

# German Language and German Minority

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## Abstract

Nowadays, a German minority in the Czech Republic accounts for only fraction of its once numerous representation. According to the census, the minority amounts to 18,772 members; only very few of them maintain a German language at the level of a native language. According to the latest census, none of the municipalities registers at least 10% of Germans, which would grant this minority some benefits anchored in Czech legal system, such as using the language in communication with the authorities or establishing bilingual names of municipalities. The paper herein examines the attitudes of citizens in the cities in Krušné Hory (Ore Mountains) in Karlovy Vary region vis-à-vis such activities. In three of them which were selected - Abertamy, Pernink, and Horní Blatná – the share of 10% was, actually, exceeded in the years 2001-2011. Yet, the minority there never claimed such rights. The research is both qualitative and quantitative and, besides a questionnaire research, it also contains interviews with the persons of German nationality.

## Keywords

German minority, minority, Germany, minority policy.

## Introduction

In total 39,106 persons claimed German nationality in the census of 2001; at the time this represented the third most numerous ethnic minority in the Czech Republic (currently, such a figure is “declaratory;” a citizen himself declares his nationality in a census form based on his own resolution). From a long-term perspective – from the post-war transfer – the number of persons of German nationality has steadily declined, primarily owing to their adverse age structure, but also due to a migration (Götze 1999). Between two censuses from the years 1991 and 2001 the number of persons of German nationality dropped by 9.5 thousand persons, i.e. approximately by one fifth. Out of the total number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic the persons of German nationality represented only four tenths percent.

According to the latest census held in 2011 there are 18,772 inhabitants claiming German nationality and residing in the Czech Republic, which equals the share of 0.2 percent out of the entire number of inhabitants of the Czech Republic. Most of them inhabit an area around German borders, in

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Karlovy Vary region (4,504) and Ústí region (4,230).<sup>2</sup> German minority thus experienced another perceptible decline in its members and is no longer the third most numerous ethnic minority in the Czech Republic. The minority *de facto* undergoes a sort of socio-demographic retirement; such steeply declining numbers of its members may not be replaced or halted, considering absent ethnic intelligence and members of a younger generation, and no “solution” may come with the arrival of the so-called new Germans, i.e. Germans moving to the Czech Republic after the year 1989. They are too few (and frequently do not have Czech citizenship) to stop the decline. Furthermore, they very often disagree upon a fundamental view of the real world as well as the significance to join the organizations of minorities, or how to frame their activities there, what should be the priorities of activities, and so on.

This is the primary impulse why to treat this ethnic group with the largest decrease in its members in the study herein. Yet as will be shown further down, there are more such motivations. Simultaneously, each new generation displays a rapid decrease in the knowledge of German language. Nowadays, specialists-linguists state that if at all there exists German language at the level of mother tongue it only concerns the oldest generation which had always lived on a relatively compact territory. And besides, this most frequently involves not a standard language/Hochdeutsch, but diverse forms of dialects with clearly archaistic structures. Assimilation impacts also played a role and the quality of German – a mother tongue of these speakers – considerably deteriorated as it was not used in public to the extent deserved by a “living language.”

*Number of Germans in Czechoslovakia (ČSR) and the Czech Republic (ČR) (1950-2011)*

Year	1950	1961	1970	1980	1991	2001	2011
Number of Germans in ČSR/ČR	159 938	134 143	80 903	58 211	48 556	39 106	18 772
% of population	1.8	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2

Source: ČSÚ (Czech Statistical Office) 1950-2011.

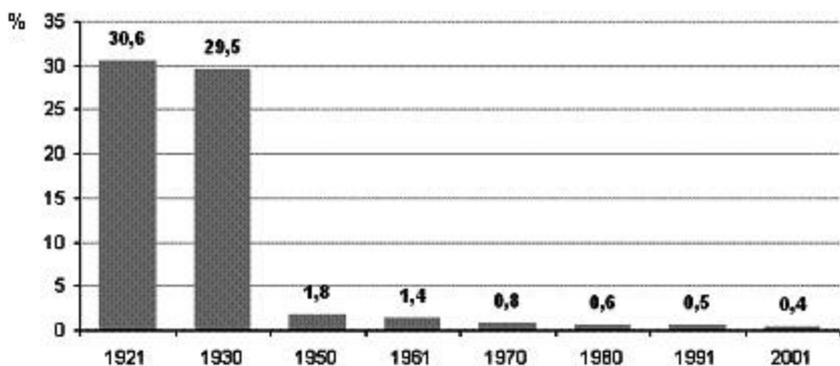
The paper herein will show a significant role a language used to play and still is playing in the life of a German minority in the Czech Republic. We will focus on the areas of a language usage itself, then on the possibilities of education for the members of ethnic minorities, and the last part will comprise a case study in which we will rather retrospectively centre on the Germans in three selected municipalities in Karlovy Vary region; based on the outcomes of census not from the year 2011, but 2001 a German minority exhibited a share exceeding 10% there. Thus a legal entitlement would arise to using a mother tongue in public discourse, bilingual names of

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.czso.cz/csu/2012edicniplan.nsf/kapitola/03000-12-n\\_2012-00](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2012edicniplan.nsf/kapitola/03000-12-n_2012-00) [18.8.2015]

municipalities, or an establishment of committees for ethnic minorities. It holds that in the municipalities inhabited by the members of ethnic minorities the name of a municipality, its parts, streets and other public premises and indication of the buildings of public bodies and local self-government units must also be inserted in the language of ethnic minority, provided in the latest census the minimum of 10% of citizens of such a municipality claimed this nationality and the representatives of a corresponding ethnic minority file such a request via the committee for ethnic minorities (§ 117 para 3) and it approves their proposal in its resolution. So far in the Czech Republic this has only been the case in Czech-Polish bilingualism in Těšín area.

