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Lithuanian Feminine Surname Debates from a Central European Perspective

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Abstract: Contemporary Lithuania remains the only European country in which official feminine surnames indicate their bearers' marital status, and this has been the object of fierce public debates over the past decade. Czechia and Slovakia grapple with surprisingly similar issues, even though Czech and Slovak feminine surnames do not reveal marital status. Similar debates in Poland took place a century earlier, a fact which may indicate the possible direction of the changes in the three countries studied. The aim of this article is to present debates concerning feminine surnames in Lithuania from a wider perspective, regarding contemporary Czechia and Slovakia, as well as Poland in the interwar period, and to show from a wider Central and Eastern European perspective that, despite the obvious differences in naming patterns, Lithuanian discussions are not exceptional, and they are part of a larger tendency towards more freedom in the choice of official surname forms for women. It is evident that, although female surnames are inexorably embedded in the language systems of the countries in which they function, their future largely depends on extralinguistic factors such as societal attitudes. While feminine surnames in European states generally seem to be on the decline, the most controversial remain those types that reveal marital status or imply male possession of women, though pragmatic factors might play some role as well, particularly in the case of minorities.

Keywords: anthroponomastics; feminine surnames; family names; marital status; Lithuanian; Czech; Slovak; Polish

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1. Introduction

Contemporary Lithuania remains the only European country in which official feminine surnames indicate their bearers' marital status. In 2003, new regulations came into force that allowed for a third form of the feminine surname (alongside the traditional single/married dichotomy), one neutral with regard to marital status. This fact instigated fierce public debate and criticism of the new forms, which were regarded by many as destructive for the Lithuanian language system.

Seemingly unique, Lithuanian discussions are in fact not exceptional, as they reflect a larger tendency to discuss the societal role of feminine surnames and to claim more freedom in the choice of the official surname form for women. In Czechia and Slovakia, these debates focus not on the marital status of their bearers but rather on the freedom to use a gender-neutral form. Poland or Slovenia, being a step or two ahead in the liberalization process today, underwent quite similar developments in the past, even if heated debates took place approximately a century earlier in Poland. Discussions concerning women's surnames were held even in European countries with no feminine surname forms (e.g., such forms of address as *Mrs John Wood*, in which the given name of the married woman is completely obliterated). With feminine surnames in European states generally being on the decline, the most controversial to this day remain those that imply the male possession of women.

Even though controversies surrounding the form of feminine surnames in the countries in which they are used might fuel public debate or find their reflection in scholarly

publications, seldom is on such occasion a wider, cross-cultural perspective employed. For diverse reasons, ranging from the relative incompatibility of specific linguistic, historical and cultural conditions to more practical considerations, the scholarly debate often remains within the confines of only one country, even though a comparison between countries might offer new vistas; as Sulis and Gheno note in reference to language inclusivity, "each debate tends to unfold in relative isolation within national boundaries, and [. . .] the critical bibliography on such matters is available mainly in the language that is the object of discussion" (Sulis and Gheno 2022, p. 155). An attempt to bridge the cross-cultural gap by proposing a common denominator to seemingly incompatibly diverse national patterns has been made with regard to constellations of standard language vis à vis non-standard varieties by Auer (2005), who claims that "on a sufficient level of generalisation there is a systematicity behind the superficial heterogeneity which unfolds from a historical perspective". In this paper, I aim to provide a postulated comparative perspective, one that involves four neighbouring countries.

2. Methodology

In this paper, I offer an analysis of the situation in Lithuania, set against the backdrop of three other Central and Eastern European (CEE) states: Slovakia, Czechia and Poland. While doing so, I will combine a discussion of the formal aspects of the onyms under consideration with references to public debate in the media, especially in the case of Lithuania. My principal research question is centred on how the particular, seemingly different sociolinguistic circumstances in the four states under consideration could at some point in history have resulted in similarly framed debates in each of them. To this end, I will attempt to identify the "systematicity behind the superficial heterogeneity" (Auer 2005), or, to put it differently, the common sociolinguistic factors that come into play. My basic assumption implies the existence of a certain developmental pattern (and a kind of chronological order) in the history of feminine surnames in Central Europe. My supporting hypothesis is that a tendency also exists in these countries for feminine surnames to gradually disappear, albeit slowly (in a process that spans decades, if not centuries), a trend whose detectable markers are individual foot-in-the-door mechanisms, i.e., factors that facilitate the acceptance of new language forms—in this case, forms diverging from the previously used system.

The issues in question, onomastic in nature, are also inherently sociolinguistic (cf. Spolsky 1998, pp. 21–22), insofar as they touch upon some of the key notions of the field, including the notion of standard language as opposed to regiolects, minority issues (cf. Kamusella 2008), linguistic human rights (Jernudd 1995) and gender linguistics (Kolek and Valdrová 2020), as well as, especially, linguistic prescriptivism and language planning (Beal et al. 2023). In the words of Bastardas (2004, pp. 193–94):

> The discipline that we have agreed to call "language policy and planning" sees to the study of decision-making processes and public intervention in the linguistic organization of society. It also studies the structures that such an organization may adopt and its evolutionary effects on sociomeanings and language behaviors, both public and private. Ideally, it would differentiate itself from sociolinguistics in the sense that sociolinguistics would project a global perspective on the phenomena being studied, while language policy and planning could be an applied, more pared down, perspective, specializing in the most political aspects of the situation. Thus, while in sociolinguistics we attempt to understand reality, making it intelligible to us, in language policy and planning we devote our efforts more to organizing, designing and changing certain parts of this reality. This is, however, a distinction among fields that dovetail, since one field is part of the other and the two are mutually interrelated.

