

Hungarians in Austria

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Short facts

Hungarian in Hungary (state language): > 9,5 million speakers.

Outside Hungary: “Old” autochthonous Hungarian-speaking minorities in neighbouring states and more recent migrant groups; number between 3 and 5 million.

In Austria: ~40,000 Hungarians in Austria, whereof ~6,000 belong to the autochthonous group in Burgenland (Census 2001). According to Jelentés (2006) ~90,000 Austrians know Hungarian, and most of these probably have a Hungarian ethnic background.

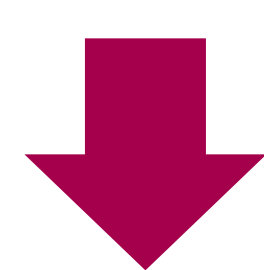
Today: Heterogenous group

- “Old” Hungarian minority in the easternmost province of Burgenland since the Middle Ages;
- Centuries-old pattern of migration from Hungarian-speaking areas to Austria until our days; continuous presence of Hungarianness particularly in Vienna despite the groups’ assimilation within a few generations.
- Probably large fringe groups outside the official statistics (commuters and seasonal migrants, non-registered residents, second- and third-generation migrants, children of mixed families or migrants from ethnically mixed areas)

Legal status: recognized as a national minority. Sharp differences between the legal treatment of Hungarians living in Burgenland, Vienna and other regions of the country.

ELDIA’s results

- Austrian Hungarians have a positive attitude towards multilingualism; a majority of Austrian Hungarians can be denoted as multilinguals.
- Hungarian is maintained mostly within the family and the private sphere; clear differences between Burgenland and Vienna due to the varying prestige of the language and on the strongly divergent legal frameworks.
- Austrian Hungarians attach high value to integration and a good competence of German; they want to avoid being regarded as foreigners and even overtly distinguish themselves from “bad migrants”.
- Austrians have little knowledge of legislation and its role for the maintenance of language diversity; Burgenland Hungarians are clearly more confident and better informed, which indicates that the public visibility of a minority language and clear regulations on its role in the school system are of crucial importance.
- Hungarian speakers in Burgenland and in Vienna have an official status as ethnic groups (*Volksgruppen*). Yet due to the territorial principle, legislation treats the Hungarians of Burgenland and Vienna differently from each other. Hungarian-speaking migrant groups in other parts of the country are not even recognized.
- Austrians are well aware of the existence and characteristics of Hungarian language and culture, but see these as something pertaining to a neighbouring country and seldom think of Hungarianness as part of Austrian culture and history.
- Hungarians are well known as a migrant group, yet their presence is overshadowed by numerically larger and culturally more conspicuously different migrant groups.
- The image of Hungarianness in Austria is fairly positive, yet many Hungarians seem to have subjective experiences of negative attitudes or discrimination (which may be directed against foreigners or immigrants in general).

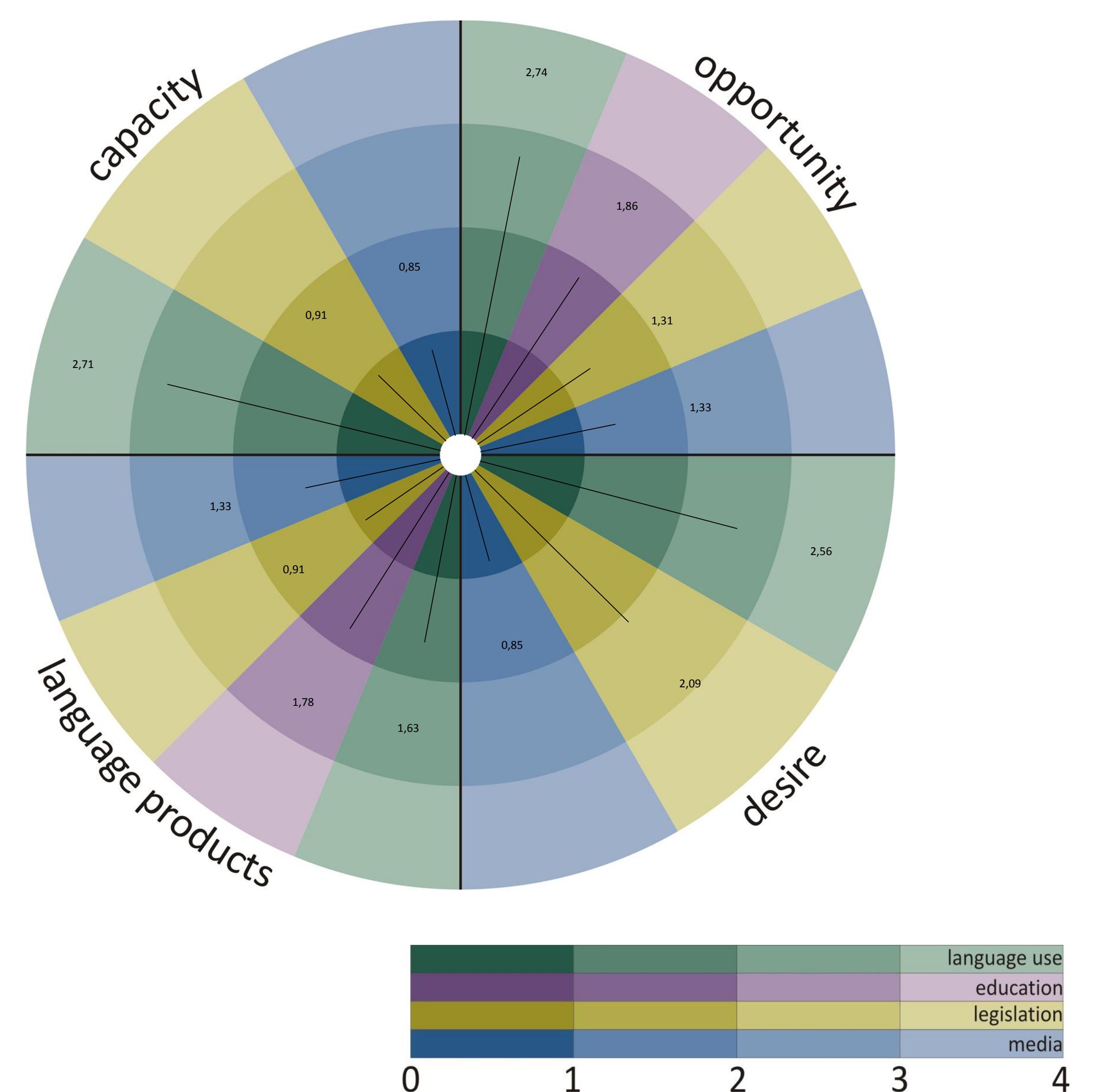


The situation is a highly complex one, full of contradictions.

Multilingualism, however, clearly has an important role in the lives of the Hungarians living in Austria and this is also one of the most prevalent characteristics of the speech community.

EuLaViBar

Despite official acknowledgment and some supportive measures, Hungarian in Austria is clearly endangered.



Language use is the strongest dimension: the Hungarians in Austria use their language and want to use it, especially in the private sphere. However, their good language skills (especially as concerns the numerous first-generation migrants), their willingness to use Hungarian and transmit it to their children are countered by the poor public visibility, insufficient media supply and inadequate institutional support for the Hungarian language.