

# LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION OF ADULT MIGRANTS: REQUIREMENTS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



Report on the 2018  
Council of Europe and ALTE  
survey on language and knowledge  
of society policies for migrants



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## REPORT ON THE 2018 COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND ALTE SURVEY ON LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIETY POLICIES FOR MIGRANTS

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# Contents

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FOREWORD BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FOREWORD BY ALTE</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>15</b>
The organisation of the 2018 survey	15
Council of Europe states responding to the 2018 survey	16
The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)	17
Structure of the report	19
<b>Chapter 1 – ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY DATA</b>	<b>21</b>
1.1. Language and knowledge of society requirements	22
1.2. Tests	36
1.3. Learning opportunities	39
<b>Chapter 2 – VULNERABLE GROUPS</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1. Minors, low-literate learners, refugees	43
<b>Chapter 3 – DEVELOPMENTS FROM 2007 TO 2018</b>	<b>49</b>
3.1. Pre-entry requirements	51
3.2. Permanent residency requirements	53
3.3. Citizenship requirements	56
<b>Chapter 4 – DISCUSSION</b>	<b>61</b>
4.1. Using language and knowledge of society tests for integration purposes	61
4.2. The lack of agreement about what level is needed for the same context	62
4.3. The CEFR – its intentional purpose and how it is (mis)used	62
4.4. Providing migrants with opportunities to learn	63
4.5. Vulnerable groups – learning a language and passing a test is not equally easy for all	64
4.6. KoS tests as implicit language and literacy tests	64
<b>Chapter 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1. Learning opportunities	67
5.2. Promoting integration	67
5.3. Paying particular attention to vulnerable groups	68
5.4. Test quality	68
5.5. Responsible use of tests	69
5.6. Responsible use of the CEFR	69
<b>REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>75</b>

# List of figures

---

<i>Figure 1 – Number of Council of Europe member states responding to surveys (2007-2018)</i>	17
<i>Figure 2 – Council of Europe member states responding to the 2018 survey</i>	21
<i>Figure 3 – Countries setting formal requirements for different contexts (percentages)</i>	22
<i>Figure 4 – Countries surveyed with pre-entry language requirements</i>	23
<i>Figure 5 – Pre-entry language requirements (raw numbers)</i>	24
<i>Figure 6 – Countries with language/KoS requirements for temporary residency</i>	24
<i>Figure 7 – Language requirements for temporary residency (raw numbers)</i>	26
<i>Figure 8 – Countries with language/KoS requirements for permanent residency</i>	27
<i>Figure 9 – Language level requirements for permanent residency (raw numbers)</i>	29
<i>Figure 10 – Countries with language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship</i>	30
<i>Figure 11 – Language level requirements for citizenship (raw numbers)</i>	32
<i>Figure 12 – Countries setting language and/or KoS requirements (2018) (percentages)</i>	33
<i>Figure 13 – Language level requirements across contexts</i>	34
<i>Figure 14 – Stages in requirements within Council of Europe member states (2018)</i>	36
<i>Figure 15 – KoS test content</i>	38
<i>Figure 16 – KoS test format</i>	39
<i>Figure 17 – KoS course characteristics – language of tuition</i>	41
<i>Figure 18 – KoS course characteristics – mode of tuition</i>	41
<i>Figure 19 – Language courses for vulnerable groups</i>	46
<i>Figure 20 – Pre-entry requirements in 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)</i>	52
<i>Figure 21 – Pre-entry requirements (19 member states)</i>	53
<i>Figure 22 – Permanent residency requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)</i>	55
<i>Figure 23 – Permanent residency requirements (subset)</i>	56
<i>Figure 24 – Citizenship requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)</i>	58
<i>Figure 25 – Citizenship requirements (subset)</i>	59

# List of tables

---

<i>Table 1 – The CEFR global scale</i>	18
<i>Table 2 – A proficiency profile – overall proficiency in one language</i>	19
<i>Table 3 – Pre-entry language requirements (2018)</i>	23
<i>Table 4 – Language requirements for temporary residency</i>	25
<i>Table 5 – KoS requirements for temporary residency</i>	26
<i>Table 6 – Language requirements for permanent residency</i>	28
<i>Table 7 – KoS requirements for permanent residency</i>	29
<i>Table 8 – Language requirements for citizenship</i>	31
<i>Table 9 – KoS requirements for citizenship</i>	33
<i>Table 10 – Requirements for the different stages: list of countries (2018)</i>	35
<i>Table 11 – Language test quality</i>	36
<i>Table 12 – KoS test characteristics</i>	37
<i>Table 13 – Language courses</i>	40
<i>Table 14 – Hours of language tuition provided free of charge</i>	40
<i>Table 15 – Exemptions from language and KoS requirements for vulnerable groups</i>	45
<i>Table 16 – Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups</i>	45
<i>Table 17 – Hours of language tuition provided free of charge for low-literate learners</i>	47
<i>Table 18 – Participating countries through the years</i>	49
<i>Table 19 – Pre-entry requirements in 2009, 2013 and 2018</i>	51
<i>Table 20 – Pre-entry requirements over time (19 member states)</i>	52
<i>Table 21 – Permanent residency requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018</i>	54
<i>Table 22 – Permanent residency requirements over time (subset)</i>	55
<i>Table 23 – Citizenship requirements since 2007</i>	56
<i>Table 24 – Citizenship requirements over time (19 member states)</i>	58





# Foreword by the Council of Europe

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**T**he Council of Europe has been actively promoting plurilingualism and linguistic diversity since its foundation. The European Cultural Convention (1954) invites the contracting parties to encourage their citizens to study the languages of other parties and facilitate that by providing necessary means (Article 2). A particular emphasis on migrant language teaching and learning was introduced with Resolution (68) 18<sup>1</sup> on concerning the teaching of languages to migrant workers, issued by the Committee of Ministers in 1968, and further strengthened with the establishment of the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) project in 2006.

While recognising the importance of language skills for social inclusion, access to education and employment, and human rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has expressed concern that formal language requirements for residency and citizenship may hinder, rather than foster, integration (Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly 2013, 2014). It is important to raise awareness of the potential for exclusion rather than inclusion of formal language requirements for entry, residency and citizenship, since even though “language competences are an important component of integration, they cannot be a pre-condition for integration, since acquiring a language is potentially a lifelong process” (Thalgott 2017, p. V).

This report presents the results of a survey carried out in 2018 by the Council of Europe and the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE). It forms part of the Council of Europe 2018-2019 Education for Democracy programme – “Inclusive approaches in education: language education for migrant/refugee children and adults”,<sup>2</sup> embedded in the Council of Europe contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda. Within ALTE, the LAMI (Language Assessment for Migration and Integration) Special Interest Group<sup>3</sup> took on the responsibility for administering the survey, analysing the survey data and writing the report.

Sjur Bergan

Head of Education Department

September 2019

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1. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/native/09000016804d7d70>.

2. Available at <https://rm.coe.int/presentation-new-programme-ed-2018-2019-final>.

3. Available at [www.alte.org/LAMI-SIG](http://www.alte.org/LAMI-SIG).



## Foreword by ALTE

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**T**his survey represents another important milestone in the collaboration between the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) and the Council of Europe.

ALTE is a multilingual organisation that has the status of an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) with participatory status in the Council of Europe. There are three main aspects to its mission in the field of language assessment: setting standards, sustaining diversity and maximising impact.