The high importance traditionally accorded to language planning in the four countries under consideration might be attributable to their complex socio-political and linguistic history (Kamusella 2008; Janicki and Jaworski 1993; Cvrček 2008; Vaicekauskienė and Šepetys

2016) but also to societal attitudes, which provide support for formal state interventions into language use.

Not to be overlooked are the political factors. The four CEE countries selected for analysis share a common pre-1989 Eastern Bloc past, a fact which certainly has bearing on attitudes to language correctness, as prescriptivism has traditionally featured heavily on the language-political agenda there. The languages of these countries are either West Slavic (Polish, Slovak, Czech) or genetically related within the Balto-Slavic group (Lithuanian); thus, typologically, they are all inflected (fusional) languages, which is also related to the presence of feminine surnames and to their formation—and which feeds the arguments about the language-systemic unavoidability of the obligatory suffixation of female surnames.

I will first discuss Lithuania as the only state in Europe where there still exists a two-way division among official feminine surnames into those that denote married women and those that mark the unmarried ones. I will begin with outlining the form and creation of these surnames, and then go on to analyse a law introduced in 2003, which enabled Lithuanian women to use a third form—one that is neutral with regard to the marital status of its bearer. While welcome by some, it was also fiercely criticised by others, often for language-external reasons. In a later section, I will search for foot-in-the-door mechanisms, i.e., factors that facilitate the acceptance of a new language form—in this case, one diverging from the previously used system. In what follows, I will closely look at the use and social reception of feminine surnames in Slovakia, Czechia and finally Poland, striving to find the foot-in-the-door factors mentioned above, and also to identify the reasons why the traditional feminine-surname system is cracking. There, I will briefly explore some other naming cultures with vestiges of feminine surnames—notably, the case of Latvian as, on the one hand, concerning the only living language closely genetically related to Lithuanian, and, on the other hand, conspicuous by not being affected by female surname debates. This article will end with conclusions.

The issue of feminine surname formation—in the countries where they nowadays exist—has been discussed by scholars such as Valentová (2016), Misad (2012) and Opalková (2016) for Slovakia; Harvalík (2016) for Czechia; and Walkowiak (2012) for Poland, and is also included in normative grammars and similar reference works—e.g., Vladarskienė and Zemlevičiūtė (2022) for Lithuania. Among the works that apply a more general linguistic approach, embedding names in a wider grammatical perspective, Unterbeck and Rissanen (2000) might be mentioned, as well as selected passages from Hellinger and Motschenbacher (2015).

3. Lithuania: Feminine Surnames until 2003

Contemporary Lithuania is the only European country in which the surname of a woman is—or since 2003, at least potentially has been—indicative of its bearer's marital status. Until quite recently, there used to be a three-way division of Lithuanian surnames (see Table 1): the masculine type and two types of feminine surnames, formed by suffixation of the masculine stem. These suffixes are different for married women and for unmarried ones (Vladarskienė and Zemlevičiūtė 2022). In the case of the surnames of married women, the suffix *-(i)uvienė* is reserved for the *-(i)us*-ending surnames (*Adamkus–Adamkuvienė*, *Skardžius–Skardžiuvienė*) and the shorter one, *-(i)enė*, for all the other morphological types. However, longer surnames, i.e., those with more than two syllables (especially those with the Slavic ending *-čius*), tend to take a shorter form for brevity (*Stankevičius–Stankevičienė* rather than *Stankevičiuvienė*). A case in point is Alma *Adamkienė* (not *Adamkuvienė*), the wife of Lithuania's former president Valdas Adamkus. All these rules hold true for literary language (*bendrinė kalba*), while dialectal forms display even more variety. One might invoke the above-mentioned tendency to replace *-(i)uvienė* with *-ienė*: in Low Lithuanian, the latter applies to all *-(i)us*-ending surnames, regardless of their length.

Table 1. Feminine surname formation in Lithuania until 2003.

Surname Type	Masculine Form—Examples	Feminine Form—Married Women	Feminine Form—Unmarried Women
Surname ending with *-as*, *-a*	Kazlausk-as Virpš-a	Kazlausk-ienė Virpš-ienė	Kazlausk-aitė Virpš-aitė
Surname ending with *-is*, *-ys*, *-ė*, *-ia*/*-(j)a*	Žvirbl-is Bals-ys Lap-ė Stundž-ia Saj-a	Žvirbl-ienė Bals-ienė Lap-ienė Stundž-ienė Saj-ienė	Žvirbl-ytė Bals-ytė Lap-ytė Stundž-ytė Saj-ytė
Surname ending with *-us*, *-(i)us*/*-(j)us*	Adamk-us Stankevič-ius Roj-us	Adamk-ienė or Adamk-uvienė Stankevič-ienė or Stankevič-iuvienė Roj-uvienė	Adamk-utė Stankevič-iūtė Roj-ūtė

4. The 2003 Change and the Ensuing Public Debate

The situation outlined above changed in 2003, when the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (Valstybinė lietuvių kalbos komisija), instigated by the office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (then Aušrinė Burneikienė) and EU directives, decided to legitimise non-suffixed female surnames ending with *-ė* as an alternative to traditional feminine suffixes.

The new regulation was carefully worded; by way of justification for introducing the novelty, it evoked "the public opinion" (*visuomenės reiškiamas nuomones*) and emphasised the fact that the hitherto used regulations regarding the formation of feminine surnames should be considered basic (*pagrindinėmis*). "In those cases where we want to obtain a form that would not indicate marital status, it is possible to create a form on the basis of the masculine form using the ending -ė, stated the resolution, implicitly reinforcing the impression of the exceptional and perhaps even tentative status of the new surname ending (*Nutarimas* 2003).

