



# ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION **WITH EDUCATION**

in the languages of  
smaller communities

Република Северна Македонија  
Министерство за политички систем  
и односи меѓу заедниците



Republika e Maqedonisë së Veriut  
Ministria për Sistem Politik dhe  
Marrëdhënie Ndërmjet Bashkësive

Управа за развој и унапредување на образованието  
на јазиците на припадниците на заедниците  
Drejtoria për Zhvillimin dhe Avancimin e Arsimit në Gjuhët  
e Pjesëtarëve të Bashkësive

# ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION WITH EDUCATION

in the languages of  
smaller communities

Skopje, March 2023

- Title:** Analysis of the situation with education in the languages of smaller communities
- Authors:** Rozita Blagojevic, Ismail Demirovic, Adzer Javuz, Marija Nikolova, Elvira Jashar
- Collaborators:** Maja Cvetanoska, Sara Osmani
- Publishers:** Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the languages of the Communities, Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations, and the OSCE Mission to Skopje
- Translation:** Lukrecija Maljkovic Atanasovska
- Graphic design and print:** Polyesterday

ISBN: 978-92-9271-071-2



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
**Mission to Skopje**

This publication has been funded by the OSCE Mission to Skopje. The content of this publication does not necessarily represent the views or the position of the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

# CONTENTS

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Background information on the research</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Research methodology</b>	<b>15</b>
Research methodology and instruments	16
Sampling	16
<b>Findings</b>	<b>17</b>
Finding 1: Implementation of the teaching process in the languages of communities	18
Finding 2: Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities	18
Finding 3: Benefits of implementing the measures	19
Finding 4: Obstacles to the implementation of the measures for education in the mother tongue	20
Finding 5: Proposals for strengthening the measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue	21
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Annex 1</b>	
Results of the research on the Bosnian language in education	28
<b>Annex 2</b>	
Results of the research on the Vlach language in education	42
<b>Annex 3</b>	
Results of the research on the Romani language in education	53
<b>Annex 4</b>	
Results of the research on the Serbian language in education	62
<b>Annex 5</b>	
Results of the research on the Turkish language in education	73
<b>Annex 6</b>	
Results of the questionnaires for the schools	85
<b>Annex 7</b>	
Recommendations of the Participatory Forum	89
<b>Literature</b>	<b>92</b>

## FOREWORD

The multiethnic character of the Republic of North Macedonia is most apparent through the different use of the mother tongue in the education system that aims to provide opportunity for the children from the smaller communities to acquire their education in their mother tongue.

Mother tongue education is a basic human right, hence the priority of the Ministry of Political System and Inter-community Relations is to include a bigger number of children that learn in their mother tongue. At the same time, our commitment is to improve the educational process that is carried out in the languages of the smaller communities and the subjects that provide learning of the language and culture when regular classes are taught in a language different from the mother tongue.

The dedication of the Government to “One Society for All” is reflected in the research “Analysis of the Situation with Education in the Languages of Smaller Communities” conducted by the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Communities in co-operation with the OSCE Mission to Skopje.

A comparison between the first research from 2010 and the research completed in 2022 would indicate a significant step forward, both in the regular classes and in the elective subjects in the languages of the smaller communities.

The Ministry of Political System and Inter-community Relations in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science, local self-government, schools, other institutions and associations will commit to implementing the recommendations stemming from this research in accordance with the needs of the smaller communities.

I would like to express gratitude to the OSCE Mission to Skopje that conducted this research with the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of the Communities and financially supported its publication.

First Deputy President of the Government and  
Minister of Political System and Inter-Community Relations,

**Artan Grubi**

## INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, there have been some notable efforts to promote education in the languages of smaller communities, especially when it comes to the process of drafting norms and strategic documents which serve as the foundation of the education system in the Republic of North Macedonia. Regrettably, they have not always been accompanied by measures that support the education of members of smaller communities.

This lack of support has stalled the implementation process and instruction in the languages of smaller communities continues to show poor outcomes. This may be attributed to the lack of investment in quality teaching, which strongly impacts the inclusion of smaller communities in the teaching process in their mother tongue, as well as the motivation to select the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities.

Research in this field shows support to be mainly declarative, with no real investments aimed at improving the conditions for teaching in the languages of smaller communities, and available funds and measures mainly benefiting the two largest communities.

The education system teaches the younger generation how to respect each other and accept the differences and specifics of every community in our country, and how to jointly empower social cohesion. All of this serves as a preparation for participation in a heterogeneous European society abundant with linguistic, cultural, religious, and other diversity.

The aim of this research, *inter alia*, is to draw the attention of society to the needs of smaller communities in education, which should nurture and promote their linguistic and cultural values as a part of the rich heritage of North Macedonia. This is the crucial moment when young people need to develop the feeling of belonging to a certain culture and respect for all other cultures in our multicultural society.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This analysis of the situation with education in the languages of smaller communities is the second research carried out by the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Communities (hereinafter the Directorate) within the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations. The research was financially supported by the OSCE Mission to Skopje and was completed in 2022. The first research was carried out in 2010, and its conclusions provide the baseline against which the last 12 years is assessed. The analysis of 2022 provides answers to whether there has been progress, and identifies the obstacles the members of smaller communities encounter when using their languages in the education system.

This research, conducted between May - November 2022, aimed to find the reasons behind the low representation of the languages of the members of communities in both the elective and regular teaching process. In order to make it relevant and more sustainable, the research was divided into two parts. The first part analyses the national regulations, the laws and bylaws that regulate the education system, the strategies and the documents adopted by the Government, and the international documents addressing the education of smaller communities. In addition, data available to the Directorate and pertaining to the representation of communities in the education system by ethnicity were also analysed, as well as information on schools that offer elective and regular teaching in the languages of communities. The second part of the research was conducted through focus groups and questionnaires with parents from the Bosniak, Vlach, Roma, Serbian, and Turkish communities, teachers and school professional staff. The questionnaire was sent to 21 municipalities, but not a single one of them sent any response back.

Recently, the state has made significant progress in regards to the use of the languages of smaller communities; the Bosnian language has been included in the regular teaching process as a language of instruction since 2018 and the Serbian and Turkish languages have been taught in the form of the elective subject Language and Culture since 2019. However, despite this important advancement, the state needs to invest additional efforts, particularly for the benefit of the Vlach and Roma communities, in order to prevent the risk of their languages disappearing. In the context of the aforementioned and on

the basis of the analysis, all stakeholders, including the ministries, institutions, local government, schools, and communities themselves, should be involved in making the languages of communities more accessible to children throughout the education system. Strengthening the communication and cooperation between the key stakeholders is of pivotal significance.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE RESEARCH

Human rights are founded on the principles of respect, justice, non-discrimination, tolerance, acceptance of diversity and personal dignity. As education is one of the fundamental human rights, the country is obliged to respect the right of persons belonging to smaller communities to learn and be taught in their mother tongue, especially in areas they traditionally populate, or populate in greater percentage. These principles are embedded in the education system of the Republic of North Macedonia. Since its independence, the country has made significant amendments to the Constitution and laws in order to align them with the majority of international documents addressing the right to education and the use of languages of the members of smaller communities in the educational process, starting from pre-school, and through primary and secondary education.

In 2001, the Republic of North Macedonia introduced significant changes to the Constitution<sup>1</sup>. With Amendment IV, the Serbian and Bosniak peoples were included in the Preamble, while Amendment VIII entitled members of smaller communities to the right to be taught in their own language in primary and secondary education as prescribed by the law. The constitutional amendments were transposed into the laws on education; however, the progress was slow and the languages of instruction remained the same (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, and Serbian), just as it was before the amendments. The Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities also reported on this situation in its Second Opinion, which reads: *“The authorities should intensify efforts to expand opportunities for*

---

1 Constitution.pdf (sobranie.mk)

*members of minorities to learn their languages, as well as for education in these languages, and in accordance with their real needs and requirements, where the requirements of the Framework Convention are met. Despite the above efforts, opportunities for members of smaller communities to learn their language or to have instruction in their language are now very limited.”*

Taking into account The Hague Recommendations regarding the Educational Rights of National Minorities<sup>2</sup>, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>3</sup>, and the findings and recommendations entailed in the *Second Opinion on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* adopted on February 23, 2007, the Government and the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) adopted the Concept for Nine-Year Primary Education<sup>4</sup> in 2007, in line with its commitment to respect the linguistic and cultural identity of the members of smaller communities. Following the Concept and the Curricula from the third to the ninth grade, schools offer children the elective subject - Language and Culture of the Vlachs, Roma and Bosniaks, respectively. Students who choose this subject can study it continually until the ninth grade, with one or two hours per week.

The Concept of Nine-Year Primary Education only partially met the requirements for the members of smaller communities to be able to study their languages in the education system. In spite of requests put forward by the Turkish and the Serbian communities to study their languages in the form of elective subjects where no conditions for a regular format exist, they were rejected by the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) on the grounds that there was regular teaching in their languages. At the same time, the Bosniak community was deprived of the right to have teaching in its mother tongue<sup>5</sup>, even though the Ministry of Education and Science consented to education in the Bosnian language in 2006.

The post-conflict situation, the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Constitutional amendments greatly impacted inter-ethnic relations, especially the most vulnerable category: the pupils. In 2009, the UNICEF office in Skopje

---

2 32188.pdf (osce.org)

3 FCNM in Macedonian (coe.int)

4 [www.bro.gov.mk/ Concept of nine-year primary education](http://www.bro.gov.mk/Concept%20of%20nine-year%20primary%20education)

5 See Planning 2006, MoES - EDB

prepared a study on multiculturalism and inter-ethnic relations in education,<sup>6</sup> analysing the current situation and capacities of the educational system, in order to contribute to the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in the country. A series of recommendations emerged from the study, including:

- to ensure learning of one of the languages of ethnic communities (e.g. Albanian, Turkish, Serbian) and to treat it as more important than learning a second foreign language;
- to create conditions under which the language of the ethnic communities selected by the pupil can be mastered at least at the level of basic communication during the regular education process.

Regarding preschool education, a multicultural bilingual preschool program called Mozaik was established in 1998 and has been implemented in age-mixed groups in kindergartens ever since. The Mozaik program is conducted bilingually, between the Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian languages, based on the needs of each community. In 2012, Mozaik groups became institutionalized as part of the Macedonian educational system<sup>7</sup>. Following several research studies and recommendations for urgent measures to create an integrated and multicultural education system, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted the Strategy “*Steps towards Integrated Education in the Education System*” in 2010, the purpose of which was to promote multiculturalism and inter-ethnic integration. The strategy is divided into five thematic groups:

- Promotion of integration through joint activities;
- Integration through language learning;
- Curricula, programs and textbooks;
- Qualifications of teachers;
- Management of schools in the context of decentralization.

The second thematic group “*Integration through language learning*” had clearly defined goals which entailed activities for learning the neighbour language and early learning of the Macedonian language for children with a different mother tongue. However, despite the insistence of a member of the Directorate, this

---

6 [https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/1826/file/MK\\_MulticulturalismInEducation\\_MK.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/1826/file/MK_MulticulturalismInEducation_MK.pdf)

7 <https://www.sfcg.org/mozaik-education-macedonia/>

thematic group was not taken into consideration. The reason for disregarding the activities of this thematic group may be the lack of political will.

In order to improve the situation, in 2010, the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Communities, in cooperation with the OSCE Mission to Skopje, conducted a research study entitled *“The Conditions in Primary Education of Children Members of the Communities in the Republic of Macedonia”*. Based on the research and the data generated by the survey, the Directorate came to the following conclusions:

- A very small number of pupils enrolled to study the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks, Vlachs and Roma, respectively;
- Low awareness of parents and pupils about the option to learn the language of community as an elective subject;
- Poorly timed or omitted surveys by schools regarding awareness about the option to learn the languages of smaller communities as elective subjects;
- The high criterion for the required number of pupils (15) to form a class;
- Lack of training for the teaching staff;
- Very low coverage of pupils who learn the elective subjects Language and Culture of Bosniaks, Vlachs and Roma, respectively;
- No option to study the languages of smaller communities in the institutions of higher education (Bosnian, Vlach and Romani languages);
- Shortage of textbooks and instruction manuals for elective subjects.

The analysis points to some notable progress. The elective subjects Language and Culture of Bosniaks and Vlachs, respectively, are fully covered with textbooks from the third to the ninth grade; there is also some progress in regards to parents' awareness of the right to learn their mother tongue as an elective subject. The problems, however, remain generally the same, which the analysis of the second research study confirms by giving a realistic depiction of the situation with the mother tongue education of smaller communities since the amendments to the Constitution in 2001.

Difficulties in learning the languages of the members of smaller communities are also reported by the Advisory Committee in their Fourth Opinion<sup>8</sup>, which

---

8 [DisplayDCTMContent \(coe.int\)](#) / Fourth opinion of the Advisory Committee, 2016

expresses regret that their requests to learn their mother tongues were rejected by the local authorities, especially by municipalities where smaller communities are a prevailing population, such as the municipalities of Bitola and Prilep, where the number of pupils of the Roma community is quite high. The Committee, however, hails the fact that the Bosnian language is taught as an experimental programme.

The Ministry of Education and Science, with the Decision of the Minister of Education and Science in 2018/19, introduced the Bosnian language as the fifth teaching language in primary education through an experimental programme.

In order to meet the demands of the Serbian and Turkish communities to study their mother tongue as an elective subject where there is no opportunity to teach it on a regular basis, the changes made in the Curriculum in 2019 introduced Language and Culture of the Serbs and Turks. These changes confirm the commitment of the Ministry of Education and Science to respect the identity and interests of all citizens in accordance with the Constitution, laws and Articles 12 and 14 of the Framework Convention for Protection of National Minorities.

Regarding textbooks, the Ministry of Education and Science made efforts to provide textbooks for members of smaller communities who study their mother tongue as an elective subject: Language and Culture of Bosniaks, Vlachs, Roma, Serbs and Turks<sup>9</sup>, respectively. Two of these communities have textbooks for the third up to the ninth grade, available both in printed and in electronic form; members of Roma community do not yet have textbooks on Romani language and culture for the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grade. For members of Serbian and Turkish communities, BDE has prepared curricula from the third to the ninth grade and is currently working on textbooks for the third and fourth grades. The Ministry of Education, through its Pedagogical Service, continuously publishes competitions for the preparation of textbooks, especially for Language and Culture of Roma, but there have been no interested applicants to work on it. The process of preparing textbooks is accompanied by a series of problems such as finding reviewers, which closely correlates with the issue of standards

---

9 [Zakon za ucebnici za osnovno i sredno obrazovanje-pdf.pdf \(mon.gov.mk\)](#)

required for teaching staff<sup>10</sup>. As a result, there is a need for an amendment that regulates the norms for teachers, including the Law on Textbooks.

The Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOOM) carried out a research study called *“Education in the languages of smaller ethnic communities”*.<sup>11</sup> The subject of this analysis is education where teaching is conducted in the languages of smaller ethnic communities, the nurturing of the language and culture of the community, and the implementation of:

- a) the teaching process in the languages of smaller ethnic communities,
- b) the elective subject: Language and Culture of members of smaller ethnic communities.

Several activities and measures are recommended for more successful implementation and promotion of the education of members of smaller ethnic communities and the elective subject Language and Culture<sup>12</sup>. In its conclusions, FOOM provided a series of recommendations to improve education in the languages of members of smaller communities.

In 2018, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted the Education Strategy 2018 - 2025, the purpose of which is mainly:

- Promotion of quality education and its relevance for the development priorities of Macedonian society (especially when it comes to productive and engaged citizenry) and for the needs of the labour market, oriented to achieving expected learning outcomes, accepting multiculturalism, inter-ethnic integration, respect for diversity and democratic values;
- Promotion of the integration of pupils belonging to different ethnic communities through joint curricular and extracurricular activities and joint learning of languages;
- Improvement of the spatial conditions for integration, ensuring interpersonal and intercultural social and societal competencies;
- Enrolment of children of appropriate age in school, regardless of their background and skills, especially those from marginalized groups (for ex-

---

10 See Curricula of Language and Culture of Communities 2018

11 [https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici\\_O6.pdf](https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici_O6.pdf)

12 See page 14,15 [https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici\\_O6.pdf](https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici_O6.pdf)

ample, Roma children) and ensuring that they complete the minimum of primary education;

- Provision of scholarships and tutoring for Roma pupils in secondary schools.

The 2018 Report of the European Commission on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia reports that the country made moderate progress in education with the adoption of the Comprehensive Education Strategy. The recommendations for 2018 were aimed at:

- a) achieving the objectives and activities of the Strategy;
- b) increasing support for teacher training and professional development;
- c) improving access to quality education for children with disabilities and children from the Roma community.

In the course of 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science adopted the Concept on Primary Education,<sup>13</sup> which stipulated that every school, in addition to the compulsory subjects, could opt to offer elective subjects of interest to the pupils of that school, taking into account the capacities of its teaching staff and its available resources.