As of the year 1989, a German minority has never applied for this arrangement despite an emergence of debates in Abertamy, amidst Germans as well, whether to implement bilingual inscriptions or not. This in any case embodies one of the few research problems occurring in regards to Czech Germans, language and policy. Let us add what on one hand is not relevant for Czech Germans any more, yet will soon be instituted in Czech legislation: an amended law on nationalities counts with a new obligation to enter inscriptions in the language of an ethnic minority also in such cases when a request was filed by an association representing the interests of a minority. This should guarantee a relation of an association towards a municipality and should prevent a teleological creation of associations. Another novelty would be an obligation of bilingual inscriptions in such a case when at least ten percent of citizens of ethnic minority resided in the municipality according to the last two censuses. This should accentuate an aspect of permanent settlement of ethnic minority on the territory of a municipality (Deník 13.6.2015).

*Graph 1: German nationality in ČSR/ČSSR/ČR according to % of the share of inhabitants*



Source: ČSÚ (the Czech Statistical Office)

We will attempt to discover why this German minority has never filed such a request, what was the main argumentation of the Germans inhabiting such municipalities, and whether a political dimension could have possibly played its role. The study will draw on the hypothesis that a language is for

this nationality no longer an *ingroup*- means and a minority transforms into the minority which may not reckon on the knowledge of German in a considerable part of its members. Such a hypothesis emerged in spite of the outcomes of census which do not manifest a large difference between the number of the members of minority and the number of those labelling German as their mother tongue. The difference is rather insignificant so we could determine from it that the hypothesis should not be valid and Czech Germans claim their mother tongue. However, on the other hand we should take into account that an indication of nationality as well as mother tongue in census forms is optional and is not subjected to any factual re-examination as far as their accuracy is concerned. The author supposes that here has been a long-term factual (not statistical) discrepancy between both data and he will seek to support this performing a research inquiry in the form of qualitative questioning amid Germans themselves (also see Fürst 2002, p. 35-42). He himself knows a few members of minority, including their officials, who claim a German nationality, yet they do not speak German at the level of a native speaker.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Approaches**

Language and identity are clearly closely interlinked. In ethnic minorities, identification through a language occurs quite intensively, in particular in case of autochthonic minorities with strong “mother” countries (Fishman 1972). Such an intensity may be due to the size of a given country, expansiveness of its (cultural, language) policies, or ties of a settlement structure of a given minority with its “home” country. In case of a German minority, such criteria are de facto fully met and even further reinforced by an active interference of a variety of cultural institutions of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as an influence of German media and concrete financial or any other support granted to a minority by a German state and other institutions. Language was a strong *ingroup* element particularly at the time when a German minority counted large numbers and was politically strong - in the era of the first republic, and it was further solidified by an existence of minority’s own education, political parties, the so-called defence organizations for language and culture, and so on (Smelser 1975). Such a situation, however, greatly changed after the transfer of a significant majority of German population upon the end of WWII (Houžvička 2015; Luza 1964). At the present time, only a small fraction of the former number of Germans lives in the Czech Republic and in comparison with the period preceding their transfer is the quantity and quality of their own cultural, language, and media production quite insignificant (Novotný 2004).

A wide range of authors even nowadays speak of the language as the main feature of ethnicity (Norton 2013). From this point of view we then ask questions such as: what makes the language so valuable? Why should we strive to hinder or halt ethnic or language assimilations? When can we speak of “natural will of ethnicity to being itself” and where does an artificial construct – “ethnic engineering” start? Such questions are especially relevant for our current times which a German sociologist Ulrich Beck calls

glocalization (Beck 2000). He interprets it as merger of globalization and localization which may be well describable on the case of ethnic minorities. On one hand we speak of globalization as we are witnessing that states spend fairly big financial means to support the activities of their own autochthonic ethnic minorities (with the Czech Republic as above-average in supporting its 11 nationalities). On the other hand, the very aspects of today's everyday life, particularly in economic as well as cultural areas, entail wiping out of regional, national and, naturally, ethnic specificities as well. In the cultural area we label it as McDonaldization of society and in the national sphere as weakening of the state power at the expense of international organizations (as, for example, visible on the case of europeanization) (Ritzer 1993). Localization embodies certain logical implications of globalization attempts and is linked with the need to reach (in our case ethnic) demarcation and anchorage. It is apparent in this context that ethnic awareness works as a certain response to internationalism; it is neither an atavistic residue nor potentially a source of xenophobia nor meaningless waste of energy, but a reinforcing element of identity (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos 2011).

Language and culture are interconnected; besides, linguistic terminology is culturally conditioned and comprehensible due to its collective dimension (Fong, Chuang 2003). It thus applies that language is culture remodelled into words. In case of a German minority we may notice that its language represents quite a different form of German language in comparison to the Germans from a compact German-speaking territory. This is quite logical as a political and cultural development of German minority, standardized under communism and weakened in its numbers, followed completely different directions (Staněk 1993; von Arburg, Staněk 2011). Language is a part of cultural identity and cultural identity is a certain guarantee of each individual against a solitary life. The loss of language and cultural identity conduces mental instability which eventually contributes to instability in other areas, including a political identity (Jenkins 1997; Alexander, Ron 2004).