In 2009, a letter was addressed to the parliament, demanding for the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language to be made to revoke the resolution. Among the signatories, there were poet Justinas Marcinkevičius, former minister for education Zigmas Zinkevičius, ethnologist Gražina Kadžytė, as well as several specialists in the Lithuanian language: Arnoldas Piročkinas, Aldona Paulauskienė, Aldonas Pupkis and Kazimieras Garšva (Gudavičiūtė 2009).

The arguments in the public debate were highly emotional. The traditional surname forms were described as "uniquely beautiful surnames [. . .] showing the sacred belongingness to the family, close ties of marriage", "characterised by particular beauty", existing "only in the language created by our nation" and creating "the most perfect system of surname formation". By contrast, under the new resolution, "the pearls of our language are trodden under foot". The newly introduced forms were considered "unaesthetical-sounding"; little wonder that "only immoral, dishonourably living women are contemptuously called with such surnames". Their real purpose, it was claimed, was "to conceal the fact of being married, and some people might wonder why" (Albinas Petrulis, cited in Garšva 2012, p. 216). Finally, advice was offered to women to "take the [traditional] surname with suffix or not marry at all" and a suggestion was directed at the women who might support the non-suffixed surnames: "why don't you renounce Lithuanian citizenship" (Digrytė 2009).

The members of the State Commission appeared certain of the strength of their arguments—not the least important of them being the fact that Vitalija Maciejauskienė, one of the most eminent anthroponomasticians, did not object to the 2003 regulation. Perhaps it was also felt that non-suffixed surnames were admitted as a compromise, so that

women would not seek masculine, non-inflected surnames. Rita Miliūnaitė, who in 2009 researched societal attitudes towards the new endings on the basis of Internet discussions, shortlisted 2763 commentaries for analysis and classified them according to the type of argument used. She came to the conclusion that about 15 per cent were factual arguments, relating to the history and function of Lithuanian surnames and to surname systems in other languages. Sociopsychological arguments, such as gender equality, emancipation and personality factors, accounted for 26.7 per cent of all arguments, while aesthetic evaluation was responsible for 10.7 per cent. The largest group, however—41 per cent—was made up by value-related arguments, which comprised referring to tradition, morality and the authority of linguists (Miliūnaitė 2013). R. Miliūnaitė's research also revealed a mismatch between the new regulations—perhaps not so much instigated by a societal need as by external pressure—and rather conservative attitudes of a considerable part of the society, especially the men.

At the same time, inadvertently or not, apparent misunderstandings have arisen. For instance, the opponents of the new solution have pointed out that its only benefit is a surname that is shorter (and therefore less unwieldy in dealing with foreigners), yet the same effect might and should have been achieved more easily by renouncing the *-evič(i)-* affix. This rather misses the point of the 2003 resolution, which was not a shortening (after all, the ending *-ė* applies to all surnames, not only to those with *-evič(i)-*) but offering an option for women not to indicate their marital status in surnames. Moreover, in the opinion of the opponents of unsuffixed surnames, such a name would reveal its bearer as being a woman of marriageable age who had in fact probably been married at least once, because her surname was changed, while neither young girls nor old age pensioners would call themselves by such name forms. In fact, all women, not only married or divorced ones, have the right to apply for surname change by force of the 2003 resolution.

In 2009, the year of heated media debates in Lithuania surrounding the issue of feminine surnames, the positioning of women who favoured the newly introduced surname option as immoral and sexually promiscuous became visible and defined the area of the debate. Not only did the journalists writing about the topic feel forced to address this charge, but even Irena Smetonienė, the then head of the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, joined in protesting against the denigration of women who use what came to be perceived as masculine surname forms (Bareišis 2009).

Other arguments from the State Commission were related more to the language than to morals and were consequently not as elusive and easy to reject. The factual argumentation went in two directions. First, the newly proposed forms with the ending *-ė* were described as traditionally existing in Lithuanian (alongside those with the suffix *-yčia*—Jonikas 1976) and backed by such undisputed authorities as Jonas Jablonskis, according to whom surnames with the suffixes *-aitė*, *-ytė* and *-ūtė* are said to be relatively new in the language, dating back to the 1920s. Although the oldest single attestations of the suffixed feminine surnames date back to the 16th century, they only became more frequent in the 17th century. Thus, one cannot say that they have been used since time immemorial, contrary to the claims that they are Indo-European[1]. Incidentally, the attestations of surnames with the suffixes *-ova*, *-evna* and *-ovna* come from the same time, giving rise to the second argument employed by the State Commission—namely, the suggestion that it is exactly the traditional feminine suffixes (and not the "new" ones) that are Polish in spirit.[2] In other words, the "traditional" ones are not so traditional in that light but rather re-invented and possibly even un-Lithuanian.

The women who decided to use the new surnames also emphasised the aspect of personal freedom and the fact that languages change. Among these women were linguist Irena Baliulė,[3] pop singer Natalija Zvonkė-Bunkė,[4] journalist Indrė Viržintė, circus magician Diana Gaičiūnaitė-Dirmė (cf. Dovidavičienė 2009) and writer Ona Baliukonė. The research commissioned by the newspaper "Lietuvos rytas" revealed that in 2009, six years after the new regulation was introduced, there were already 3480 women in Lithuania with the non-suffixed surname (Gudavičiūtė 2009); in 2023, that number is set at approximately nine thousand.[5]