In fact, every school must offer two lists of elective subjects: one relating to learning a second foreign language, and another referring to the so-called “free elective subjects”, depending on the interests of pupils and the capacity of the school. In addition, schools can also offer elective subjects related to learning the language of the community, learning the second official language in the municipality, learning the Albanian language and/or learning the culture and the language of smaller ethnic communities, intended for the members of those communities.

An innovation in the Concept is learning the language of the community as an elective subject from the fourth grade, intended for learning the second official language in the municipality in which the number of residents who belong to the community is higher than 20% of the total population in the municipality, a figure which is far too high for the members of smaller ethnic communities. Due to such legislative solutions which deprive smaller communities of the same status because of the representation by percentile, the percentage of those

---

13 [www.bro.gov.mk/](http://www.bro.gov.mk/)

who speak the languages of smaller communities is evidently dropping along with the teaching of those languages throughout the education system. The census in 2021<sup>14</sup> corroborated this fact by showing an evident decrease of the population of all ethnic communities and the number of those who speak the languages of smaller communities, putting the existence of those languages at stake. According to the census data, shown in the table below, the survival of the Vlach language is at the highest risk.

Table 1. Representation of communities and native speakers of the language of communities

Ethnicity	Community percentage	Native speakers of the language of the community
Turks	3.86%	3.41%
Roma	2.53%	1.73%
Serbs	1.30%	0.61%
Bosniaks	0.87%	0.85%
Vlachs	0.47%	0.17%

In accordance with the curriculum, teaching languages in the Republic of North Macedonia, in addition to Macedonian and Albanian, also include Turkish, Serbian and Bosnian; and the elective subjects which enable learning of the language of smaller communities are Language and Culture of the Vlachs, Language and Culture of the Roma, Language and Culture of the Bosniaks, Language and Culture of the Serbs and Language and Culture of the Turks.

The data available to the Directorate shows that the Turkish language as a language of instruction in primary education is taught in 27 municipalities and 41 schools, and the elective subject Language and Culture of Turks is taught in five municipalities and five schools. In secondary education, the Turkish language as a language of instruction is represented in nine municipalities and 15 schools.

The Serbian language as a language of instruction is represented in three municipalities and three elementary schools, and the elective subject Language and Culture of the Serbs is taught in three municipalities and five schools.

<sup>14</sup> <http://popis2021.stat.gov.mk/>

The Bosnian language as a language of instruction in preschool is used in one kindergarten, and in primary education, the Bosnian language is taught in two municipalities and two schools, while the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks is taught in five municipalities and eight schools. The Bosnian language is not represented in secondary education.

For now, the Vlach community in the Republic of North Macedonia has not availed itself of the right to teach in their mother tongue at any level in the education system. As far as preschool education is concerned, no kindergarten teaches in the Vlach language. However, since February 2022, the “Gondza Tufa” kindergarten in Krushevo started the sensitization process of the Vlach language with the oldest group of pre-schoolers (from 5–6 years of age). This initiative to introduce awareness of the Vlach language in kindergartens with children members of this community was initiated by the Vlach community in several municipalities: Bitola, Aerodrom, Kisela Voda, Karposh, and Shtip. The elective subject Language and Culture of Vlachs is taught in four municipalities and seven schools.

Roma ethnic community does not have teaching in the Romani language, so they mostly follow the teaching in Macedonian and Albanian, in both primary and secondary education. The elective subject Language and Culture of Roma is taught in six municipalities and 13 schools.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**The subject matter** of the analysis is the administration of the measures for implementation of the right to education of members of smaller communities:

- Teaching process in the languages of smaller communities
- Elective subject Language and Culture of communities

**The questions** that this analysis will answer are:

- Is teaching in the languages of smaller communities carried out wherever there is a Bosniak, Vlach, Serbian, Roma or Turkish population?
- Is the elective subject Language and Culture of members of smaller communities taught wherever there is a Bosniak, Vlach, Serbian, Roma or Turkish population, in schools where there is no teaching in the mother tongue of these communities?

- What are the benefits of their implementation?
- What are the obstacles/difficulties for their implementation?
- How can the implementation of these measures be strengthened wherever there are members of smaller communities?

## Research methods and instruments

For the purpose of this research, quantitative and qualitative data were collected through **surveys and discussions in focus groups**.

Three survey questionnaires were prepared: for the parents, the schools, and the municipalities. The questionnaires were sent online through the Directorate, the municipalities, and the schools by sending the respondents the link. In this way, the privacy and anonymity of the respondents' answers were guaranteed.

The focus groups had two discussion protocols: one with parents and one with teachers and representatives from the professional school and kindergarten administration.

**Wider consultations were held within the framework of the Participatory Forum** and in cooperation with the Agency for Community Rights Realization and the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Communities, with the support of the OSCE Mission to Skopje and representatives from several relevant institutions and civil society organizations. For this session, a method of strategic planning, called retrograde planning (back casting) was used, resulting in key recommendations for the forthcoming year and which have been submitted to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

## Sampling

The sample consists of parents from smaller communities, who have one or more children in preschool, primary, and/or secondary education.

A total of 1186 parents or close members of the immediate family answered **the questionnaire for parents**. Of these, 405 declared that their child belongs to one of the five communities that are in the focus of this research (149 to the Bosniak, 89 to the Vlach, 86 to the Roma, 41 to the Serbian and 40 to the Turkish

communities). The remaining 781 declared that their child did not belong to any of these five communities, so their responses were not analysed.

A total of 52 parents participated in **the focus groups** (14 from the Bosniak, 12 from the Vlach, six from the Roma, 13 from the Serbian and seven from the Turkish communities).

The sample included teachers and representatives from the school professional staff in areas where the dominant population comes from one of the smaller communities.

Fifty-five schools answered the **school questionnaire**. A total of 61 representatives from schools and kindergartens participated in the focus groups.

Representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations, the Ministry of Local Self-Government, the Bureau for Development of Education, the Pedagogical Service, the Ombudsman, and civil society organizations were invited to the **Participatory Forum**. The sampling is adequate, which needs to be taken into account when making conclusions. This research limits the findings solely to the respondents who participated in the focus groups and who answered the questionnaires, so they cannot be generalized to the entire population. Participants in the focus groups were selected from areas with the highest number of residents from smaller communities, while the “*online*” questionnaires were distributed to all parents and schools populated with members of smaller communities.

In order to ensure anonymity, the questionnaires were filled in online, guaranteeing confidentiality for the respondents because the questionnaires were not collected by the schools, but instead the answers went directly into the online database. It should be taken into account that this approach precluded parents who have no access to technology.

## FINDINGS

This section presents the integrated findings on teaching in the mother tongues of all five smaller communities, based on the results of the questionnaires for the parents, the focus groups of parents and school representatives,

and the questionnaires for the schools. The results from these four sources are presented in Annexes 1-6 to this document. The recommendations of the Participatory Forum of various stakeholders from relevant educational institutions and civil society are shown in Annex 7.

## Finding 1:

### Implementation of the teaching process in the languages of smaller communities

There is no regular teaching in the Vlach and Romani languages, but there is some teaching in the Bosnian, Serbian and Turkish languages.

Most of the parents from all five communities are familiar with the right to have education in their mother tongue, but in each community, at least one parent out of ten is uninformed about this. More than half of the parents from each community say that they have not been informed about this option by either their child's kindergarten or the school.

Despite their desire to have their children study in their mother tongue, parents also share their concern that attending primary education in their mother tongue might cause difficulties for their children once they enrol in higher grades and continue their education in Macedonian. For instance, parents from the Turkish community report that teaching conducted in Turkish is carried out mainly from the first to the fifth grade in the district schools and in areas where the population is dominantly Turkish, while from the sixth grade on the children continue their education in central schools, where the teaching is conducted in Macedonian and their success drastically declines because of their insufficient knowledge of the Macedonian language.

## Finding 2:

### Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities

The elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is taught in few schools, as reported by half of the parents from the Bosniak community, one-third from the Vlach community and one-tenth from the Roma community.

Parents from the Serbian and Turkish communities report that this subject is not taught at all in their children's schools. Some teachers and representatives of the school administration report that they have no clear knowledge as to how to inform the parents about this possibility.

Even though the majority of parents have a positive view about this elective subject, most schools fail to form a class for this subject, nor is there any survey about expressed interest. Some schools do not release any information whatsoever about the possibility for a class to study Language and Culture of Communities.

The schools confirmed that the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is very rarely taught. The schools that teach this elective subject have a very variable number of pupils between them, with some schools having much fewer pupils in the class than the prescribed minimum of 15.

Certain school representatives believe that creating a class for studying this elective subject largely depends on the attitude and commitment of the school management, even though the responsibility is quite frequently transferred onto the parents and their poor interest in this subject, which seems to be in contrast to their positive attitude about learning the language and culture of their community.

Actions to discourage students and parents from choosing this elective subject have also been observed in certain areas<sup>15</sup>.

### Finding 3: Benefits of implementing the measures

The benefit of learning the mother tongue for children from smaller communities is seen mainly in the possibility that children will achieve better results at school because they can express themselves more fluently in their mother tongue. Equally important is the opportunity to nurture the literary mother tongue and

---

<sup>15</sup> Noted by an adviser in the Directorate: representatives of some of the municipalities where the survey was conducted refused to distribute the questionnaire to the kindergartens in their municipality; principals who checked the statements of the pupils and parents for this elective subject only; teachers teaching other subjects who dissuaded the pupils by saying that they will not "benefit" from learning this language, etc.

one's own culture, which is particularly emphasized by parents from the Vlach community, who say that there is already a risk that the Vlach language will disappear in these areas because it is spoken less and less in families.

Some parents from the Serbian and Turkish communities pointed out that children who know their mother tongue will be more prepared to continue their education in Serbia and Turkey, respectively.

## Finding 4:

### Obstacles to the implementation of the measures for education in the mother tongue

There are different perceptions between parents and school representatives regarding the identification of obstacles to the implementation of teaching in the mother tongue and the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities. School representatives believe that the main obstacle is the low level of interest among parents in learning their own language and culture, while the parents think it is the lack of readiness and non-transparency of educational institutions in implementing these two measures. Parents believe that the main impediments also include the lack of qualified staff and ambiguous criteria for their selection, the absence of curricula and textbooks in the languages of smaller communities, the lack of willingness on the part of the school management, or a combination of all of these factors. Furthermore, the lack of transparency of the schools about measures for implementing the right to education in the mother tongue results in uninformed parents and a low number of enrolled pupils.

Only a few schools report that the staff teaching Language and Culture of Communities meets the required norm. Also, a fraction of schools report that they provide support to the teachers who teach this elective subject.

For parents from most communities, another key hurdle is the fact that the elective subject is offered outside the regular teaching process, in the form of additional classes held after the regular classes, which represents an extra burden for the children and their families. Staying after regular classes is impossible for those children who use organized transportation to school and

travel from more remote places, as they would not be able to return home if they miss the transportation, which departs immediately after the end of the regular classes.

Roma parents state that an additional hardship for education in the Romani language is the discrimination against the Roma in our society, which makes them worried about the safety of their children. They believe that their children will be better protected if they learn the Macedonian language well.

Parents in the Turkish community report that a major obstacle for their children who are taught in Turkish until the fifth grade is their inability to continue their education in Turkish once they go to a higher class and the lack of support during their transition to learning in the Macedonian language.

## Finding 5:

### Proposals for strengthening the implementation of measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

Despite expressing distrust in the capacities of the system to provide equal opportunities for quality education for every child, parents' recommendations for the implementation of the measures are aimed at strengthening the capacities in the education system in order to ensure quality education in the language of smaller communities in the country. For this purpose, they consider it crucial to involve all stakeholders: parents, schools, the local community, relevant institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education and the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the languages of Communities, and the media.

It is necessary to create a curriculum and provide qualified staff and literature, but it is also critical to work on improving the working conditions in schools.

Parents point out that it is imperative for the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities to become regular and to be incorporated within the regular school timetable so that children from remote areas can attend and take advantage of the transportation organized after classes.

It is recommended that the Macedonian language is taught in parallel with the mother tongue starting from the first grade, because this is how every child will have fair conditions for progress.

In order to produce qualified teaching staff, it is proposed to open departments for the languages of smaller communities.

Schools call for education in the mother tongue which will not create segregation of communities. They believe that good analysis will produce good solutions. They propose development of a strategy for mainstreaming implementation.

The recommendations of the Participatory Forum indicate that both educational institutions and civil society organizations have identified the same obstacles and weaknesses with the implementation of the right to education in the mother tongues of smaller communities in the country. Their recommendations are in line with the recommendations made by parents and school representatives.

## CONCLUSIONS

**The right to education in their mother tongue cannot be enjoyed by a large number of children from smaller communities in the country, especially children from the Vlach and Roma communities.** The responsible institutions fail to provide the necessary conditions for the implementation of the two measures for mother tongue education: 1) teaching in the languages of smaller communities and 2) access to the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities. There is a lack of a comprehensive approach that would enable quality education in the mother tongue, preparing the children for the next levels of education and their inclusion in society as adults.

More specifically, the analysis of the status of education in the languages of smaller communities in the country resulted in the following conclusions:

**1. Teaching in the mother tongue is only carried out in a small number of schools** and in areas populated with the Bosniak, Serbian and Turkish communities, while there is **no teaching in Vlach and Romani languages at any level of education.** Parents from the communities are familiar with the right to education in the

mother tongue, but they lack adequate and timely information from the schools about this. The dominant attitude of parents from all communities regarding teaching in the mother tongue is very positive and supportive, but is coupled with their concern about the achievements of the children during their transition to higher levels of education where teaching in the mother tongue is not provided. Children from smaller communities are not supported through the educational process so that they can achieve their potential in full. Conversely, when parents do not choose an education in the mother tongue for their child, they risk their child having difficulties in expressing themselves and adapting to the school environment from the very start. In both cases, educational institutions do not fulfil their role in keeping up with their responsibility to ensure the right to quality education for every child, because they do not provide the necessary support and optimal conditions for the progress of children whose mother tongue is different from the language of instruction.

**2. The elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is taught in few schools** in areas with a population from smaller communities. Parents from all communities are very interested in their children studying this subject, but the lack of information about this possibility and the inadequate survey of their interest seriously impedes the implementation of this measure for realizing the right to education in the mother tongue. Some schools' management show no willingness to organize lectures on this subject; moreover, the staff is unaware of the existence of this possibility and the way it can be implemented. Parents have no faith in the quality of the teaching due to the under skilled staff and unpreparedness of the schools to teach the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities.

The fact that this subject is offered as an elective and is outside the regular curriculum presents an additional burden to the children, as it requires their commitment to attend classes outside of their regular schedule.

The elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is not offered as an option for children who belong to other communities, even though this would be in the spirit of the Strategy "*One Society and Inter-culturalism*" and would contribute to the inclusion of the pupils rather than their segregation.

**3. The greatest benefit of learning in the mother tongue is the opportunity for children to express themselves freely and to achieve better learning**

**results.** This opinion is corroborated by the experience of children from the Turkish community, whose achievements decline once they move from the fifth to the sixth grade where the teaching language is different. Another benefit of learning in one's mother tongue is the opportunity to improve one's literary mother tongue and nurture one's own culture. Furthermore, education in their mother tongue allows children to continue their education in countries where that language is spoken.

**4. The implementation of measures for education in the mother tongue is impeded by numerous obstacles, most of them of a systemic nature.** The following factors have been identified: lack of quality and competent teaching staff, unclear criteria for selection of teaching staff, insufficient opportunities for professional development of the teaching staff, lack of textbooks and teaching materials, and the lack of will on the part of the school management to implement the measures for fulfilling the right to education in the mother tongue.

The elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is given unequal status in relation to other elective subjects: it is offered as the second elective subject, which makes choosing this subject challenging. This is a hindrance, particularly for children who live in remote areas and who use organized transport to get to school, which is unavailable after classes outside of the school timetable.

Frequently, the prescribed minimum number of 15 students to form a group to take the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities cannot be achieved, which obstructs its implementation. This, for instance, is one of the reasons why, in the last 20 years, a class to attend the elective subject Language and Culture of the Vlachs could not be assembled in the schools located in areas with a Vlach population.

