

## The Quality Management System of The State Language Proficiency Examination For Civil Servants: Baltic States Experience

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### Abstract

Use of the official state language in the public sector and in the civil service in particular became one of the main requirements in the Baltic states after gaining their independence. The present paper argues that the further development of language policy within the civil service domain is a rational response to the existing language challenges. This argument is supported by the comparative analysis within the Baltic states experience. In this article, we reflect upon the role of world language practices and assessments on the detailed requirements to the language proficiency level of civil servants and discuss standards' design, implementation, and appropriation issues that will challenge the field over the next few decades.

**Keywords:** Baltic states, civil servants, communicative competence, standards-based assessment, titular language, language proficiency.

### Introduction

This paper studies the evolution of the various levels of the quality assurance in the civil service and attempt to build language certification institutional system from the perspective of the existing opportunities for constructing its internal coherence, thus enhancing also its international dimension.

The objectives aim in this study consist in identifying the quality policies of the state language proficiency examination for civil servants and their implementation. We are attempting to offer an overview regarding the introduction and use of the language quality management instruments in public administration, as well as their convergence in Baltic states. The article argues that the language quality management can evolve due to using best language certification practices, which defines the overall direction of the process of building an elite corps of civil service. Being against the reluctance of the governmental institutions to alter the current format of the language certification, this process will inevitably lead to further convergence with approaches of international language certification centres. In this sense, internationalisation remains, perhaps, the only rational choice to meet the practical needs of the language policy in Baltic states.

The article consists of four parts accompanied by introduction and conclusion. Part 1 deal with language quality management in public administration. Part 2 provides the background on the study, focusing on the synergy of current language certification challenges and dominance of linguistic Russification. Part 3 provides insights into the policy formation and implementation process, revealing the drawbacks of the formal policy mode. Part 4 is devoted to the Baltic states experience, putting the need for synergy between the government and higher educational institutions at the core of the discussion. This part also provides case studies of practices within the language certification, implying that internationalisation is already an on-going process.

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## Quality assurance and language certification in public administration: theoretical approach

Spolsky (2009) defines language management as: "conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control [language]choices" (p. 1) and as: "the explicit and observable effort by someone or some group that has or claims authority over the participants in the domain to modify their practices or beliefs" (p. 4). But in his book the terms "language management," "language policy" and "language planning" are used interchangeably.

Practice-oriented studies within the global organisation has focused on the communicative practices of language clustering and thin communication in relation to trans-organisational knowledge sharing and networks (Charles, 2006; Marschan-Piekkari et al., 1999a). From this point of view language management means that new speech varieties and repertoires are adopted to fulfil certain "lingua franca functions" (Blommaert, 2003, p. 609), which has implications for language users whose organisational position and influences will be determined by their awareness of such codes (Tange, 2009, p. 222).

It should be noted that language management changes organisational information and communication systems, and that improving to internal knowledge flows, enhancing public employees to use discretionary power for maximising exchanges that request their use of official language.

The current study advances this stream of research by concentrating on managing language diversity and how diversity and dissimilarity measures affect public employees' attachment to employment in a multicultural public administration (Binderkrantz, 2011; Ritz, 2018)

Trying to incorporate the concept of Quality Management in our research it's useful to concentrate on it features (Zurga, 2008; Matei, 2011, p. 69): main goal is to acquire customer satisfaction; quality is defined by the customer; influence on all activities of the organization; customers are external; it closes the activities of control, but primarily involves the management of the entire organization; all are involved in its application; the participation is determined by conviction; methodology is particularly directed toward prevention; it aims to do the right things "from the beginning"; the responsibility and the involvement of everyone from organization.

But the use of excellence models and quality norms are only recommended and used on voluntary basis in many public administration systems, especially in Central and Eastern European countries. As far as the measuring of language certification quality is concerned, the current systems should be analyzed through the self-evaluation of test center based on the EFQM model, and the evaluation of stakeholders and examinee satisfaction should be based on various surveys organized at a national level, in order to know their needs better. But scholars pointed out that the introduction of self-assessment methodology and the organizational quality management systems have progressed to a certain extent, but the self-evaluation just begun to develop (Matei, 2011, p. 94). Therefore, the introduction of elements of quality management system in the case of state language proficiency examination for civil servants is determined by internal factors and, in general, closely related to administrative practices.