5. Other Sources of Influence on Lithuanian Feminine Surnames

Apart from the "neutral" *-ė*-suffixed form, the traditional surname system is being undermined from several other directions, leading to certain societal habituation to forms from outside the traditional pattern and also acting like a foot-in-the-door phenomenon (once a minor concession is made, it will be easier to obtain a major one). One of them is the use of surnames for unmarried women by married ones, a phenomenon that disturbs the consistency of the pattern. The list of publicly known women who chose to keep their maiden names after marriage is quite long: fashion models Asta Valentaitė and Monika Račiūnaitė, designer Daiva Urbonavičiūtė, politician Nijolė Oželytė, actress Vaiva Mainelytė, pianist Guoda Gedvilaitė, singers Jurga Šedulkytė and Irena Starošaitė, writer Jolita Seredaitė, ballet dancer Loreta Bartusevičiūtė, hosts of TV programmes Nomeda Marčėnaitė and Živilė Vaškytė, theatre manager Giedrė Liugaitė, etc. This is perhaps not so surprising, considering the fact that the signatories of the 2009 letter to the parliament advised the women wishing to conceal their marital status to keep their maiden name after marriage.[6]

Another factor contributing to the trend is for women to use masculine surnames. Examples include Daina Bosas (Danish citizen, nee Randers); Izolda Gudelis (married a Lithuanian of American citizenship); TV hostess Lidija Rasutis (lived in the USA); director of the Kuronian Spit national park, Aušra Feser; designer Aušra Žvirblienė-Haglund; graphic designer and jeweller, Jurga Karčiauskaitė-Lago; as well as academics Vaida Našlėnaitė Eberhardt, Inga Hilbig and Eglė Vaivadaitė-Kaidi. Admittedly, most of them owe their surnames to foreign husbands but not all. For instance, journalist Aurelija Simutis has no foreign citizenship or husband; she has borne her masculine name since 1999 and helped initiate the 2003 law change.[7]

The supporters of the 2003 resolution invoke a number of famous or at least publicly visible Lithuanian women who once bore or are now bearing (for a variety of reasons) non-suffixed surnames or surname-like pen names: Salomėja Nėris, Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė, Eva Simoneit, Marija Gimbutas, Liūnė Sutema, Eglė Juodvalkė, Carla Rigg and Vilė Vėl.

Yet another foot-in-the-door mechanism comes in the form of non-suffixed, undeclinable Polish minority surnames for women (cf. *Ana Vonsovič*, gen. *Anos Vonsovič*, dat. *Anai Vonsovič*, etc.), as well as Russian and Ukrainian surname patterns (*Alina Orlova/Orlovskaja, Evelina Sašenko*) and the names of foreigners that appear in Lithuanian media.

The most recent voice in the debate is the 2023 proposal by Lithuanian politician and MP Ieva Pakarklytė that an exception be made for surnames that end with *-a* or *-ia* in the masculine form (e.g., *Juška*, *Švėgžda*, *Šarka*, *Pelėda*, *Mažeika*, *Lydeka*, *Strolia*), whose feminine forms would be, according to the bill, identical to the masculine ones.[8] The arguments used on this occasion ranged from linguistic ones (Lithuanian masculine surnames ending with *-a* are grammatically feminine, with many identical to feminine-gender common nouns still in use today, e.g., *pelėda*—"owl", *lydeka*—"pike", *šarka*—"magpie"; therefore, it is a paradox that women must not bear them) to those invoking identity and personal freedom. It is worth noting that in the case of such surnames as *Lapė* or *Kregždė*, which end with *-ė*[9], the "neutral" feminine surname introduced in 2003 was also formally identical to the masculine one.

Even though the suggestion would concern only a small segment of the surname pool, it nevertheless occasioned considerable public debate. Some journalists, using slippery-slope argumentation, envisioned further changes, which in their opinion would ultimately destroy the surname system, "which we have already systematically organised after all the occupiers, foreign rule and forced assimilation".[10] The side effect of the proposed regulation, if eventually accepted, would be the introduction of yet another way for women's surnames in Lithuania to not reveal the marital status of their bearers.

6. Slovakia

In contrast to Lithuania, Slovak surnames do not reveal a woman's marital status, although feminine surnames are obligatory by law (cf. *Pravidlá* 2000). They are formed

with the suffix *-ová* added to the masculine form of nominative-type surnames (see Table 2). This is the general rule, subject to certain morphological adjustments due to the historical development of Slavic languages, which included, e.g., the admission of Romanian, Albanian or Turkish surnames into the name stock (1c). Moreover, surnames that end in *-ec*, *-ek* or *-ok* may drop the vowel in the feminine form in the last syllable (1b), though native surnames with features of foreign orthography typically retain these vowels (1b'). The preservation (or the lack of it) of these vowels may also be related to the contemporary etymological transparency of a surname, to the family tradition of using the feminine form or to other factors too numerous to further discuss here. There are also modifications in the case of some foreign surnames.

Table 2. Feminine surname formation in contemporary Slovakia.

Surname Type	Masculine Form—Examples	Feminine Form
1a. Nominal type	Mečiar Bednár Ondrejov	Mečiar-ová Bednár-ová Ondrejov-ová
1b. Nominal type with morphological adjustments	Škorec Vlček Svitok	Škorc-ová Vlčk-ová Svitk-ová
1b'. Exceptions—native surnames with the features of foreign orthography	Jellinek	Jellinek-ová
1c. Nominal type with a final vowel—including the *-u* ending ones of Romanian, Albanian or Turkish origin	Ryba Lacko Olteanu	Ryb-ová Lack-ová Oltean-ová
2. Adjectival type	Smutn-ý Biel-y Radeck-i	Smutn-á Biel-á Radeck-á
3. Surnames ending with *-iech*, *-ech*, *-ých*,*-eje*, *-oje*, *-e*	Balažoviech Mikulášových Kováčeje	Balažoviech-ová or Balažoviech Mikulášových-ová or Mikulášových Kováčeje-ová or Kováčeje
Surnames ending with *-ovie* or *-ů*	Brezíkovie Jirků	Brezíkovie Jirků

In the adjectival type, only *-á* is added. However, certain features inherently present in the system act as a foot-in-the-door phenomenon. In the case of surnames that in the masculine form end with *-iech*, *-ech* and *-ých*,[11] the *-ová* suffix is not obligatory; this similarly occurs in those ending in *-eje*, *-oje* and *-e*. Moreover, in the case of the native ending *-ovie* or the Czech ending *-ů* (e.g., *Jirků*), the feminine form is the same as the masculine one.