We should bear in mind that language determines a person and thus may serve as a tool of supremacy over a human being. The loss of a language implies adoption of another language and thus another cultural norm as well. Dissemination of one's own language also within another national territory as well as the support of those adopting it are legitimate demands of any language community, provided they do not infringe on ethnic right of others (Pelinka 2007). Language policy constitutes not only a cultural policy, but also forms a certain ingredient of domestic policy, foreign policy, as well as economic policy. Support of the languages of minorities is support of minorities themselves and follows complex development of such groups.

Accordingly, several findings relate to a German minority. Firstly, we may see that despite constant financial support from the Czech Republic as well as Germany the attempts have failed to maintain the numbers of minority and keep its German language as a mother tongue. Naturally, this has been caused by a demographic fall in the members of minority which relentlessly heads for extinction of minority (Novotný 2006). The minority has been vanishing and logically its language as well, or its form embraced by the citizens of

German nationality themselves. Regardless of how generous a minority policy is it is still impossible to reverse the trends initiated with intense discrimination of the citizens of German nationality under communism (Staněk 1998). Secondly, we may perceive that specific manifestations of a language in the form of preserved cultural values exhibit a strong archaistic character and do not indicate a longer viability. What is frequently spread are several decades old dances, songs, or other customs which evolve and adapt to the present only to a small extent (Kreisslová 2013). They do not even adapt from the perspective of a generational transfer when a younger generation which might adopt them is missing (Novotný 2013). Thirdly, any transfer inflicts quite an essential problem involving the absence of ethnic intelligence. This one is logical as generally a younger generation is missing. This furthermore complicates an ability of minorities to survive. Fourthly, we may detect relatively large deficits in the area of representation of the unions of Germans. They do hold a conforming position as the state financially supports language education as well as cultural activities; nevertheless, the minority is not strong enough to be able to mould such cultural values and consequently maintain them. This may be well demonstrated on the case of media production when until the year 2005 the minority had two newspapers released bi-weekly, while nowadays it only has one monthly journal available.

In view of methodological approach the paper herein draws on two researches. First, a questionnaire research was performed in three municipalities in Krušné Hory in the former district of Karlovy Vary. The research was held from March to May of this year. It involved the municipalities of Abertamy, Horní Blatná and Pernink, located relatively close to the ridge of Krušné Hory. 80% of all the questionnaires were collected in them; the remaining respondents came from a very nearby vicinity lined by Nejdek and state borders. They represent mountainous municipalities with a higher share of German-speaking population. Abertamy, Pernink as well as Horní Blatná belong to the 18 municipalities where the share of minority exceeded 10% according to the census of 2001. In the next 117 municipalities a German nationality shared in the total number of ten or more percent of nationalities, required for an establishment of the Committee for nationalities (Maškarinec 2015). According to the census of 2011, in none of the municipalities the number of persons claiming German nationality reached 10% of all the local inhabitants, which clearly demonstrated high mortality rate and partly also natural assimilation in case of this minority.

*Tab. 1: Numbers of Germans according to the census in observed municipalities*

	2001			2011		
	popul. /total	number of Germans	% of Germans	popul. /total	number of Germans	% of Germans
Abertamy	1197	174	14.61	1263	90	7.42
Horní Blatná	468	73	15.59	474	35	7.38
Pernink	904	114	12.61	722	46	6.37

Source: ČSÚ

In total 420 persons were approached via the questionnaire consisting of 5 questions. The selection was quota-based in regards to age, gender, and education. 260 of them came from Abertamy, 85 from Pernink, and 75 from Horní Blatná. There were 240 women, which accounted for 57%, the others were men. An average age of respondents was 52 years. This research did not aim to acquire information regarding a nationality of respondents, which would probably render the provision of completed questionnaires more difficult. On the contrary, the research sought to detect what stance the citizens would assume if their municipalities have suddenly introduced bilingual inscriptions, both in Czech and German. Certainly, the respondents were asked questions about the current state of Czech-German relations and their sentiment vis-à-vis other nationalities. The data were collected and subsequently processed with the help of students at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem (UJEP).

The second part of the research entailed a qualitative questioning amidst the citizens of German nationality in these three observed municipalities. The interviews were placed within a broader context of recognizing the attitudes of the citizens of German nationality towards their cultural life. One of the topics also targeted the question of introducing a German language into public offices or public space. The questions coincided with individual questions from a questionnaire research, and thus a standardization of research was secured. There were 10 interviews with the persons who in 7 cases were already of retirement age. The remaining 3 persons were over 50 years old. Men and women were equally represented. Some core passages from the interviews will also be incorporated into the study herein. Also this research was performed in cooperation with UJEP students, including an analysis of acquired data.