## In search of solutions to language certification challenges: discrepancies between idea and implementation

The role and impact of the administration are not always taken into account when analysing language policy. Most researchers explore the peculiarities of national identity, some shed a light on a mixture of language and ethnicity questions.

The situation with the use of the state language in the public sector in Baltic states on the eve of the collapse of the USSR was quite similar to that which developed in other soviet republics (see table 1).

**Table 1: Population of Baltic states according to the 1989 All-Union Census of Population (3 main ethnic groups dimension), Demoscope, own calculations**

Country	Ethnic group	Numbers	%
Lithuania	Lithuanians	2,924,251	79,6
	Russians	344,455	9,4
	Poles	257,994	7
Latvia	Latvians	1,387,757	52
	Russians	905,515	34
	Belarussians	119,702	4,5
Estonia	Estonians	963,281	61,5

	Russians	474,834	30,3
	Ukrainians	48,271	3,1

At the same time, the Russian language was considered to be the mother tongue for most Ukrainians and Belorussians (Kotyhorenko 2005, 51) in view of the consistent policy of Russification in the former soviet socialistic republics, in the framework of the Soviet course for “the rapprochement, and in fact the merger of socialist nations” (Dzuba 2011, 460) the Russian language dominated in all spheres of social life.

Moreover, Russian aggression in 2014 raised up the value of Ukrainian as the national language and created internal motives not only for civil society, but for the state institutions. Although this movement didn’t lead to a drastic change in language practice, all the more so because the state did not insist on the use of Ukrainian even in the public sector (Kulyk 2016).

However, we can see the opposite approach in the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania built their governmental bodies and security services almost from scratch. They chose to set up their own civil services, national armies and security services. At least, this guarantees that their civil servants, military forces and security agencies will not turn into the branches of similar Russian services, stuffed with the agents of the Kremlin’s influence. Obviously, the process was not easy as some recruited servants of the new governmental bodies lacked professionalism. Moreover, the linguistic situation differed in the attitudes of titular elites and masses toward their national language which was much more positive in the Baltic states, thus enabling more resolute and supportive policies. Similarity of the linguistic situations in the Baltic states at the end of the Soviet rule is much based not on the share of people declaring the titular language as native in censuses, but on the gap between linguistic and ethnonational identification resulting from the Soviet combination of ethnic primordialism and linguistic Russification (Onuch and Hale 2018, 101; Kulyk 2014).

### **Formation and implementation of language quality management system in civil service**

The issue of using the state language in the civil service became especially acute in the Baltic states after restitution of their independence in 1991. That was predetermined both by total russification of the public sector during the Soviet occupation and by the ethnic composition of the population (Hogan-Brun et. al. 2008: 67). Accordingly, the use of the state language in the public sector and in the civil service in particular turned into one of the main requirements in the Baltic states after gaining their independence because they “saw themselves as unitary states that were indeed multilingual (as they had always been) but as states in which the national language would be the language in which all essential social functions were to be conducted” (p. 81). Consequently, “knowledge of the state language became an important factor for the integration of ethnic minorities into a changing society” (p. 132). As a result, it was quite natural that the experience of implementation of the state language and the modern language policy in the field of the civil service in these states are extremely similar.

A QMS is based on processes (what should be done), procedures (how the process should be done) and working instructions (how procedures should be performed). When applied to the state language proficiency examination, the QMS will have to meet all ISO 9001 requirements, including documentation conditions. Some of the key components of a QMS include:

- a system that is repeatable, quantifiable and constantly improving
- documented information (such as procedures, working instructions, forms) in order to achieve the pre-defined quality
- external or internal revision to ensure compliance with requirements

One of the best-known standards which was implemented by many public bodies is ISO 9001:2015, Quality management systems – Requirements, which defines the set of requirements for a QMS to help institutions to be more efficient and improve their relations with business, civil societies and citizens.

The development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) is based on several objectives which are similar to quality management goals (Bärenfänger, O. 2008).

Both, and even more bodies of language learning standards, are certainly needed because standards must to a certain extent be customized for and calibrated to the local (i.e., national- or regional-level) language learning environment. From a practical perspective, standards may be used to regulate learning, and people and educators most certainly may want any language learning regulation to be at a more national or regional level (Cox, 2018).