There are exceptions to the principles above, which are visible in public life. For instance, the singers Szidi Tobias (of Hungarian ancestry), Dara Rolins and Jana Kirschner, as well as the hostess of TV programmes and business coach Andrea Vadkerti all use non-suffixed surnames. Incidentally, in 1997, Vadkerti was officially required to use the suffixed surname form Vadkertiová in her TV programmes.[12]

By law, the feminine suffix in surnames is not obligatory if one of the spouses is not a citizen of Slovakia; if both spouses are citizens of Slovakia, but the wife is of a non-Slovak nationality (this refers especially to Hungarians—the most numerous minority, whose naming patterns markedly differ from Slovak ones) or if a female citizen of Slovakia is also a citizen of another country. The renouncing of the feminine suffix in such a case is not treated as a name change (*Zákon* 2006, §7 (2) d).

Those who support the status quo stress the integrity of the language system and its tradition (for a discussion of both with reference to feminine surnames, see Valentová 2016), patriotism or potential problems with communication. Thus, it would be impossible and ungrammatical, they claim, to say "Poviem pani Straka" ("I'll tell Mrs Straka") instead of: "Poviem pani Strakovej".[13]

Their opponents emphasise individual liberty, potential problems abroad (when a family is not recognised as such due to the differences in the surnames of its members) and the comic aspect of foreign surnames with Slovak suffixes, such as Icelandic, Lithuanian, Chinese, Indonesian or Hungarian surnames, respectively: *Björk Gudmundsdottirová*, *Edita Pucinskaiteová*,[14] *Gong Liová*, *Megawati Sukarnoputriová*, *Loschan Férencnéová*.[15]

In 2012, a proposal to allow Slovak women to choose non-suffixed surnames upon written request was put forward by the Ministry of the Interior, led by Robert Kaliňák. However, the Ministry of Culture opposed the project, arguing that registration is conducted in the state language—Slovak—therefore, the data entered into the register must respect its rules. The proposal would thus be contrary to the State Language Act.[16] Consequently, the project was not implemented.

7. Czechia[17]

Similarly to Slovakia, feminine surnames are also obligatory in documents and in general public use in Czechia. They are formed with the suffix *-ová* added to the masculine form of nominative-type surnames (owing to the history of Slavic languages; similar to Slovak surnames, there are certain morphological adjustments connected with the names that have a movable *-e-*, *-o-* or *-a-*before the word-final consonant; see 1b in Table 3) and with the suffix *-á* in the case of adjectival-type surnames. Also, similar to Slovak, the final vowel disappears in native surnames ending in *-a*, *-e*, *-ě* and *-o* (1c in Table 3).

Table 3. Feminine surname formation in contemporary Czechia.

Surname Type	Masculine Form—Examples	Feminine Form
1a. Nominal type	Novák Kubiš	Novák-ová Kubiš-ová
1b. Nominal type with morphological adjustments	Štěpánek Havel	Štěpánk-ová Havl-ová
1c. Nominal type with final vowel	Svoboda Kubice Purkyně Máslo	Svobod-ová Kubic-ová Purkyň-ová Másl-ová
2. Adjectival type	Mal-ý	Mal-á
Surnames ending with *-ů*	Jirků Paulů Janů	Jirků Paulů Janů
Surnames ending with *-i*, *-y*, *-u* (typically of non-Czech origin)	Petöfi Konopí Bondy Dočekau Dovrtěu	Petöfi-ová or Petöfi Konop-ová or Konopí Bondy-ová or Bondy Dočekau-ová or Dočekau Dovrtěu-ová or Dovrtěu
The plural genitive form surnames ending with *-ých*	Malých Černých	Malých Černých
Many foreign surnames, also dialectal ones	Szabó Karenin Fojtův	Szabó-ová or Szabó Karenin-ová or Karenina Fojt-ová or Fojtův

The foot-in-the-door phenomena are quite similar in their essence to Slovak ones. For instance, surnames ending with *-ů* do not form suffixed feminine forms (i.e., both

men and women bear the same form). In the case of some surnames of non-Czech origin, it is permitted when the feminine form in the nominative is identical to the masculine one. Surnames ending in *-ých*, which etymologically have the plural genitive form, still grammatically transparent to Czech language users, have the same nominative form for both genders. Finally, in the case of many surnames of foreign origin, it is admissible for their female bearers to use the non-suffixed form (e.g., *Szabó*—of Hungarian origin), or to use the feminine form typical of the language of origin (e.g., *Karenin*—of Russian origin). The same applies to certain surnames of dialectal origins.

By law, the feminine suffix in surnames has not been obligatory since 2000 for women who are Czech citizens of non-Czech nationality (at the written request of the woman concerned or of the parents of a female child). Since 2004, this possibility has been available to Czech citizens of non-Czech nationality, to Czech citizens who have or will have permanent residency abroad, to foreigners and to Czech women who marry foreigners (cf. Harvalík 2016).

Similarly to the Slovak language, the supporters of preserving the Czech system of feminine surname formation also emphasise tradition and the cohesion of the language system. As Harvalík (2016) noted, "The forming of feminine surname forms (native and foreign) may be by its bearers perceived as inappropriate change, but insisting that it not take place interferes strongly with the Czech language system" (p. 28). At the same time, the consistent top-to-bottom introduction of the obligatory suffixation of Czech female surnames may be linked to de-Germanization after WW2 and generally to compulsory Czechization, as evidenced by the fate of the names of foreigners in post-war Czechia (Kolek and Valdrová 2020, pp. 50–51).