### **Support of German Minority**

The Czech Republic has the legislation of quite a high quality vis-à-vis nationalities and also participates in an international protection of minority rights (Petraš 2012). For the sake of illustration we may mention the European charter of regional and minority languages (ratified by the Czech Republic in 2006) and the Framework convention about the protection of

national minorities (ratified by the Czech Republic in 1995). These are significant determinants of Czech minority policy and may nowadays be regarded as signs of an internationalisation of minority rights. In general, we may observe a relatively conservative approach towards the Germans, when the weakening numbers of the group do not lower in any significant way the support from a Czech or German state. According to the last census of 2011 the group consists of fewer than 20,000 persons, which is a demographic decline with no parallel in Czech history. And yet, a German minority has received a long-term guarantee of the activities of its organizations; it gains support primarily in the area of spreading culture, traditions, and language. The financial means, however, are not drawn from corresponding ministry departments only (in particular department of education and culture); German associations also cooperate with a variety of institutions and foundations – naturally mainly in Germany. Let us name, for instance, Goethe - Institut and Institute for International Relations (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen – ifa), which play an important role particularly in the modernization of minority activities; they offer various supportive educational programmes and view their financial and material support as a certain historical responsibility (Novotný 2005).

Support of German minorities in Central Europe has for a long time embodied a prominent topic in the Federal Republic of Germany; this support brings sizeable benefits to Czech Germans, unlike other minorities who may not count on such sophisticated cultural-political institutions. Another issue is whether the minority itself sufficiently exploits such possibilities, experience, and resources it could gain for its activities.

Another remark is worth mentioning - it refers to an institutional support of activities, running of management and dealings of a patronizing Assembly of Germans in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia; this support is furnished from public resources of the Federal Republic and passes through the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Prague. It grants this organization, which represents the main negotiator and representative of the needs of citizens of a German nationality in relation to a Czech state, substantial financial security. Through projects and grant requests a Czech state endeavours to back up activities of individual regional unions of Germans as well as another association of minority - Cultural Association of German Nationality Citizens. Similarly, there are possibilities to draw financial support for various activities within the regions, municipal councils, or city halls (among many, see Balvín 2000). None of this support is claim-based and automatic and must be applied for in regular invitations to a tender. However, we have to assert that unions of a German minority do not sufficiently draw the financial resources – only to a minimum extent in proportion to their numbers. This constitutes a longstanding problem observable in other national minorities as well. This is particularly apparent in comparisons with financial support of activities of other minorities, primarily the Roma and the Poles. Their associations also rather neglect a project management, which relates to the aforementioned absence of human resources able to devise, draft and then do accounts of the approved projects.

In their approach to a German minority, the corresponding Czech ministries embrace an equal treatment; they do not discriminate against Czech Germans. When re-visiting the history of post-war Czechoslovakia - for many years Germans in legal terms did not exist, not to mention to be respected - this truly is a unique condition. Even nowadays a German minority is struggling to come to terms with the consequences of post-war forced expatriation and assimilation policy of communist regime, which greatly determine its survival. Heterogeneous nature of the representation of German minority poses a problem as well. The Government Council of the Czech Republic for nationalities as an advisory body of the Office of the Government is aware of this fragmentation in associations and thus the members of this body are representatives of the Assembly of Germans as well as of the Cultural Association. Thus both associations are represented in the body which was in particular useful in the 1990s when they did not communicate much and encountered a number of insurmountable differences. Recently we have rather experienced convergence between these two associations of Czech Germans, which may be deemed as praiseworthy considering current socio-demographic trends of the minority itself (Novotný 2013).

Nowadays, a German minority is supported with diverse projects of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports and in its media activities as well. Endorsed by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, a monthly *LandesEcho* has been coming out. In the past two by-weeklies used to be published - *Prager Volkszeitung* and *Landeszeitung*. The Czech Republic as well as the Federal Republic of Germany committed to support the minority when signing the Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and Czech and Slovak Federal Republic on good relations and friendly cooperation. Its point 20 addresses a German minority in the Czech Republic. Germany particularly supports the activities of 15 meeting centres. A number of cultural or other agreements were concluded in the following years, reinforcing the position of Germans.

### **German Minority and German Language**

A language situation of a German minority in the Czech Republic to a large extent reflects adverse historical development it had been affected by in the past. From the end of the WWII and a forced expatriation of the majority of German-speaking population, the group of the Germans who stayed has undergone a language transformation of far-reaching significance. As a result of post-war stigmatization of German language, its exclusion from public sphere, and subsequent assimilation policies of a communist regime, a native language of such individuals found very little use outside their community or recognition and a larger part of the members of a given community have throughout several decades turned into being monolingual (Novotný 2006). Various language competences may be detected among the speakers across individual generations. The oldest members of a German minority grew up in the pre-war and war period when a German language enjoyed dominant position in all the spheres of a social life and became fully integrated into

their language and ethnic identity (Novotný 2013). Local dialects usually carry identification function in such cases; they assume a position of the native language and their users attribute a large emotional value to them. In the Czech lands such dialects may be classified into five basic categories: Middle Bavarian, North Bavarian, East Franconian, Upper Saxon, and Silesian dialect areas. The key activity of the unions of Germans has been the very support of German language education.