As an INGO for the past 30 years, all three aspects have been prominent in the contributions that ALTE members have made, and ALTE has contributed to a large number of Council of Europe initiatives in the wider field of language education. Since its inception, ALTE has participated in the development and validation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its related resources. This has enabled ALTE members to contribute their multilingual perspectives on language proficiency standards and to bring their expertise in language assessment to bear on many important issues related to policy making.

In order to achieve a positive impact and to promote diversity across a wide range of societal contexts, ALTE has established a number of special interest groups (SIGs) and most relevant to this report is the work of the Language Assessment for Migration and Integration (LAMI) SIG. This SIG was established in 2002 when it was already apparent that language tests were increasingly being used within the context of migration in several European countries. Since then, the LAMI SIG has enabled ALTE to engage in the widening debate on the use of assessment in migration policy, at a time when the range of assessment purposes has become more extensive – and consequently more controversial.

Our aim has been to advocate for greater understanding of assessment principles and practices, to ensure that only valid and reliable tests are used to make important decisions, and to achieve policy goals, such as the successful integration of newcomers. Recently the scope of this work has widened to bring in perspectives on social justice and plurilingualism.

The LAMI booklet, “Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policy makers”, was produced on behalf of the Council of Europe for this purpose (ALTE 2016) and is available in a number of languages in addition to English.

The current report provides a useful and very thorough update on the “state of play” across Europe with regards to policies and current practices in over 40 countries. It clearly shows the trend that has been followed over the past decade for the

increasing use of tests and it highlights a number of inconsistencies or gaps in policy that are problematic. For example, the authors note cases where there is a lack of relevant research and quality management measures to ensure that the tests are fit for purpose. Another cause for concern is where knowledge of society tests are used as covert language tests. These problems can lead to negative impacts on vulnerable groups, such as minors and low-literate adults.

Through more effective engagement with policy makers using this report and similar kinds of evidence, it is hoped that ALTE can continue to advocate for realistic improvements to policies that can foster better practice and lead to fairer outcomes for all concerned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Saville', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr Nick Saville

ALTE Secretary-General

September 2019

# Executive summary

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**T**he purpose of the present report is to offer an up-to-date picture regarding language and knowledge of society (KoS) requirements for migrants in Council of Europe member states in 2018. The report contains data collected in the fourth iteration of the Council of Europe survey on language and KoS policies for migrants, and aggregates the results of the previous surveys, thus providing an overview of policy trends in member states from 2007 to 2018.

## HIGHEST PARTICIPATION RATE TO DATE

The 2018 survey is larger in scope than any of the previous Council of Europe surveys and contains more detailed information regarding test procedures and learning opportunities.

A clear majority of Council of Europe member states responded to the 2018 survey. As in the earlier surveys, Flanders and Wallonia (respectively the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking regions of Belgium) were considered as two distinct regions, since they have legislative autonomy regarding migration and integration policies. As a result, this report covers 40 member states but 41 different contexts/regions.

## NO LANGUAGE AND/OR KoS REQUIREMENTS IN SEVEN MEMBER STATES

At the time of data collection, 7 of the 40 member states surveyed had no language or KoS requirements prior to entry, for temporary or permanent residency, or for citizenship. However, some member states have other, often financial, requirements for prospective residents, which are beyond the scope of the survey.

## PRE-ENTRY REQUIREMENTS ARE THE EXCEPTION, CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS THE NORM

Most member states that set language and/or KoS requirements do so in relation to citizenship ( $n = 33$ ) or in relation to permanent residency ( $n = 21$ ). Comparatively few countries report requirements for temporary residency ( $n = 13$ ) or prior to entry ( $n = 10$ ).

## **SAME CONTEXT, LACK OF UNIFORMITY**

Where member states have formal language requirements prior to entry, for residency or for citizenship purposes, these requirements are typically expressed in CEFR levels. Since most member states refer to the same six-level proficiency scale it is possible to compare the language requirements across contexts and member states.

While there is some consistency regarding the most commonly required levels for a given context, there are notable differences between the member states with the highest and lowest requirements for the same context. Pre-entry requirements vary from no requirements at all to A1 level. Temporary residency requirements vary from no requirements to B1. The most commonly set levels for temporary residency are A1 and A2. Permanent residency requirements vary from no requirements to B1. Citizenship requirements vary from no requirements to B2.

## **LACK OF RESEARCH AND QUALITY CONTROL**

Only 8 of the 33 member states which have requirements related to language proficiency or knowledge of society indicate that their requirements are based on research. If research is conducted, in most cases it is based on consultation with language professionals within the country rather than on empirical data.

Only half of the member states in which passing a language test is a precondition for entry, residency or citizenship use standardised language tests, meaning that half of the member states use assessment tools that are unstandardised and may lack validity. Only seven member states report that the language tests used have been subject to external quality control (audit) by ALTE.<sup>4</sup>

## **KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIETY TESTS CAN BE COVERT LANGUAGE TESTS**

Nearly half of the member states surveyed require migrants to pass a KoS test prior to entry, to gain residency or citizenship status. Most often these tests focus on history and geography, constitution and law, or customs and traditions of the host country.

In 9 out of 10 cases KoS tests are in an official language of the host country, and they typically require reading skills. As such, KoS tests function as implicit language and literacy tests. In quite a few cases it is likely that the language proficiency level needed to pass the KoS test exceeds the CEFR level of the language test.

## **LANGUAGE COURSES: UP TO 250 HOURS ARE OFTEN PROVIDED**

In nearly all of the member states/regions surveyed, language courses for migrants are provided and, in the majority, courses are provided and/or financed by the government and their quality is controlled. Half of the member states surveyed provide language courses completely free of charge for all migrants, while one third

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4. See [www.alte.org/Setting-Standards](http://www.alte.org/Setting-Standards).

provide free courses for certain groups of migrants. Most member states provide up to 250 hours, sometimes up to 500 hours and several provide more than 500 hours of language tuition. More than 1 000 hours are rarely provided.

## **POLICY RARELY CONSIDERS VULNERABLE GROUPS**

Vulnerable groups including minors, low-literate learners and refugees are only rarely catered for in language or knowledge of society courses. Moreover, very few Council of Europe member states provide systematic exemptions from language or knowledge of society requirements for vulnerable groups.

Low-literate learners are rarely provided with a sufficient number of hours of instruction to reach the language level required.

## **INCREASED USE OF REQUIREMENTS SINCE 2007**

The use of language and KoS requirements as part of migration and integration policies has become gradually more common in Council of Europe member states since the first survey was conducted in 2007. The number of member states setting language and/or KoS requirements as part of their citizenship policy has doubled between 2007 and 2018. Also, the number of member states setting requirements for residency purposes or prior to entry has substantially increased since 2007. In addition, the specific language proficiency levels required for different purposes have gone up. While only one country had a B2 requirement for citizenship in 2007, the number has increased to four in 2018.





# Introduction

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**F**or the past two decades a growing number of European countries have introduced language and knowledge of society (KoS) requirements as part of their immigration and integration policies. While rarely practised before the year 2000, most countries in Europe today have formal language and KoS requirements for citizenship, residency and/or entrance to the country. As the findings of this report reveal, however, the actual level of language proficiency required varies considerably from one country to the next, as does the degree to which states provide migrants with learning opportunities through tailored and free-of-charge language and KoS courses.