Their opponents stress individual freedom, human rights and present gender inequality. According to linguist Jana Valdrová, "various forms of surnames and cultures used to coexist in the country up until the Second World War. After the Expulsion of Germans of former Czechoslovakia, foreign, uninflected forms of surnames stopped being used".[18] Yet another aspect of the situation is the fact that, as observed by Jana Talmanová, head registrar at Prague 1 City Hall, the current law has forced many women to relinquish their Czech nationality—they instead wish to be registered as Greeks, Ukrainians or Hungarians (cited in Ponikelska 2004).

In 2015, a lecture with a following debate devoted to the problem of suffixed feminine surnames in the Czech language was organised in Prague by the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.[19] At the beginning of 2023, one of the Czech online news dailies, *Deník N*, announced that it was dropping the practice of using the suffix *-ová* for foreign women's surnames, a decision which was reportedly met with diverse reactions, from approval to protests (Fodor 2023).

8. Poland

Compared with Slovakia and Czechia, the situation in Poland appears free from conflict in the present day. From the point of view of forming feminine forms, three surname types can be distinguished today (see Table 4). The first and probably largest group (nearly 63 per cent among the most frequent one thousand surnames) comprises nominal-type names, which have the same masculine and feminine form in official use today. The second largest (about 36 per cent in the top thousand) is the adjectival-type group ending with *-ski* or *-cki*/*-dzki* (in their feminine form *-ska* or *-cka*/*-dzka*, respectively). The third group is interesting, though numerically insignificant (under 2 per cent in the top thousand): it is adjectival but mostly ending in *-y* or occasionally *-i*, both corresponding to *-a* in the feminine form. These surnames are often identical with common adjectives, e.g., *biały*—"white", *cichy*—"silent", *lekki*—"light (not heavy)", and it is largely for this reason that the woman has a choice whether to use them in the masculine or feminine form. Since the choice is legally binding for all her female offspring, the moment when women can choose the form of their surname basically occurs at marriage.

Table 4. Feminine surname formation in contemporary Poland.

Surname Type	Masculine Form—Examples	Feminine Form
1. Nominal type	Nowak Wójcik Kowalczyk Mazur Fredro Sikora Kmita	
2. Adjectival -ski/-cki (-dzki) ending	Kowalsk-i Malinowsk-i Rudeck-i Zawadzk-i	Kowalsk-a Malinowsk-a Rudeck-a Zawadzk-a
3. Adjectival -y/-i ending	Biał-y Cich-y Lekk-i	Biał-y or Biał-a Cich-y or Cich-a Lekk-i or Lekk-a

Until the Second World War, however, the first (nominal) surname type was traditionally suffixed (see Table 5). Most surnames of that type used to assume the suffix *-owa* for married women and *-ówna* for unmarried ones.[20] Only if the masculine surname ended with *-a* was the suffix different, often with complex morphophonetic modifications.

Table 5. Feminine surname formation before WW2.

Surname Type	Masculine Form—Examples	Feminine Form—Married Women	Feminine Form—Unmarried Women
Nominal type with ending other than *-a*	Nowak Wójcik Kowalczyk Mazur Fredro	Nowak-owa Wójcik-owa Kowalczyk-owa Mazur-owa Fredr-owa	Nowak-ówna Wójcik-ówna Kowalczyk-ówna Mazur-ówna Fredr-ówna
Nominal type *-a* ending	Sikor-a Kmit-a	Sikorz-yna Kmic-ina	Sikorz-anka Kmici-anka

The reasons for the active (re-)adoption of all these complicated patterns can be found in the socio-political history of the country. At the end of the 18th century, Poland was partitioned among Russia, Prussia and Austria. Consequently, German, as one of the new languages of civil registration, and French, as the language of the educated in 19th century Russia, are considered likely factors contributing to the gradual demise of feminine surname suffixes. Another one might be the beginnings of the emancipation of Polish women at the time. These changes did not go unnoticed. In 1907, Polish poet Lucjan Rydel wrote the following about these suffixes:

> While in Bohemia, I used to witness misunderstandings due to the same feminine ending -ova for the mother and the daughter [. . .] I used to think then with pride that the Polish language has such beautiful and logical distinctions in its very endings, as well as the comfort and conciseness resulting from richness; now there's talk of expulsion from language of such a beautiful, clever and useful trait! Why? Because a couple thousand female maniacs and bluestockings feel like it! Millions of Polish peasants keep this distinction and they will keep it because they are not big-headed. (Rydel 1907, p. 10, own translation)

Rydel also envisioned the likely confusion that would ensue if feminine surnames were deprived of suffixes and used in dependent cases.

Suffixation was already slowly dying out in 1918, when Poland regained independence. Then, the suffixation of feminine surnames became obligatory. The *-a*-ending type was especially troublesome, to the extent that registry clerks had to receive detailed written instructions on how to form feminine surnames for each of the 32 different morphological patterns (Litwin 1932, p. 25). Interestingly, in 1924, on average only about half of the women who bore suffixable surnames voluntarily used them with suffixes (Walkowiak 2012).

After WWII, suffixed surnames ceased to be officially used, although shortly after the war, vestiges of pre-war discussions occasionally resurfaced in scholarly writings of Polish language specialists, despite state regulations. Accordingly, in 1951, Pawłowski, writing in a spirit that today sounds laden with heavy sex bias, warned against the likely misunderstandings that might result from the inability to identify the gender of the person in question; thus, a client who trusted a male dentist or a male barrister more than a female one might be unpleasantly disappointed if, upon entering the waiting room or the barrister's chambers, he would find a woman instead (Pawłowski 1951, pp. 41–42).