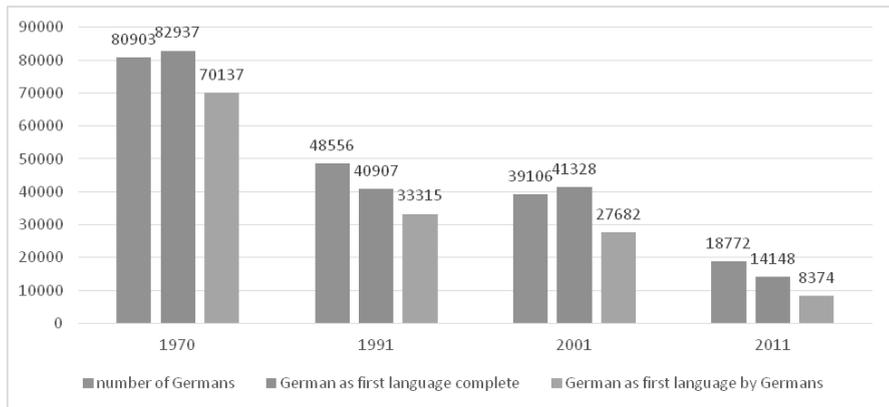
German language also assisted a construction of collective identity of this community – i.e. identification with one's own ethnic group, realization of one's own uniqueness, as well as differences with other groups. This identity-forming process thus contains an important moment of a group determination between “us” and “them” – “ingroup” and “outgroup.” In our case this generation defined itself through the language against a Czech majority society, which it associated with negatively earned experience from the post-war period, which could have strengthened the sense of belonging to German language and identity. It remained resistant to the environment of different ethnicity, unlike the succeeding generations which in the environment of a symbolic supremacy of language and culture of a Czech majority began to produce a discourse of bi – lingual and ethnic identity or assimilation (Bourdieu 2000).

According to the latest census of 2011, which defined the mother tongue as a language used in communication with a given person in the childhood by his/her mother or a person who had raised him/her, one fourth of the respondents of German nationality specified a Czech language as their mother tongue and 27% of persons a combination of German and Czech language.<sup>3</sup> Earlier researches had already alluded to a deflection from a German mother tongue. For instance, social researches held in the year 1970 in the area of North Bohemia concluded that 92% of Germans consider German to be their mother tongue; in 1987 there was a decline to 65.5% - with the oldest generation most contributing to such a result (Novotný 2002, p. 256). A German minority may thus be regarded as an endangered language community. In the current discourse of language ecology such groups are perceived as important integral parts of cultural wealth of humankind and language diversity as an asset and our goal should be to fight for its preservation (Šatava 2009, p. 46).

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<sup>3</sup> Census of people, houses, and flats 2011, ČSÚ.

Graph 2: Germans in the census in ratio to their mother tongue German



Source: ČSÚ

The first success came with the opening of a special class with extended teaching of German at the elementary school in Český Krumlov in the school year of 1991-1992. Among other things, the Union of Germans became involved in financing a teacher of German language. Such an activity did not last long, though and in three years came to an end. In 1991 a Czech-German education was launched at the private Elementary School of German-Czech Understanding in Prague, set up by the Union of Germans in the region of Prague and Central Bohemia; currently carried by the Assembly of Germans (Novotný 2014). Thus a resolution has been fulfilled regarding an establishment of classes in German language from the first grade; besides, as of the year 2004 the school has been offering pre-school preparatory year as well.<sup>4</sup> In 1995 the Thomas Mann Grammar School was founded as a continuation to the school. The grammar school provides a possibility of general education with extended courses of German language (including a possibility to attain Deutsches Sprachdiplom II) and teaching of individual special courses partly in German.<sup>5</sup> Of course, there is a wide range of other private school institutions offering bilingual Czech-German education outside the workings of the unions of a German minority. A variety of projects emerges within Czech-German/Austrian cooperation covering the pre-school education onwards, particularly in the areas alongside the border as well as on the territory of neighbouring countries. Let us name an example from the area of the observed regions – for instance, bilingual Czech-German studies at the Friedrich Schiller Grammar School in Pirna, commencing its education in 1998 on the basis of an international agreement concluded between the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports and the Ministry of Cult of a Free State of Saxony.

<sup>4</sup> See *Landeszeitung* 2. 11. 2010.

<sup>5</sup> See 2004. *Yearbook of the Assembly of Germans in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia*. Prague 2004, p. 35–38.

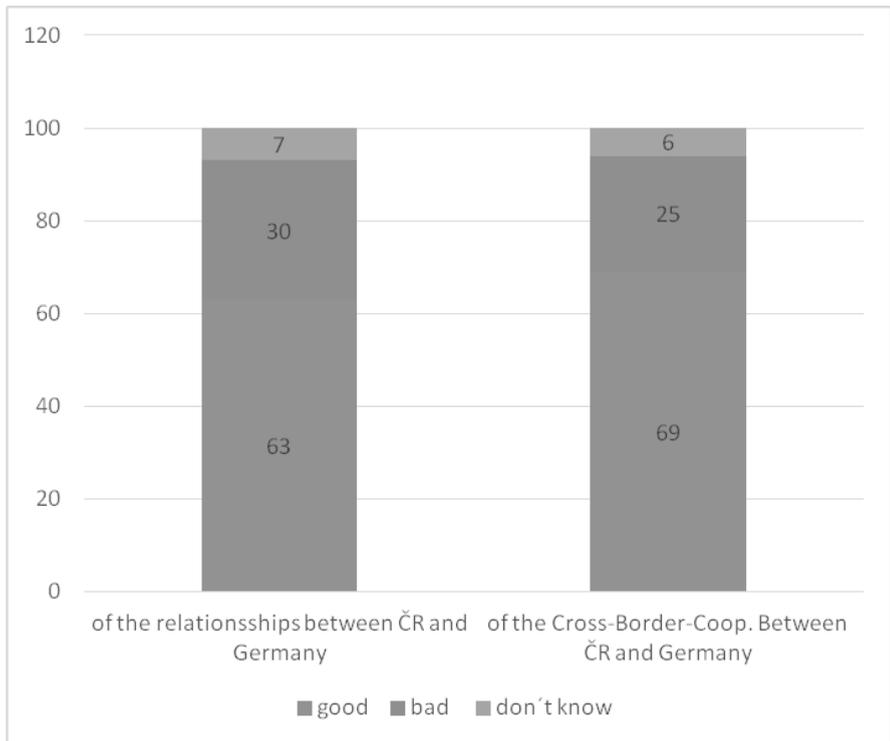
Furthermore, a generally beneficial association Educational and Social Work was established (Bildungs- und Sozialwerk, hereinafter referred to as BUSOW); it aimed and still aims to educate the members of a German minority. Individual regional unions initiate on irregular basis and unfortunately in uncoordinated manner the projects to preserve different traditions, including dialectic forms.