The purpose of the 2018 survey presented in this report has been to map the language and KoS requirements, as well as the learning opportunities, provided for migrants<sup>5</sup> in the Council of Europe member states. The Council of Europe conducted similar surveys in 2007, 2009 and 2013,<sup>6</sup> which makes it possible to report trends in language policies over time. A new feature in the 2018 survey is the particular attention dedicated to vulnerable groups, such as minors, low-literate migrants and refugees.

In addition to explicit language requirements, many countries set KoS requirements. Typically, KoS tests contain multiple-choice questions about the society, culture, history and law of the host country. When the KoS test is in writing and presented in the majority language, KoS tests are *de facto* implicit reading and language tests, since passing the test requires both literacy and knowledge of the majority language.

## THE ORGANISATION OF THE 2018 SURVEY

To compare the results of the 2018 survey with the previous Council of Europe surveys and to investigate policy trends over time, the experts took the 2013 survey as a starting point. The 2013 survey was improved for clarity and new questions were added to collect specific data about minors, low-literate migrants and refugees. The 2018 computer adaptive survey is composed of three sections: (1) language and KoS requirements for entrance, temporary residency, permanent residency and citizenship; (2) learning opportunities for language and KoS; and (3) language and KoS tests.

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5. In this survey, the term “migrants” refers to third country nationals, thus including asylum seekers and refugees, minors, economic migrants and those who entered the host country for family reunion. Foreign students and workers from within the EU/EEA are not the focus here.

6. Available at [www.coe.int/it/web/lang-migrants/surveys](http://www.coe.int/it/web/lang-migrants/surveys).

The survey was launched in September 2018 and conducted in French and English. The data collection period lasted until November 2018. An invitation to participate was sent via e-mail directly to government officials dealing with integration/immigration affairs in the 47 Council of Europe member states, and a link to the survey was made available on the Council of Europe webpage. Factual checks were carried out through consultation with ALTE experts and policy documents online.<sup>7</sup>

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE STATES RESPONDING TO THE 2018 SURVEY

The survey was completed by 41 government-affiliated respondents. For 21 countries we received additional replies from individual respondents who were not government affiliated but had professional ties to the topic of the survey. These answers were compiled in a secondary dataset, which was used for data triangulation. To increase the reliability of the study, both datasets were taken into consideration: when the data related to the same country mismatched in the two datasets and the second dataset was credible,<sup>8</sup> we consulted publicly available policy texts to determine which answer was accurate.

The 40 Council of Europe states (41 regions) covered in the 2018 survey are as follows (in alphabetical order): Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium (Dutch speaking, hereafter Belgium (Fl.)), Belgium (French speaking, hereafter Belgium (Fr.)),<sup>9</sup> Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom (UK).<sup>10</sup> The number of Council of Europe member states covered by the 2018 survey exceeds that of previous Council of Europe surveys about requirements for immigration and integration (see Figure 1).

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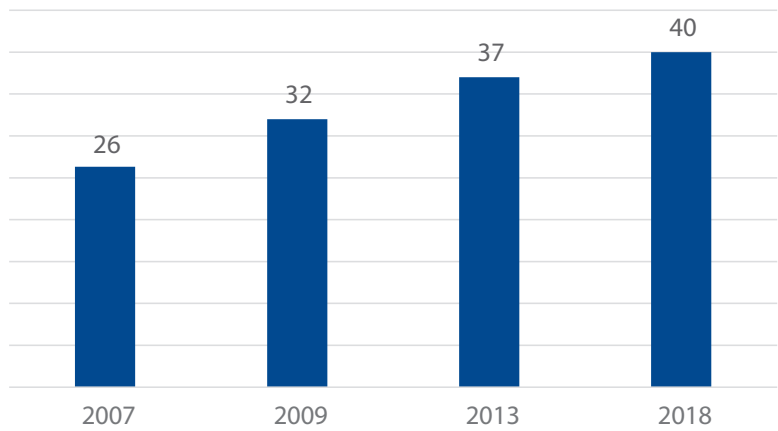
7. It has not been possible to include the voice of migrants in this survey. For a study of migrants' own perspectives, we refer readers to Strik et al. (2010) and Khan (2019).

8. Responses were considered credible when they provided specific details and/or aligned with longitudinal policy trends of that country.

9. In this report, the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking regions of Belgium are treated as two distinct contexts since their legislation regarding residency requirements is federalised. The legislation regarding nationality and citizenship applies to the two communities.

10. More member states replied, but the answers were not sufficiently complete to be included in this report.

**Figure 1 – Number of Council of Europe member states responding to surveys (2007-2018)**



**THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES (CEFR)**

Many Council of Europe states link their formal language requirements for entry, residency and citizenship to the language levels described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001).<sup>11</sup> It should be pointed out that using the CEFR to set language criteria to control migration deviates from the CEFR's intended purpose, which was to promote the free movement of people and ideas.

The CEFR was developed by the Council of Europe over a period of 30 years with the purpose of promoting mobility and communication across Europe. The underlying value upon which the CEFR rests is respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. The CEFR forms part of the Council of Europe's goal to ensure high-quality education as a right of all citizens. The CEFR contains detailed descriptions of second language proficiency on a six-point scale ranging from A1 (lowest) to C2 (highest).<sup>12</sup> The levels are described in more than 50 illustrative scales. An overall description of the levels is given in the global scale, presented in Table 1 below:

11. Readers who are unfamiliar with this document may wish to consult the CEFR self-assessment grid available online in 32 languages at [www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-2-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-self-assessment-grid](http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-2-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-self-assessment-grid).

12. In 2018 a companion volume to the CEFR was published online by the Council of Europe. In the companion volume, a new level below A1 was added (pre-A1). See <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>.

**Table 1 – The CEFR global scale**

<b>C2</b>	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
<b>C1</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
<b>B2</b>	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
<b>B1</b>	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
<b>A1</b>	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Most learners do not achieve the same CEFR language level in every skill (reading, listening, writing and speaking). It is common for learners to perform better (i.e. at a higher level) in the receptive skills (reading and listening) than in the productive skills (writing and speaking). Low-literate learners often perform better in the oral modes (listening and speaking) than in the written modes (reading and writing).

The reason why the CEFR includes more than 50 descriptor scales is precisely to encourage users of the CEFR to develop differentiated profiles (Council of Europe 2018). An illustration of a hypothetical learner’s proficiency profile is presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2 – A proficiency profile – overall proficiency in one language**

	Pre-A1	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Listening comprehension							
Reading comprehension							
Spoken production							
Written production							

The proficiency levels and descriptors of what a learner can do at different levels are illustrative only. They are intended to be used selectively and to be adapted to the situation, needs, abilities and educational experiences of the learners. When using the CEFR, then, it is important to start from the real-life language needs of migrants, rather than with a specified proficiency level.

**STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

The rest of this report is structured as follows. Chapter 1 presents the findings of the 2018 survey in relation to its three main parts: requirements, tests and learning opportunities. Chapter 2 examines learning opportunities and exemption from requirements in relation to particularly vulnerable learner groups (minors, low-literate learners and refugees). Chapter 3 provides an overview of the developments in language and KoS legislation from 2007 to 2018. Chapter 4 discusses the results and Chapter 5 puts forward empirically based policy recommendations.

