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Ukrainians making Russian more common in EU state – official

The Lithuanian government has warned against incitement targeting those who speak the language

Ukrainian refugees have contributed to the growing use of the Russian language in Lithuania, a senior official in the Baltic state has said.

For centuries, Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire, and between 1940 and 1991, it was a republic within the Soviet Union. Ethnic Russians make up around 5% of the country's population of 2.89 million.

Approximately 60% of Lithuanian citizens are fluent in Russian, and nearly all Ukrainians understand the language to some extent.

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“With the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, as well as migrants from Central Asia and other countries, Russian is being heard more often in public places,” Dainius Babilas, head of the Department of National Minorities, said on Friday.

A pro-Ukrainian demonstration in Vilnius, Lithuania, on February 23, 2025. © Yauhen Yerchak / Anadolu / Getty Images

Babilas urged the public not to exploit the issue of language to sow division. *“We encourage society’s opinion*

leaders ... to ensure that the well-intentioned goal of strengthening the national language does not become a vehicle for inciting hatred or creating social divides, which would weaken the resilience of the state and civil society,” he said, according to national broadcaster LRT.



Language has remained a point of contention since Lithuania regained independence, with politicians and activists from the Russian-speaking community pushing back against efforts to stigmatize their native tongue and limit its role in public life and education.

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The influx of Ukrainians has also posed challenges for schools and the enforcement of labor laws, which require a basic knowledge of Lithuanian. In a viral

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Facebook post last month, veteran journalist Edmundas Jakilaitis wrote: *“The prevalence of Russian in Vilnius has become intolerable. The language is everywhere. How are we supposed to reclaim the capital now?”*

Lithuania is among the most vocal supporters of Ukraine in the EU and has consistently called for tougher sanctions on Moscow and increased military aid to Kiev.

Unlike its Baltic peers, Lithuania granted citizenship to all its residents regardless of ethnicity or language following the break-up of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. However, despite this measure and a rising standard of living, the country has lost almost one quarter of its population since 1991, prompting heated debates about the desirability of immigration.

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 **Richard Castle** 7/26/2025 at 11:32 AM 1

As one walks across Europe, one can see how each country has modified their language to be different from their neighbours. So, when one country complains about Russian, or German or Greek, then stop using all similar words, but they won't, because of their belligerent attitude.

Ukraine is of course the most stupid, because their base language is Russian and they try to hide this fact.

Welsh. Two million people and a language being taught that nobody else in the world understands. That's how you hold a nation back. Learn a language that brings people together.

[Reply](#)


 **Wombat Joey** 7/26/2025 at 7:31 AM -1




I barely have time to read this article.....it cuts into the hours I need to allot every day for my all-important Lithuanian language study. It is crucial to the nth degree. The only thing I can compare it with is the time others must devote to two other top-rung tongues: Latvian and Estonian.

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M Melons1054 7/26/2025 at 11:08 AM ↑

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Dave 7/26/2025 at 9:26 AM

4

They speak Russian and a little Ukrainian.

The Lithuanians speak Lithuanian, English, and maybe some Polish or German; none of which the Ukrainians speak.

So the Ukrainian settlers and the Lithuanians have to speak a language they both understand: Russian.

It's rather funny actually.

By the way, Lithuania, these immigrants have absolutely no intention of ever going back to Ukraine. Everyone wanted to get out of there BEFORE the war, let alone now.

You are stuck with them.

Reply

M Murray Regan 7/26/2025 at 10:18 AM ↑

0

Lithuania and Poland formed a union of the two lands, due to royal marriages between the two nations. Back when Ukraine was a tiny principality land locked never go anywhere hole. Kind of similar to a station in Australia. MR.

Reply

E Eileen Dover 7/26/2025 at 11:04 AM ↑

1

There is a Cyrillic inscription and Russian Orthodox motifs in the Jagellonian chapel in the catholic cathedral on Wawel hill in Krakow, Poland. Poland's Lithuanian king was influenced by Russian culture.

Reply

M Melons1054 7/26/2025 at 11:07 AM ↑

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Works much better for Slavic languages than the Latin alphabet.

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E Eileen Dover 7/26/2025 at 11:00 AM

3

HAHA! ukrainian isn't a language. It is a Russian regional dialect. It is one of many. So EU better get used to it.

[Reply](#)

Abdurraheem 7/26/2025 at 5:32 AM

1

T h e y speak Russian
Thus they're Russians...
Yes that's the power of
The Russian language
That they are afraid off

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