### **Case Study – Municipalities with Higher Presence of Germans**

As it has already been mentioned, the quantitative research comprised 5 questions which were submitted to the respondents – regardless of their nationality. It aimed to seize complex attitudes of local population vis-à-vis the research questions. Along with it, another minor qualitative research was performed, this time targeting the members of a German minority. Everything was purposefully aimed at the Krušné Hory area in the region of Karlovy Vary, which displays certain compactness in a settlement structure of the citizens of a German nationality.

The first question of the questionnaire research served to elicit the attitudes of inhabitants of Krušné Hory, living in close proximity to the state borders, towards Czech-German relations, but also towards an across-the-border Czech-German cooperation. Unfortunately, we are unable to compare such data with any previous researches due to today's absence of sociology research of the Czech border area (see Jeřábek 2015); however, we may now consult already 10 years old data compiled by the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic when 83% of respondents viewed the relations positively and 10% negatively (Houžvička 2005). When interpreting such findings, we should take into account the small size of the municipalities, located close to the borders with the Federal Republic of Germany, which undoubtedly determines the resulting data. Nevertheless it still applies that 63% of positive responses in case of Czech-German relations and 36% in case of across-the-border cooperation is a below-average number in comparison with existing data (Novotný 2014). It is probably affected by an immediate proximity to the border and experience with the Germans – most likely being above-average particularly in comparison with some other larger cities in border areas. This might give rise to rather worse perception of Czech-German relations. On the other hand there still are two thirds of respondents who deem such relations to be good (see graph 4). This confirms what have already concluded the researchers from the Institute of Sociology that the public repeatedly attaches quite big significance to the good relations with Germany (Houžvička 2005, p. 443 and n.). We may surely establish - based on what was heard in the qualitative questioning of the members of German minority - that they evaluate the relations quite favourably, i.e. with reference to political and economic power of Germany.

Graph 3: How do you evaluate the current level...

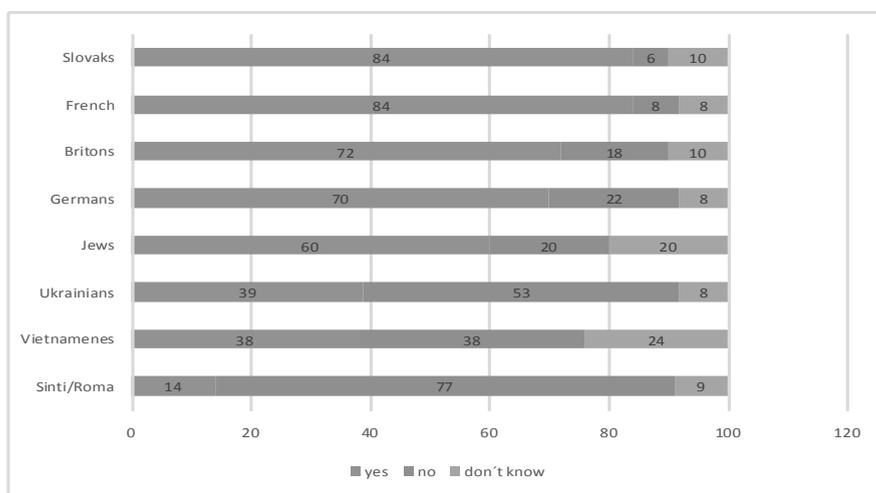


Source: own research; data in %

In the next question the respondents could address the issue of co-existence with the citizens of selected European nations. Among others, the following nationalities were selected for the sake of research – the Slovaks, French, English, Germans, and Jews. In such cases a vast majority of respondents claimed they would not mind them being their neighbours. Yet, in case of Germans (22%) and Jews (20%) there is not a negligible percentage of those who would mind co-existing with them. Such values imply that in the environment of a Czech border area attitudes of the part of public are charged by negative historical experience as well as certain prejudices. We may see, however, that the majority of population in the observed municipalities in Krušné Hory can imagine living in proximity to Germans and the majority supports it. Ethnic tension was not detected in this area. Similar implications relate to the questionings amidst the citizens of a German nationality who naturally do not have any problems in regards to co-existence with the Germans. Besides the aforementioned “West European” nations, the public shows (in light of the researches of tolerance quite traditional) a great deal of tolerance towards the co-existence with the Slovaks (92.8%). Such tolerance is rooted in traditional cultural proximity and long-term cohabitation in a common state.