It should be mentioned that the immigration and integration policies of the Council of Europe member states are more complex than can be fully covered by a survey of the present kind and a relatively short report. The report will therefore necessarily be a somewhat simplified presentation of main trends.

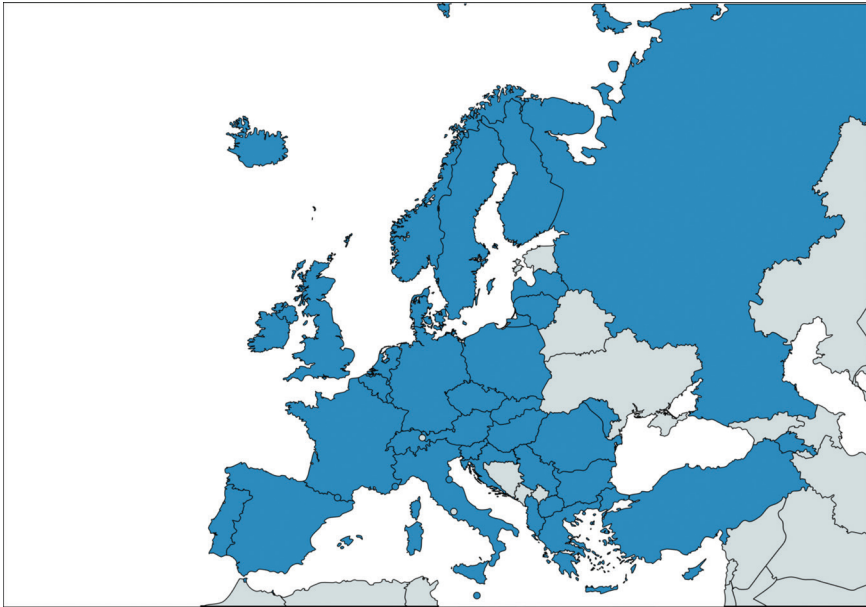


## Chapter 1

# Analysis of the survey data

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*Figure 2 – Council of Europe member states responding to the 2018 survey*



Some 41<sup>13</sup> of the 47 Council of Europe member states/regions (87%) responded to the 2018 survey. Figure 2 displays the responding countries, showing a good coverage of the Council of Europe member states.

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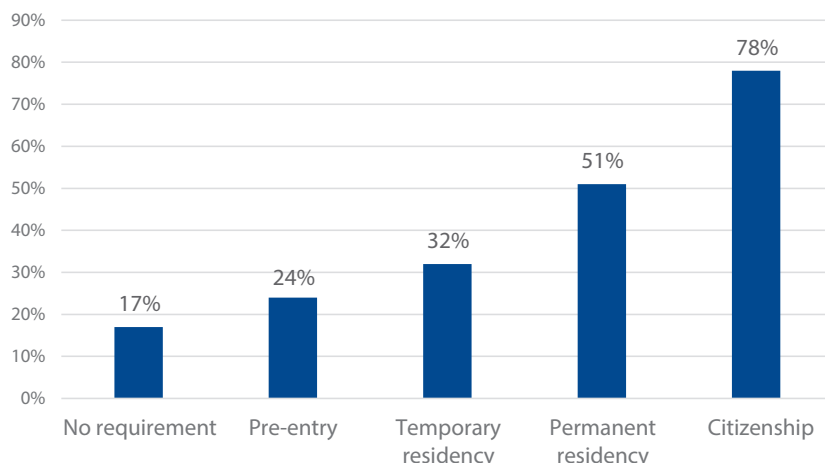
13. The Dutch- and the French-speaking parts of Belgium are treated as two different regions since their integration legislation differs.

## 1.1. LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIETY REQUIREMENTS

Of the 41 member states/regions responding to the 2018 survey, seven member states (Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Monaco, San Marino, Serbia and Sweden) do not have explicit language requirements at any stage of the immigration and integration processes. In some of these countries, migrants are subject to other forms of scrutiny (e.g. financial), but those criteria fall outside the scope of this survey.

Of the responding member states/regions, 34 of the 41 (83%) have language requirements at one, some, or all of the following stages: pre-entry, temporary residency, permanent residency or citizenship. As Figure 3 shows, 78% ( $n = 32$ ) of the responding Council of Europe member states/regions set formal language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship. In 21 (51%) and 13 (32%) member states respectively, requirements exist for permanent and temporary residency; 10 member states have set pre-entry requirements, while 17% of the member states ( $n = 7$ ) report no language or KoS requirements as part of their integration/immigration policy.

**Figure 3 – Countries setting formal requirements for different contexts (percentages)**



### 1.1.1. Pre-entry requirements

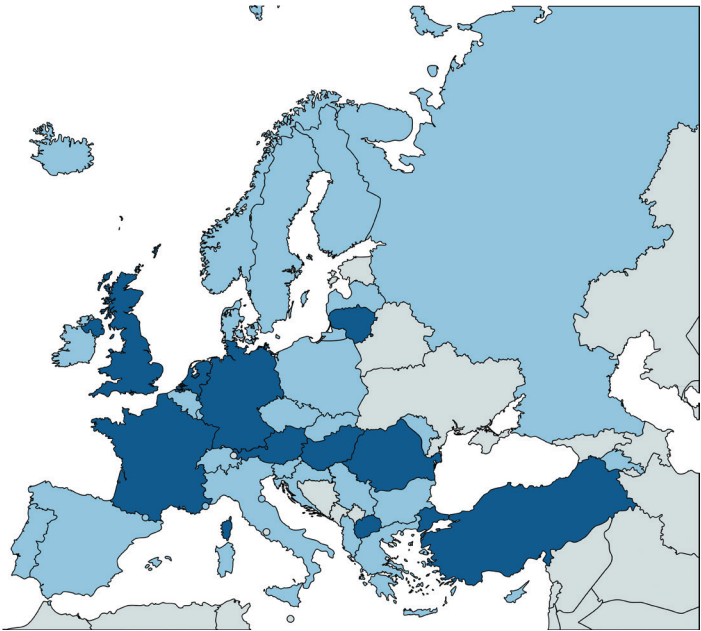
Pre-entry requirements imply that a certain level of proficiency in the language of the host country and/or knowledge of society is demanded even before entering the country. Pre-entry requirements are typically demanded of a person seeking family reunification with his or her spouse who is already settled in the host country.

#### 1.1.1.1. Pre-entry language requirements

The 2018 survey reveals that 10 of the 41 member states/regions (24%) require that immigrants demonstrate a certain level of proficiency in the language of the host country and/or knowledge of society before entering the country. Member states with pre-entry requirements in 2018 are Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania, Turkey and the UK (Figure 4).



Figure 4 – Countries surveyed with pre-entry language requirements



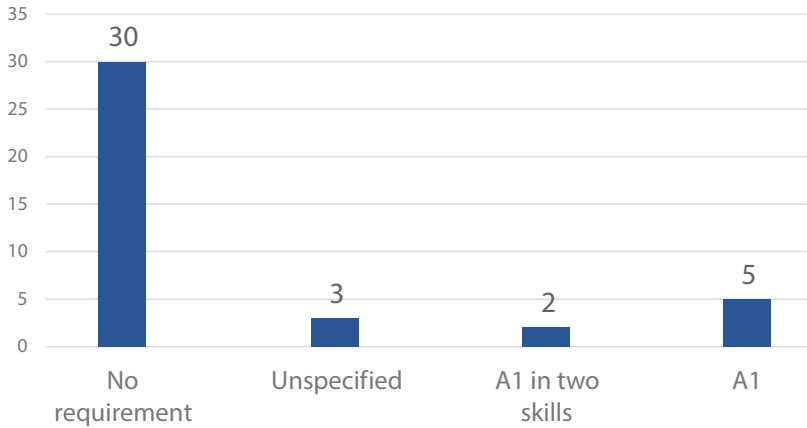
Of the 10 member states setting pre-entry language requirements, 5 require A1 level in all 4 skills and 2 require A1 in 2 out of 4 skills. Three countries do not specify the level requirement (Table 3).