Today the suffixed nominal surname forms only appear in informal—especially spoken—language, sometimes with derogatory undertones (cf. Skudrzyk[owa] 1996). Even when not pejorative, they often function independently of marital status, as evidenced by several actresses, who, despite being married, use forms characteristic of unmarried women, probably to make their surnames more attractive (*Beata Ścibakówna*, *Agnieszka Kotulanka*, *Zofia Kucówna*). Another professional group in which suffixed surnames could still be found after 1945 were some writers (*Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina*, *Joanna Kulmowa*) or university specialists of the Polish language or literature (*Zofia Kurzowa*, *Maria Renata Mayenowa*).[21] However, in the 21st century, even Polish language professors believe that "the custom of endowing surnames with maiden suffixes is for psycho-sociological and morphological reasons a thing of the past in language. For why should a woman inform people by the shape of her surname about her marital status?" (Miodek 2006). Contrary to Rydel's fears, the non-declinability of all feminine surnames that do not end in *-a* is the norm today and an inherent feature of these names in Polish.

9. Other European Countries

Official feminine surnames also exist in Latvia, Russia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Macedonia. They only preserve the masculine/feminine contrast (and not married vs. unmarried). In other Slavic states, as well as in the region of Lusatia (Germany), suffixed feminine surnames only have informal status. For example, in Slovenia, official surnames are the same for both sexes (*Svet*, *Maze*): when referring to a man, they are inflected; when to a woman—uninflected. Their use with suffixes is obligatory (grammatically, not legally) when a woman is only referred to by her surname: *Svetova*, *Mazejeva*. There are two types of feminine suffixes: *-ova* after a hard consonant (*Danilova*, *Trdinova*, *Kozakova*) and *-eva* after a (genetically) soft consonant (*Bulovčeva*, *Majdičeva*, *Mazejeva*). Recently, there has been an increasing tendency to omit the *-ova*/*-eva* suffix in speech, possibly due to the fact that such surnames are felt to indicate possession, which is not politically correct today. Adjectival surnames are characterised by differential gender: *Matičetov–Matičetova* (Nowakowska 2016). In Croatia, the distinction between masculine and feminine surnames has disappeared altogether, its only contemporary vestige perhaps being the practice in the media of adding the suffix *-ova/-eva*—in order to enable declension—to surnames of female foreigners that do not end in *-a*, e.g., *Steffi Grafova* (Motschenbacher and Weikert 2015, p. 79).

10. Conclusions

The history of feminine surnames in Central Europe follows a developmental pattern and a specific chronological order, with a dichotomic division into those for married and unmarried women slowly disappearing, so that only one female surname form is left—though even that one may prove controversial if its use entails what comes to be perceived as a violation of personal freedom.

Lithuanian is one of the late-standard languages (Subačius 2002). Its standardization dates back to the 19th century, in contrast to many languages in Western Europe (as well as Polish and Hungarian), where it took place in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Late standardization is what Lithuanian shares with Belarusian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian; probably Czech and Latvian should also be included here. According to Vaicekauskienė (2012), "this has marked the standardization ideologies with the expressed need for constant institutionalised protection of the authenticity and purity of the established state language from any external influence" (p. 84). Yet this does not seem to be the only reason for the emotional surname debates in contemporary Lithuania, Czechia or Slovakia (but not in other countries with feminine surnames).

Latvia seems to offer an explanation. Its present surname pattern owes its existence to a 1927 reform, whereby a two-way system with no suffixes was introduced, featuring only the endings *-a* or *-e* for women and *-s*/*-š* or *-is* for men, respectively: *Kalns–Kalna*, *Ozoliņš–Ozoliņa*, *Balodis–Balode* (Hanks 2003, p. xcv). There are some exceptions to the pattern though—surnames with the same ending for males and females (*Liepa*, *Egle*) or foreign, non-declinable vowel-ending surnames (*Martinelli*, *Iannaccaro*) as well as a certain pre-war tradition of the masculine surname form for women, not followed any more today. Nevertheless, in contrast to Lithuania, Latvian women do not appear interested in contesting the *status quo*.[22] It would seem that, as there is no information about the surname bearer's marital status in suffixes, nor is there a connotation of ownership evidently still felt by users of the suffixes *-owa*, *-ová* or *-ienė* (despite claims by linguists that such suffixes are not indicative of possession today), Latvian women evidently do not find gendered surnames in any way problematic.

The proprietary dependence of women on men, implied by the suffixed surname, is perhaps the common denominator that unites the surname debates in Lithuania with those in Czechia, Slovakia and—before the war—Poland. The adverse consequences of the feeling of ownership—incompatible with lifestyles in contemporary European countries—are visible even in those naming cultures in which feminine surnames are not formed by suffixation. For example, in English-speaking countries not long ago, it was quite usual to refer to a married woman using the full name of her husband. Examples include the actress known to the audience as *Mrs Patrick Campbell*, as well as women writers who wrote not under their real names but under the names *Mrs Humphry Ward*, *Mrs James Joyce Arthur*, *Mrs Robert Henrey* or *Mrs Henry Wood*. In a similar fashion, for centuries, Hungarian women used to adopt their husband's full name with the feminine derivative (formative syllable) *-né* after marriage, abandoning their maiden name altogether, and this also occurred in official documents, e.g., *Kis* [husband's surname] *Jánosné* [husband's given name *János* + *-né*] (Fercsik 2012). The above-mentioned names symbolically expressed the possession of a woman by a man, to the extent that not only her maiden (birth) name but even her own given name disappeared in, e.g., official correspondence or even on tombstones.[23]

Putting female surnames in the service of the nation constitutes another common feature in some of the analysed countries. In Poland, this happened after WW1, in Czechoslovakia—after WW2. Other than in Poland, though, in the Czechoslovak case ethnic homogenization was also involved:

> From the perspective of gender onomastics, it is possible to see the surprisingly close bond between personal names and the political situation of the day. The pre-war multinational society was characterized by a variety of given names and surnames. From 1946, both names and surnames were Czechized. (Kolek and Valdrová 2020, p. 54)

There is also an interesting parallelism between the Czech argument that a sentence like *Susan Sontag navštívila Shirley Temple* ("Susan Sonntag visited Shirley Temple", cf. Kolek and Valdrová 2020) precludes the correct recognition of the subject and object when used without suffixes, and a similarly constructed Polish sentence, *Baran mówi o Kowal* ("Baran is

speaking about Kowal", cf. Pawłowski 1951), faces the same analogical objections—in the latter case, however, the worries appear immaterial today.