Children and parents from the Roma community experience additional stumbling blocks for realizing their right to education in their mother tongue due to discrimination against them in our society. Parents prefer their children to study in the Macedonian language so that they can integrate into society more easily and smoothly. Another obstacle is the parents' lack of interest and their concern that their children will not be able to continue their education in secondary and higher education successfully, due to their poor knowledge of the Macedonian language. For example, children from the Turkish community

who are taught in the Turkish language until the fifth grade are not ready to pass to the sixth grade where the teaching is conducted in the Macedonian language. Due to the lack of knowledge of the new language of instruction, their success significantly declines. In this way, children are robbed of their right to quality education, because they study in an environment that deprives them of developing their potential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for exercising the right to education in the mother tongue of the members of smaller communities are aimed at systematically improving the conditions for the implementation of the two measures for education in the mother tongue: 1) teaching in the languages of smaller communities and 2) the elective subject Language and Culture of the Communities. They cover the following aspects:

- 1. To strengthen the dialogue and cooperation among all relevant institutions and the Directorate, to promote education in the mother tongues of smaller communities.**
- 2. To systematically support those schools located in areas populated with members of smaller communities to provide teaching in their mother tongue.** This includes creation of appropriate curricula, qualified teaching staff and transparent processes for their selection, creation, adaptation and translation of textbooks and teaching materials in each of the languages of smaller communities. At the same time, the physical conditions in the regional schools where teaching in the languages of the smaller communities is carried out should also be improved.
- 3. To revise the requirement for at least 15 pupils to form a class** for the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities, in order to enable every child who has expressed an interest to be able to sign up.
- 4. To revise the Law on Teachers and Professional Associates** in order to enable the teachers teaching the elective subject Language and Culture of the Communities the right to sit for an apprenticeship exam, to give them full-time employment and to amend the requirement for work experience to a minimum of five years.

5. **To revise the Law on Textbooks in the section referring to the textbook review committee and authorship**, and enable reviewers and authors of textbooks with less than 10 years of experience to compete in competitions for textbooks and reviewers announced by the Ministry of Education and Science.
6. **To open faculty departments in the languages of smaller communities at the Faculty of Philology at UKIM** in order to prepare professional teaching staff for the respective language. For example, the Agreement between the Republic of North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina envisages opening of a department for the Bosnian language.
7. **To provide opportunities for the professional development of teachers** teaching in the languages of smaller communities and the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities, aimed at raising the quality of the teaching process to a higher level and strengthening the linguistic competencies of the teaching staff.
8. **To provide support for those children who finish the fifth grade**, in which the teaching was in their mother tongue and advance to teaching conducted in the Macedonian language, by providing a teacher in their mother tongue who will help them understand the material, as well as by teaching the Macedonian language between the first to the fifth grade in schools where the regular teaching is conducted in their mother tongue.
9. **To examine different approaches to mother tongue education that enable quality, continuity and integration instead of segregation of children from different communities.** A positive model that has existed for 25 years is the MOZAIK approach - bilingual groups in kindergartens with the educational process conducted in two languages which prevail in the area where that kindergarten is located. In our country, there are Macedonian and Albanian, Macedonian and Serbian, and Macedonian and Turkish language groups. Another model of bilingual teaching in primary education in Macedonian and Albanian is the approach of the Nansen Dialogue Centre for Integrated and Intercultural Education. We should also mention the project of Strengthening of Multi-Ethnic Cooperation in Municipalities, through which the Pestalozzi Children's Foundation implemented joint lessons in primary schools in nine municipalities.

When it comes to secondary education, eight secondary schools in Skopje successfully conducted regular classes in certain subjects in two languages of instruction since 2018. This initiative is implemented by the City of Skopje, and is supported by the OSCE Mission to Skopje. These are a few examples that can be consulted in finding appropriate models for quality education in the mother tongue of every child in the country.

- 10. To inform parents in a timely manner about the possibility for their child to be taught in the mother tongue.** To conduct a timely and transparent survey among all parents in schools to gauge interest in the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities. To organize activities to raise awareness among parents about the right to education in the mother tongue at the local level, in cooperation between schools and the local self-government, the media, civil society, and the private sector.
- 11. To provide transportation for pupils who live in remote places** and want to follow the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities.
- 12. To prepare a document with affirmative measures for the Vlach community whose linguistic and cultural identity is at risk of disappearing.** The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and relevant institutions should implement a process of revitalization of Vlach language and culture, focused on three basic areas: education, culture and media.
- 13. To form a team of authors for the preparation of textbooks for the elective subject Language and Culture of Roma** under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Science and in cooperation with teachers who teach the subject and professors from the Institute of Pedagogy and from the Faculty of Philology at UKIM.
- 14. To carry out activities for inter-ethnic integration at the school and local level** in order to reduce stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination against members of the Roma community.
- 15. To improve cooperation with local government and mayors to invest in school buildings** and improve learning conditions in many district schools.

## ANNEX 1. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE BOSNIAN LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

### Sample

The questionnaire for parents was answered by **149 parents** from several places in the country (Batinci, Dolno Konjari, Sredno Konjari, Cento, Ljubos, Aerodrom, Chair, Petrovec, Shtip, Skopje, Crkvino, R'zhanichino), who reported that their child belongs to the Bosniak community. Most of them are mothers (138; 92%), aged between 31-40 years (81; 54%), with secondary education (86; 58%).

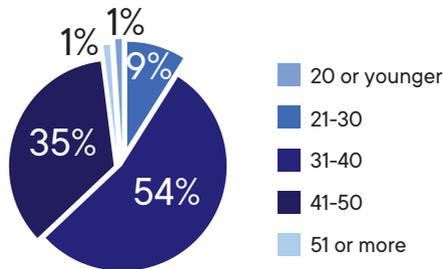


Figure 1. The age of parents

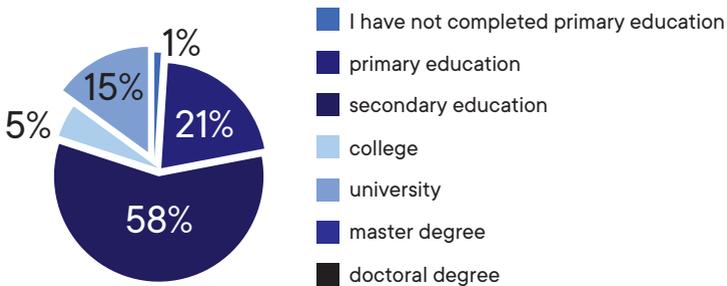


Figure 2. The level of education of parents

Almost all of them have a child going to primary school (143; 96%), and 46 (31%) of the parents have a child going to secondary school (some of them have one child in primary and another in secondary school). Most of them (122; 82%) declared that they only speak Bosnian at home, and 22 (15%) declared that they speak one of the other local languages in addition to Bosnian, which means that the remaining five parents declared that they do not speak Bosnian at home.

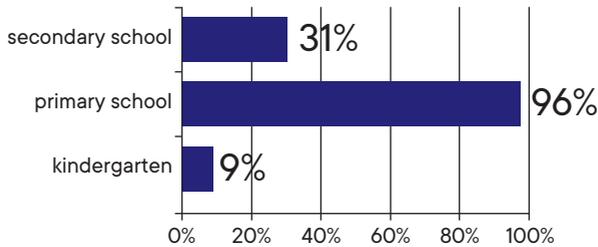


Figure 3. The level of education of children

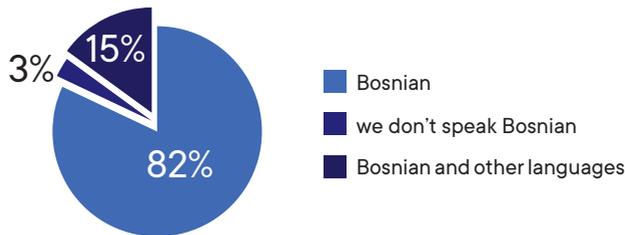


Figure 4. Language spoken at home

Fourteen parents and 8 representatives of the school's professional staff participated in the focus groups.

## RESULTS

### Implementation of the teaching process in the Bosnian language

#### Questionnaire for parents

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (132; 89%) report that they are familiar with the right to education in the mother tongue guaranteed by our laws. However, only half of them were informed about the possibility of learning in their mother tongue by the school (73; 49%) and by the kindergarten (2; 1%), and the other half were either not informed (52; 35%) or they did not know whether they were informed or not (22; 15%).

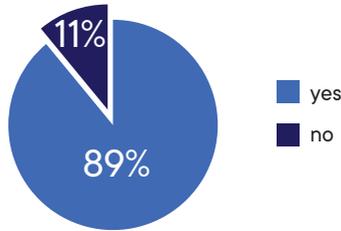


Figure 5. Knowledge about the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

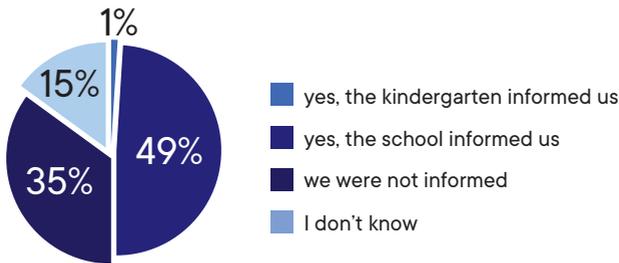


Figure 6. Level of information on the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

One-third of parents (46; 31%) answered that their children do not study the Bosnian language either at school or in kindergarten. A very small number (3; 2%) stated that their children go to a bilingual kindergarten, and 16% (24) study in the Bosnian language in elementary school (Figure 7).

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to learn in their mother tongue”*, on a scale from 1-not at all agree to 10-completely agree, parents are divided: 40 (27%) of them chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 68 (46%) chose the highest (10), with the average degree of agreement being 6. (Table 2).

### Focus group with parents

During the discussion in the focus group with parents, it was established that everyone speaks the Bosnian language at home, except for those families with mixed marriages, where, in addition to Bosnian, they also speak the language of one of the parents; in this case, Albanian. Most of the parents were familiar with the legal regulation, that is, the right to education in their mother tongue, but they all agreed that the implementation is hindered: *“Someone somewhere is blocking it, but we don't know where”*.

All of the parents stated that their children follow the teaching process in Macedonian except for two, who pointed out that their children who go to preschool are taught in the Bosnian language. Almost all of them adamantly requested teaching in the Bosnian language.

Regarding the question, “*Does your kindergarten or school offer the option for your child to study in the mother tongue? How did you find out about that possibility, and if it doesn’t exist, do you know why?*” two of the parents declared that their children go to kindergarten in the Bosnian language, they are content, and the children speak the Bosnian literary language better.

Parents were divided on whether their children should study in Bosnian as the language of teaching. Most of them prefer it to be a separate but mandatory subject, rather than all subjects being taught in the Bosnian language. The general attitude of the parents is that taking classes in the Macedonian language is problematic because the children perceive it as a foreign language and find it difficult to cope with it. There is a prevailing opinion among parents that schools are “*afraid*” to allow teaching in Bosnian as many teachers might lose their jobs. In their opinion, a teacher who teaches in the Bosnian language should be a Bosniak.

### Focus group with school representatives

The participants in the focus group with school representatives reported that teaching in the Bosnian language takes place in one of the participating schools, from the first to the ninth grade, and in another one, from the first to the fifth grade. In the other schools, teaching is carried out either in the Macedonian or the Albanian language, with the Language and Culture of the Bosniaks being offered as an elective subject.

*“In our school, the teaching process from the first to the third grade is conducted in the Bosnian language, and from the fourth to the ninth grade the teaching in the Bosnian language is an experimental program.”* - a statement from representatives of a school in a town with over 95% Bosniaks.

Often, schools in which the Bosniaks are dominant do not teach in the Bosnian language because there is no teaching staff. The teachers avoid teaching in Bosnian because there is no curriculum and no literature, so in order to provide

teaching materials, they need to invest additional effort. On top of this, there are parents who want their children to study in the Macedonian language.

*“In 2018 it was introduced as a regular subject. Before that, it had just been experimental. The textbooks from the first to fifth grade are in Bosnian, and there are plans and programs, too. From the sixth to the ninth grade, the old program is followed. Somehow, we find our way with the textbooks. Serbian language textbooks are also used, but this has not yet been resolved and it is still a problem.”*

When asked why classes are not conducted in Bosnian, the school representatives listed the following reasons: a mixed composition of pupils from several communities, lack of staff, programs and textbooks, and sometimes the parents’ choice that their children take classes in the Macedonian language.

*“There is no staff, there are no suitable programs, and sometimes the parents want the teaching only in Macedonian. Usually, they are content with having it as an elective subject and sometimes they don’t even choose it because they don’t think they need it.”*

## Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of the Bosniaks

### Questionnaires for parents

Half of the parents (74; 50%) declared that their child studies the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks.

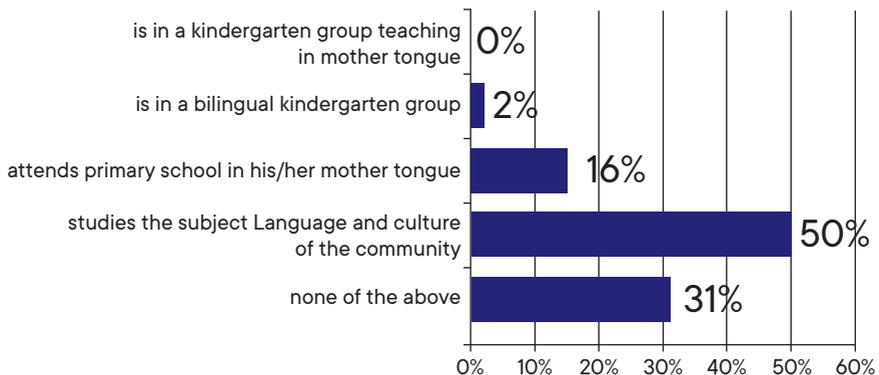


Figure 7. Implementation of the measures for learning the Bosnian language

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to study the subject Language and Culture of our community”*, the majority of parents completely agree: 119 (80%) of them chose the highest degree of agreement (10), 11 (7%) chose the lowest (1), and the average degree of agreement is 9. (Table 2.)

### Focus group with parents

In the focus group, parents from one surveyed school said that despite the fact that many pupils in the school belong to the Bosniak community, only ten of them signed up to study the elective subject Language and Culture of the Bosniaks, thus failing to meet the minimum legal requirement of 15 children per class.

When asked *“Does the school of your child teach the subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks? How did you find out about that opportunity?”*, all parents in the focus group, whose children go to schools in the municipality of Centar and Butel, pointed out that there was no elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks in these municipalities. Efforts were made on several occasions to make a group, but to no avail. Surveys are often conducted in June, parents remain uninformed about them, and schools do not show much interest in motivating them.

### Focus group with school representatives

The participants in the focus group with school representatives give the impression that the parents from their schools are well informed and that classes are formed. They believe that the school management should be given credit for this as it encourages the formation of classes for elective subjects. On the other hand, they believe that there are schools where the school management makes the organization of elective subjects impossible, justifying it with the requirement for a minimum of 15 children per class, which they consider wrong, as in other places it is organized differently. They also believe that parents do not choose this subject for their children because they believe that the teaching staff is selected and appointed in an inept manner.

*“There is a mixed composition of pupils (Roma, Vlach...), so it can't be just in Bosnian. It is okay to study it as an elective subject, but we have another*

*problem, we are not organized well enough and we don't take advantage of what the state is giving us. I come across a problem when a parent reacts with - why would I need Bosnian (that's what they call the language), and this is a problem that occurs mostly in urban areas."*

*"We have an elective subject. We have the same problems – some general difficulties and misunderstandings from the elders. They say it is too much of a workload for their children."*

*"They are informed through a questionnaire, it is given to the children to pass to their parents, the parent makes a decision and that's how a group is formed. Our problem is that this subject is not a regular one, like English."*

*"In our school, 90% of parents choose this subject, but in other schools I know it's not like that because parents don't trust the teachers. They believe that there is no suitable staff for that, and it is true, very few have completed the appropriate university. We have taken some courses, and similar... therefore, we should be allowed to continue our education to be able to teach. We need to educate adequate staff so that we can work properly."*

## Benefits of the implementation of the measures

### Questionnaire for parents

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *"I think that the child will progress better in school if he/she learns in his mother tongue"*, parents are divided: 49 (33%) of them chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 57 (38%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 6. They least agree with the statement that the teaching in the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching of the Macedonian language (69 (46%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 35 (23%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 4). (Table 2.)

Table 2. Parents' opinion about education in the mother tongue

Please indicate on a scale of 1-10 (1-do not agree at all; 10-completely agree) how much you agree with the following statements (average values of the group):	Average value
I want my child to learn in his mother tongue	6
I want my child to study the language and culture of our community.	9
I believe that a child will do better in school if he/she learns in the mother tongue.	6
I believe that the teaching of the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching in the Macedonian language.	4

### Focus group with parents

Taking into account that the Bosnian language has been the fifth language of instruction since 2018, the parents who participated in the focus group discussed the benefits of teaching in the mother tongue, but there were no parents in the group whose children took teaching in the Bosnian language, except those who had children in preschools and who were satisfied with their child learning in their mother tongue. The general impression is that parents are not very satisfied with the quality of teaching in some schools, so they decided to transfer their children to other schools, despite the fact that the Bosnian language is taught there only as the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks. However, the prevailing opinion among parents is that their children should be educated in their mother tongue.

