

IO1: DIGITAL TOOLS FOR LITERACY AND STRENGTHENING OF LINGUISTIC SKILLS

TOOLKIT Tool4aLLs

1. INTRODUCTION

Europe has increasingly become a destination of significant migratory flows in the last decades. However, the current refugee crisis has presented an additional, urgent challenge to European policymakers, institutions and national governments to find sustainable solutions for ensuring the existence of comprehensive measures to the teaching and learning of languages and literacy.

According to European Commission, during 2018 a total of 3.9 million people immigrated to one of the EU-27 Member States, while 2.6 million emigrants were reported to have left an EU-27 Member State. However, these total figures represent the migration flows to/from the EU-27, including flows between different EU-27 Member States. Also in 2018, there were an estimated 2.4 million immigrants to the EU-27 from non-EU-27 countries. As far as the national numbers of 2018 are concerned, **Germany** accommodates the largest number of **immigrants** and **emigrants**, by reporting the largest total number of immigrants (893.9 thousand) in 2018, followed by Spain (643.7 thousand), France (386.9 thousand) and Italy (332.3 thousand). A total of 22 out of the EU-27 Member States reported more immigration than emigration, but in Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania & Romania the number of emigrants outnumbered the number of immigrants (Eurostat, 2020).

With the increasing mobility in Europe and the rising number of young people arriving from third countries, European Commission attempts to ensure that multilingualism will remain central to the European project. It targets to boost language learning by the end of compulsory education in various ways: by focusing on achieving specific competence levels; by introducing into education and training the concept of language awareness, which provides an inclusive framework for language learning taking into account individuals' language skills; by identifying and promoting innovative, inclusive and multilingual teaching methods using tools and platforms at the EU-level, such as the School Education Gateway and eTwinning (Europa, 2020).

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Desk research includes the presentation and analysis of relevant and available data on the existing background, practices and digital tools for literacy and strengthening of linguistic skills implemented at a national level for the benefit of migrants and refugee groups. Partners shall include practices and digital tools used in local, regional or national level, as reported in former research, literature, official documents, etc.

The following structure is proposed:

1. Description and analysis of the socio-linguistic background of each country. This short descriptive study about the society's characteristics and effect on language (including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used)
2. Presentation of the main languages spoken by migrants and refugees in the country. Partners must collect and present statistics and relevant pieces of information about most widespread spoken languages amongst refugees or migrants.
3. Presentation and analysis of the migrant presence and features in relation to the national population size. Partners must collect and present data of the groups of foreigners constituting the largest proportion of immigrants by nationality of origin in the country.
4. Presentation and analysis of facts highlighted by agencies, scholars, teachers and the language learners about the priorities of the special language training programs (listening, speaking, writing and reading) implemented by various authorities.
5. Description and analysis of the variety of issues and difficulties the language operators are dealing during the language learning processes of migrants/refugees at the national level.
6. Description and analysis of the possible areas of improvement regarding the knowledge of the operators on the language learning processes for migrants/refugees.
7. Presentation and analysis of the main problems the refugees and asylum seekers are facing concerning literacy learning.
8. Presentation and analysis of the main problems the refugees and asylum seekers are facing concerning language learning.
9. The mapping of the national digital tools for literacy and strengthening of linguistic skills should be developed in two ways:
 - Create a list of tools
 - Each tool type should have a min and max of results per tool type

Learning a foreign or second language presents various challenges for people in different contexts with immigrant background. There is a great range of methods and approaches often used to teach a new language. Furthermore, in the context of a humanitarian crisis, many language teachers face several kinds of challenges in working with refugee and migrant children and adults.

The most basic methods for data collection in the desk research are the followings:

Secondary data that have been previously collected or gathered for other purposes than the aim of the national desk research in question. This type of data is already available, in different forms, from a variety of sources. The secondary data could lead to **Internal** and **External** secondary data research. On the one hand internal secondary data research refers to the company, organization, institution internal sources (previous researches, operations-related data, etc.) which can be easily attained and re-purposed to explore research questions about different aspects. External secondary data research, which represents a study that uses existing data on a certain research subject from government agencies (National Statistical Authorities) published research reports from different international organizations (IOM, UNHCR) international and intergovernmental agencies (European Union, IMF, World Bank, etc.), and so on.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

3.1.1 Which is the socio-linguistic background in the country?

Greece has traditionally affirmed the monolingual and monocultural nature of the country, but as it has engaged more with wider European values, officially recognized the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism so as it takes all appropriate measures to integrate it in current school language curricula and other lifelong educational programmes.

