



Institute of the  
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# Linguistic Diversity in the Cyberspace of the Russian Federation

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**Linguistic Diversity**

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# Non-English Speaking Users

- A significant number of today's Internet users either don't speak English or prefer to use their native language for Web transactions
- Non-English speakers also represent "the fastest-growing group of people online today"
- 55.7 million people are part of the non-English segment  
*[Euro-Marketing Associates (EMA), a consulting firm specializing in multilingual marketing]*
- Example from India:
  - Only 100 million people from over 1 billion use English



# Russia as a Multilingual Culture

- Russian Federation is a federal state comprising 85 subjects
- The population of Russia according to the 2002 census is 142.4 million people
- In addition to the Russians (79.8%) there are more than 180 other nations with unique cultures and traditions



# Russia as a Multilingual Culture

- Around 150 languages and dialects are spoken that belong to the Indo-European, Altaic, and Ural language families, the Caucasian and Paleo-Siberian language groups
- Two dozen languages have an official status in the Russian Federation
  - Russian as a state language on the entire territory
  - 23 more languages as state languages of the subjects of federation



# Russia as a Multilingual Culture

- There are 8 languages in Russia used by more than 1 million people:
  - Russian (the overwhelming majority)
  - English (6.9 mln)
  - Tatar (5.3 mln)
  - German (2,9 mln)
  - Ukrainian (1.8 mln)
  - Bashkir (1.4 mln)
  - Chechen (1.3 mln)
  - Chuvash (1.3 mln)



# Legislative Ground to Protect Linguistic Diversity in Russia

- There is a set of laws that secure rights to protect, to develop and to learn the native language for any Russian citizen, incl.:
  - Constitution of the RF
  - Federal Law “On the Languages of the Russian Federation”
  - Federal Law “On Education”
  - Other federal laws related to culture and self-government
  - Constitutions of the subjects of the RF
  - Regional laws of the subjects of the RF



# Legislative Ground to Protect Linguistic Diversity in Russia

- All nationalities of the RF are guaranteed:
  - Equal rights and means of the languages protection (social, legal, and economic, incl. funding of relevant governmental programs)
  - Opportunity to create literature in their native language
  - Conduct research on the respective languages
  - Organize children's upbringing and education in their native language independent on the size of the ethnic group and in accordance with its needs



# Legislative Ground to Protect Linguistic Diversity in Russia

- In the areas of compact inhabitation of an the indigenous population use of a respective language as an official language is allowed along with the state language(s)
  - in government office work
  - in enterprises
  - in institutions
  - in toponymy





# Basic International Documents to Follow – UNESCO

- Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (adopted at the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference, 2001)
  - “cultural diversity as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity is just as indispensable for humanity as biological diversity for Nature, and is a treasure shared by the entire human race”
- Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace (32<sup>nd</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2003)
  - “the public and private sectors and the civil society at local, national, regional and international levels should work to provide the necessary resources and take the necessary measures to alleviate language barriers and promote human interaction on the Internet”



# Basic International Documents to Follow – WSIS

- Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action
- Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society
  - emphasize the importance of the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity and suggest a set of measures necessary to achieve this goal
  - encourage
    - governments
      - to design policies to promote the production of content suited to the linguistic and cultural context of the users
      - to support local content development, translation and adaptation
    - all stakeholders
      - to provide content that is relevant to the languages of individuals in the Information Society
      - to foster the creation of varied local and national content, including that in the language of users



# Handling the Linguistic Diversity Issue in Russia

- Major events outcomes:
  - International conference “UNESCO between Two Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society” (St. Petersburg, 17-19 May 2005), Section “Cultural Diversity in Knowledge Societies”  
[http://confifap.cpic.ru/conf2005/eng/info/pr\\_s5\\_en.htm#ms5\\_1](http://confifap.cpic.ru/conf2005/eng/info/pr_s5_en.htm#ms5_1)  
adopted a Final Document  
[http://confifap.cpic.ru/conf2005/eng/info/str\\_166.html](http://confifap.cpic.ru/conf2005/eng/info/str_166.html) (see Section 6)
  - International conference “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Cyberspace” (Yakutsk, July 2-4, 2008) adopted the Lena Resolution  
[http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/lena\\_resolution\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unesco.ru/files/docs/lena_resolution_eng.pdf)