### Focus group with school representatives

All school representatives agreed that parents are afraid that if their children study in Bosnian, they might have problems with the language once they enrol in high school. A teacher who works at a school where the teaching language is Bosnian says that the children have no problem once they enrol in secondary education, just like their teachers who used to study in the Serbian-Croatian language themselves. The advantage of the opportunity to learn in the mother tongue is that the children will be able to express themselves in

their own language more fluently and freely, and at the same time, improve their knowledge of it.

*“In the beginning, parents were afraid of how their children would continue in high school, but it turned out that they had no problems at all. They master Macedonian without any problem. That’s why I don’t understand why parents would have problems with their child’s education in their own language. I think the problem also lies in the fact that parents are afraid, and they forget that we also studied Serbian–Croatian and had no problems whatsoever.”*

*“Each learns their own language, their culture and their background.”*

*“We express ourselves better in our own language, it is the language in which we think and dream. Thus, we have a larger vocabulary. If parents knew this, all of them would choose it. Language is identity.”*

In reference to the benefits of studying the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks, the school representatives consider learning any language to be an advantage, especially the mother tongue. Thus, students will get to know their own language and culture better. In some schools, this subject is also chosen by children from other communities, for example, Macedonians. Although these cases are rare, they believe that those who choose it, do so out of their own free will and with great affection.

*“Here, everyone learns this elective language, even the Macedonians choose it because they live in such an environment. Maybe the parents don’t really trust the teaching staff. Now we have textbooks, but we don’t have proper staff and curriculum for the fifth grade.”*

*“And if they don’t learn it like this (either as a regular or as elective subject), the pupils will be totally ignorant about the literature of Bosniaks.”*

## Obstacles to the measures for implementing education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaires for parents

One-third (47; 32%) of the parents who responded to the questionnaire did not reply to the possible reasons why there is no teaching in the Bosnian

language and they chose the option “other”; a quarter of the parents (38; 26%) believe their own community is responsible for not having teaching available in Bosnian, because, in their view, it is generally uninterested in this possibility. The lowest number of parents (8; 5%) find the school management responsible. Some of them see the main obstacles as the lack of teachers to teach subjects in Bosnian (9; 6%), the non-existent textbooks in Bosnian (17; 11%), and the insufficient number of children to form a class (10; 7%); 20 (13%) of the parents believe that it is a combination of the aforementioned reasons.

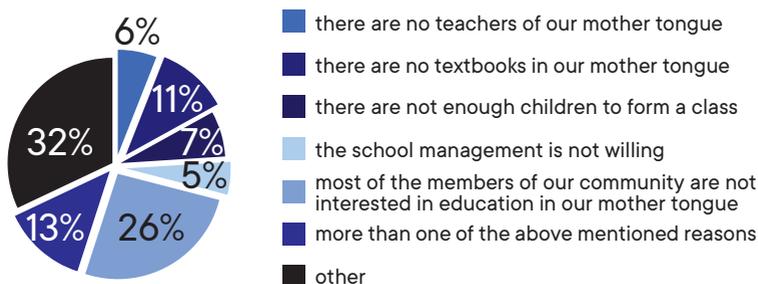


Figure 9. Reasons for non-implementation of teaching in the Bosnian language (parents' opinion)

## Focus group with parents

In the focus group, the parents of two children who go to a kindergarten where the teaching is in the Bosnian language highlighted a problem with the deficiency of literature in Bosnian. Nevertheless, they would still like their children to continue their further education in the Bosnian language, believing that it will increase their productivity, but it should not mean that they should be segregated from the rest of their peers.

For the parents, the minimum number of 15 pupils required to make a class is disputable (even though signatures from 10 parents were collected, the class was not formed). According to the parents, the biggest culprit is the school, that is, the school management, because even though the representation of Bosniaks is high, such as in the school of “*St. Cyril and Methodius*” where one-third of the pupils are from the Bosniak community, the class was not formed. One of the participants stated that the justification of the school was the lack of sufficiently qualified teachers to teach the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks.

When asked *“What is missing and how can teaching in the mother tongue be improved?”*, most of the participants indicated the lack of literature and inadequate teaching staff, but they also highlighted the absence of elements of multiculturalism in the literature in the Macedonian language.

Regarding the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks, all respondents agreed that no limit should be set for studying the language as an elective subject. One of the key problems is inadequate and insufficient awareness about this possibility. The respondents pointed out the shortage of staff, with the current staff being inadequate and under skilled, which is debatable.

### Focus group with school representatives

To the school representatives, the insufficient number of professionals to teach classes in the Bosnian language is a hurdle. The lack of curriculum for the sixth to the ninth grade is also considered an obstacle. The third disadvantage identified by the group is the potential problem that pupils may face using professional vocabulary in the Macedonian language when they enrol in secondary school. This is mitigated by the fact that the teachers always tell them how the professional words are in the Macedonian language so that it will be easier for them in the future.

*“Teachers should go improve their Bosnian language because they were educated in Macedonian, so they need to improve their knowledge of the language. When we teach, we always tell them the same words in Macedonian [meaning the professional terms], so that they know them when they move on.”*

*“The problems with the implementation of the teaching process are multiple: lack of textbooks for teaching in the Bosnian language; teaching staff without knowledge of the Bosnian language; hiring teaching staff without testing their knowledge of the Bosnian language; reading list in the Macedonian language; local powerful people influencing the activities of the school; the impact of local and central political events on the work of the school”.*

For them, a bigger challenge is the parents who, due to their insufficient awareness, decide not to choose the Bosnian language. Firstly, it is because they think there is a shortage of professional staff, and secondly, in their opinion, the Bosnian language taught at school is different from the colloquial

one (the dialect they speak). As for the appointment of teaching staff, they say that the criteria and procedures for hiring a teacher for this subject are unclear and undefined. For example, a teacher who has a master's degree in the Bosnian language is not given permanent employment, while teachers who teach the subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks (Bosniak teachers who also teach another subject - for example, physics) do get employed.

*"Each language is specific and is very often under the influence of the other dominant language in the area where we live, but still, there are certain linguistic specifics that are only taught in school [a discussion developed about the dialects of Bosnian - that every region has its dialects], and at schools they teach the literary language, not the dialects."*

## Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaire for parents

Parents believe that it is necessary to provide quality staff who will have access to continuous professional development, textbooks in the language of the community, a high quality curriculum, an opportunity for education in the mother tongue at all educational levels, and literature available in the mother tongue.

Some of them propose joint activities for children from different ethnic communities so that they can get to know each other and interact.

*"In my daughter's primary school, there are no classes for children from the upper grades, only from the lower ones, which is why she cannot learn the subject Language and Culture of the ethnic group. Although there were applicants from higher grades, they were not included. We have not received an explanation why yet. Therefore, I believe that everyone should be equally availed of the right guaranteed by the Law, instead of having a situation where one can study but the other cannot. Moreover, there is a recommendation that the reading list should include books which are appropriate for the present times, and this goes for Macedonian books, as well as for those in the languages of the ethnic groups."*

*“A better curriculum, interaction, positive examples of bringing people together, less studying the bad part of the history which makes children feel different from each other.”*

*“To have more classes, literature in the mother tongue.”*

*“Higher quality teaching staff and textbooks in the mother tongue.”*

Some parents believe that the teaching should be in the Macedonian language, while the language of the community should be represented with two hours a week. Some of them believe that the mother tongue should mainly be learned at home and that everyone should learn the Macedonian language so that they could understand each other.

*“I studied in a Macedonian school and I think that the teaching should be conducted in the Macedonian language. I want my children to speak the language of where they live well, and we will teach them Bosnian or Serbian at home.”*

### Focus group with parents

During the discussion in the focus group, the participants said that in order to improve the current situation with the Bosnian language, it is necessary to involve all stakeholders in the process, such as parents, school authorities, the municipality, and the state.

### Focus group with the school representatives

The recommendations given by the school representatives refer to the teachers, the school, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Bureau for Development of Education and the Directorate for Enhancement and Promotion of Education in the Languages of Communities.

The teachers play a key role in the process of getting to know their pupils and whether they will make the class fun or not.

The school has the responsibility to organize surveys and authorizations properly. For instance, the primary school “St. Cyril and Methodius” can form a group if they want because the majority of pupils are Bosniaks. There was an example of a school principal who introduced the Bosnian language at the

school and all of the pupils chose that subject. Every school has to find a way to organize itself.

*“Decisions depend on the awareness of those who organize it. In our school the number of pupils is not a problem, there are groups with fewer pupils than 15.”*

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) should consider the number required to form a class. If there is a decision on their part, there will be more pupils.

The Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) should revise the programs and provide operation manuals.

The administration should organize debates in the municipalities to raise parents’ awareness of the need to learn their language.

*“Training of the current teaching staff for teaching the Bosnian language; provision of textbooks, reading list and other necessary literature for successful teaching of Bosnian language in all classes; permanent professional training - improvement of the teaching staff; amendments to the laws and regulations regarding the formation of working groups of pupils for elective subjects and regarding the employment of teachers who will teach in the Bosnian language or who will teach the elective subject Language and Culture of Bosniaks.”*

*“We have no solutions, and we have been working for many years - I think that this needs to be resolved. My colleague and I have graduated from an adequate faculty, but we have no employment contracts, this is why people are afraid to choose our faculty. That’s how we lose our enthusiasm and desire to work.”*

*“We are working on the programs, but if this procedure is not accelerated, we will still have programs, but we will lose children, and the groups are dropping out.”*

*“Studies in South Slavic literature - they included Bosnian authors too, we had the opportunity to study them, we took exams...[a discussion developed about whether Bosnian literature is studied]. Professor Radicevski insisted that it be included in the curriculum, but I don’t know if it happened or not.”*

*“It is the Bosniaks who should convince themselves that they should study in the Bosnian language.”*

## ANNEX 2: RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE VLACH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

### Sample

The questionnaire for parents was answered by **89 parents** from several places in the country (several municipalities of Skopje, Bitola, Krushevo, and Shtip), who report that their child belongs to the Vlach ethnic community. Most of them are mothers (65; 73%) and fathers (20; 23%), aged between 31-40 years (38; 43%) and 41-50 years (40; 45%), with higher education (35; 39%), secondary education (26; 29%) and master's degrees (20; 23%).

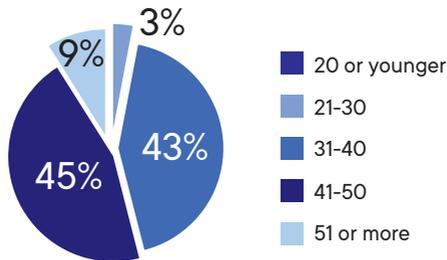


Figure 1. The age of parents

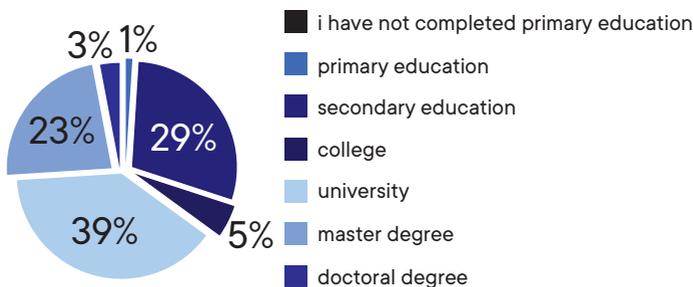


Figure 2. The level of education of parents

The lowest number of parents have children in kindergarten (18; 20%), the majority have a child in primary school (69; 78%), and 13 (15%) parents have a child who goes to secondary school (some have one child in primary and another in secondary school). Almost an equal number of them said that they

speak Vlach and another language at home (42; 47%) or that they do not speak Vlach (41; 46%); only 6 (7%) report that they only speak Vlach at home.

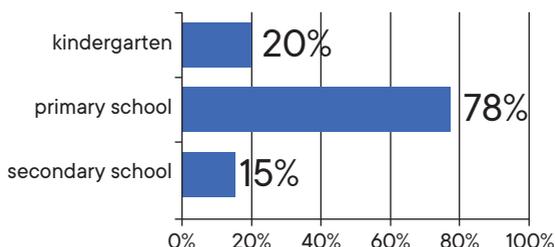


Figure 3. The level of education of children

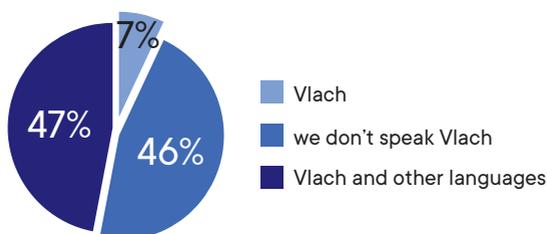


Figure 4. Language spoken at home

The focus groups consisted of 12 parents, 21 representatives of the school's professional and teaching staff, 4 representatives of the kindergarten professional staff, and one teacher of Language and Culture of Vlachs who teaches the subject to a group of pupils in one of the municipalities.

## RESULTS

### The right to education in the Vlach language

#### Questionnaire for parents

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (78; 88%) report that they are familiar with the right to education in the mother tongue guaranteed by our laws. However, less than half of them were informed about the possibility of learning in their mother tongue by the school (34; 38%) and by

the kindergarten (1; 1%), and a large majority of them were either not informed (34; 38%) or they did not know whether they were informed or not (20; 23%).

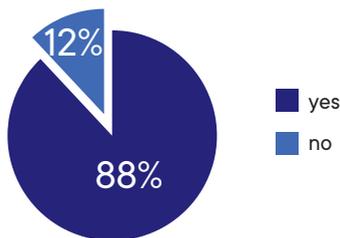


Figure 5. Knowledge about the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

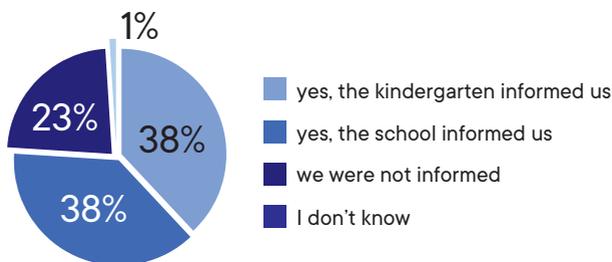


Figure 6. Level of information on the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to learn in their mother tongue”*, on a scale from 1-not at all agree to 10-completely agree, the majority of parents opted for the highest degree of agreement (10) and only 6 (7%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), with the average degree of the agreement being 8. (Table 2)

### Focus group with parents

The parents report that this right for the Vlach community is not exercised at any level of education. They say that there is a need to introduce teaching in the Vlach language, at least partially, in every municipality with a Vlach population, starting from kindergartens and continuing all the way to primary and secondary education. However, there is concern that the institutions have not yet provided conditions for the implementation of this request.

## Focus group with school representatives

The impression was that the representatives were not sufficiently informed about this right. Some of them said that all pupils study in their mother tongues, having in mind primarily the Macedonian and Albanian languages.

## Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Vlachs

### Questionnaire for parents

Only 31 (35%) of the parents said that their child studied the elective subject Language and Culture of Vlachs.

Asked how much they agree with the statement: “I want my child to study the subject Language and Culture of our community”, most of them completely agree: 77 (87%) of them chose the highest degree of agreement (10), only 1 (1%) chose the lowest (1), and the average degree of agreement is 9. (Table 2.)

### Focus group with parents

Parents reported that the elective subject Language and Culture of Vlachs is not taught everywhere, and even where it is, not all parents have sufficient information about it, especially those from mixed marriages whose children are enrolled in the school as members of another community, so they are not even offered the option to study the Vlach language as the mother tongue of one of the parents. It was emphasized that there was no survey and no promotion whatsoever.

*“I didn’t know about the survey. We have never been surveyed about studying Vlach, I took one of my children (now in the 8th grade) to private lessons. I also have another child that is in the 3rd grade. I think that there should be a survey to see how many children are interested and I think that everyone, regardless of whether they are from a mixed or non-mixed marriage, should take the opportunity. Realistically, the Vlach language is a dying language and therefore I think it is necessary to make it (the studying) possible.”*

*“I think it should be offered as a regular elective subject - and now it’s an additional elective subject. I know why it is like that (additional elective), this*

*is just to cap the teaching hours of the teacher of ethics or of some other elective subject. In Europe, when parents request an additional language, 4-5 children can take this opportunity and then one of the teachers who speaks the language teaches it to a group of children of different ages.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

Most of the school representatives were surprised to hear about such an opportunity, pointing out that they had not received any guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES). Few of the participants said that they were familiar with it, but since there were no pupils who declared themselves as Vlachs, that opportunity was not offered to them, either through surveys or in any other way.

Two schools have been organizing elective learning of the Vlach language and culture for years, with children coming from other schools to attend the classes.