In contrast, the Roma still occupy the other end of an imaginary line of “popular” nationalities in the Czech border area. This probably is a result of several processes and phenomena. First, such antipathy possesses historical roots when the Roma were and still are perceived by the majority of population as culturally quite a different element; this has a bearing on negative attitudes of the majority towards their ethnicity. Undoubtedly, immediate experience with the Roma plays its role; such experience is not good in the border areas inhabited by a larger number of Roma population. This phenomenon may certainly be explained in terms of different value-system orientation of the majority of European Roma population and majority societies as well as different lifestyles (Leontiyeva, Novotný 2010).

*Graph 4: Nationalities which are acceptable as neighbours in the place of residence*

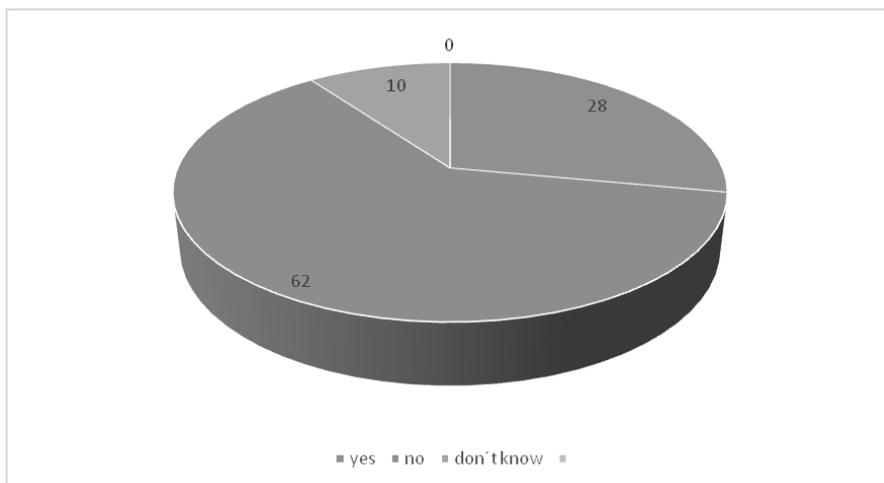


Source: own research; data in %

We have already alluded to the fact that in its numbers a German minority is significantly marginalized, which this research confirms as well. We may suppose that the goal of communist propaganda following the transfers of German population – to minimize German influence on the history of Czech lands – was partly met. Besides, the question was formulated quite generally and allowed for different responses, and any knowledge of activities of persons of German nationality was valued. However, in most cases a lack of knowledge prevailed, as a result of a decreasing level of informedness about this minority; on the other hand, the level of knowledge is partly due to the responses of the citizens of German minority and perhaps the activities of the union of German minority. At the same time we may notice that no ethnic tension is present, nurtured by the unions of a German minority, or some groups, or extremists from the ranks of majority population. In the research, the Germans define themselves as a “silenced group” and point to a considerable discrimination particularly in the language area when in the first post-war years as well as in the upcoming decades they had to bear their

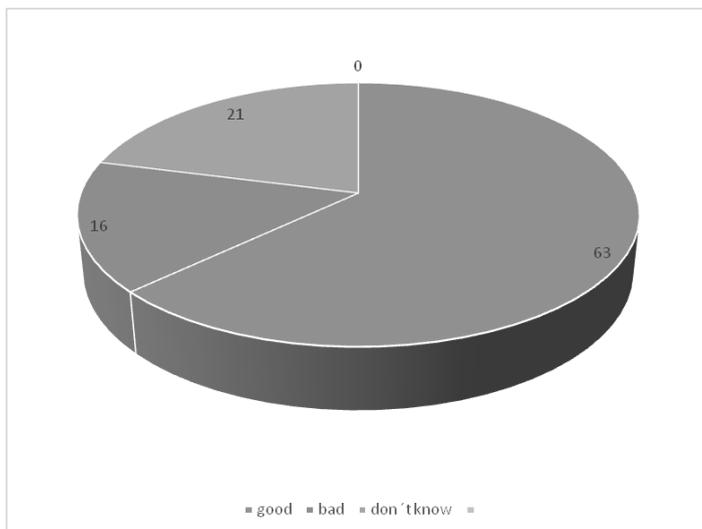
humiliation. The interviews also contained two allusions to indemnification for such hardship. The respondents were not acquainted with or had forgotten an original activity of the deputy prime minister Petr Mareš from the year 2003, which counted on it. We know, however, that in the end such an initiative never materialized.

*Graph 5: Have you ever heard of German minority in the Czech Republic?*



Source: own research; data in %

When we inspect a response to the question regarding a concrete relation of respondents towards the persons of German nationality living in their surroundings, then – unambiguously – the relations are good. The findings of the previous question were confirmed, i.e. that even in neighbour's relations the Germans do not represent an impediment for the Czech people. Furthermore, this question affirms that no ethnic tension is present and that the society is in interpersonal relations vis-à-vis the citizens of German nationality either accommodating or apathetic. It may be established here that even various pragmatic reasons might have made the Czechs and Germans at local levels minimize their possible disputes and learn how to live together. And that it was quite unnatural and uneasy, especially in the first post-war years, reflect the statements of respondents as well as the findings of other researches (Kreisslová 2013).

