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Multilingualism, a Challenge for Macedonian Institutions

Abstract

Our state is going through a language revolution, namely new languages are trying to find their path into use after this stated being redefined as multiethnic after the conflict. This paper aims to look at some issues concerning putting in use the languages, besides the Macedonian one. Before some years, by Government decision, two institutions were formed for this purpose: Language Implementation Agency of RNM and Inspectorate for the Use of Languages, whose purpose is to implement and inspect the use of the languages according to the language law. This paper outlines the language composition of the Republic of North Macedonia and briefly elaborates the Law on the Language that is spoken by at least 20% of the Citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Law on the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages. Another interesting issue, which is also the core of this research paper, is the desk-research done concerning the use of languages, based on the data on website translations, which are expressed statistically. And the last part of this research paper covers the future potential challenges that lay ahead of the implementation of these minority languages in North Macedonia.

Key Terms: *Language, agency, implementation, inspectorate, translation, law.*

I. Background Information on the Use of Languages

North Macedonia is considered a place with many nationalities and several languages. The official language of North Macedonia is Macedonian, while Albanian has co-official status. Macedonian is spoken by roughly two-thirds of the population natively and as a second language by much of the rest of the population. Albanian is the largest minority language. There are a further five national minority languages: Turkish, Romani, Serbian, Bosnian, and Aromanian. The Macedonian Sign Language is the country's official sign language.

Table no. 1: Language composition in RNM

Languages of North Macedonia 2002 census	
Macedonian	66.49%
Albanian	25.1%
Turkish	3.54%
Romani	1.90%
Serbian	1.22%
Bosnian	0.42%
Aromanian	0.34%
other / unspecified	0.99%

Source: "Macedonian census, language and religion" (PDF). www.stat.gov.mk. 2002.

According to the last 2002 census, North Macedonia had a population of 2,022,547 citizens. 1,344,815 Macedonian citizens declared that they speak Macedonian, 507,989 citizens speak Albanian, 71,757 citizens speak Turkish, 38,528 citizens speak Roma, 6,884 citizens speak Aromanian, 24,773 citizens speak Serbian, 8,560 citizens speak Bosnian and 19,241 citizens speak other languages.^[1]

II. Language Policy

The language policy in North Macedonia is regulated by the 7 Article of the Constitution of North Macedonia and the Law of languages. According to the national constitution:^[2]

1. The Macedonian language, written using its Cyrillic alphabet, is the official language throughout the Republic of North Macedonia and in the international relations of the Republic of North Macedonia.
2. Any other language spoken by at least 20 percent of the population is also an official language, written using its alphabet, as specified below.
3. Any official personal documents of citizens speaking an official language other than Macedonian shall also be issued in that language, in addition to the Macedonian language, in accordance with the law.
4. Any person living in a unit of local self-government in which at least 20 percent of the population speaks an official language other than Macedonian may use that official language to communicate with the office of the central government with responsibility for that municipality; such an office shall reply in that language in addition to Macedonian. Any person may use any official language to communicate with a main office of the central government, which shall reply in that language in addition to Macedonian.
5. In the organs of the Republic of North Macedonia, any official language other than Macedonian may be used in accordance with the law.
6. In the units of local self-government where at least 20 percent of the population speaks a particular language, that language and its alphabet shall be used as an official language in addition to the Macedonian language and the Cyrillic alphabet. With respect to languages spoken by less than 20 percent of the population of a unit of local self-government, the local authorities shall decide on their use in public bodies.
- 7.

III. Albanian Language

Besides Macedonian language, Albanian language is used as co-official along with Macedonian in the municipalities where speakers of Albanian consists at least 20% of the population or more. These include places such as Tetovo, Brvenica, Vrapchishte and other municipalities. The new law from 2019 extended the official use of Albanian over the entire country, easing communication in Albanian with the institutions. Under the new legislation, Macedonian continues to be the primary official language, while Albanian may be used now as a second one, including at a national level in official matters. The legislation stipulates also all public institutions in the country will provide Albanian translations in their everyday work. Despite since 2019 the usage of Albanian language being no longer geographically limited, the Macedonian language with the Cyrillic alphabet remains the only official language throughout the whole territory of North Macedonia and its international relations, per Macedonian Government.^[3]

IV. The Law on the Use of Languages and the Law on the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages in RNM

Under this chapter a few law issues will just be illustrated in order to provide the readers with the holistic picture of language constellation. According to the *Law on the Use of Languages*,^[4] Macedonian language is the official language in the whole territory of the RNM, but besides the Macedonian language, Albanian language is also considered official language as this language is spoken by 20% of the population within the boundaries of the Republic on North Macedonia. This law obliges all state administration bodies in the Republic of Macedonia, central institutions, public enterprises, agencies, directorates, institutions and organizations, commissions, legal entities that perform public authorizations to use the language spoken at least by 20% of the population (Albanian language), besides Macedonian language.