The foreign languages offered in general education are only English (obligatory), German and French (obligatory by choice), reproducing the language hierarchies maintained in EU.¹ Migrant and minority languages are still excluded from the conventional school curriculum, transferring the responsibility of teaching and learning other languages to the immigrant groups themselves.² Apart from the Greek language spoken by 99% of the total population, Turkish is one of the most widely spoken minority languages in Greece today, with a speaker population of 128,380 people. Due to the long period of rule by the Ottoman Empire and after the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, there is a small number Turkish speaking

¹ Dendrinou, B., & Mitsikopoulou, B., 2004. Policies of Linguistic Pluralism and the Teaching of Languages in Europe. Athens: University of Athens & Metaixmio Publications
http://scholar.uoa.gr/sites/default/files/mbessie/files/02_politikes_glossikou_plouralismou_front_material.pdf

² Kiliari A., 2009. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece. *Language practice in Greece: The effects of European policy on multilingualism*
<https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/ENL132/Session%2001%3A%20Language%20policy%20in%20Greece/Language%20practice%20in%20Greece.pdf>

Greek Muslims mainly concentrated in the region of East Macedonia and Western Thrace.^{3 4}

3.1.2 Which are the main languages spoken by migrant and refugees in the country?

Greece has been traditionally one of the most important emigration countries following the Second World War. National emigration flows lasted from 1952 to the mid-1970s but the last decades, Greece has become from a migrant-exporting to a migrant-receiving country.

According to IOM evidence, immigration to Greece started in 1980s with immigrants coming mainly from Africa and Asia, but the phenomenon was limited in scope and legal in character. It was only in the 1990s that Greece started receiving large inflows of immigrants from the Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the communist regimes with large numbers from Albania too. Some estimate the number as high as 400,000 persons present illegally in Greece⁵. In the last 15 years, the number of immigrants has quadrupled, making Greece the country with the highest proportional increase in immigration in the EU⁶. The striking feature of the recent humanitarian crisis which is transforming the Greek society is the wide range of languages and ethnicities involved.⁷

According to the General Censuses of Population-Housing and Buildings, conducted in 2011 by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the highest number of immigrants by nationality of origin in Greece (with foreign citizenship) is recorded as following: Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Pakistan, Georgia, Cyprus, Afghanistan, United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Germany and others.⁸

The majority of the refugees and migrants who arrived in Greece between 2015 and 2017 (approximately 95 percent) came from seven countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Algeria. These groups reflect the diversity of ethnic groups in those countries and speak a great array of

³ Ethnologue: Languages in Greece: <https://www.ethnologue.com/country/GR>

⁴ Minority Education in Greece: the Case of Western Thrace Turks (2008)

⁵ ENTRE OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH EMN -GREEK NATIONAL CONTACT POINT ILLEGALLY RESIDENT THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS IN GREECE: STATE APPROACHES TOWARDS THEIR PROFILE AND SOCIAL SITUATION (1ST draft) https://ec.europa.eu/homeaffairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/illegally-resident/gr-report-29-8_en.pdf

⁶ IOM History of Greece, website: <https://greece.iom.int/en/iom-greece>

⁷ Save the Children. *Language & Comprehension barriers in Greece's Migration Crisis* <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Language-Comprehension-barriers.pdf>

⁸ 2011 Population and Housing Census Statistical data on the reasons on account of which immigrants (with Greek or foreign citizenship) settle in Greece https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/1215267/A1602_SAM07_DT_DC_00_2011_01_F_EN.pdf/fb71f487-c113-4f0e-8055-e301c68377b4

languages and dialects - which might be Arabic, Kurmanji, Sorani, Dari, Farsi, French, Lingala, Baluchi, Urdu or Pashto, among others.^{9 10}

Most of the Arabic speakers are from Syria and Iraq; other Arabic speakers came from Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan. While Arabic is used across a wide geographical area (from North Africa, all the way to the Gulf States), its dialects differ so greatly (especially in verbal communication) that some Arabic speakers might not understand each other.¹¹