First of all, the language issue was raised in the Baltic states laws on citizenship. Only Lithuania, where the majority of the population were ethnic Lithuanians, adopted a so-called zero option immediately after the collapse of the USSR in 1991 proclaiming all legitimate residents, excluding military, Committee for State Security (KGB) and other temporary units as citizens. However, in two next years the Government of the Republic of Lithuania passed a Resolution No. 314 “Concerning the qualification categories of the knowledge of the national language” (1992) and a Resolution No. 145 “Concerning article 12 on the citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian language and Lithuanian Constitution fundamentals examinations” (1993), introducing an examination in the Lithuanian language and the fundamentals of the Lithuanian Constitution as a mandatory condition for getting citizenship and language categorical examination for those who wanted to hold a particular job. Estonia and Latvia also proclaimed basic competence in Estonian and Latvian as one of the main requirements for the naturalization (Alien law of 1993, revised into the current version in 1995, in Estonia and Alien law of 1994 in Latvia). Accordingly, applicants for citizenship had to demonstrate “basic writing, reading and speaking level of competence” (p. 83).

Simultaneously the language legislation which had existed in times of USSR occupation was substantially revised, and new principles for language policy, which are relevant nowadays, were developed in the Baltic states. The main objective of the national language policy in the states, which was enunciated in each constitution and detailed in the language laws, is “to guarantee the status of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian as the only official language in each republic. Estonia’s was passed in 1995, Latvia’s in 1999 and Lithuania’s in 1995” (p. 103).

Introduction of a “systematic language certification for employment purposes” became an important provision of these laws and the accompanying legislative acts. The examinations procedures had “a common core: all those people who had not undergone an education in the respective national language (Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian), and who were employed in defined occupations, needed to demonstrate a level of knowledge of the national language appropriate to their level of employment. In Lithuania, this requirement targeted only those in the public sector; in Estonia and Latvia this requirement extended to all personnel in employment, public or private, who had contact with the public” (p. 85). In order to ensure state control over this certification state language offices were established in all the states. Researches admit that “the need to gain language certification was the most significant reason for those who had no proficiency in the national language to learn that language” (p. 85).

With the aim of evaluating a linguistic competence of civil servants all the states initially developed their own scales, which eventually proved to be quite similar. In Estonia before 2008 there was a three-level system of evaluation: beginner, intermediate and advanced. In Latvia from 1992 to 2000 a system of three levels of state language proficiency existed: the first (the lowest), the second and the third (the highest), which were divided into sublevels 1A and 1B, 2A and 2B, 3A and 3B from 2000 to 2009. In Lithuania three categories from the first (the lowest) to the third (the highest) were established in 1992, and they are still actual there. Various positions in the public sector required specific levels of knowledge of the state language. However, in November 2001 a European Union Council resolution recommended using the CEFR to set up systems of validation of language ability, and the Baltic states governments takes it as a base for their own systems of language proficiency assessment.

Nowadays the requirements for the Baltic states language proficiency as well as its assessment and testing are established by Estonian Language act of 23 February 2011, Latvian State language law of 21 December 1999 and the Republic of Lithuania Law on the state language No. I-779 of 31 January 1995, which proclaim an official status of the national language of each republic.

Therefore, in section 10 (1) of Estonian Language act it is determined that “the language of public administration in state agencies and local government authorities is Estonian”, and, according to section 23 (1), “officials and employees of state agencies and of local government authorities, as well as employees of legal people in public law and agencies thereof, members of legal people in public law, notaries, bailiffs <...> shall be able to understand and use Estonian at the level which is necessary to perform their service or employment duties” (Language act 2011). Almost the same provision can be met in section 6 of the Latvian State language law: “Employees of state and local government institutions, courts and institutions constituting the judicial system, state and local government undertakings” should be “fluent in and use the official language to the extent necessary for performance of their professional duties and duties of office” (State language law 1999). Article 6 of the Republic of Lithuania Law on the state language proclaims that among other institutions “heads, employees and officers of state and local government institutions providing services to the population <...> must know the state language according to the language knowledge categories, established by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania” (Law on the state language No. I-779, 1995).