The teacher of Language and Culture of Vlachs said that surveys were a legal obligation. Due to the fact that it is an additional elective subject and therefore, it is outside the regular school timetable, pupils who want to attend the class in the Vlach language, usually in a block-scheduling format, need to come back to the school in the evening hours. Moreover, pupils coming from other schools to attend this class, have their success disregarded by their own school and their grade is omitted from the final school report.

As for preschool education, the participants said that the kindergartens had not undertaken any activities in this regard yet.

*“I used to work in a secondary school. It is not offered in the kindergartens. This year we have six Vlach children, and we have not offered it.”* - a psychologist in a kindergarten.

*“The ministries give us the curriculum, and we have never received any guidelines or projects for the Vlach language, nor was there any initiative from parents.”* - a kindergarten representative.

## Benefits of the implementation of the measures

### Questionnaire for parents

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I think that the child will progress better in school if he/she learns in his mother tongue”*, parents are divided: 18 (20%) of them chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 36 (40%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 6. They least agree with the statement that the teaching in the languages of communities is of lower quality than the teaching of the Macedonian language: 32 (36%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 14 (16%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 5. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Parents' opinion about education in the mother tongue

Please indicate on a scale of 1-10 (1-do not agree at all; 10-completely agree) how much you agree with the following statements (average values of the group):	Average value
I want my child to learn in his mother tongue	8
I want my child to study the language and culture of our community.	9
I believe that a child will do better in school if he/she learns in the mother tongue.	6
I believe that the teaching of the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching in the Macedonian language.	5

### Focus group with parents

According to the parents, studying the Language and Culture of Vlachs is pivotal, because for some children it is their only contact with the language. This subject is a good opportunity to nurture the language and ensure its future. Furthermore, they pointed out that by learning two languages simultaneously at a young age, children acquire the ability to learn other languages more easily, especially in the Romance group of languages.

## Focus group with school representatives

A teacher of Language and Culture of Vlachs believes that teaching conducted in Vlach as the mother tongue, or as the language of one of the parents, is positive, while for pupils who do not have a Vlach background, learning the language is valuable because they learn another language from their environment.

*“For the time being only their grandparents speak to them, so this is how a dying language can be brought to life.”*

## Obstacles to the measures for implementing education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaires for parents

One-third (26; 29%) of the parents who responded to the questionnaire did not reply to the possible reasons why there is no teaching in the Vlach language. Thirteen (15%) believe that parents from their own community are generally uninterested in this possibility. Only one parent (1%) finds the school management responsible. Some of the parents see the main obstacles as the lack of teachers to teach subjects in Vlach (5; 6%), the lack of textbooks in Vlach (3; 3%), and an insufficient number of children to form a class (6; 7%); 35 (39%) of the parents believe that it is a combination of the aforementioned reasons.

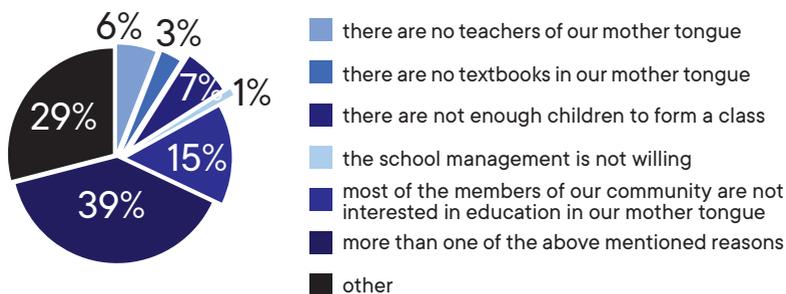


Figure 9. Reasons for non-implementation of teaching in the Vlach language (parents' opinion)

### Focus group with parents

Parents report that they have not been informed about the possibility for their children to study in their mother tongue or take the elective subject

Language and Culture of Vlachs. Another obstacle is the requirement for at least 15 interested pupils to form a class for that subject, which often cannot be provided in larger settlements due to dispersion and lack of information.

The status of the elective subject Language and Culture of Vlachs, offered as an optional elective and not in the same rank as other electives, is another downside: an additional two hours for the children and an extra workload for them. Classes for this subject are not organized within the regular school timetable and professional literature is lacking, making parents feel discriminated against. They believe that every municipality with a Vlach population needs to ensure adequate conditions for studying this subject, without any constraints in regard to the number of children or their ethnic affiliation. The municipality and schools should jointly promote this possibility in cooperation with the teachers.

### Focus group with school representatives

The participants in this group emphasized the lack of information of the parents and the insufficient number of teaching staff as the main impediments to the implementation of the measure for education of the mother tongue. This is in close correlation with the shortage of training for teachers and their exclusion from regular professional development.

## Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaire for parents

One-third of the parents gave recommendations for better realization of the right to education in the mother tongue, as follows:

- 1) To increase the number of high-quality teaching staff who will teach in the Vlach language, invest in their training and provide permanent employment for them.  
“Training of personnel and reforms in education for curricula for the first cycle of studies, because some of the languages are no longer available as an option for concurrent studies.”

- 2) To form classes for the Vlach language in both primary and secondary school and to teach the subject Language and Culture of Vlachs at least twice a week.  
“Each community must learn its mother tongue in the kindergarten or the school of the child, rather than cluster children from various schools in one group.”  
“The Vlach language should be studied because it is already dying out. Only the elderly speak it, but that is not enough for the children to learn it properly.”
- 3) Families need to speak the language at home and use it with their children from the youngest age if they want to preserve the language and tradition.
- 4) To promote the possibility to study the language more intensively by informing all parents.
- 5) To study the Culture and Language of other communities within the regular school timetable because that is how prejudices will be eliminated. There is a need to organize extracurricular activities for children so that they get to know children from different communities.
- 6) To improve the quality of overall education, regardless of the language.  
“More effective programs.”  
“Schools should improve their conditions. Better quality teaching, more practical teaching is needed.”
- 7) To introduce a bilingual program in every kindergarten.

### Focus group with parents

The participants of the focus group said that there was a need to introduce teaching in the Vlach language, at least partially, in every municipality where the Vlach community is present. The institutions should ensure training for new teachers, preparation of textbooks and literature, and transport for pupils from larger areas where the Vlach community is more dispersed and the children cannot sign up for the classes, as their parents cannot take them because of work commitments.

Parents believe that it is important that all children should be given this opportunity and that it should cover all languages, while teachers should promote it and encourage children to take these classes.

All parents agreed that a survey should be conducted in all schools regardless of whether or not Vlach children or other ethnic communities are enrolled. Institutions should also be included in the promotion of the subject, and in providing appropriate written literature and video materials. There is a need to work on recruiting teaching staff - either by introducing the Vlach language in certain university departments (there was one unsuccessful attempt at the Faculty in Shtip) or by organizing courses for licensing teachers.

There were suggestions to form groups at the municipal level, but this was a less desirable option than a teacher who would shuttle from one school to another.

The subject needs to be offered as a regular elective subject instead of being an additional elective subject as that can overburden the children.

Competent institutions should conduct stronger supervision over the implementation of surveys, with possible sanctions in case of noncompliance.

Parents should take the initiative and ask for support from international organizations, associations, etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science should undertake activities to amend the law about the legal prerequisite for a minimum of 15 children to form a group for the subject Language and Culture of the Communities because learning in the mother tongue is a basic human right.

Municipalities and educational institutions (schools and kindergartens) must promote this elective subject and conduct surveys, regardless of the ethnic composition of the pupils.

Most of the participants in the first focus group believe that the relevant authorities should make changes in the statutes to facilitate the realization of this right to studying and teaching in the mother tongue.

*“All relevant institutions for ensuring constitutional rights have to act and start executing it. They need to work together and stop transferring the responsibility onto each other.”*

*"...To organize groups for learning the Vlach language in schools and at the municipality level. This is especially important because the Vlach language is not even used at home anymore..."*

*"...To create a special program for nurturing and revitalizing the Vlach language, which should include associations and the like."*

*"...To start from kindergartens, even though this might be problematic, because if a parent needs to take their child to another kindergarten because the language is not taught in all of them, then parents won't do it."*

*"To have a mobile teacher who will go from kindergarten to kindergarten."*

### Focus group with school representatives

Most of the participants believe that the Ministry of Education and Science should come up with a good organizational strategy for each language separately and fit the needs of each community. The strategy should be based on practical and realistic possibilities for implementation and should include the media to promote the opportunities it provides, and, at the same time, offer training and education for both parents and teachers. There was also a proposal to incorporate languages into already existing subjects on the culture of other ethnic communities.

Some of the participants emphasized that the Ministry of Education and Science should pay special attention to the Vlach language because it is in a critical state of existence and the media and parents should be alerted of this.

Certain participants from the second focus group insisted on the need for similar education for the teaching staff, the children and the rest of the stakeholders, because, as they said: *"we implement programs that also include other ethnic communities."*

Some individuals, on the other hand, believe that there are no conditions for any special programs yet and that celebrating of the holidays of smaller communities will suffice.

## ANNEX 3: RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE ROMANI LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

### Sample

The questionnaire for parents was answered by **86 parents** from several places in the country (several municipalities of Skopje, Kumanovo and Shtip), who report that their child belongs to the Roma ethnic community. Most of them are mothers (58; 67%) and fathers (23; 27%), aged between 31-40 years (42; 49%) and 21-30 years (22; 26%), with elementary education (41; 48%) and secondary education (32; 37%).

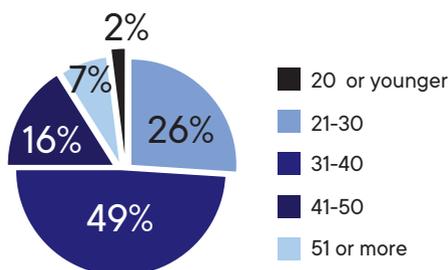


Figure 1. The age of parents

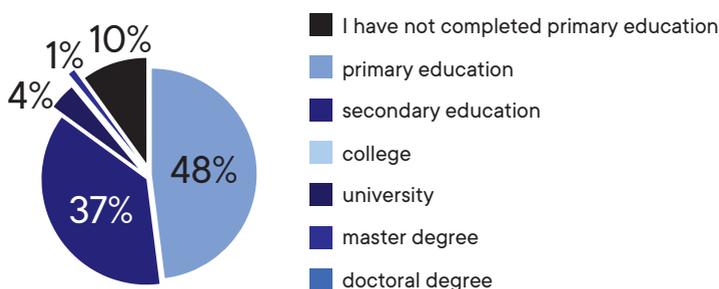


Figure 2. The level of education of parents

Most of the parents have a child in primary school (68; 79%) 14 (16%) of parents have a child who goes to secondary school (some have one child in primary and another in secondary school) and 11 (13%) have a child in kindergarten. Half of them (43; 50%) said that they speak only Romani at home, 27; (31%) said that

in addition to Romani they also speak another local language; and 16 (195) said that they do not speak Romani at home.

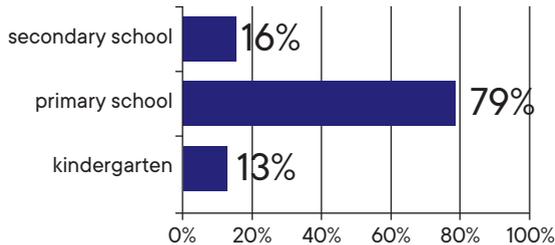


Figure 3. The level of education of children

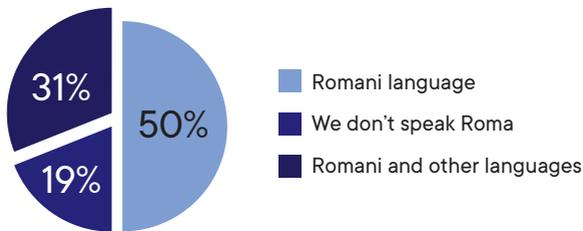


Figure 4. Language spoken at home

Six parents and eight teachers and school professional staff participated in the focus group.

## RESULTS

### The right to education in the Romani language

#### Questionnaire for parents

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (72; 84%) report that they are familiar with the right to education in the mother tongue guaranteed by our laws. However, fewer than half of them were informed about the possibility of learning in their mother tongue by the school (36; 42%) and by the kindergarten (1; 1%), and a large majority of them were either not informed (25; 29%) or they did not know whether they were informed or not (24; 28%).

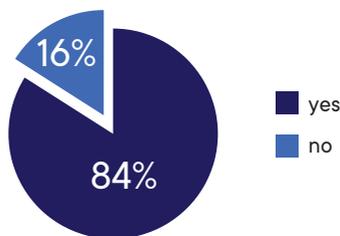


Figure 5. Knowing about the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

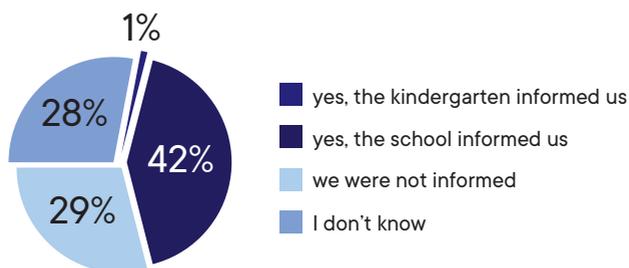


Figure 6. Being informed of the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

Only one-third of the parents have a strong desire for their child to learn in the mother tongue. When asked how much they agree with the statement: “*I want my child to learn in their mother tongue*”, on a scale from 1-not at all agree to 10-completely agree, the parents are divided: 30 (35%) of them chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 26 (30%) parents opted for the highest degree of agreement (10), with the average degree of the agreement being 5. (Table 2)

### Focus group with parents

The general conclusion is that even though they speak Romani language at home, they all speak Macedonian as well, with the dominant language being either the Romani or the Macedonian language.

The children of all of mothers participating in the group study in Macedonian. They all have children in primary school, and one has a child in secondary school. They were not informed about the legal right to study in Romani language, but they believe it is enough that they speak Romani language at home, especially because the Romani language taught at school (literary language) is different from the one spoken at home.

## Focus group with school representatives

*The school of these participants teaches in Macedonian and in Albanian.*

*“There used to be the Romani language, but as an elective subject. There used to be a teacher, too. Not anymore”.*

## Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Roma

### Questionnaires for parents

Only 9 (10%) of the parents said that their child studied the elective subject Language and Culture of Roma.

Asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to study the subject Language and Culture of our community”*, half of them completely agree: 45 (52%) of them chose the highest degree of agreement (10), 19 (22 %) chose the lowest (1), and the average degree of agreement is 7. (Table 2.)

### Focus group with parents

Parents are aware of the opportunity to study the subject, but none of the participants enrolled their children. Firstly, this is due to the experience of previous generations, or to the fact that what they learn in Sumnal is not the same language they speak at home. Secondly, they think that the Romani language their children learn at home is sufficient knowledge of the Romani language spoken in this region. Thirdly, they are bothered by the fact that language classes are offered as a non-mandatory additional subject, which creates an extra burden for their children.

*“I think there is (an option), but my child doesn’t attend it. There are some words they teach there that we don’t use.”*

*“It would have been very complicated, so I didn’t let him enroll. At home, we speak a different Romani language, not the one they teach there.”*

*“The teacher informed us about this possibility, but it is after regular classes. We know some of the words that they learned before (they go to Sumnal) and*

*we see that it is a different language. One thing is being taught at home, and another there.”*

*“We know that they teach about culture. It is good to learn that language, but it is an additional workload for the children, and nothing can be understood from that (literary) language.”*

## Focus group with school representatives

School representatives reported that there used to be an elective subject Language and Culture of Roma, but it is no longer available for several reasons: the number of enrolled children is insufficient, there is no adequate staff (the staff was canceled once there were no children), and parents are not interested because the subject is elective meaning the children have to attend it after the regular classes. Parents believe that there is no need for additional learning of the Romani language - speaking it at home is enough for them. They say that surveys are conducted but no children apply.

*“Parents say that there is no need for it, they know the language.”*

*“But they don’t really know it, because the language they know is not literary.”*

*“We didn’t have an adequate teacher, parents probably noticed the difference. We had one professor who was good, but he left quickly. Secondly, the children have too many classes and this is overburdening them. In addition to one elective subject, they have one more - the language. Maybe there should be just one elective subject, not two. We run surveys for all and in all languages. Also, there are no adequate textbooks. For now, this position is canceled, but we are still running polls to know whether we will organize it in the second grade. Older pupils can also participate if they so wish.”*

## Benefits of the implementation of measures

### Questionnaires for parents

When asked how much they agree with the statement: “I think that the child will progress better in school if he/she learns in his mother tongue”, parents are divided: 33 (38%) of them chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 22 (26

%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 5. They least agree with the statement that the teaching in the languages of smaller communities is of lower quality than the teaching of the Macedonian language: 28 (33%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 28 (33%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 5. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Parents' opinion about education in the mother tongue

Please indicate on a scale of 1-10 (1-do not agree at all; 10-completely agree) how much you agree with the following statements (average values of the group):	Average value
I want my child to learn in his mother tongue.	5
I want my child to study the language and culture of our community.	7
I believe that a child will do better in school if he/she learns in the mother tongue.	5
I believe that the teaching of the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching in the Macedonian language.	5

### Focus group with parents

The parents did not share their opinion about the benefits.