3.1.3 What about the migrants presence and features in relation to the national population size?

The 2011 census reveals the **7.8% of the total population** (862,381 individuals, out of just over 11 million are **non-Greek residents in Greece**. From the 862,381 of the non-Greek citizen residents, 203,120 in 2011 were EU citizens. According to IOM (2008) the main countries of origin across Europe are Albania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Georgia, with Albania constituting the largest proportion (62%) of immigrants. The greatest cluster of the non-EU and EU residents in Greece are Albanians, who are also estimated to be more than half of the registered immigrant population in Greece, amount from 450,000 to 550,000 (i.e. 57.5% of the immigrant population)¹² Concerning the school student population, according to official figures from the **Greek Ministry of Education**, in the school years 2011–2012, the percentage of foreign students was **12.27%** of the students attending primary school, the majority of whom were of **Albanian background (78.5%)**. In secondary education, immigrant students **amounted to 8.74% of the student population (78.4%) of which were of Albanian origin**¹³. The greatest cluster of non-EU immigrant population are in the larger urban centres, especially the Municipality of Athens, with 132,000 immigrants comprising 17% of the local population, and then Thessaloniki, with 27,000 immigrants reaching 7% of the local population. Of the migrant population covered by the 2011 census, 45% were women. However, there were considerable differences within specific nationalities, with men accounting for 93% of the Indians, 79% of the Syrians, and 76% of the Egyptians and women making up 76% of the Filipinos, 75% of the Ukrainians,

⁹ UNHCR (2016), Men, Women and Children - Trends of Arrivals in Greece, June 2015 - 16 January 2016. Available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/46726>

¹⁰ Language & Comprehension barriers in Greece's Migration Crisis (2017) A Study on the Multitude of Languages and Comprehension of Material Provided to Refugees and Migrants in Greece. Available at: <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Language-Comprehension-barriers.pdf>

¹¹ Translators without Borders and Save the Children (2017) Language & Comprehension barriers in Greece's Migration Crisis, A Study on the Multitude of Languages and Comprehension of Material Provided to Refugees and Migrants in Greece. Available at: <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Language-Comprehension-barriers.pdf>

¹² Labrianidis & Hatziprokopiou (2005) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/27377303> Albanian return migration migrants tend to return to their country of origin after all

¹³ Gkaintartzi et al., (2016) Heritage language maintenance and education in the Greek sociolinguistic context: Albanian immigrant parents' views. Cogent Education p.3: 1155259

and 70% of the Moldovans.¹⁴

3.1.4 What is the situation concerning literacy vs language learning of refugees/migrants in the country?

The nature of **Literacy** was also observed by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation¹⁵ where it was indicated that literacy as a concept has proved to be both complex and dynamic, continuing to be interpreted and defined in a multiplicity of ways. **Language**, has also evolved in meaning and definition. Lyon supports the idea that language is a broader concept because is not restricted to the oral version¹⁶

The similarities and differences discussed are practically and theoretically based on context, history and perception. The conventional form of Literacy, and Language are closely related to the extent that it is literary impossible to discuss reading and writing literacy skills without implying the existence of language. In terms of historical existence, the concept of Literacy, including reading and writing matters are more recent than language and it is associated with the high class groups of people who had access to information, training in order to get these skills and then to control and produce written meanings, stories and other messages, while language was for every member of each community¹⁷.

As far as Greece is concerned, there is no doubt that nowadays new language learners, have emerged due to regional conflicts, poverty, types of oppression which have led millions of language learners involuntarily to seek refuge in Europe via Greece.¹⁸ In order the needs of these populations to be addressed, special language training programs have been implemented by Ministries, local Municipalities, Universities and Vocational Training Centers.¹⁹ One of the most useful parameter to be noted in immigrant and refugee educational settings is that the populations have high numbers of illiteracy in their own native language.

In all cases, teachers highlighted the fact that students needed to be communicatively competent, especially with regard to everyday interactions and basic survival skills.

¹⁴ MMWD – Making Migration Work for Development,
<file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/Migration+profile+of+Greece.pdf>

¹⁵ United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2006). Understandings of literacy. Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Available at
http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt6_eng.pdf

¹⁶ Lyons, J. (1990) Language and Linguistics: An Introduction. Cambridge: University Press.