The same requirements can be found in section 14 of the Estonian Public service act of 25 January 1995, in section 7 of the Latvian Law on the state civil service of 22 September 2000 and in article 9 of the Republic of Lithuania Law on public service No. VIII-1316 of 8 July 1999.

Furthermore, sections 24–27 of Estonian Language act also set out some basic requirements for the Estonian language proficiency examination and proclaim that the primary responsibility for its organization (providing preparation for the exam, developing tasks and forming their bank, issuing certificates of language proficiency, approving of examination commissions) is entrusted to Ministry of Education and Research and directly to its head, whereas in Latvian and Lithuanian legislation these aspects are established in a number of governmental regulations and resolutions.

The detailed requirements to the language proficiency level of civil servants, description of the structure and the procedure of the state language proficiency examination are established by regulation of the Ministry of Education and Research in Estonia, regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers in Latvia and resolutions of the Government in the Republic of Lithuania (see Table 2).

**Table 2 : The procedure of the state language proficiency examination in the Baltic states**

	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>
Title of the exam	Estonian language proficiency examination	State language proficiency testing (examination)	State language proficiency examination
Main legal acts	1. Language act of 23 February 2011. 2. Public service act of 25 January 1995. 3. Regulation of the Government of the Republic No. 105 “Estonian language and use requirements for civil servants, employees and sole proprietors” of 26 June 2008. 4. Ministry of Education and Research Regulation No. 24 “Organization and execution of Estonian language proficiency examinations” of 13 June 2011	1. State Language law of 21 December 1999. 2. Law on the state civil service of 22 September 2000. 3. Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 733 “The amount of state language knowledge and the procedure for testing the state language proficiency for performing professional and official duties, obtaining a permanent residence permit and obtaining the status of a long-term resident of the European Union, and a state fee for examining the state language proficiency” of 7 July 2009. 4. Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 289 “The state fee for the certification of the state language proficiency for professional and professional duties” of 22 August 2000	1. The Republic of Lithuania law on the state language No. I-779 of 31 January 1995. 2. The Republic of Lithuania law on public service No. VIII-1316 of 8 July 1999. 3. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania Resolution No. 1687 “On the approval of the procedure for the issuance of the state language and the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania basis examinations and certificates” of 24 December 2003. 4. The Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolution No. 1688 “Concerning the approbation and implementation of the categories of the state language knowledge” of 24 December 2003. 5. The Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania order No. ISAK-286 “On the organization and implementation of the examinations of the state language examination and the Constitutional basis of the republic of Lithuania” of 1 March 2004
Subjects	Language proficiency commissions of the Innove Foundation centers in Tallinn, Narva, Jõhvi and Tartu on the base of schools, gymnasiums, universities or education	State language skill examination commission of the National Centre for Education (Riga)	State language proficiency commissions of town or district municipalities, working in adult education centers, adult schools or other comprehensive schools

	centers		
Form of ownership	State	State	State
Financing	State	State	State
Control	National Examination and Qualification Centre (NEQC) of the Innove Foundation of the Ministry of Education and Research; Minister of Education and Research	The State Language Proficiency Testing Department of the National Centre for Education; Ministry of Education and Science	The State Language Department of the Teachers Professional Development Centre, National Centre of Examination subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science
Quality control	Language Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Research, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research, official conducting state or administrative supervision	National Centre for Education	Ministry of Education and Science, the state education supervision departments of county governors' administrations, education departments of municipal administrations, National Centre of Examination, the State Language Department of the Teachers Professional Development Centre,
Compliance with the requirements of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE Quality Label)	+ Foundation INNOVE (A2-C1)	-	+/- The Department of Lithuanian Studies at Vilnius University ALTE Full Member, but don't have the Q-Mark
Existing exceptions	Candidates, who acquired basic, upper secondary, vocational secondary, secondary specialized or higher education in Estonian (at least 60 % of the studies must be in Estonian)	Candidates, who have completed basic, secondary or higher education in accredited programs in the Latvian language; who have acquired an accredited minority education program and have passed the centralized examination in the Latvian language (minority education programs for the 9th grade) or the centralized examination in the Latvian language for the 12th grade, certified by the basic education certificate or the general secondary education certificate; who have state of health related functional restrictions or diagnoses mentioned in Annex 3 to the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 733 of 7 July 2009	Candidates, who have completed basic, secondary, higher education in the Lithuanian language; who have acquired secondary education in the Republic of Lithuania in the non-Lithuanian language in 1991 or later; graduated from Lithuanian gymnasiums or secondary schools; who passed the school / state examination of the mother tongue or the state language of Lithuania. Those, who, in accordance with the procedure established by the Republic of Lithuania law on the legal status of occupations (Official Gazette No. 66-1609, 1997), were victims of occupations from 1939–1990, as victims of occupations, do not apply the state language category for one year after their return to the Republic of Lithuania
Coast of examination session	Free	State fee	State fee

