with particular national minorities. These are mainly Evangelical, Muslims, Jews, Crimean Karaites, and Krymchaks. In the churches of Evangeli-

cal Reformed denomination, whose members are the representatives of Hungarian minority, masses are in Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Russian, and in Romanian Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession parishes in Romanian, Russian, and Ukrainian.

In recent years the number of Muslim minorities have increased, represented by Azerbaijani, Uzbek, Tatar, Dagestan, Ossetia, Turkmen, Kazakh, and most of all Crimean-Tatar minorities. Arabic is the languages of religious services, although some religious ceremonies are in the languages of the minorities<sup>34</sup>. Also recently the revival of the religious life of the Jews can be noted<sup>35</sup>. The overwhelming majority of Jewish minority are members of Judaism communities. There are over 270 of them in Ukraine.

Analyzing the contemporary religious situation in Ukraine from the perspective of national minorities, it ought to be emphasized that their spiritual needs are fulfilled to a great extent when it comes the use of a national language during masses and services. What is more, schools and religious courses are established in parishes, religious literature is available in mother tongues, and frequently masses are conducted by clergymen coming from historic homelands of particular minorities (e.g. 240 out of 340 priests of the Roman Catholic Church are Polish citizens)<sup>36</sup>.

## Education and school system

The development of school system is one of the main factors guaranteeing and stimulating the pursuit of particular national groups for the preservation of their ethnic and language distinctiveness, especially the school system of national minorities. In 2003 in Ukraine there were 20 913 comprehensive schools with 5 million 583 thousand students. There were 16 945 schools with the Ukrainian language (3 million 863 thousand students), 1594 schools with Russian (708.2 thousand students) and with Moldavian – 9 (3602 students), Romanian – 94 (24 085 students), Polish – 4 (1004 students) and Crimean – Tatar – 14 (4151 students). Apart from these there were 2140 schools with two or more languages, including: in Ukrainian and Russian – 2068 (1 million 168 thousand students), Ukrainian and Hungarian – 30 (9332 students), Ukrainian and Romanian – 8

<sup>31</sup> Since the beginning of the 1990s in Ukraine significant level of activity of Romanian Orthodox Church has been visible as well. It aims at embracing with its jurisdiction a part of orthodox parishes, especially in Odessa, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia Oblasts, inhabited by large groups of Romanians. П. Чалий, *Етнічний чинник та добросусідство*, Політика і час 2003, nr 8, p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> В.Б. Євтух, *Етнополітика в Україні. Документи та матеріали*, Київ 1998, p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> С.І. Здіорук, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> О.В. Антонюк, *op. cit.*, pp. 197–198.

<sup>35</sup> П. Чалий, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> В.Б. Євтух, *Етнополітика в Україні...*, p. 49.

Table 4. The division of students according to the language at school and optional language education in 2003.

		The number of students learning in a particular language	The number of students learning a particular language as an optional subject
The language of teaching	Ukrainian	4379675	1455277
	Russian	1394331	1618387
	Moldavian	6508	1430
	Crimean-Tatar	5945	29366
	Hungarian	20229	1312
	Polish	1404	4968
	Romanian	27471	295
	Slovak	97	-
	Bulgarian	120	13592
	Hebrew	-	1719
	Greek	-	176
	Gagauz	-	805
	German	-	318
Together:		5835983	3128733

The source: Т. Пилипенко, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–65.

(2949 students), Ukrainian and Moldavian – 3 (1320 students), Russian and Crimean – Tatar – 19 (11 251 students), Russian and Romanian – 2 (1376 students), Russian and Hungarian – 2 (654 students), Russian and Bulgarian – 2 (1398 students) as well as Bulgarian and Moldavian – 3 (1436 students). Russian was taught as one of subjects to 1 million 618 thousand students, Ukrainian to 1 million 455 thousand, Bulgarian to 13 592, Polish to 4 968, Hungarian to 1312, Romanian to 265, and Greek to 176 students. As optional subjects in some schools students can learn Czech, Slovak, Roman Gypsy and Armenian<sup>37</sup>.

