

## Workshop “Historical sociolinguistics: Sociolinguistic development and language planning in Norway and Ukraine – Similarities and differences”

Ernst Håkon Jahr (University of Agder)

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Aula im. Hrynakowskiego, Collegium Heliodori Święcicki

In 1814, Norway – with independence after 400 years of Danish rule – had a sociolinguistic situation which was quite ‘normal’ in a European context: a spoken, high-status variety used among the upper-middle classes all over the country was closely connected to a written standard (Danish), and all the non-standard local dialects of the peasants, fishermen and workers had a low status and were used only locally. In Norway today, however, we observe a situation which can be considered unique: the country has two written standards, both of them Norwegian (*Bokmål* and *Nynorsk*) but no universally accepted spoken standard comparable to the spoken standard of, say, Swedish and Danish. Instead, most native speakers of Norwegian use their local dialects in most contexts. There exist only small differences between the two written standards, but Norwegians know that the differences between *Bokmål* and *Nynorsk* are sociolinguistically important.

Since this situation has been brought about by 150 years of official as well as private language planning, there might be lessons to be learnt from the Norwegian case for language planning in general. Norwegian and Ukrainian have an important historic feature in common: both languages have a long shared history with superstratum languages: Danish (for Norwegian) and Russian (for Ukrainian). Both languages have also been perceived by many (especially Danes and Russians) as merely a dialect (or dialects) of the neighbouring, superstratum language: Spoken Norwegian was seen as a variety of Danish, Ukrainian of Russian. Since language planning has been a major issue in Norwegian society for more than 200 years, there might be lessons to learn from the Norwegian case for current and future language planning in Ukraine with its independence in 1991.

References:

Jahr, Ernst Håkon. 2014. *Language planning as a sociolinguistic experiment: The case of Modern Norwegian*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. (<https://academic.oup.com/edinburgh-scholarship-online/book/22699>)