All the Baltic states language legislation proclaims the only state form of the language proficiency examination and provides state funding for institutions that deal with the development of tasks and recommendations for the preparation, as well as with organization, carrying out and assessment of testing. Furthermore, passing the examination is free in Estonia, while there is a minor state fee with a number of privileges in Latvia and Lithuania. Also in Estonia individuals who have passed the Estonian language proficiency examination and have been issued the certificate are reimbursed for the costs of language learning to the extent established by the Government of the Republic (see <http://www.innove.ee/en/language-examination>).

In all the states the subjects directly involved in taking the exam and verifying its results are state language proficiency commissions which work on the basis either of special educational and testing centers (Estonia, Latvia) or secondary and higher educational institutions (Lithuania). The commissions include employees of these institutions who are required to have a higher philological or pedagogical education, and their candidacies are approved by the Minister of Education and Research in Estonia, the head of the National Centre for Education in Latvia and the head of the National Centre of Examination in Lithuania.

Control over the activities of these commissions is carried out by the National Examination and Qualification Centre of the Foundation Innove in Estonia, the State Language Proficiency Testing Department of the National Centre for Education and the Ministry of Education and Science in Latvia and the State Language Department of the Teachers Professional Development Centre and the National Centre of Examination in Lithuania. The whole information on the official language examinations organized by the institutions and tests sample are available on their web-sites. The duties and powers of all the organizations are similar, and they all work under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Science of each country. Representatives of these organizations can attend the exam without prior warning, checking the competence of both the examinees and the examiners. Moreover, the Lithuanian Teachers Professional Development Centre organizes qualification improvement events for the members of the state language proficiency commissions.

It is also noteworthy that all the controlling bodies are members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), and they conduct the development of examinations tasks and requirements for linguistic competence according to its recommendations. But only Estonian testing institution became ALTE Members. Foundation Innove undergo a strict ALTE audit of A2-C1 qualifications and success in an audit results in a Q-Mark being awarded for those qualifications. Thus, in Estonia language proficiency examination is available on four levels, which correspond to the CEFR (A2, B1, B2, C1) (section 5 of the Amendment act to the Language act of 8 February 2007). In Latvia according to the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 733 of 7 July 2009 the scope of the official language knowledge is divided into three proficiency levels: A, B and C, and each of them has two degrees—the lowest first and the highest second. In Lithuania three state language knowledge qualification categories have been confirmed in the Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolution No. 1687 of 24 December 2003. According to it these categories correspond to A2, B1 and B2 levels of the CEFR. The C-level in Lithuanian state language proficiency examination does not exist.

A certain level of the Baltic languages is required to get a job in different civil services. In Estonia these requirements for various civil servants are described in the Regulation of the Government of the Republic No. 105 of 26 June 2008. According to it, language proficiency at B1 and B2 levels is required of civil servants, whose duties may be related to administration and management of subunits or the compiling of documents, and C1-level is required of civil servants, whose duties are management of departments, planning and coordination of their activities or providing consultation and the preparation of public speeches and text of official correspondence. As for C2, in Estonia positions requiring the linguistic competence at this level are not legally defined.

In Latvia the requirements to the language proficiency of civil servants are higher than in Estonia. According to the Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 733 of 7 July 2009, C1 is compulsory for members of the municipal governments, deputies of the municipal government of the region, the governors / presidents of the councils, membership of the councils, budget unit managers, employment departments managers, etc., and C2 is necessary for the representatives of the highest public administration authorities and their units.