Besides the Macedonian language, the citizens have the right to use another language, the language spoken by at least 20% of the population in these cases and with these institutions:

- in the units of local self-government
- in judicial, administrative, enforcement proceedings, pre-trial and investigative procedures, criminal and misdemeanor procedures, litigation and non-contentious proceedings, procedure for execution of sanctions
- courts, public prosecution offices, as well as all other organ, bodies and other institutions
- in communication, use and application in all actions of the citizens in front of all the bodies that make up the state power (Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, President of the Republic of Macedonia, Government of the Republic of Macedonia, judiciary, public prosecution), Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, in the election process, education, science, health, culture, in the application of police authorizations, in the broadcasting activity, the notary, the execution, the infrastructure objects, the records, the personal documents, finances, the economy, as well as in other areas.
- Elected or appointed officials of the above-mentioned institutions whose headquarters are located in Skopje or in municipalities in which at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian language, in their communication use the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet, if at least one

of the elected or appointed officials speaks an official language other than the Macedonian language.

- If the elected official speaks a language other than Macedonian, he has the right to use the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens; MP-s in the Government, in commissions...

In the above paragraphs, I enlisted some of many uses of the language other than Macedonian but this situation differs in terrain. Though the implementation of this Law has been given time, the majority of the institutions still have not found the way to implement in practice, as it can be seen below in the Table 2.

To ease the implementation process of this Law, in 1919 the Government decided to establish an agency that will provide help for institutions concerning translation of documents from/to Albanian and Macedonian and English, to provide consultations for institutions on terminology harmonization and to provide support for both translators and institutions. Though this Agency did its best to help and provide support to institutions to implement the Law on the Use of Languages, still there had been seen a stagnation in its implementation. This made the officials decide to help the reinforcement of its implementation by establishing another institution to observe its implementation. In 2020, the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages was established.

V. Inspectorate for the Use of Languages

This institution aims at cooperating with other institutions to help the implementation of use of languages. The Inspectorate inspects the implementation of Amendment V of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and the provisions of the Law on the Use of Languages in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia by all competent institutions. Supervision includes:

- supervision over the application of the Law on the Use of Languages in the proceedings before the institutions;
- supervision over the names and seals of the institutions;
- supervision over the names of the infrastructure facilities;
- supervision over the publications in the “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” of the laws, bylaws, decisions and announcements and
- other issues determined by law, which refer to the application of the Law on the Use of Languages.^[5]

According to the Law, the inspection inspectors of the the Inspectorate should undergo a training prior to carrying out supervision of the implementation of the law. The timeframe of the training, both theoretical and practical part, takes almost a year.

VI. Results of Desk Research

Being unable to collect data from the above-mentioned institutions, I decided to do a desk research and see how much the language Law is being implemented. In the Table 2 below, you will see the Institution, its bilingual website, proceedings at the institution both in Macedonian and in Albanian language. The table includes the Legislative Power, Executive Power, Judicial Power and Local Governance.

Table 2 Desk-research of the use of languages in institutions' websites

LEGISLATIVE POWER											
No.	Institution	Name of the institution on the website		Bilingual website		Content of the website		Proceedings at the institution on website		Bilingual website	
		Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk %	Alb %
1.	Parliament of RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
EXECUTIVE POWER											
Nr.	Institution	Name of the institution on the website		Bilingual website		Content of the website		Proceedings at the institution on website		Bilingual website	
		Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk %	Mk %
1	President of RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %

2.	Government of RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x		100 %	75%
3.	Ministry of Defence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100%	50%
4.	Ministry for Internal Affairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100%	50%
5.	Ministry of Justice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100 %	50 %
6.	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x		100 %	75 %
7.	Ministry of Finance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100 %	50 %
8.	Ministry of Health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100 %	50%
9.	Ministry of Transport and Connections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100 %	50%
10.	Ministry of Economy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x		100 %	50 %