During the past two decades Ukraine had to face serious problem, namely a significant degree of Russification of the Ukrainian school system. In the school year 1990/1991 only 49% of students were learning in Ukrainian, whereas 59% in Russian. As a result of this system it was not the minorities that were underprivileged but actually the Ukrainians. In the mid 1990s the proportions had undergone a slight change in favour of the state language, in which 58% students were educated. However, a noticeable change was brought about by “The complex program of actions concerning the comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language” from 1997, thanks to which in the school year 1999/2000 already 67% of primary school students were educated in Ukrainian, 75% of secondary school students and 69% of academic students, and

the rates were growing gradually in the following years. In 2012 as many as 81.9% of students were acquiring education in Ukrainian<sup>38</sup>. Still over 90% of students in Crimea acquired their education in Russian, and over a half in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts<sup>39</sup>.

Analyzing the data concerning the language at school and the languages of minorities, taught at comprehensive schools as one of subjects (table 4.) it can be stated that despite the “Ukrainization of education” – i.e. constant decrease of the number of schools with Russian as the language of education, there is still a good basis in Ukraine when it comes to fulfilling the language needs of national minorities<sup>40</sup>. The system of state efforts aim-

<sup>38</sup> Частка учнів в школах України, що навчаються українською, <http://language-policy.info/2015/10/chastka-uchniv-u-shkolah-ukrajiny-scho-navchayutsya-ukrajinskoyu/>.

<sup>39</sup> In 2000 there were 2215 schools with 1.9 million students educated in Russian. In 2002 the number decreased to 1935, with 1.7 students. At the same time other national minorities (Romanian, Hungarian, Crimean – Tatar) increased analogically the rates. See: П. Чалий, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Decreasing the number of schools with the Russian language does not mean the discrimination of Russian national minority. It is one of the elements of justified process of de-Russification and de-Sovietization.

<sup>40</sup> Despite the general positive assessment of Ukrainian educational policy towards national minorities as well as the access of their members to the education in mother tongues, В.Б. Євтух points at several basic problems, such as insufficient financing of school books (although only between 1997 and 2000 in Ukraine almost 170 school books, phrasebooks and books for children were published in the languages of

<sup>37</sup> Т. Пилипенко, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–66.

ing at fulfilling educational needs of particular national minorities associated with their specifics of ethno-cultural development ought to be assessed positively

## The ending remarks

All the elements of the ethnic structure of the Ukrainian society are currently in the phase of initiated at the end of 1980s so called “national renaissance” which is characterized by the revival of marginalized and neglected in the times of the Soviet Union languages, cultures, traditions, customs and religions of particular national and ethnic minorities. It shows among them with different power, the strongest being visible amongst Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Germans, Poles, Russians, Romanians, Crimean Tatars, and Hungarians. However, despite presented above rapid processes of ethnic revival in Ukraine, most members of national minorities, whether consciously or not, identify with the Ukrainian state, and see the future of their children and grandchildren as Ukrainian<sup>41</sup> - in the broad, most of all civic, and not exclusively ethnic meaning of the word. As T. Olszański remarks, the inhabitants of Ukraine (both Ukrainians, and Russians, and members of national minorities) have chosen self-organization “around the homeland-common land and common fate, and not around the language or ethnic origins”<sup>42</sup>. This phenomenon is also emphasized by W. Nachamanowicz who is writing that the national life of Ukraine can be currently characterized by two basic over-ethnic processes: the shaping of Ukrainian political nation of European type, with civic priority of “national-territorial” patriotism over typical ethnic social bonds, as well as gradual vanishing of “Soviet nation”, as an over-ethnic community<sup>43</sup>.

19 national minorities) as well as the wrong location of schools and the centres of culture of national minorities. The real needs of national minorities referring to the preparation of personnel speaking their languages are also unfulfilled. В.Б. Євтух, *Про національну ідею, етнічні меншини, міграції*, Київ 2000, р. 55.

<sup>41</sup> В. Котыгоренко, *Етнічні протиріччя і конфлікти в сучасній Україні. Політологічний концепт*, Київ 2004, р. 220.

<sup>42</sup> T. Olszański, *Trud niepodległości. Ukraina na przełomie tysiącleci*, Kraków 2003, р. 143.

<sup>43</sup> В. Нахманович, *op. cit.*, р. 95.

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