In Lithuania according to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolution No. 1688 of 24 December 2003 those state servants “whose posts are classified in grades B and C need to have the second category if they are required to communicate with the people on a regular basis and / or fill in papers” (Resolution No. 1688, 2003). And “the third category of the state language shall be applied to heads of state and municipal institutions, bodies, enterprises and organizations, civil servants whose posts are assigned to A-grade<sup>1</sup>” (Resolution No. 1688, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> According to The Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolution No. 693A “The approval of the description and assessment methodology of state civil service representatives and on the functions of the state

The list of categories of citizens who do not need to pass the language proficiency examinations is also almost identical in the Baltic states (see Table 1). The main general requirement is completed basic, secondary or higher education in accredited programs in the state and passing the centralized examination in it.

The main requirements to the structure of the language proficiency examination in the Baltic states are slightly different and quite similar to the patterns of Cambridge examinations, IELTS and TOEFL. The examination indicates abilities of examinees to understand the information they read or listen to, to write texts of different styles and genres, to be fluent in different communicative situations. The tasks aim to reflect everyday professional situations as close as possible. Their detailed description is given in the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research regulation No. 24 of 13 June 2011, Latvian Cabinet of Ministers regulation No. 733 of 7 July 2009, The Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolution No. 1688 of 24 December 2003 and The Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania order No. ISAK-286 of 1 March 2004.

The examinations are divided into two parts – written and oral. In Estonia and Latvia written part consists of reading, listening and writing sections, and in Lithuania there are also use of the language tasks added, as well as in some Cambridge examinations. Accordingly, in Estonian and Latvian versions of the examination each part gives a maximum of 25 % of the final result, while in Lithuanian it is 20 %, and any part must not be 0 points. The test is passed if at least 60 % of total points is achieved in Estonia, 50 % in Latvia and 55 % (with at least 50 % of each part) in Lithuania. Furthermore, in Estonia candidates who fail to meet the minimum threshold of 35 % of maximum points cannot retake the test until 6 months after their last test.

In Latvia, if a person does not pass the examination, his or her higher level of proficiency in the state language may be reviewed no earlier than 3 months after the last check. And if it is determined that during the inspection a person has performed unlawful acts within the meaning of the Code of administrative offenses, the National Centre for Education shall not issue a state language proficiency certificate to the examinee and cancel the results of the testing. In this case, the person may repeat the test no earlier than 6 months after the inspection. If a candidate refuses to take some part of the examination (listening, reading, writing or speaking skills) or performs unlawful acts, his or her state language proficiency is not assessed.

In each state types of the tasks, their amount, complexity and duration of carrying out vary according to the different levels. Typical tasks for B1–C2 levels are:

1. *Writing* — 1) private or official letter, e-mail, summary, based on the source data (e.g. diagrams, photographs, maps, schemes, etc.); 2) essay, review, article, report.

2. *Listening* — monologues and dialogues with multiple choice, true/false, gap-filling, cloze, matching and open questions.

3. *Reading* — multiple choice (complete the sentence or choose the right answer to the question), matching (paragraphs to headings, texts to their annotations or topics), gap-filling, true/false, cloze and open questions.

4. *Use of Language* (only for Lithuania) — gap-filling with right personal / impersonal verb forms, words buildings and transformation tasks.

5. *Speaking* — 1) general introductory interview; 2) short presentation on a topic related to the field of work or conducting a conversation with the examiner according to the given plan; 3) discussion on some topic using topic and argument cards; describing pictures and answering related questions. Speaking section is a conversation between an examiner and one (Latvia, Lithuania) or two (Estonia) examinees. The examiner takes the examination, strictly basing on instructions. The conversation is recorded, and each examination is assessed independently by two evaluators.

The highest levels of the testing require knowledge of the specific vocabulary because reading tasks base on public information about institutions and enterprises, texts of manuals, information about services or products, reviews, fiction, newspapers and magazines articles or popular science articles, listening section needs understanding lectures, presentations, business conversations, and speaking tasks include topics related to the examinee's field of work.

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service management” of 19 June 2000, there are three grades of civil servants: A, in which the necessary obligations of the position require a higher university or equivalent education, B, in which the necessary obligations of the position require a higher education or equivalent (specialized secondary education — technical schools) and C, in which the necessary obligations require at least secondary education and vocational qualification.