Table 3 – Pre-entry language requirements (2018)

	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Austria	A1	A1	A1	A1
France	A1	A1	A1	A1
Germany	A1	A1	A1	A1
Hungary	Unspecified			
Lithuania	Unspecified			
Netherlands		A1	A1	
North Macedonia	Unspecified			
Romania	A1	A1	A1	A1
Turkey	A1	A1	A1	A1
UK	A1		A1	

Figure 5 presents the pre-entry requirements graphically and shows that the largest number of member states ( $n = 30$ , 73%) do not have pre-entry requirements. Among the member states that do have these requirements, A1 is the most commonly required level. Respondents representing three member states did not specify the level required.

*Figure 5 – Pre-entry language requirements (raw numbers)*

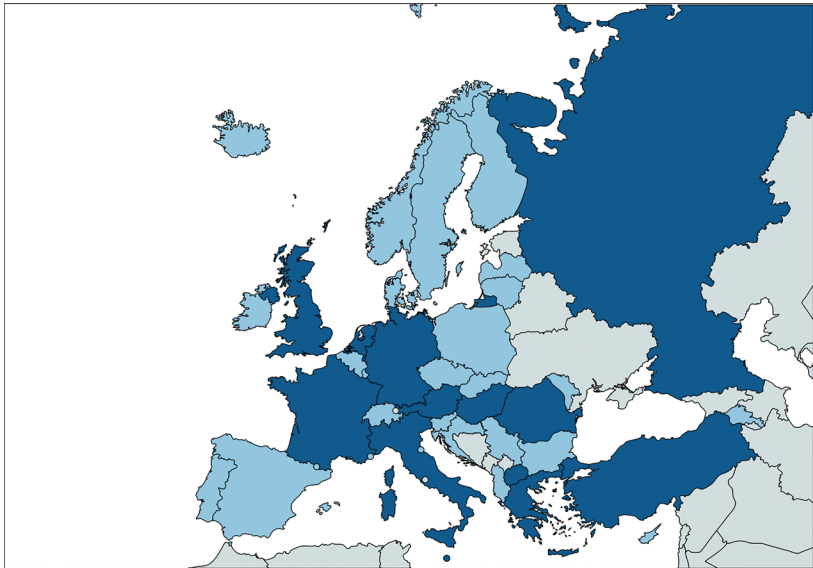


**1.1.1.2. Pre-entry KoS requirements**

Respondents from two member states (the Netherlands and Turkey) reported pre-entry KoS requirements.

**1.1.2. Temporary residency**

*Figure 6 – Countries with language/KoS requirements for temporary residency*



Of the member states surveyed, 13 (32%) have language and/or KoS requirements for temporary residency. At the time of data collection, the following member states had language and/or KoS requirements: Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Turkey and the UK (Figure 6).

1.1.2.1. Language requirements for temporary residency

Table 4 below displays the level of language required for temporary residency. As is clear from the table, most member states with language requirements for temporary residency require the same level in the four language skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). Only three countries (Italy, Germany and the UK) set different level requirements in different language skills for temporary residency: Italy has no requirement in reading, writing and listening, but has an A2 requirement in speaking, Germany has an A1 requirement in reading, writing and listening but A2 in speaking, while the UK reports having higher requirements in the written skills (reading and writing) (B1), than in the oral skills (listening and speaking) (A2).

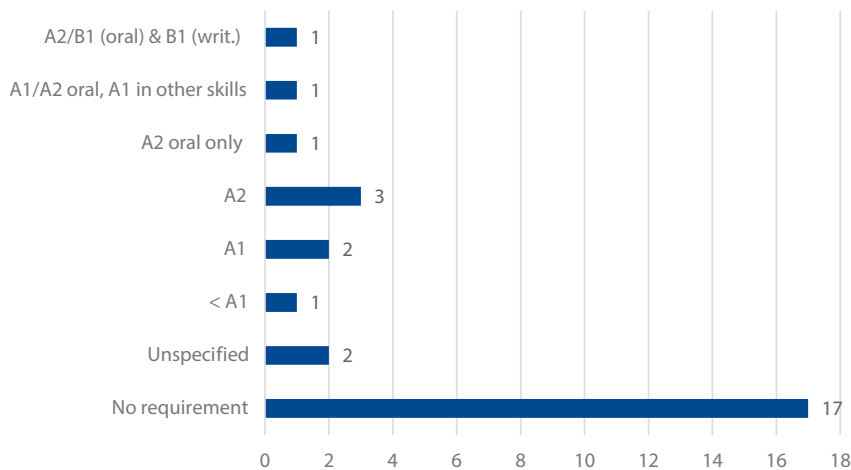
Table 4 – Language requirements for temporary residency

Country	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Austria	A2	A2	A2	A2
France	A1	A1	A1	A1
Germany	A1	A1	A1/A2	A1
Greece	A2	A2	A2	A2
Hungary	Unspecified			
Italy			A2	
Malta	Unspecified			
Netherlands	A2	A2	A2	A2
Romania	A1	A1	A1	A1
Turkey	<A1	<A1	<A1	<A1
UK	A2/B1	B1	A2/B1	B1

Figure 7 shows the language requirements for temporary residency in graph form. It displays the lack of consistency in language requirements for temporary residency across the Council of Europe member states, varying from no requirements ( $n = 17$ , 40%), through to B1 in some skills. Two member states do not specify their requirements. Of the countries setting formal language requirements, 3 out of 11 set an A2 requirement and 2 out of 11 require A1.

In five member states (Austria, France, Germany, Greece and North Macedonia), it is obligatory to attend a language course to gain temporary residency.

Figure 7 – Language requirements for temporary residency (raw numbers)



1.1.2.2. KoS requirements for temporary residency

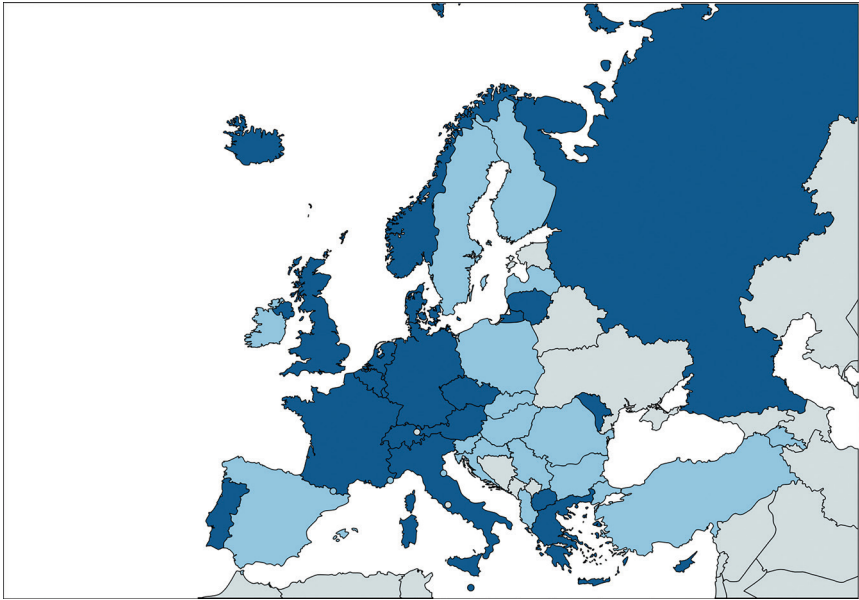
Respondents from 10 member states report a requirement to pass a KoS test for temporary residency (Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania and Russia). In seven member states it is compulsory to attend KoS courses as well (see Table 5):