¹⁷ Mkandawire, S. B. (2018) Literacy versus Language: Exploring their Similarities and Differences
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327545196_Literacy_versus_Language_Exploring_their_Similarities_and_Differences

¹⁸ Androulakis, Mastorodimou, & van Boeschoten (2016) Using qualitative methods for the analysis of adult immigrants' L2 needs: Findings from a research project in Greece focusing on school-parents Communication. Irish Journal for Culture, Arts, Literature and Language, 1(1), 1-19

¹⁹ Kantzou, V., Manoli, P., Mouti, A., & Papadopoulou, M. (2017). Γλωσσική εκπαίδευση προσφύγων και μεταναστών/ριών: Πολλαπλές μελέτες περίπτωσης στον Ελλαδικό χώρο. Διάλογοι! Θεωρία και πράξη στις επιστήμες αγωγής και εκπαίδευσης, 3, 18-34. doi:<https://doi.org/10.12681/dial.15000>

Given the limited time allotted to the courses, most teachers prioritized listening and speaking and sometimes writing and reading were totally neglected in these programmes.²⁰

3.2 NEEDS OF OPERATORS, EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS WORKING WITH REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

3.2.1 What are the main difficulties faced by operators concerning language learning of migrants/refugees?

The operators are dealing with variety of issues and difficulties during the language learning processes of migrants/refugees in Greece:

- a) These populations differ in age, gender, socio-cultural background, first language, interests, language learning purposes, language aptitude, motivation, intelligence, educational achievement, and prior exposure and current access to the target language(s) affecting language acquisition in or out of the classrooms.
- b) Most educational initiatives are organized by NGOs in large cities and are mostly targeting refugee children and less adults
- c) There is a variety of course operators in Greece. Some courses are funded by NGOs, others are operated on the basis of volunteer work offered by individuals, many belong to more complicated cases such as the one in which studied courses are part of a programme funded by a foreign Humanitarian Aid Organization but implemented by greek NGOs and other voluntary associations, like “Stekia Metanaston” in various central cities. The parameter to be taken into consideration in immigrant and refugee educational settings is the often limited and disrupted nature of the classes due to adversities. They also appear to have a great range of duration, frequency and quality p.ex the contexts in many cases are designed by few irregular teachers/educators.
- d) Modern Greek was taught in seventeen (17) out of the total sum of the educational settings) while English and German was taught as well on a much lower scale. This variety of languages taught is not reflecting the fact that parts of the learners are waiting for permissions to leave Greece and resettle in some other EU country, so learning modern Greek is not their priority.
- e) Little evidence is available on good practice with regard to pedagogy and teaching methods in language and literacy provision for refugees and migrants.

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²⁰ Kantzou, V., Manoli, P., Mouti, A., & Papadopoulou, M. (2017).[..] 3, 18-34.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.12681/dial.15000>

²¹ UNESCO Language and literacy programs for migrants and refugees: challenges and ways forward
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000266077>

3.2.2 What could it be done to improve the knowledge of the operators concerning language learning of migrants/refugees ?

As far as Greece is concerned, the influx of immigrants over the last decades has sharply increased the demands for adult language education. There should be more opportunities for teachers and language operators who wish to deepen their knowledge and skills of teaching Greek language to migrants and refugees by attending specialized courses and targeted postgraduate degrees. These courses include modules designed to answer key questions in applied linguistics and second language acquisition in the world's numerous, diverse multilingual contexts. HOU's (Hellenic Open University) in Greece provides a postgraduate Program entitled as "Language Education for refugees and migrants" and it is considered as a successful best practice aiming to integrate language, culture, and social code as part of the development of formal, informal and non-formal, on-line and off-line educational programs for the benefit of language learners and the operators²² Furthermore, the common Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) addressed to immigrant populations should be used to support the language course development. It is intended to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis to all language learning programmes. These must be separated and focus on preliterate, illiterate and semi-literate adults and IL2S sets standards and recommends criteria for teaching both literacy and L2 in relation to the different literacy profiles.²³

Lastly, it should be noted that language operators, as other humanitarian workers, should attend special workshops and capacity building seminars about improving their own cultural competences in working with people from refugee backgrounds. These initiatives aim to raise the participants' awareness of the key components to cultural competency when working with refugee groups of diverse identities and cultures, survivors of torture and those who suffer post-war (refugee) trauma.