Yet another shared reason for controversies surrounding feminine surnames might be the fact that their creation can pose problems. Rules for their formation tend to be complex. For instance, registry clerks in interwar Poland had to use special books with instructions that helped them build feminine surnames correctly, taking into account such counter-intuitive (and occasionally, also hard to pronounce or spell) forms as *Gaździna* and *Gaździanka* from *Gazda*; *Różdżyna* and *Różdżanka* from *Różga*; *Wydżdżyna* and *Wydżdżanka* from *Wydźga*; and *Pocieszyna* and *Pocieszanka* from *Pociecha* (Walkowiak 2012). Minority and international aspects are also not to be overlooked: foreign surnames embellished with native suffixation acquire some hybrid characteristics that may look grotesque (e.g., in the case of foreigners' names in the media), violate the bearer's identity (in the case of national or ethnic minorities), or simply pose problems abroad (where female surnames may fail to be recognized as related to their male versions). All things considered, a combination of all the above—the implication of ownership, a history of prescriptivism and various above-mentioned pragmatic and identity considerations—might jointly contribute to the tendency towards the slow disappearance of feminine surname forms.

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Notes

1 http://www.ve.lt/naujienos/lietuva/lietuvos-naujienos/kam-moterims-vyriskos-pavardes/ (accessed on 12 September 2023).
2 Ibid. It would seem that a suggestion of a linguistic feature in Lithuanian being genetically Polish is detrimental for the favourable evaluation of this feature.
3 http://www.ve.lt/naujienos/nuomones/nuomones/ar-moteris-turi-teise-trumpinti-pavarde-44048/ (accessed on 12 September 2023).
4 According to anecdotal evidence, it was Zvonkė's high-profile non-suffixed surname that occasioned the 2009 media debate, six years after the new regulation was introduced.
5 https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/2027756/parlamente-pirmas-zingsnis-del-siulymo-leisti-moteru-pavardes-rasyti-su-galune-a (accessed on 12 September 2023).
6 See note 3 above.
7 http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/emigrants/lietuvos-moteru-vargai-del-pavardes.d?id=30709499 (accessed on 12 September 2023).
8 https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/e557d8a0ea5611eda305cb3bdf2af4d8?jfwid=-bxdpcdur9 (accessed on 12 September 2023).
9 In Lithuanian the nouns that gave rise to these surnames are gramatically feminine: *lapė* 'fox', *kregždė* 'swallow'.
10 https://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/nuomones/dalia-kiseliunaite-dar-karta-apie-moteru-pavardziu-burbula-18-2064732 (accessed on 12 September 2023).
11 In contrast with the earlier discussed types of Slovak surnames, these are structurally in plural genitive form, somewhat like *the Wilsons'*. One can easily imagine the genesis of such a surname: *Whose boy is that? The Wilsons'*.
12 https://www.sme.sk/c/2065396/zenske-priezvisko-bez-pripony-ova-uvedene-v-matrike-sa-nesmie-pouzivat-vo-verejnom-styku.html (accessed on 12 September 2023).
13 http://archiv.extraplus.sk/2153/komplexy-z-prechylovania (accessed on 12 September 2023).
14 While incorrect, this form appeared in the Slovak press, with 11 corpus attestations (cf. Garabík 2005).
15 https://korpus.juls.savba.sk/attachments/publications/2005_Garabik_menazeny.pdf (accessed on 12 September 2023).
16 https://domov.sme.sk/c/6673595/kalinak-chce-dat-zenam-moznost-nepouzivat-ova-madaric-je-proti.html (accessed on 12 September 2023).
17 The principles of forming feminine surnames are outlined according to the set of principles *Internetová jazyková příručka*, 2008–2017, prepared by the Institute of the Czech Language of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, http://prirucka.ujc.cas.cz/?id=700#nadpis7 (accessed on 12 September 2023).

[18] Daniela Kaňková *The Peculiar Culture Of Gender Surname Inflection*, 1 February 2021. https://femonomic.com/the-peculiar-culture-of-gender-surname-inflection/ (accessed on 12 September 2023).

[19] *Stát mě přechýlil.* Noc vědců a vědkyň (European Researchers' Night), 25 September 2015.

[20] The only exception was surnames whose masculine form ends in *-g*, *-ge*, *-go* (*Szeląg*, *Lange*, *Wielgo*)—the surnames of unmarried women should end in *-anka*, not *-ówna* (*Szelążanka*, *Lanżanka*, *Wielżanka*) to avoid the association with the appellative *gówna* 'feces'.

[21] For a more detailed discussion of feminine surnames in Polish, see (Walkowiak 2016).

[22] Opinion of linguist Sanita Lazdiņa, email communication of 18 August 2017.

[23] Cf. the photo of the tomb of István Markus and his wife at http://felvidek.ma/2016/12/a-zselyi-evangelikus-temeto/ (accessed on 12 September 2023). Today the -né-ending names are just one of several officially acceptable options in Hungary.

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