Table 5 – KoS requirements for temporary residency

Country	Course	Test
Austria	Yes	Yes
France	Yes	Yes
Germany		Yes
Greece	Yes	Yes
Italy	Yes	Yes
Malta		Yes
Netherlands		Yes
North Macedonia	Yes	Yes
Romania	Yes	Yes
Russia	Yes	Yes

### 1.1.3. Permanent residency

Figure 8 – Countries with language/KoS requirements for permanent residency



The survey reveals that in 2018 21 member states/regions (51%) have language and/or KoS requirements for permanent residency (Figure 8: Austria, Belgium (Fl.), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova,<sup>14</sup> the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Switzerland and the UK).

#### 1.1.3.1. Language requirements for permanent residency

Table 6 below shows the level of language proficiency required for permanent residency across the member states/regions that have such requirements. As we saw in the context of temporary residency above, for permanent residency too only a small number of member states set differentiated language requirements (different proficiency levels in different language skills): Germany requires B1 in at least two skills, Norway has an A1 requirement in oral production (speaking), but no requirement in the other skills, and Switzerland requires A2 in the oral skills (listening and speaking), but A1 in the written skills (reading and writing).

<sup>14</sup>. Moldova has no formal language requirement but does have a KoS test.

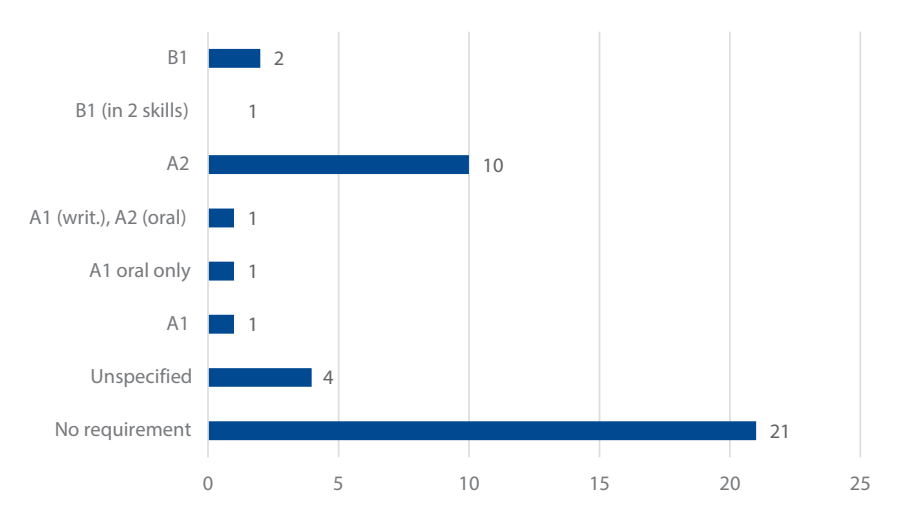
**Table 6 – Language requirements for permanent residency**

Country	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Austria	A2	A2	A2	A2
Belgium (Fl.)	A2	A2	A2	A2
Cyprus	A2	A2	A2	A2
Czech Republic	A1	A1	A1	A1
Denmark	B1	B1	B1	B1
France	A2	A2	A2	A2
Germany	B1		B1 <sup>15</sup>	
Greece	A2	A2	A2	A2
Iceland	Unspecified			
Italy	A2	A2	A2	A2
Lithuania	Unspecified			
Luxembourg	A2	A2	A2	A2
Malta	Unspecified			
Netherlands	A2	A2	A2	A2
North Macedonia	Unspecified			
Norway			A1	
Portugal	A2	A2	A2	A2
Russia	A2	A2	A2	A2
Switzerland	A2	A1	A2	A1
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

Again, and as is clear from Figure 9 below, there is a lack of consistency across member states as to the specific language requirements required, ranging from no requirements, through A1 oral skill only, to B1 in all four skills (Denmark and the UK). Most of the member states do not set formal language requirements for permanent residency, but, of those who do, most countries (10 out of 20) require an A2 level in all 4 skills. Four of the countries do not specify their level. In eight member states language courses are a compulsory requirement.

15. In Germany, B1 is required in any two of the four skills.

Figure 9 – Language level requirements for permanent residency (raw numbers)



1.1.3.2. KoS requirements for permanent residency

In 15 member states/regions surveyed there are KoS requirements in the form of an obligatory course, an obligatory test or both (Table 7).

Table 7 – KoS requirements for permanent residency

Country	Course	Test
Austria	No	Yes
Belgium (Fl.)	Yes	No
Cyprus	Yes	Yes
Denmark	No	Yes
France	Yes	Yes
Germany	No	Yes
Greece	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes	Yes
Malta	Yes	Yes
Moldova	No	Yes
Netherlands	No	Yes
Norway	No	Yes
Portugal	Yes	Yes
Russia	No	Yes
UK	Yes	Yes

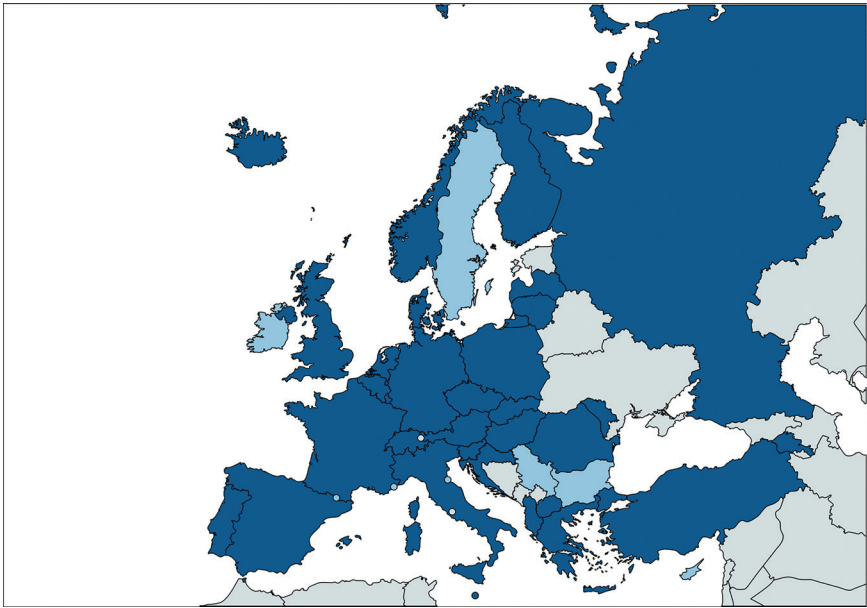
Around half of these member states/regions (*n* = 7) require migrants to participate in a compulsory KoS course and pass a KoS test. An equal number requires that

migrants pass a KoS test, but without demanding participation in a compulsory KoS course. Only one region (Belgium, Fl.) requires migrants to take part in KoS courses, without requiring that participants pass a formal KoS test in order to gain permanent residency.