# Russia's National Report to UNESCO

- In late 2006 – early 2007 the “Report by the Russian Federation to the General Conference on Measures Taken to Implement the Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace” was prepared by a large multi-stakeholder group led by the Russian Committee of the UNESCO “Information for All Programme” (Chairman *Evgeny Kuzmin*)
- The Report includes two detailed cases of the implementation of the language policy in two subjects of the RF:
  - Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)
  - Republic of Buryatia



# Russia's National Report for UNESCO

- The Report covers the following topics:
  - Support and Development of Multilingualism in Russia
  - Multilingualism in the Cyberspace
  - Access to Socially Important Information: Current State, Legal Support, Challenges
  - Improvement of Access to Networks and Services
  - Open-Source Software Development
  - Information Literacy Progress as Means to Popularize It and Win Public Confidence in ICT
  - Reaffirming the Equitable Balance Between the Interests of Property Rights-Holders and the Public Interest

The full text of the Report in Russian and English is available at <http://www.ifapcom.ru>



## Commitment of the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Program

- Russian chapter of IFAP is conducting a research aimed at:
  - revealing to the most extent possible the circle of government departments at different levels, organizations and specialists dealing with the linguistic diversity problems in the Internet, establishing contacts with them
  - defining the level of completeness of the representation of Russia's nations in the Russian segment of the Internet
  - listing the measures undertaken in Russia in relation to the development of linguistic diversity in the Internet



## Commitment of the Russian Committee of the UNESCO Information for All Program

- Russian chapter IFAP is conducting a research aimed at:
  - exposing the activities directed to the development of e-translators and e-dictionaries for Russia's languages
  - studying the situation with the creation of standardized character sets for Russia's languages
  - finding out what is being done in the area of adaptation of search engines for a full value search in the Internet



## First Outcomes of the IFAP-supported Research

- Comprehensive reports in Russian and English on:
  - Language Policy in
    - Republic of Dagestan
    - Republic of Karelia
    - Republic of Tatarstan
    - Chuvash Republic
  - Development of Multilingualism on the Internet





## First Outcomes of the IFAP-supported Research

- Comprehensive reports in Russian and English on:
  - Development of Multilingualism on the Internet and the Runet
  - Activities of the National Library of the Republic of Karelia to Promote Regional Languages in Cyberspace
  - Documentation of Minor Languages: Research and Technical Aspects
  - Scripts for Languages Spoken in Russia, Which Have Recently Acquired a Written Form

All outcomes are presented in English in publication  
“Preservation of Linguistic Diversity: Russian Experience”

[http://www.mcbs.ru/publication\\_29.htm](http://www.mcbs.ru/publication_29.htm)



## Regional Activities to Preserve the Linguistic Diversity

- Electronic training aids, textbooks and dictionaries are being published
- Online forums are being offered for the communication in different languages
- Media resources are presented online, radio broadcasting is provided in the languages of many nations of Russia



# Linguistic Diversity Challenges for Russia

- In spite of the efforts undertaken the languages spoken by the peoples of Russia are poorly presented in the Internet
- The main reason for that is lack of awareness and, consequently
  - inadequate financing
  - insufficient training of specialists that would be able to create information resources for the Internet and to develop standardized fonts for local languages, vocabularies, search instruments, etc.



# Linguistic Diversity Challenges for Russia

- Limited Use of Native Languages
  - One can get a higher education, with few exceptions, in Russian only
  - TV and radio broadcasting in national languages is often limited; in local languages it lasts just a few hours a week
  - There are comparatively little published in national languages

*All this happens mostly for economic reasons*



# Linguistic Diversity Challenges for Russia

- Many representatives of non-Russian nationalities begin to consider their native languages as those of no prestige and do not want to learn them
- The students concentrate on learning Russian and English as the major part of information needed for education and future professional activity is available in these languages
- The number of native languages carriers is decreasing, and this can lead to the loss of the languages themselves



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