*Graph 6: Relation to persons of German nationality in my surroundings ...*

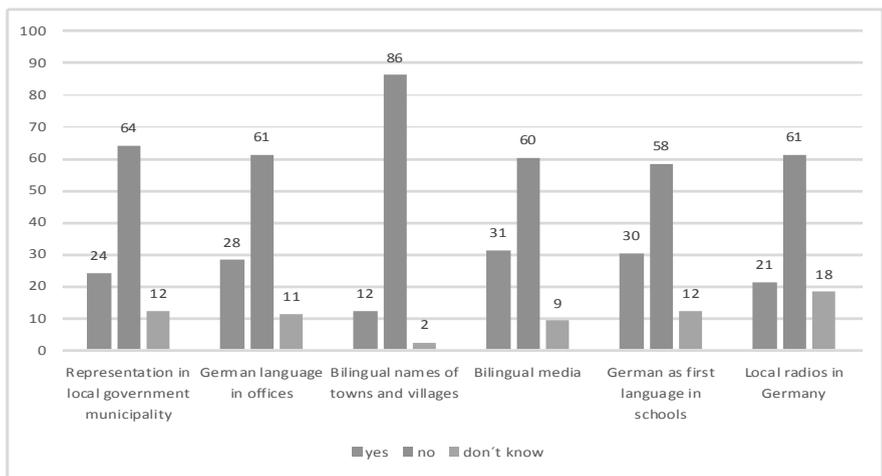
Source: own research

The most interesting part of the questionnaire research were the questions referring to quite specific eventual possibilities of minority policy afforded to the citizens of German nationality, provided they would account for more 10% on the territory of a given municipality. As already stated before, as of the census held in 2011 this is no longer relevant; however, it was topical in the period between 2001 and 2011 and concerned the municipalities covered by the research and numbering more than 10% of Germans. The outcomes in this area embody considerably less conciliatory attitudes towards these eventual activities of the citizens of a German nationality. Let us recall that for the sake of their implementation it would be generally helpful if a more efficient organizational structure of Czech Germans existed on the territory of a given municipality and if there were some activists from the ranks of minority willing to introduce such topics. As it has been mentioned several times by the head office of both unions of German minority – the Cultural Association of German nationality citizens as well as the Assembly of Germans in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia – they both refuse to penetrate individual municipalities from their head offices and dictate any orders; contrariwise, they opt to leave all the decisions at the discretion of the citizens of a German nationality directly in concrete municipalities. As shown by the outcomes of a qualitative research amidst these Germans most of them had no intention to implement any of the above mentioned. What also played a key role was an argument that such implementation would increase tension in the majority of population and anti-German moods and sentiments might arise; they are already present in the Czech Republic due to the workings of a communist propaganda during the Cold War as well as being a part of collective historical memory of the Czech nation whose cultural awareness was often moulded in sharp antagonism to Germans. This was also confirmed

in the interviews with the respondents of a German nationality. If they were knowledgeable about the possibility to implement such activities ex lege, it was more an exception as only 2 out of 10 respondents knew about this. Still, they both said in case of Abertamy that introduction of bilingual inscriptions would not be wise for further co-existence with Czech majority. The respondents, however, recalled the discussions on this issue which were given up to pursue good relations with the Czechs...

The graph indicates that the majority of population in the observed municipalities is not in favour of implementing anything which the local German fellow citizens were entitled to in the years 2001-2011. We may suppose that such attitudes are longstanding and were present in the similar intensity ten or more years ago. Most vigorously opposed is a possibility of a bilingual name of a municipality; for instance, in compliance with the law the name “Permk“ would be marked with a German “Bärringen“. This is in place in the Czech border area with Poland in case of Polish minority which lives here in a more compact way. In case of introduction of such “signs” the Germans accurately assessed prior to the year 2011 that such demands would enhance radicalization of the attitudes towards them and so abandoned them. No agreement was voiced with any of potential activities, but the smallest resistance attracted an introduction of German in the schools and the bilingual or minority’s own press.

*Graph 7: Opinions to such potential activities of Germans in your municipality*



Source: own research; data in %

## Conclusion

The paper herein has shown that there is no inter-ethnic tension pervading the municipalities with traditionally higher share of the population of German nationality. It applies that the citizens endorse positive attitudes towards the citizens of German nationality and the same applies to cultural activities. However, what is on the contrary not regarded as proper are any eventual

political demands linked with a German minority. Old experiences with Germans as well as prejudices are still being revitalized here. Therefore, what is out of the question is, for instance, a representation of Germans in local self-government or an implementation of a bilingual name of municipality.

We may thus conclude that the representatives of German national minority made a good decision when they decided in the years 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 not to demand an inclusion of German language into public communication in such municipalities in West Bohemia where the minority made up more than 10% of the total population. Based on the outcomes of the research this might evoke a certain escalation of tension and old resentments vis-à-vis a German population might re-emerge. This would definitely not help nurture mutual inter-ethnic co-existence.

In addition, it is quite interesting that a German minority in the observed municipalities is not particularly organized. A branch of the Union of Germans – the Cheb Region operates only in Abertamy. The minority here thus seems to have been integrated and apparently assimilated as well. Its today's passivity might also testify that any eventual official state, government, or any other official institutional initiatives would most probably not spur any significant revitalization of a minority.

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