### 1.1.4. Citizenship

The most common context in which Council of Europe member states set formal language and/or KoS requirements as part of their citizenship policy; 33 of the 41 member states/regions responding to the 2018 survey (78%) have language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship. Member states with language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship are: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium (Fl.), Belgium (Fr.), Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK, as displayed in Figure 10 below.

*Figure 10 – Countries with language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship*



As is clear from the map, only a small number of Council of Europe member states had not introduced language and/or KoS requirements for citizenship at the time of data collection (Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Monaco, San Marino, Serbia and Sweden). Cyprus has a system of obligatory language courses, but no language or KoS tests.



### 1.1.4.1. Language requirements for citizenship

Table 8 below shows the level of language proficiency required for citizenship across the member states/regions that have such requirements. Again, it is worth noticing that very few countries set differentiated language requirements. Only Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland set formal requirements in only one or some of the four skills or different skills for written (reading/writing) and oral (listening/speaking) modes.

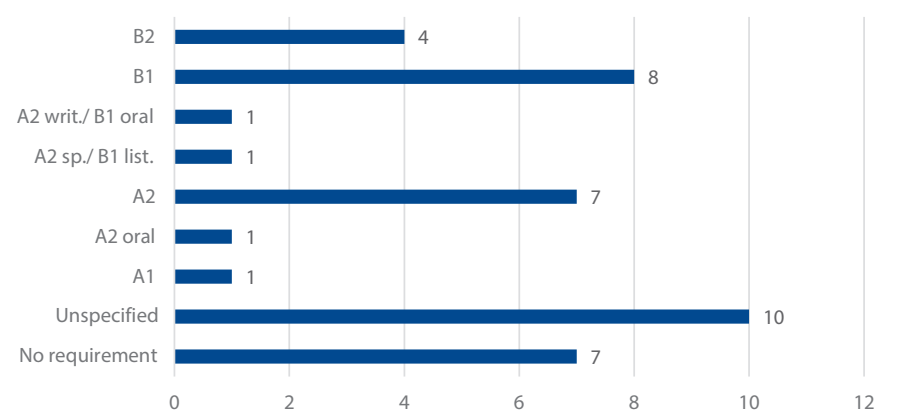
**Table 8 – Language requirements for citizenship**

Country	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Albania	Unspecified			
Armenia	Unspecified			
Austria	B2	B2	B2	B2
Belgium (Fl.)	A2	A2	A2	A2
Belgium (Fr.)	A2	A2	A2	A2
Croatia	Unspecified			
Czech Republic	B1	B1	B1	B1
Denmark	B2	B2	B2	B2
Finland	B1	B1	B1	B1
France	B1	B1	B1	B1
Germany	B1	B1	B1	B1
Greece	B2	B2	B2	B2
Hungary	Unspecified			
Iceland	B1	B1	B1	B1
Italy	B1	B1	B1	B1
Latvia	Unspecified			
Lithuania	Unspecified			
Luxembourg	B1		A2	
Malta	Unspecified			
Moldova	B2	B2	B2	B2
Netherlands	A2	A2	A2	A2
North Macedonia	Unspecified			
Norway			A2	
Poland	B1	B1	B1	B1
Portugal	A2	A2	A2	A2
Romania	A1	A1	A1	A1
Russian Federation	A2	A2	A2	A2
Slovak Republic	Unspecified			
Slovenia	A2	A2	A2	A2

Country	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Spain	A2	A2	A2	A2
Switzerland	B1	A2	B1	A2
Turkey	Unspecified			
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

Figure 11 presents the language requirements for citizenship in graph form.

**Figure 11 – Language level requirements for citizenship (raw numbers)**



As is evident from Figure 11, there is a considerable lack of consistency from one member state to another when it comes to requirements for citizenship. This finding parallels the trends we saw for pre-entry and residency requirements. This is striking given the fact that the purpose of the test (a requirement for obtaining citizenship) is the same from one country to the next, yet the requirements range from none, through A1, A2 oral, A2, A2/B1 and B1 to B2. Again, some member states do not specify their requirements and some measure language implicitly through KoS tests set in the language of the host country.

Of the countries that set CEFR-based language requirements, the levels of proficiency most often set for citizenship are A2 and B1, with 21% (7 out of 33) and 24% (8 out of 33) respectively; 4 out of 33 (12%) set a B2 requirement. However, there is a substantial group (10 out of 33 or 30%), that does not specify their level requirements. These unspecified requirements could range from A1 (or below) to B2 (or above).

### 1.1.4.2. KoS requirements for citizenship

Table 9 offers an overview of the KoS requirements for citizenship.

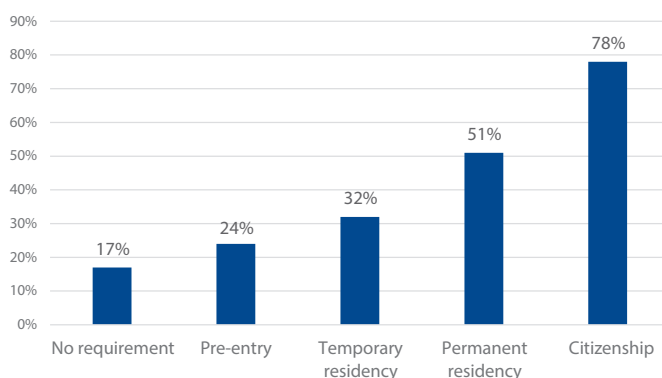
**Table 9 – KoS requirements for citizenship**

Country	Course	Test
Austria		Yes
Belgium (Fl.)	Yes	No
Belgium (Fr.)	Yes	No
Czech Republic		Yes
Denmark		Yes
Germany		Yes
Greece	Yes	Yes
Hungary		Yes
Latvia		Yes
Moldova		Yes
Netherlands		Yes
Norway		Yes
Portugal		Yes
Spain		Yes
Switzerland	Yes	Yes
UK	Yes	Yes

### 1.1.5. Comparing requirements across contexts

Of the member states/regions setting formal language and/or KoS requirements, more do so for citizenship (78%) and permanent residency (51%), than for temporary residency (32%) and entrance to the country (24%), as presented in Figure 12 below.

**Figure 12 – Countries setting language and/or KoS requirements (2018) (percentages)**



As is clear from the results of the 2018 survey, there is substantial variation in the proficiency levels the Council of Europe member states require for the same purpose. This lack of agreement between member states when it comes to requirements for the same purpose is in itself an important and interesting finding.

Due to the large variation, in order to allow for comparison of the levels required for the same purpose (prior to entry, temporary residency, permanent residency and citizenship) across member states, the data were recoded according to the following procedures:

- ▶ member states/regions with no requirements were omitted;
- ▶ in-between levels or dual levels (for example A1/A2) were recoded at the lower level (a strong A1, but not yet A2);
- ▶ requirements in some but not all skills (for instance B1 in two skills) were treated as a full level requirement (B1).

Figure 13 serves to show the main trends at a glance. For a more detailed representation of the diversity of level requirements, we refer to the tables and figures presented earlier in the chapter.

