

Work-related language learning in

Macedonia

Majority language learning (L2) for newly-arrived migrants

Most of the regulations regarding language acquisition by migrants or ethnic communities in the Republic of Macedonia are focused on their mother tongue rather than on learning the official language of Macedonia. In this respect the larger ethnic communities attend all the school subjects in their own language in primary schools, whereas the Albanian community continues up to high school where they can study in their mother tongue. They all have Macedonian as a school subject.

On the other hand, the policies regarding the languages of the communities seek to promote tolerance and mutual understanding, so that in primary and secondary schools in the areas where larger ethnic communities learn in their own language, the other smaller communities have the opportunity to learn the language of the largest community as an optional school subject.

In 2008, the government adopted the first national migration policy and published a [national strategy](#) (2008-2015) on integration of refugees and foreigners.¹ Again the focus is on creating possibilities for

¹ The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states in its publication of August 2015, *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia As a Country of Asylum, Observations on the situation of asylum-seekers and refugees in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*:

40. In December 2008, the Government, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), adopted an Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners for the period 2008-2015. The strategy covers six main areas: 1) housing/accommodation; 2) education and training; 3) employment and vocational trainings; 4) health protection; 5) social services and social protection; and 6) community development.⁹⁰ The strategy was primarily aimed at facilitating the local integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) from the region who were granted international protection, without special consideration for refugees from outside the region.

41. At present, there are seven persons from outside the region who have been granted international protection and who reside in the country and have access to services under the Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners.⁹¹ The socio-economic integration of refugees falls under the authority of the MLSP, Section for Asylum, Migration and Humanitarian Assistance and the Centre for Social Welfare. According to the law, refugees and persons who have been granted subsidiary or temporary protection are entitled to socio-economic rights such as access to accommodation, health care, education and employment at nearly the level of citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.⁹² However, although policies for integration are in place, these policies have generally been devised with persons from within the region in mind. Persons from outside the region who have been granted international protection do not have the same integration possibilities or access to integration programmes, mostly due to language barriers, which influences the practical implementation of services. 42. One of the main obstacles for integration is the fact that language-learning opportunities are not offered by the State. Access to employment is granted by law,⁹³ but extremely difficult to obtain in practice due to language barriers, cumbersome administrative procedures, and the already high national unemployment rate (27.3 per cent at the time of writing).⁹⁴ As a result, persons who have been granted international protection generally remain unemployed and dependent on financial assistance provided under the Law on Social Protection. No specialized programmes are in place to facilitate access to education for refugee children and others who have been granted international protection.

...Recommendations: • Revise the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's Strategy for Integration of Refugees, to ensure it reflects the needs of persons from outside the region who are granted international protection; • Ensure that vocational training and Macedonian language courses are available and can be accessed by asylum-seekers, refugees and others who are granted international protection from an early stage of the procedure, so as to promote their local integration; • Institute comprehensive local integration programmes, including but not limited to, housing for refugees and others who are granted international protection.

acquisition/maintenance of the mother tongue of the immigrants through various agreements with the representatives of their respective countries. According to the Law on the Citizenship though, migrants must show knowledge of Macedonian by taking an exam.

The strategy considers all the laws regarding education and quotes some parts of them. According to the Law on Primary Education, children holding foreign citizenship or children without citizenship who reside in the Republic of Macedonia may gain elementary education under the same conditions as the children who are citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

Nevertheless, there are many recommendations for the future, regarding integration policies for migrants in which the acquisition of the official language of Macedonia is also addressed: In future, the issue of learning the Macedonian language should be regulated by a law, as a constituent part of particular compulsory programmes for integration of the designated target group in the Republic of Macedonia.

The strategy refers to an action plan for the period of 2016-2025, but this is yet to appear.

Further information

[Council of Europe surveys](#) on member state policy and practice relating to the linguistic integration of adult migrants

[European Web Site on Integration country information sheets](#)

[German government information service \(Bundeszentrale für politischen Bildung/bpb\) country profiles](#) on migration in Europe and beyond

[CEDEFOP VET in Europe project country reports](#)

[European Migration Network country fact sheets](#)

[Migration Policy Institute](#)

[Global Forum on Migration and Development Migration Profiles Repository](#)

Macedonia profile acknowledgement: Stojan Dončevski , Dragana Gjoreska (LfW Workshop participants, 2015)

Participants at the Language for Work Workshop held at the ECML in Graz on 24-25 June 2015 were asked to prepare a brief review of policies and practice in their own country/region relevant to work-related language learning for migrant/ethnic minority workers and/or low-literate majority-language speaking workers. Reviews were completed for Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy (Emilia-Romagna), Kosovo, Macedonia, Malta, Norway, Romania (Bucharest), Sweden.

⁹⁰ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners (2008-2015) and its Action Plan, which enables persons granted international protection to benefit from Government's integration measures. http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_begalci.pdf.

⁹¹ The number refers to the persons who are still present in Macedonia, as some of those who were granted international protection in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia already left the country.

⁹² Persons recognized as refugee or granted subsidiary protection are granted the same rights as nationals in accordance with relevant laws, with a few exceptions as highlighted in footnote number 6. Nevertheless the actual implementation of the provisions in practice is of concern.

⁹³ Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners, Art 12, para. 3. In practice, the provisions in the law are not implemented. The administrative procedure is cumbersome and it is often difficult to verify previous diplomas and qualifications.

⁹⁴ State Statistical Office – Republic of Macedonia – http://www.stat.gov.mk/Default_en.aspx.