

THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
NATIONALISM STUDIES PROGRAM

cordially invites you to a lecture by

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Language policy in Slovakia since 1993: between
emotions and pragmatism

Languages serve as means of communication and simultaneously bear an important symbolic value to individuals and groups. Decisions about who, when and why someone is (or is not) allowed to use a particular language are often a matter of controversy, because they can contribute to more equality in access to rights and services as well as create regimes of inequality and dominance. In this presentation, I explore the complexities of language policy and language regime formation on the case of Slovakia which was marked by years of recurring conflicts between demands for an exclusive position of the Slovak language and protection of minority languages, in particular Hungarian. Drawing on the two most important laws regulating language use in Slovakia (Law on the state language and Law on the use of the languages of national minorities) and the parliamentary debates surrounding them, I analyze the switches between language policy priorities since 1993 and the arguments used to support or oppose them. I argue that apart from the alternating government constellations, the policy has been influenced by internal and international political challenges (e.g. dissolution of Czechoslovakia, relations between Slovakia and Hungary, EU integration) and most recently by the creation of a government uniting the Slovak national party and representatives of the Hungarian minority which showed that language-related conflicts can be completely set aside if necessary.

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Barbora Moormann-Kimáková is research fellow with the Nationalism Studies program. She studied political science and Slavic philology at Charles University in Prague and Université Libre de Bruxelles and holds a doctorate in political science from Humboldt University Berlin. Her research interests include language policies and language regimes, minority rights as well as constitutionalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Her book *Language-related conflicts in multinational and multiethnic settings* was published in 2016. Recently her contributions on post-socialist constitutionalism in Slovakia and the Czech Republic appeared in the edited volume *Constitutional politics in Central and Eastern Europe*. In 2013 and 2014 she was head of the Moscow office of the German-Russian Forum.