### Focus group with school representatives

The teachers believe that studying the Language and Culture of Roma is useful for Roma children to nurture their culture and to learn the literary Romani language.

*"It is useful for the Roma. They express themselves more easily and they also learn the grammar better."*

*"The languages of ethnic communities are cherished. From this subject, one learns the culture of the other."*

## Obstacles to the implementation of the measures for education in the other tongue

### Questionnaires for parents

One-fourth of parents (21; 25%) believe that the parents are not interested in allowing their children to learn the Romani language. Some parents think that it is a result of the lack of teaching staff who would teach in the Romani language (14; 16%), the non-existence of textbooks in the Romani language (8; 9%), and the insufficient number of children to form a class (3; 4%); only two parents (2%) think that the school management is to blame. One in five parents (19; 22%) thinks it is a combination of the reasons.

An equal number of parents (19; 22%) who responded to the questionnaire did not disclose their opinion about the reasons for the non-implementation of teaching in Romani language, by choosing “other”.

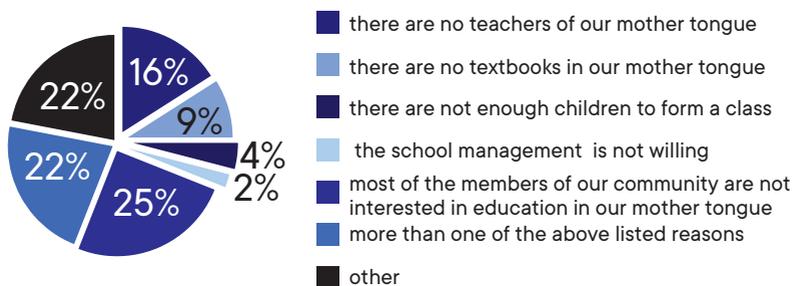


Figure 7. Reasons for non-implementation of teaching in the Romani language (parents' opinion)

### Focus group with parents

Parents believe that the school management should make Language and Culture of Roma a regular subject that will be taught to all children without separating their children from the group. There is fear and skepticism about studying this subject because it is not used in everyday life: for instance, when they look for a job or want to have a document issued. Parents pointed out their general feeling of being discriminated against and are afraid to motivate their children to speak Romani language so as to avoid teasing or mistreatment.

*“Well, there is a class about the Romani language, but it is a separate class. If it was like a regular class, twice a week, I wouldn’t mind taking him. If it was a regular class at school, then he would have to attend.”*

*“If only it was English, Turkish, or another language, but they learn the Romani language at home. We all spoke Macedonian at home and they had no problem. I speak Romani to them.”*

*“Why would you learn your mother tongue? They should learn Macedonian. There are also Turks who learn Macedonian. It’s nice to learn everything, but it is better to learn Macedonian. If he studies Romani language for 9 years - which school is he going to enroll in afterward, and where will he work? We can’t find a job as easy as that. The Macedonian language is taught in Shutka, but they also have a subject in Romani language.”*

*“We study the Romani language and then when we need some document and you don’t know how to ask for it, they call us gypsies. Now, even when we meet a Roma person, they speak Macedonian to us. At work, I am forbidden to speak in Romani with my Roma friends.”*

*“I will not going to talk about this, I work in a clinic, and I am forbidden to speak Romani with Roma colleagues. Albanians are allowed to do it, but we are not. I don’t think it should be forbidden.”*

*“On the bus, if I speak Romani, they immediately turn to me and look at me strangely - what right do they have to do that? That is very rude. Our country is very strange. If you use Roma somewhere, people are bothered. I lived in Gostivar, and cohabited with everyone. I am surprised to see that here everyone is bothered by something. I didn’t know Romani, but I learned it here - and I understand it.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

Teachers and school representatives report that the biggest obstacle is the deficient curriculum for the subject, because if there were one, there would also be criteria for selection of a teacher who would teach it.

*“No staff, no facilities, no time, the classes go until late. Maybe if they shorten the programme, they could include it somewhere”.*

## Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of the measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaire for parents

The suggestions from the parents who filled out the questionnaire are as follows:

- 1) To introduce teaching in Romani language.
- 2) To introduce an additional class for the Romani language or to have half of the teaching in Romani.
- 3) To provide quality staff and textbooks in the Romani language.
- 4) To open Romani language departments in order to obtain qualified teaching staff.
- 5) To work more with the children.
- 6) Some believe that children should learn Macedonian because they speak Romani at home.

### Focus group with parents

They say it should be organized within the regular teaching process - then, they will see it as something mandatory to do and attend.

*"I have no objection if it is a regular class, not as an extra one. He won't be able to back out, like come on, you're from a different community, go to a different class."*

### Focus group with school representatives

They say it is necessary to establish an appropriate curriculum, to have adequate staff. Furthermore, it is necessary to figure out how to shorten the program and how to include the subject as a regular elective.

*"To prepare an appropriate strategy with a curriculum. To train appropriate staff."*

*"To integrate it into other programs."*

## ANNEX 4: RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE SERBIAN LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

### Sample

The questionnaire for parents was answered by **41 parents** from several places in the country (municipalities of Aerodrom, Bitola, Rosoman, Shtip, Kumanovo and Skopje), who report that their child belongs to the Serbian ethnic community. Most of them are mothers (31; 76%), aged between 31-40 years (25; 61%) with secondary education (20; 49%).

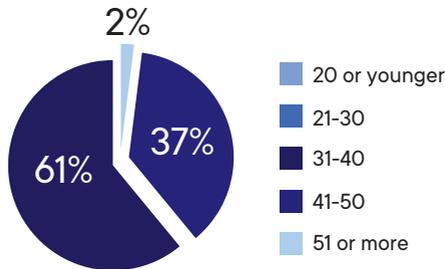


Figure 1. The age of parents

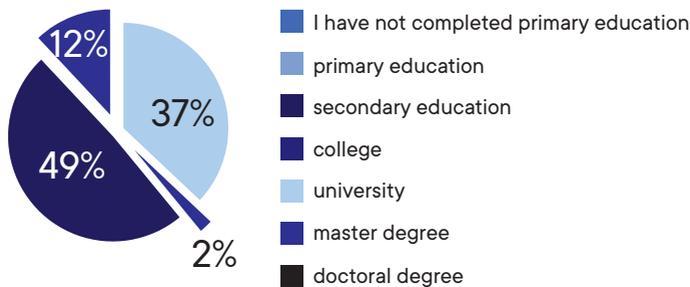


Figure 2. The level of education of parents

Most of the parents have a child in primary school (34; 83%) or kindergarten (12; 29%); four of them (10%) have a child who goes to secondary school (some have one child in primary or kindergarten and another in secondary school). Half of them (20; 49%) report that they do not speak Serbian at home, and 17 (41%) report they speak Serbian and one more local language, while four (10%) report that they speak only Serbian at home.

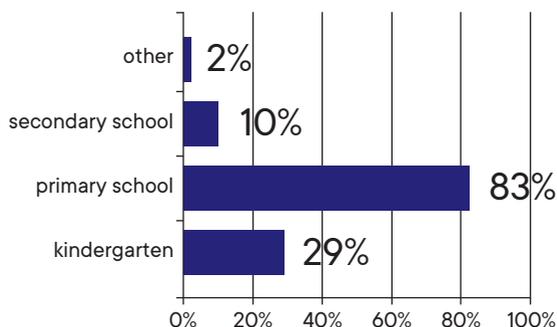


Figure 3. The level of education of children

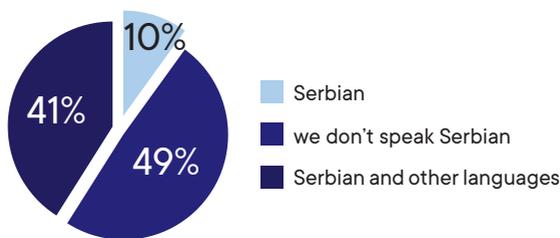


Figure 4. Language spoken at home

The focus groups consisted of 13 parents (all from one place) and 14 representatives of two schools (12 teachers and 2 professional staff).

## RESULTS

### The right to education in the Serbian language

#### Questionnaire for parents

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (18; 83%) report that they are familiar with the right to education in the mother tongue guaranteed by our laws. However, only one-third were informed about the possibility of learning in their mother tongue by the school (12; 29%) and by the kindergarten (2; 5%); the rest were either not informed (18; 44%) or they did not know whether they were informed or not (9; 22%).

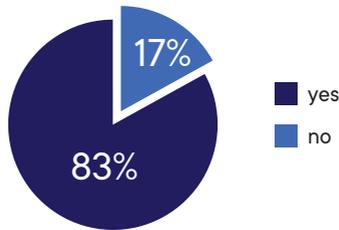


Figure 5. Knowledge about the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

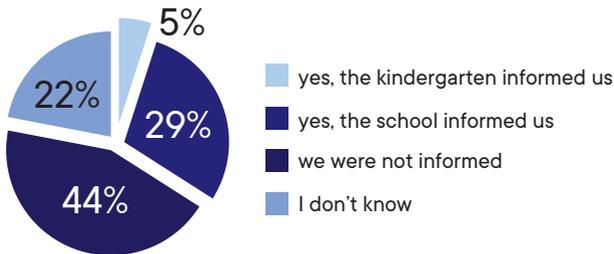


Figure 6. Level of information on the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

Half of the parents (20; 49%) responded that their children do not study the Serbian language at school or kindergarten. Few of them (4; 10%) said their children go to a kindergarten or school (15; 37%) in the Serbian language.

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to learn in their mother tongue”*, on a scale from 1-not at all agree to 10-completely agree, the majority of parents (17; 41%) opted for the highest degree of agreement (10) and 4 (10%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), with the average degree of agreement being 7. (Table 2)

### Focus group with parents

All parents in the focus group were from the same school. They said that there was also a kindergarten in their area with a bilingual Macedonian-Serbian group, but there were no participants from that kindergarten in the group. All of them were familiar with the right to education in their mother tongue.

Most of the parents present reported that they speak both Serbian and Macedonian at home, as well as the Kumanovo dialect. Most often, a member of the family speaks Serbian, but although the children understand it, they do not actively speak it back. There was not a single parent participant whose

child studies in Serbian. They say that there are minimal opportunities, but they do not choose them because it becomes difficult for their children once they enroll in secondary school.

*“Now he fits into an environment in which he should continue to grow. I don’t want to impose one language on him, when he grows up, he will decide for himself which language he will continue to speak.”*

*“I don’t see this option as an opportunity for my child to learn Serbian - there are just not enough children.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

Both schools teach only in the Macedonian language. There are no such opportunities in these schools and they believe that this is regulated by law. There are several elementary schools in Kumanovo and the surrounding area that offer Serbian as the language of instruction, but the general impression is (not said directly by the participants, but a conclusion made from listening to them) that the interest in learning Serbian as the language of instruction has declined.

## Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Serbs

### Questionnaire for parents

Not one parent who responded to the questionnaire reported that their child takes the elective subject Language and Culture of Serbs.

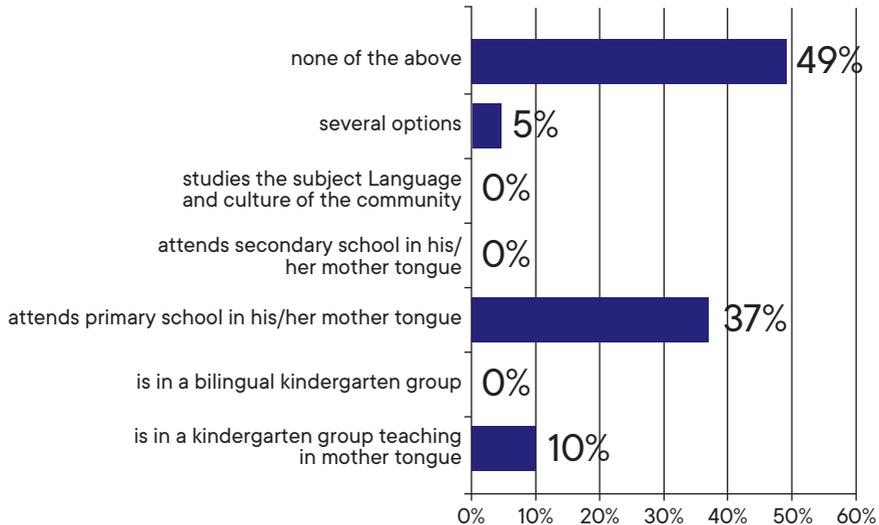


Figure 7. Implementation of the measured for teaching the Serbian language in education

Asked how much they agree with the statement: “I want my child to study the subject Language and Culture of our community”, most of them completely agree: 26 (63%) of them chose the highest degree of agreement (10), 3 (7 %) chose the lowest (1), and the average degree of agreement is 8. (Table 2.)

### Focus group with parents

The general impression is that not all parents are informed. Most of them said that it was the first time they had heard about this possibility. This means that there were either no surveys conducted among them, or they did not understand the purpose of them. Last year a survey was conducted and only four children signed up. Now, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is supposed to answer whether to open a group or not, but there has not been any feedback yet.

*“We are in favour of having an elective subject, but the teaching should be in Macedonian.”*

*“A survey was conducted in our school, too. There is no need to have teaching in the Serbian language, I enrolled my child to study in Macedonian. But the school needn’t ask us, it should provide teaching in Serbian and then it should*

*just let us know. Just like with the other languages - English, French....and others can learn Serbian too, not just the Serbs."*

*"I think that maybe they are not informed well, only 4 children out of the whole school applied and all are from our class."*

*"It is not offered here, there are other selective subjects, but not the languages"*  
- a father who works in a secondary vocational school.

### Focus group with school representatives

There is no elective subject in the schools teaching in Serbian. It remains unclear how the information about the possibility to have an elective subject in Serbian reaches the parents. Some say that only those parents whose children are enrolled as Serbs or Roma are informed. A group was not formed because only three children applied.

In general, teachers agree that children lose interest in everything and not just languages. The program is overloaded, the children have no free time at all, and the organization of such classes is very complex for the school; the classrooms are constantly busy. (The professional staff said, however, that if children applied for those classes, they would find a way to organize them.)

The professional staff also believes that the busy program cannot be seen as an obstacle. In recent years, there has been, in general, weak interest in all areas; there is no will or interest in studying, especially after the pandemic.

*"One school offered additional classes in Romani and Serbian. As of last year, it has been organized only in the lower grades. We asked the teachers to send us information - and that's how a group is formed. We inform the teachers through the forms they choose - parents meetings and such."*

*"The number of applicants is small - last year there were only 3 pupils. There are no obstructions from our side, the interest is poor, that's all."*

## Benefits of the implementation of the measures

### Questionnaire for parents

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I think that the child will progress better in school if he/she learns in his mother tongue”*, parents are divided: 9 (22%) of them chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 13 (32%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 6. They least agree with the statement that the teaching in the languages of communities is of lower quality than the teaching of the Macedonian language: 15 (37%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 6 (15%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 4. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Parents' opinion about education in the mother tongue

Please indicate on a scale of 1-10 (1-do not agree at all; 10-completely agree) how much you agree with the following statements (average values of the group):	Average value
I want my child to learn in his mother tongue	7
I want my child to study the language and culture of our community.	8
I believe that a child will do better in school if he/she learns in the mother tongue.	6
I believe that the teaching of the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching in the Macedonian language.	4

### Focus group with parents

Parents fear that if children in primary school follow the classes in Serbian, they will encounter problems when they enroll in secondary school. This, inter alia, is one of the reasons why they do not choose education where the teaching is conducted in the Serbian language.

Parents who are in favor of learning the elective subject say *“our nationality is Serbian, so if our child learns the language at school, it will only be for his or her benefit.”*

Some of the parents also believe that this may be useful if their children decide to enroll in college in Serbia in the future.

*“I think it should be included as an elective regular subject and chosen by whoever wants to study it, not just the Serbs.”*

*“The more languages they know, the better for the children. Whatever language they learn, it is a treasure for them. My children know Serbian, but it’s different when they learn it at school - they learn the literary language”.*

### Focus group with school representatives

Teaching in the Serbian language is not conducted in their schools.

*“Since it is the same group of languages, it is not really a problem for them to learn Macedonian in order to fit into the system from an early age. If the child studies in Serbian, it will be difficult for him later in high school.”*

*“The number of children interested in learning Serbian (after the breakup of Yugoslavia) is falling.”*

*“I think it is legally regulated, we are monolingual and therefore we have no option” (from the professional staff).*

## Obstacles to the measures for implementing education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaires for parents

An equal number of parents (7; 17%) who responded to the questionnaire see the reason for non-implementation of teaching in Serbian within their own community that the community is not sufficiently interested in this option, as well as in the low number of interested children.