Results of the examinations shall be announced to the candidates not later than within 3 working days after the testing in Lithuania, within 15 working days in Latvia and within 30 working days in Estonia, and can be appealed if a person is not satisfied with them. The received certificate has no limitations on its validity period. Furthermore, language proficiency certificates issued before each state brought the national assessment system into conformity with CEFR are not replaced, nor it is required to re-take the examination.

A notable peculiarity of the Baltic states language legislation is that their state language proficiency examinations perform a dual function: they do not only testify the level of an employee's linguistic competence but also allow to confirm the level of language proficiency which is necessary to apply for citizenship. In Estonia a minimum level of B1 is required for the naturalization procedure, in Latvia and Lithuania it is A2 (first category).

In all the Baltic states "the period of most extensive testing occurred from the early to the mid-1990s when over 200,000 tests were taken and passed in Estonia, more than twice as many in Latvia and about 25,000 in Lithuania" (Hogan-Brun *et. al.* 2008: 128). In the 2000s this numbers has decreased significantly. For instance, in 2016 only 5,200 people in Estonia and only 4,790 people in Latvia took the state language proficiency examination (see statistics of the Innove Foundation at <http://www.innove.ee/et/eesti-keele-tasemeeksamid/tasemeeksamite-statistika-ja-analysid> and of the Latvian National Centre for Education at [http://visc.gov.lv/valval/dokumenti/2016\\_statistika.pdf](http://visc.gov.lv/valval/dokumenti/2016_statistika.pdf)). In our opinion, these data confirm the effectiveness of language policy and coverage of a great number of people wishing to apply for citizenship and employees by language proficiency testing in the Baltic states.

### **Conclusions and suggestions for further research**

The Baltic countries restoration of independence and the historic separation from the Soviet Union have found logical imprint on the language legislation which was substantially revised during the first years of rebirth, and new principles for language policy such as "systematic language certification for employment purposes" were incorporated. The Baltic states societies considered the "Russification" program as an instrument of introducing official "language of occupation", which would hinder the possible process of reconciliation.

Period of soviet occupation gave a "Carte Blanche" for Baltic state governments for used more hard ("sticks") than soft ("carrots") language policies by setting requirements, practicing control and letting the solutions come from the civil society organisations. Ruling elites and citizens were mostly agreed on the language policy balance between minority rights and the ensuring of social stability. Attitudes of titular elites and civic activists toward their national language were positive, thus enabling more complex language certification policies in civil service.

Regarding theoretical background the QMS of the state language proficiency examination is intended to an integrative element which brings together aspects of the public institution, the civil society and customer language identification, integrating civil servants (skills, roles and responsibilities), processes (workflow, interactions), state regulatory requirements, technology, risks and opportunities, with the main purpose of delivering the best language proficiency.

It is necessary that the process of planning certification and control are carried out in a centralized fashion by a single state institution. As a minimum, such a center must take care of the tasks preparation and the development of clear criteria for their evaluation, send tasks through secure communications to the licensed higher educational institutions that carry out only representative and organizational functions, and verify the work performed. In some cases trying to implement a strict language policy, it was useful to open additional positions of special language inspectors with authority to demand administrative fines.

Regarding the improvement and unification of the certification evaluation methodology: the authors of the international IELTS, TOEFL and Cambridge examinations (BEC, FCE, CAE, etc.) offer a qualitative solution to this issue, in which the evaluation method clearly specifies the language competencies for each level of English language proficiency. In general, the basis for ranking the language and communicative competence of civil servants has been taken from the CEFR. Nowadays only Estonian testing institution has received the ALTE Q-mark which show that their exams have meet all the core requirements of ALTE's 17 quality standards. But those standards are not fully cover the evaluation of stakeholders and examinee satisfaction. It was found that communication procedures haven't enough feedback instruments and mostly build on providing information to stakeholders and examinee.

Also, convergence of the certification evaluation methodology implies the existence of common structures or similar structures to implement language certification in Baltic states public institutions and implicitly in implementing the elements of quality management, but self-evaluation practices are only starting to be implemented.

Suggestions for future research include a study of implementation the quality management tools in all central and local institutions of public administration, an examination of communication between native- and second-language speakers. One might also consider a sociolinguistic mapping of an public institutions, identifying relevant speech communities and assessing to what extent social interaction and knowledge-sharing are affected by the use of a second language.

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