3.2.3 What are the main problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers concerning literacy?

Since 2015, a large number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa have arrived in Greece. Some of them continued their onward journey to western European countries others decided to settle. The integration of young refugees into the Greek education system has been a key concern of the Ministry of Education since the beginning of 2016, so different national governmental and NGOs developed a plan to integrate migrant children into education in an effort to succeed their wider social integration.

According to this plan, 111 Refugee Education Host Structures (REHSs) with 145 classes were implemented, including more than 2600 pupils (2017 data). A year later

²² Hellenic Open University <https://www.eap.gr/en/courses/4562-language-education-for-refugees-and-migrants-lrm-2>

²³ Minuz, F., & Borri, A. (2017). Literacy and language teaching: tools, implementation and impact. In J. C. Beacco, H. J. Krumm, D. Little, & P. Thalgott (Eds.), *The linguistic integration of adult migrants. Some lessons from research* (pp. 357-364). Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter

organizing reception classes and/or REHS The Refugee Education Coordinators (RECs) were functioned as the links between REHSs and schools and they monitor the coordinated educational actions between NGOs and other bodies who are trying to provide informal educational structures/services within hotspots, camps and other accommodation settlements aiming to prepare the children for their full integration into the normal school curriculum. For the majority of migrant children and their families their first priority is the positive outcome of their application for international protection status and secondly the issue of integration into education. Students had to deal with a variety of issues while attending classes and the number of school drop outs and inadequate attendance amongst migrant populations is relatively high in both informal and formal educational structures across the country.²⁴

Another parameter that needs to be taken into consideration in immigrant and refugee educational settings for learning literacy for both, student minors and adults, who are attending language learning courses, is that very often these groups have limited or disrupted access to education due to the specificities prior to re-settlement. The problem of illiteracy in their own native language in their countries of origins is common and significantly affects their ability to acquire a new language and in most of cases it is related to the fact that they speak a local dialect which is not taught in centrally oriented educational curricula. As it was already mentioned, Arabic is used across a wide geographical and its dialects differ so greatly (especially in verbal communication) that some Arabic speakers might not understand each other.

3.2.4 What are the main problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers concerning language learning?

The year 2015 remains in the memory of people across Europe for the surge of several millions of people seeking refuge. Authorities and CSOs are facing continuous challenges. A complete challenge by itself for the host country is to find ways of offering refugees the possibility to acquire competences in the language of the host country. Humanitarian aid workers indicated that language presents one of the main obstacles to effectiveness in their own work with refugees and migrants in Greece. At the same, the majority of the humanitarian aid workers were not sufficiently informed about the origin of and the nuance between certain languages, limiting their ability to seek support for communicating with the refugees and migrants, they aim to assist.²⁵

From the perspective of the admission state there is a danger that migrants may be considered as “speechless”, because they are not able to use the language(s) of that country they have settled and therefore speaking or not the local language(s) of the receiving state constitutes the most important part in the process of integration.

²⁴ Tzoraki,O.(2019),A Descriptive Study of the Schooling and Higher Education Reforms in Response to the Refugees’ Influx into Greece [file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/socsci-08-00072%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/socsci-08-00072%20(2).pdf)

²⁵ Language & Comprehension Barriers in Greece’s Migration Crisis: A Study on the Multitude of Languages and Comprehension of Material Provided to Refugees and Migrants in Greece <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/language-comprehension-barriers-greece-s-migration-crisis-study-multitude-languages>

Findings show that in Greece there is a lack of comprehension testing while admitting language learners in Greek courses. Those tests can aid communication by clarifying levels of understanding between some of the main languages of refugees and migrants in Greece. It was highlighted that a significant number of Farsi and Dari speakers can understand each other, but Farsi speakers might understand less Dari, and Kurdish dialects of Kurmanji and Sorani are less likely to understand each other's languages, but they both can understand Arabic. As we have already mentioned in the section presenting the obstacles in literacy learning, in immigrant and refugee educational settings the explicit knowledge of "oral" languages that in most of cases are not taught in official educational systems in the countries of origins may impose obstacles in the process of learning a second language, such as the Greek ²⁶.

²⁶ See above Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/language-comprehension-barriers-greece-s-migration-crisis-study-multitude-languages>

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