One-third (13; 32%) of the parents who responded to the questionnaire did not reply to the possible reasons why there is no teaching in the Serbian language, by choosing “other”. One parent each found the school management, the shortage of competent staff or the lack of textbooks in Serbian responsible. One-third (11; 27%) believe it is a combination of the aforementioned reasons.

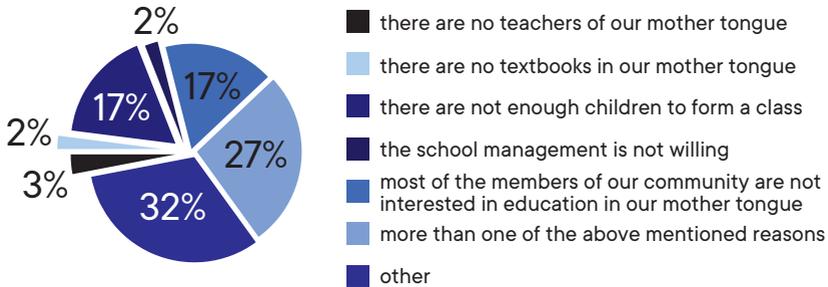


Figure 9. Reasons for non-implementation of teaching in the Vlach language (parents' opinion)

### Focus group with parents

Parents believe that one of the biggest obstacles is the lack of adequate teaching staff. Furthermore, they believe that the status of the subject as elective makes it less attractive, which is why it should be given the same status of all other elective subjects and be offered to all pupils in the school.

*“Finding a suitable professor is also a challenge.”*

*“If it is offered as an elective subject within the framework of the rest of the elective subjects, it will be more easily organized, rather than offering it as a subject intended for the nationalities.”*

*“There should be an information flyer distributed to us during the enrollment process, or at the parents' meeting.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

They believe that insufficient efforts to inform parents about the advantages of studying this subject is an obstacle, which is precisely why this subject is rarely chosen.

They expressed concern with teaching conducted in multiple languages, as it may lead to greater segregation of children.

They believe that parents should be more involved in their children's education.

*“Parents need to be informed more. Just as they take their kids to an English class, they can take them here, too – and this one is free of charge.”*

## Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaire for parents

Recommendations from the parents who answered the questionnaire mostly refer to the necessity for quality staff who not only know the Serbian language well, but can also offer quality teaching. Recommendations include providing textbooks and the creation of effective programs by the practitioners. One of the recommendations is that members of smaller communities learn about their rights.

### Focus group with parents

Parents believe that the responsibility lies with the Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE) and the Ministry of Education and Science, pointing out that the new Concept will improve the situation.

*“Perhaps with the new Concept, when subjects are joined, more conditions will be provided. Maybe there will be more teachers with an insufficient number of teaching hours - so maybe there will be more professors...”*

*“We, as parents, need to be informed about how this would be organized, and at the same time, we should know the benefits. I, personally, did not know that there was such an opportunity until today.”*

*“I only ask myself what is happening, every year there are reforms and everything is getting worse. I don’t know how far it will go.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

School representatives believe that there should first be a good strategy to promote this opportunity and inform the parents about its benefits. Then, the rule for forming a group needs to be clarified. Only then can the school, following instructions from the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipality, implement the activity at the parental level - by informing them and by promoting this option to them.

*“Parents must be informed and educated first - with workshops or meetings. The media can be involved, too.”*

*“The school is obstructing us, MES and BDE should come up with a better strategy. We have no staff. First we need to gather interested pupils, and then we need to look for staff. Until now, we have not been looking for staff because there have not been any interested pupils. This project died because there were no interested parties.”*

*“Even if it’s just for two, there should be a group, and the teacher should go from one school to another.”*

The participants were not sure how the law regulates this issue - whether it requires nine or more pupils - but they concluded that a group can be formed with nine students from one generation.

*“Let everyone learn in their mother tongue, but there should be a thorough analysis about how to do it.”*

*“Parents should take the need to learn languages seriously by respecting the differences, rather than live separated, like in the ghettos.”*

*“To form classes in every school is risky, where could we find teachers? I don’t think children would sign up, I am skeptical. But we need to think how to incorporate it into the law.”*

*“The opportunity should exist, but with respect to other communities, we shouldn’t confine ourselves only within our mother tongue, we need to be open to everyone.”*

Children should be enabled to study their mother tongue as an elective subject, but attention should be paid to promotion, through the media even. If it is an elective subject, then, there will be no segregation between pupils.

*“Pupils are overburdened. It is not a bad idea to make it a mandatory subject. But, still, parents need to be informed - they make decisions for their children. The state should work in cooperation with parents.”*

*“It should be elective, but it still needs a little more involvement from the institutions, including the associations and political parties that support the Serbian community.”*

## ANNEX 5: RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON THE TURKISH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

### Sample

The questionnaire for parents was answered by **40 parents** from several places in the country (several municipalities of Skopje and nearby villages Shtip, Karbinici, and Veles), who report that their child belongs to the Turkish ethnic community. Most of them were fathers (21; 53%), aged between 31-40 years (18; 45%), with secondary education (16; 40%).

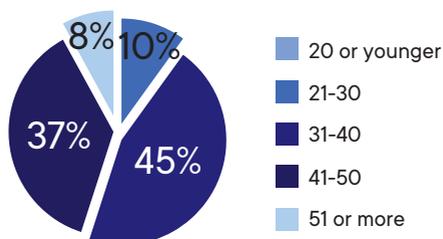


Figure 1. The age of parents

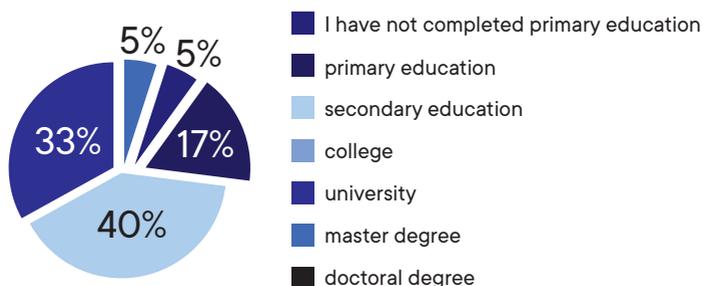


Figure 2. The level of education of parents

Most of the parents have a child in primary school (32; 80%), 18 (45%) parents have a child who goes to secondary school, and several (10%) have a child in kindergarten (some have one child in primary and another in secondary school or in kindergarten). Most of them (18; 45%) said that they speak only Turkish at home, and 16 (15%) say they speak Turkish and another local language at home. The remaining 6 (15%) report that they do not speak Turkish at home.

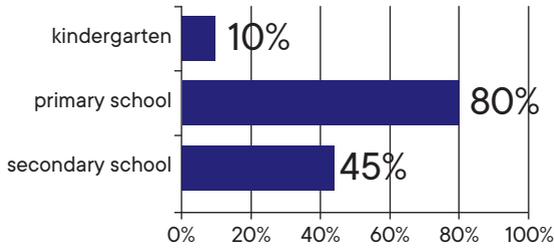


Figure 3. Level of education of the child

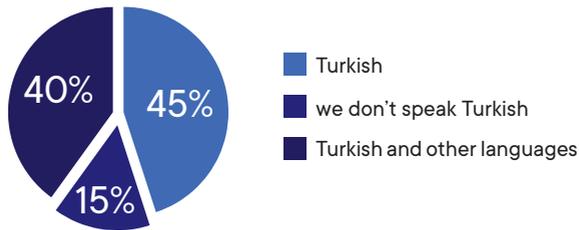


Figure 4. Language spoken at home

The focus groups consisted of 7 parents and 11 school representatives: teachers (9) and professional staff (2).

## RESULTS

### The right to education in the Turkish language

#### Questionnaire for parents

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire (34; 85%) report that they are familiar with the right to education in the mother tongue guaranteed by our laws. However, less than half of them were informed about the possibility of learning in their mother tongue by the school (17; 42%), and a large majority of them were either not informed (15; 38%) or they did not know whether they were informed or not (8; 20%).

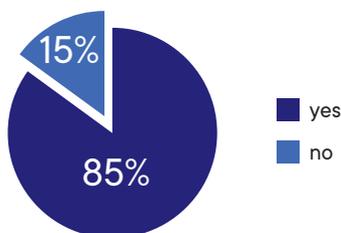


Figure 5. Knowledge about the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

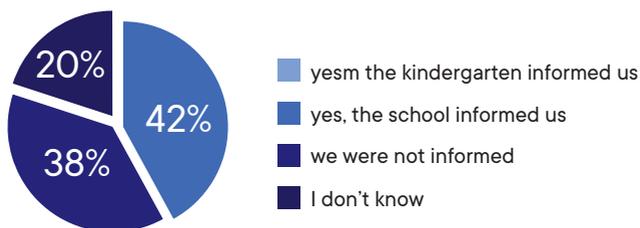


Figure 6. Level of information on the possibility for studying in the mother tongue

One-third of the parents (16; 33%) replied that their children study in their mother tongue in primary school, and 12 (25%) study in their mother tongue in secondary school. (Figure 7)

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to learn in their mother tongue”*, on a scale from 1-not at all agree to 10-completely agree, six parents (15%) chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 22 (55%) opted for the highest degree of agreement (10), with the average degree of the agreement being 8. (Table 2)

### Focus group with parents

The general impression is that parents enroll their children in schools teaching in the Macedonian language so that they do not have to cope with problems once they enroll in the sixth grade.

*“When they come to the sixth grade, their success plummets, they don’t get 5s (excellent) at all. The teacher tells me he studies well, he learns German well, but he can’t get more than a 2 (fair) - as the other pupils do.”*

All participants confirmed that they had the same problem with the teachers who, despite the children’s efforts, did not give them higher grades just because

they did not know the Macedonian language, regardless of the subject. All this stirred some unrest among the parents.

All participants confirmed that they knew that their child had the right to learn in their mother tongue and they unanimously stated that it was easier for their children to express themselves in their mother tongue, understand each other and be more successful.

*“When my child studied Turkish he was very successful, when he came to the central school he could not get a higher grade.”*

*“I have another proposal, let the children continue in Turkish from the sixth grade on, they should be given the opportunity to continue education in their mother tongue (perhaps 70% are Turks in this school). Let them learn in Macedonian as well, give them more hours in Macedonian, because this is where we live - in Macedonia. When I was studying, it wasn't difficult for me because I knew Macedonian, but my classmates cried a lot, it was very difficult for them, they didn't understand... and 70% of the class was Turkish, so we didn't have anyone to learn Macedonian from or to practice with.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

The participating teachers and school representatives were from the same central school, which was an umbrella for several district schools. In some of the district schools, teaching is conducted in Turkish until the fifth grade, while in others the teaching is in Macedonian and in one district school there is teaching in both in classes until the fifth grade. From the sixth grade on, all pupils transfer to the central school and study in the Macedonian language. There are 9 district schools, 4 of which teach in Turkish, and in the rest in Macedonian. Turkish is taught in predominantly Turkish neighborhoods, and only in one school do pupils have the opportunity to choose. These pupils have organized transportation from their homes to the central school.

During the presentation, it was constantly reiterated that the Macedonian language is taught from the fourth grade and English from the first grade, which is considered as a disadvantage. In settlements with a predominantly Turkish population, teaching is offered in Turkish until the fifth grade, while in others the teaching is in Macedonian; only in one of them is there an option to choose either Turkish or Macedonian.

## Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Turks

### Questionnaire for parents

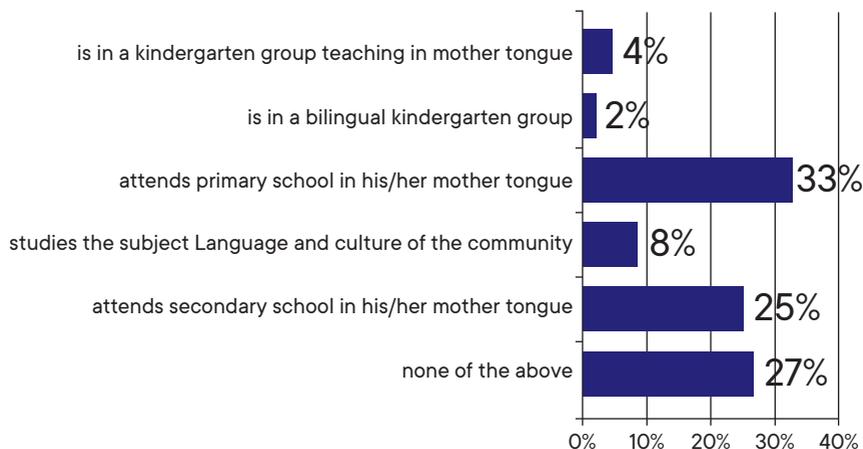


Figure 7. Implementation of the measures for learning the Turkish language

Only 4 (8%) of the parents said that their child studied the elective subject Language and Culture of Turks.

Asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I want my child to study the subject Language and Culture of our community”*, most of them completely agree: 28 (70%) of them chose the highest degree of agreement (10), 3 (8%) chose the lowest level (1), and the average degree of agreement was 9. (Table 2.)

### Focus group with parents

Parents did not receive questionnaires for the elective subject Language and Culture of Smaller Communities.

One parent said that he had heard that there were no teachers who would teach this subject, but another parent said the opposite: there were teachers who could not reach their limit for teaching hours and this helped them to reach the limit. They had no knowledge about the reasons why there was no survey.

This group, too, said that the problem lies in the fact that the Macedonian language is learned in the fourth grade rather than the first grade, so when pupils reach the sixth grade, they have problems with adaptation.

*“Perhaps Turkish can be taught as an elective subject, but certain subjects can also be taught in Turkish. This is how children develop their linguistic knowledge; this is how they can express themselves more fluently.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

According to the pedagogue, surveys are conducted with the parents of the fourth graders and, due to the insufficient number of pupils, the Turkish language as an elective subject is not offered. The teachers disagreed about whether the subject is offered in the fourth grade, and one teacher said that surveys were not done. The teachers were surprised that the Turkish language was offered as an elective subject, because they were unaware of this possibility.

The teachers said that there were no elective subjects in Macedonian classes with Turkish pupils. The professional staff claimed that a survey was conducted showing an insufficient number of pupils, while the teachers said they had not seen such an offer. They reacted because they were not informed about this option and they even demanded proof from the professional staff.

## Benefits of the implementation of the measures

### Questionnaire for parents

When asked how much they agree with the statement: *“I think that the child will progress better in school if he/she learns in his mother tongue”*, parents are divided: 7 (18%) of them chose the lowest level of agreement (1), 23 (58%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement is 7. They least agree with the statement that the teaching in the languages of communities is of lower quality than the teaching of the Macedonian language: 13 (33%) chose the lowest degree of agreement (1), 9 (23%) chose the highest (10), and the average degree of agreement was 5. (Table 2.)

Table 2. Parents' opinion about education in the mother tongue

Please indicate on a scale of 1-10 (1-do not agree at all; 10-completely agree) how much you agree with the following statements (average values of the group):	Average value
I want my child to learn in his mother tongue	8
I want my child to study the language and culture of our community.	9
I believe that a child will do better in school if he/she learns in the mother tongue.	7
I believe that the teaching of the languages of the communities is of lower quality than the teaching in the Macedonian language.	5

### Focus group with parents

Parents believe that the main benefit of learning the mother tongue is that children will express themselves more easily and be more successful. Yet, they emphasize that no such opportunity was offered to them.

### Focus group with school representatives

On the positive side, they find it useful for their children to be able express themselves in the language they know and the fact that they learn the literary Turkish language instead of the dialect spoken at home. This increases their chances to enroll in college or in high school and study in their mother tongue, showing better results, unlike the period when they enrolled in the sixth grade and continued their education in a non-native language.

*“That’s good - the more languages you know, the better. We participate in projects, it’s nice for them to learn the language, they will know their language better.”*

*“We have children who go to a secondary school in Gostivar because of the Turkish language, or they enroll in a university in Turkish. After that, they have difficulties because they haven’t continued learning Turkish as an elective subject. When they don’t learn it from the sixth grade, it’s not nice, they forget the language.”*

## Obstacles to the measures for implementing education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaires for parents

One-third (13; 33%) of the parents who responded to the questionnaire did not reply about the possible reasons why there is no teaching in the Turkish language, opting for “other”, while one-fourth of the parents (10; 25%) said that it was a combination of different reasons. Seven (17%) believe that the main reason is the lack of teachers who would teach in Turkish, while 4 (10%) think it is because of the shortage of textbooks in the Turkish language. A few believe that there is no will with the school management (3; 8%) and that there is an insufficient number of pupils to form a class (3; 7%).