11.	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %
12.	Ministry of Information Society and Administration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75%
13.	Ministry of Work and Social Polocy	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
14.	Ministry of Education and Science	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %
15.	Ministry of local self-government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75%
16.	Ministry of Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %
17.	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75%
18.	Ministry for Political Sistem and Inter-Community Relations	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x	x	50 %	50%
JUDICIAL POWER											
No.	Institution	Name of the institution on the website		Bilingual website		Content of the website		Proceedings at the institution on website		Bilingual website	
		Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk %	Mk %

1.	Supreme Court of the RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
2.	Higher Administrative Court of the RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
3.	Administrative Court of the RNM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
4.	Court of Appeal Bitola	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100%	50%
5.	Court of Appeal Gostivar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100%	50%
6.	Court of Appeal Skopje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100%	50%
7.	Primary Court Veles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
8.	Basic Civil Court Skopje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
9.	Basic Criminal Court Skopje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	50%
10.	Primary Court Kumanovo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
11.	Primary Court Prilep	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
12.	Primary Court Struga	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
13.	Primary Court Gostivar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
14.	Primary Court Debar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	50%
15.	Primary Court Kichevo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50%
16.	Primary Court Tetovo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
LOCAL GOVERNANCE											

No.	Institution	Name of the institution on the website		Bilingual website		Content of the website		Proceedings at the institution on website		Bilingual website	
		Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk	Al	Mk %	Alb %
1.	City of Skopje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75 %
2.	Municipality of Arachinovo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	0 %	0 %
3.	Municipality of Bogovinje	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75 %
4.	Municipality of Bervenica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	100 %	75%
5.	Municipality of Butel	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
6.	Municipality of Vrapchishte	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	75 %	75 %
7.	Municipality of Gostivar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	75 %	75%
8.	Municipality of Debar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
9.	Municipality of Dolneni	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %
10.	Municipality of Zhelino	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	50 %	100 %
11.	Municipality of Zelenikove	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
12.	Municipality of Jegunivce	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %
13.	Municipality of Kichevo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
14.	Municipality of Krushevo	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
15.	Municipality of Kumanovo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	50 %

16.	Municipality of Lipkovo	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	50 %	100 %
17.	Municipality of Petrovec	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
18.	Municipality of Saraj	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	75 %	100 %
19.	Municipality of Sopishte	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %
20.	Municipality of Struga	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
21.	Municipality of Studenichani	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	xx	x	75 %	75 %
22.	Municipality of Tearce	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	75 %	75 %
23.	Municipality of Tetovo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100 %	100 %
24.	Municipality of Çair	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	75 %	75 %
25.	Municipality of Chashka	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	75 %	25 %
26.	Municipality of Chucher-Sandvo	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	✓	x	100 %	0 %

Totality of%:

95 %

59 %

Source: These data have been collected and analysed by the author

As can be seen from the table, the use of languages in North Macedonia, to my surprise, is not complete, at least based on the online data we have. The number of institutions whose websites I have checked is 61 and the languages that I checked are Macedonian and Albanian as these are the languages that find application in our territory.

Through the Law on the Use of Languages have been adopted for years now, based on the website data, we see that Macedonian is used in 95% of institutions i.e. some institutions have some parts of the website only in Albanian. On the other hand, the use of Albanian language is at lower level, only 59%, i.e. some institutions do not have their website at all in Albanian while some of the institutions have their websites on partially in Albanian.

Based on the website data, it can not be explicated why and what are the reason of this low-percentage use of the languages that are spoken by at least 20% of citizens. The reasons may be of various nature. It remains to be researched in the future.

VII. Conclusion

On one hand, as can be inferred from the text itself, the language composition of our country is abundant and its character is multilingual as it is a cradle of more than an ethnicity. This constellation represents a priceless abundance as here different cultures clash and impact each other.

On the other hand, this amalgam represents a challenge for the institutions of the Republic of North Macedonia as the implementation of the above-mentioned Law on the Use of Languages requires that institutions reinforce their capacities regarding language use like hiring translators, establishing translation sections and sectors, providing their employees with dictionaries, translation softwares and providing on-job training for their employees.

Another implication that also is inherent in the Law on the Use of Languages is finance. Many institutions are not in possession of enough financial means or they have not planned financial means for translation and/or translators, a factor that contributes to the non-implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages.

These website data may also imply that there is another opportunity for freelance translation growth. Institutions may resort to the private sector of translation to meet institutional need for translation with this pair of languages.

VIII. Reference

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