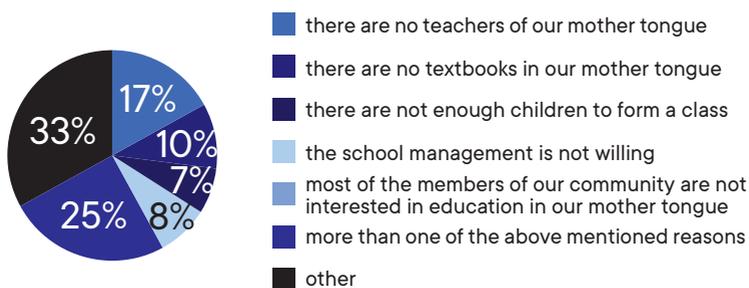


Figure 9. Reasons for non-implementation of teaching in the Turkish language (parents' opinion)

### Focus group with parents

All participants agreed that their children in the central school are discriminated against because, according to them, the children do not have grades higher than a 3 (good), while in secondary school all of their grades are 5 (excellent). They believe that the teachers are discriminating against their children.

*“They cannot achieve the success as they would in their native language.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

School representatives believe that the biggest obstacle to education in the Turkish language is the lack of textbooks in Turkish. The conclusion was that this problem exists with all teaching languages; however, the problem

with the Turkish language is considered to be particularly apparent. One of the mentioned problems was the fact that the Macedonian language is not learned from the first grade, so once the pupils come to the sixth grade and have to continue their education in Macedonian, their results drop drastically.

The general impression was that some of the teachers were surprised to find out that this possibility existed. Once they found out about it, they gave their support to it and believed that the school should make more efforts to inform the parents about the benefits and the advantages of learning the language, and at the same time, provide conditions for the pupils, like transportation, so that they can stay after regular classes.

*“We have the staff, but not much is being done.”*

*“It can also be organized in the central schools, as an elective subject, we have enough teachers.”*

*“The coordination with the buses may be a problem - there is a bus that collects the pupils at a certain time - there is a child who travels 50 km a day, so they are dependent on the transport - surely, that is the reason why they do not enroll them.”*

One teacher suggested that the school should organize this on the days when the children have 5 hours. All teachers supported this proposal. The professional service said that it depended on the principal. Some conflicting discussion developed around this issue.

## Recommendations for strengthening the implementation of measures for executing the right to education in the mother tongue

### Questionnaire for parents

The recommendations of the parents who responded to the questionnaire are mainly focused on providing quality teaching staff, textbooks, and other necessary resources. Several emphasize that political employment should be stopped in order to allow the recruitment of quality staff in schools.

## Focus group with parents

Parents believe that adequate conditions need to be provided to help the children adapt when they continue their education in the Macedonian language in the sixth grade. They need to have some support, such as a teacher who is a Turk and who can be asked for assistance every time a child has a problem.

The Macedonian language should be taught from the first to the ninth grade within the teaching process conducted in the Turkish language.

*“There should be a Turkish teacher for support, so that when a child has a problem he can ask for help from that teacher.”*

The general impression is that parents had no information about the option to study the elective subject Language and Culture of the Turks. When they found out, they proposed that it becomes compulsory subject so that all Turkish children can attend it. They asked for a teacher in the school. Their recommendation was to explain to the parents why learning Turkish is important, so that they do not see it as an additional burden.

*“Just as there is English from the first to the ninth (grade), there should be Turkish as well. We asked for it once and they told us that there was no staff.”*

*“The mayor can help here, give an order, or make a decision, and so can the Ministry of Education and Science (MES).”*

*“The mayor doesn’t help us, he only helps the villages where there are Macedonians, but not our villages.”*

*“We have been deprived of our right here. Skopje is different, they get their rights there. Here, we are like orphans, without a mother and a father. We are not even allowed to speak. But we are to blame too, when someone has a problem in the municipality, we just laugh - we don’t help them.”*

*“They should come all the way from Skopje to see us, to ask us if we have any trouble, if we have the conditions - just like you came now to ask us questions, but you should also come to our schools and see the conditions in our schools, so very dirty.’*

They said that the conditions in district schools with Turkish pupils were worse than the conditions in district schools with Macedonian pupils.

*“Other parents are just like us, but they can’t speak out, they don’t believe that anything would change, so they give up on their demands.”*

*“This is to you – keep telling them, as long as you can and as far as you want, that we don’t have our mother tongue until the ninth grade and that our schools are in very bad condition. We want our children to study, and not just become farmers. We need someone to help us, we are here alone - we are saying this to you, and you should pass the message where you think is right.”*

*“This is to the state - have a Turkish translator in the institutions to help people who go to look for documents.”*

*“There are children who say we study in vain, why do we study at all, they are just not motivated - there should be a way to motivate those children.”*

### Focus group with school representatives

The idea of the teachers is to give parents more attention and increase their involvement in children’s lives, to give more importance to teachers and pupils, to promote more interest from the parents. The fact that they continue in the Macedonian language creates a problem for them because they cannot express themselves in Macedonian and they become introverts and they will not speak because their knowledge of Macedonian is limited; therefore, they should learn both Macedonian and Turkish simultaneously from the first grade.

Another recommendation is to work on increasing the staff for the Turkish language, although some of the teachers felt that the staff was sufficient and that there are teachers who do not even meet the limit of teaching hours, so this could be a way for them to achieve that.

A discussion developed about what kind of an elective subject the Turkish language is (they were unaware if it was elective) – and when they found out, they said that it would be good if the Turkish language became a compulsory subject in their school. The requirement for a minimum of 15 children should be changed and the number of pupils required for a group should be adjusted, as sometimes even the total number of pupils does not exceed 15.

*“The Ministry of Education and the Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE) should procure textbooks on time.”*

*“To increase the number of lessons in the Macedonian language in lower grades so that the children no longer have problems with adaptation in the sixth grade. The Macedonian language should be taught from the first grade where the language of teaching is Turkish.”*

*“To the Ministry of Education and Science and other institutions - to pay more attention to the mother tongue. To have more projects in those languages so that children can learn in that language. For example, Turkish children do not like Turkish, parents say their children do not know the language, and they are not aware that their children do not know the literary Turkish language. There should be a project to increase the awareness of parents about the need to learn the literary Turkish language.”*

*“We think the ball is in the parent’s court, but if 50% of the fault is with the parents, then 50% is also with us. We need to bring them together because they are uninformed. We need to motivate them and bring them closer.”*

## ANNEX 6: RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE SCHOOLS

### Sample

The questionnaire was filled out by representatives from **55 schools**, of whom **24** are **pedagogues**, **15** are **psychologists**, **8** are **principals** and **8** are **other employees** of the school.

### Implementation of the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities

The largest number of schools (48; 87%) report that the employees are fully aware of the right of the members of smaller communities to study the mother tongue as an elective or regular subject during teaching.

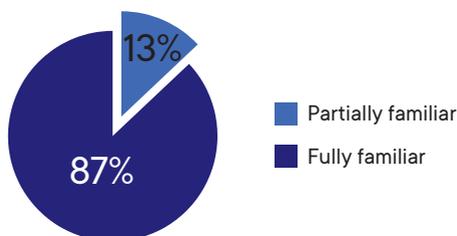


Figure 1. Familiarity of school employees with the right to education in the mother tongue

Out of a total of 55 schools, the subject Language and Culture is not taught about any of the smaller communities in 45 (82%) of them. It is reported that the subject Language and Culture of the Roma and Vlachs is taught in five schools (9%), and the Language of Bosniaks and Turks, are taught in one school (2%) each.

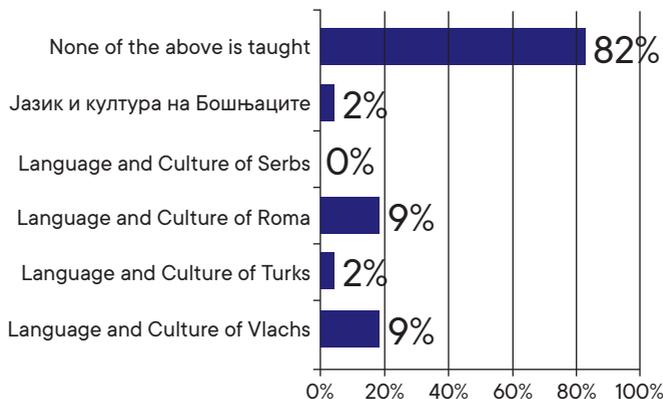


Figure 2. Teaching the subject Language and Culture of Communities

Only nine out of ten schools in which the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities is implemented reported on the number of pupils. Table 2 shows that the number of pupils attending this subject differs from one school to another, with the number ranging from 3 to 65 pupils. In two of these nine schools, two elective subjects Language and Culture are taught to pupils from two different communities.

The Language and Culture of Bosniaks is taught in one school, with 13 students.

Table 2. Number of pupils who take the subject Language and Culture

School	LC of Bosniaks	LC of Vlachs на Власите	LC of Roma Ромите	LC of Turks Турците
S1		17		11
S2	13			
S3			18	
S4			50	
S5			50	
S6		15		
S7		3		
S8		3		
S9		15	65	

## Obstacles to the implementation of the measures for education in the mother tongue

Forty schools responded to the question about the reasons for not implementing the Language and Culture subject. Twenty-six (47%) schools believed that there is no interest among the parents and the pupils. Thirteen (24%) schools reported the reason for not implementing the elective subject is the insufficient number of pupils to form a group. In only one (2%) school, they believed that there is no adequate staff to teach that subject.

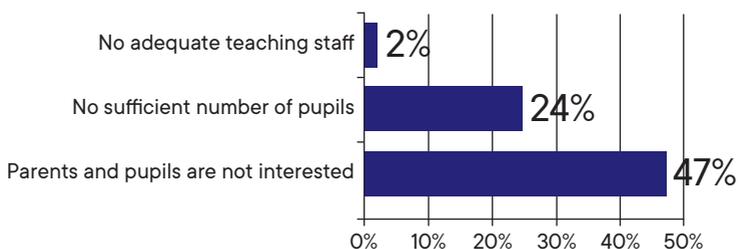


Figure 3. Reasons for not implementing teaching process in the language of the community

The majority of schools (49; 89%) declared that they conduct a survey among parents about the elective subjects they would like their children to study, and 4 (7%) schools reported that they do this through direct contact with the parents.

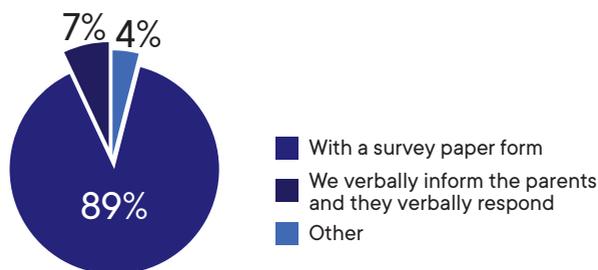


Figure 4. Method of informing parents about the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities

The highest number of schools, 47 (85%), report that they present the results of the survey to the parents. In case of an insufficient number of registered pupils, and following the criterion of at least 15 students needed to form a group, 24 (44%) of the schools do not form a class and inform the parents that there are not enough pupils to form a class. Ten (18%) schools try to attract more

children by talking to their parents. Only a few schools make additional efforts to form a class for the study of the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities, and one-third of schools do not respond to this issue.

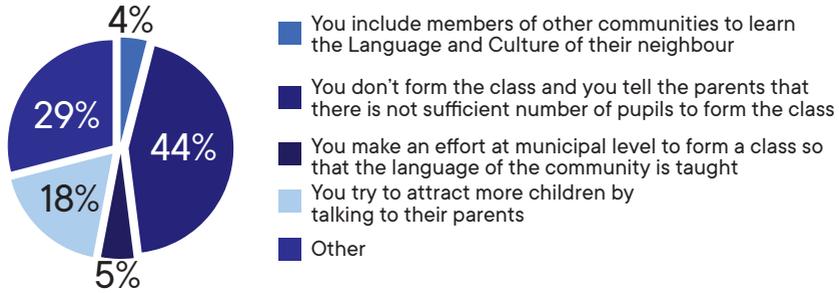


Figure 5. How do schools act when not enough pupils register for the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities

Fifteen (27%) schools report that they submit the requests for textbooks for the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities in a timely manner and in accordance with the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Science (MES).

## Teaching staff for the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities

Only 12 (22%) schools reported that the teaching staff is in accordance with the norm provided by the Curriculum on Language and Culture of the Communities and that their work is monitored by someone from the school.

Ten (18%) schools reported that the school provides support to teachers for the implementation of the elective subject, mainly through advisory-consultative work, methodological and technical-didactic support, discussions, training, and by providing working conditions, support (in cooperation with parents), and, in one of the schools, by adding to the required teaching hours.

Twenty-three (42%) schools reported that the teachers who teach the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities participate in training, together with the rest of their colleagues.

## ANNEX 7: RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PARTICIPATORY FORUM

### Recommendation 1:

**To amend the law on preschool and primary education and to reduce the number of pupils required to form a group/class.**

The Law on Preschool Education and the Law on Primary Education stipulate that the minimum number of pupils required to form a group or class in order to organize teaching of the language of the community is 15. This number needs to be reduced so that a higher number of pupils can study their mother tongue.

### Recommendation 2:

**The elective subject Language and Culture of smaller communities should be given equal treatment with other elective subjects and it should be available for any pupil to choose, regardless of ethnicity.**

Schools most frequently offer the elective subject Language and Culture of Communities as the third elective subject intended only for pupils who belong to that community, and for which the parent must consent. For the other elective subjects, the procedure is completely different and they are offered as a priority.

### Recommendation 3:

**To amend the Law on Textbooks and the Law on Publishing in order to ensure high-quality translation and proofreading of textbooks in the languages of smaller communities.**

### Recommendation 4:

**To introduce affirmative measures for the selection of textbook reviewers in the languages of smaller communities.**

Pursuant to the Law on Textbooks, a reviewer should have at least ten years of professional experience in the subject of the textbook. Taking into account the fact that there is a shortage of teaching staff that would meet the standards prescribed in the Curriculum, it is necessary to introduce a change by which a reviewer with shorter professional experience is approved for textbooks in the languages of smaller communities.

### Recommendation 5:

**Prepare textbooks for the elective courses Language and Culture of the Roma, Serbs, and Turks, as well as manuals and other teaching materials for all communities.**

The Roma community does not have textbooks for the elective subject Language and Culture of Roma for the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Therefore, additional effort is needed to prepare textbooks for the grades for which there are none, in cooperation with the Roma community and with the assistance of university professors.

### Recommendation 6:

**To prepare a curriculum for the subject Serbian language in secondary education.**

In order to conduct the teaching process, it is necessary to have a curriculum, the preparation of which is within the competence of BDE.

### Recommendation 7:

**To allocate financial resources for the next calendar year for all levels of education, according to the needs at the local level (e.g. for bilingual groups in kindergartens, for the transportation of children from remote areas, etc.).**

### Recommendation 8:

**To continuously strengthen the capacities of the current and future (during university studies) educational and teaching staff in the languages of smaller communities.**

### Recommendation 9:

**To enable the study of the languages of smaller communities at the universities.**

When it comes to quality teaching of a language, teachers should have a great knowledge of the language, so that the language they teach is the standardized, literary language. It is the only form of teaching that should be practiced. Such a teaching staff needs to have the expertise that is acquired at higher education institutions. Currently, the languages of smaller communities are not being studied at the universities at all. They need to be studied either as elective subjects or through an appropriate model of language studies.

## Recommendation 10:

**To provide scholarships for young people who, after their secondary studies, continue to the Faculties of Pedagogy. This is aimed at increasing the number of teaching staff.**

## LITERATURE

- Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", 2006.
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, <http://www.amos.org.mk>;
- Recommendations from The Hague to the OSCE HCNM on the education rights of national minorities;
- Law on Basic Education, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 161/19 and 229/20
- Law on the protection of children ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova" no. 23/13, 12/14, 44/14, 144/14, 10/15, 25/15, 150/15, 192/15, 27/ 16, 163/17, 21/18, 198/18 and "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" No. 104/19, 146/19, 275/19, 311/20, 294/21 and 150/22)
- Concept for nine-year primary education 2007.
- Study on multiculturalism and interethnic relations in education. [www.unicef.org.mk](http://www.unicef.org.mk)
- Strategy for integrated education, 2010.
- Research "Conditions in the primary education of children belonging to the communities in the Republic of Macedonia 2010".
- Law on textbooks for primary and secondary education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 98/2008, 99/2009, 83/2010, 36/2011, 135/2011, 46/2012, 24/2013, 120/2013 , 29/2014, 146/2015, 217/2015, 30/2016 and 21/2018)
- The law on the promotion and protection of the rights of members of communities that are less than 20% of the total population in RSM 2020.
- State Statistics Office <http://popis2021.stat.gov.mk/>
- Education in the languages of smaller ethnic communities - research [https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici\\_06.pdf](https://fosm.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/obrazovanie-na-jazicite-na-pomalubrojnite-etnicki-zaednici_06.pdf)

Funded by:



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe  
**Mission to Skopje**