**Figure 13 – Language level requirements across contexts**

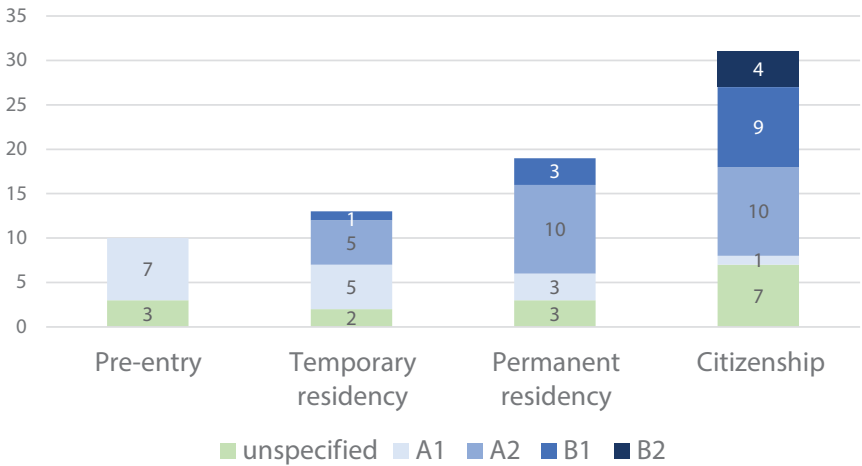


Figure 13 shows quite clearly that the language proficiency levels required are generally stricter for citizenship than for the other contexts. Not only do more member states set requirements for citizenship than for residency and entry, but the specific levels required are also higher. Citizenship is the only context in which the B2 level is required ( $n = 4$ ). The number of member states setting a B1-level requirement is also considerable for citizenship ( $n = 9$ ). The second most common context for which member states set requirements is permanent residency; three member states set a B1-level requirement for permanent residency, but the most commonly set level for this context is A2. Fewer countries set requirements for temporary residency and prior to entry, and the levels required for these contexts are generally lower than for citizenship and permanent residency. Within the group of member states

setting pre-entry requirements 3 out of 10 member states set requirements at an unspecified level and, as mentioned earlier, these requirements may very well exceed the A1 level. Figure 13 displays, as did the graphs and tables presented earlier, a considerable lack of consistency across member states as to the requirements they set. Formal language requirements for citizenship, for example, vary from A1 to B2.

Table 10 summarises which countries have requirements in place at the different stages of their migration policy.

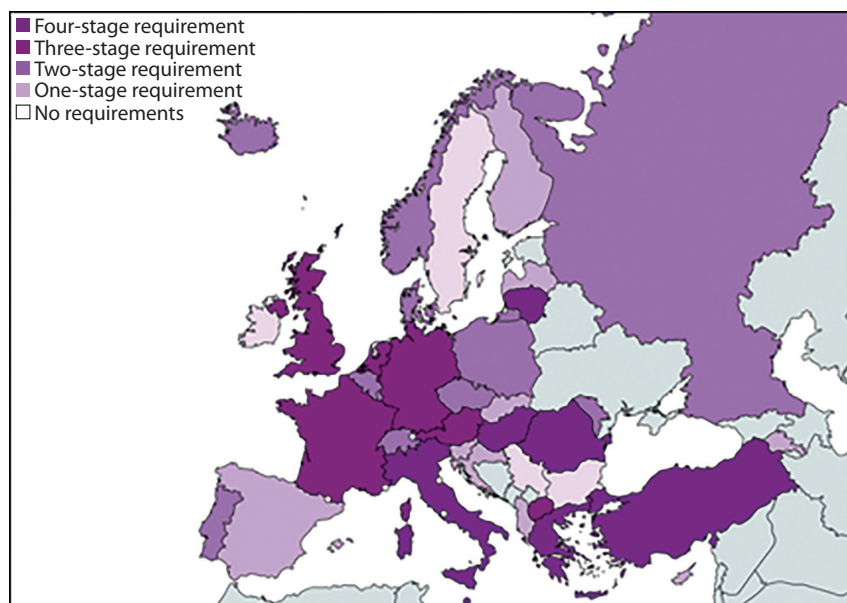
**Table 10 – Requirements for the different stages: list of countries (2018)**

Stages	Countries
Pre-entry	Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania, Turkey, UK
Temporary residency	Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, UK
Permanent residency	Austria, Belgium (Fl.), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Switzerland, UK
Citizenship	Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium (Fl.), Belgium (Fr.), Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, UK

Figure 14 visualises the trends by indicating which member states set language or KoS requirements and at how many stages (pre-entry, temporary residency, permanent residency, citizenship) of their migration policy.

As Figure 14 shows, 7 of the 41 responding member states/regions (17%) have no requirements (Andorra, Bulgaria, Ireland, Monaco, San Marino, Serbia and Sweden), 10 (24%) have requirements at 1 stage (Cyprus: permanent residency; Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain: citizenship), 11 (26%) have requirements at 2 stages (Poland: pre-entry and citizenship; Belgium (Fl.), Belgium (Fr.), Czech Republic, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Moldavia, Norway, Portugal, Russia and Switzerland: permanent residency and citizenship), 7 (17%) have requirements at 3 stages (Hungary, Romania and Turkey: pre-entry, temporary residency and citizenship; Lithuania: pre-entry, permanent residency and citizenship; Greece, Italy and Malta: temporary residency, permanent residency and citizenship). Six member states (15%) have requirements at all four stages (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, North Macedonia and the UK).

**Figure 14 – Stages in requirements within Council of Europe member states (2018)**



## 1.2. TESTS

### 1.2.1. Language tests

There are official standardised language tests used for migration purposes in 16 member states/regions. Consequently, of the member states that set formal language requirements as part of their migration policy ( $n = 35^{16}$ ), around half do not base their decisions on standardised measurement instruments. In 11 member states, multiple tests are used alongside each other. In five member states there is only one standardised test. The quality of the test instrument is checked in 12 member states, but only 7 tests used for these purposes have an ALTE Q-mark, indicating they meet the minimum standards of a high-quality test (Table 11).<sup>17</sup>

**Table 11 – Language test quality**

Country	Tests	Quality check	ALTE Q-mark
Austria	Multiple tests	1	1
Belgium (Fl.)	Multiple tests	0	0
Belgium (Fr.)	Multiple tests	0	0
Czech Republic	Multiple tests	1	1

16. Only 35 countries/regions (Belgium (Fl.) and Belgium (Fr.) counted as two regions again) replied to this last part of the survey.

17. See the ALTE homepage for information about the minimum standards and the ALTE Q-mark: [www.alte.org/Setting-Standards](http://www.alte.org/Setting-Standards).

Country	Tests	Quality check	ALTE Q-mark
Denmark	Multiple tests	1	1
Finland	Multiple tests	1	0
Germany	One test	1	1
Greece	One test	0	0
Italy	Multiple tests	1	0
Moldova	One test	1	0
Netherlands	Multiple tests	1	1
Norway	Multiple tests	1	1
Russia	Multiple tests	1	0
Slovenia	One test	1	1
Switzerland	Multiple tests	1	0
Turkey	One test	0	0

### 1.2.2. KoS tests

There is a KoS test in at least 16 (46%) of the 35 responding member states/regions. Table 12 displays the characteristics of a typical KoS test.

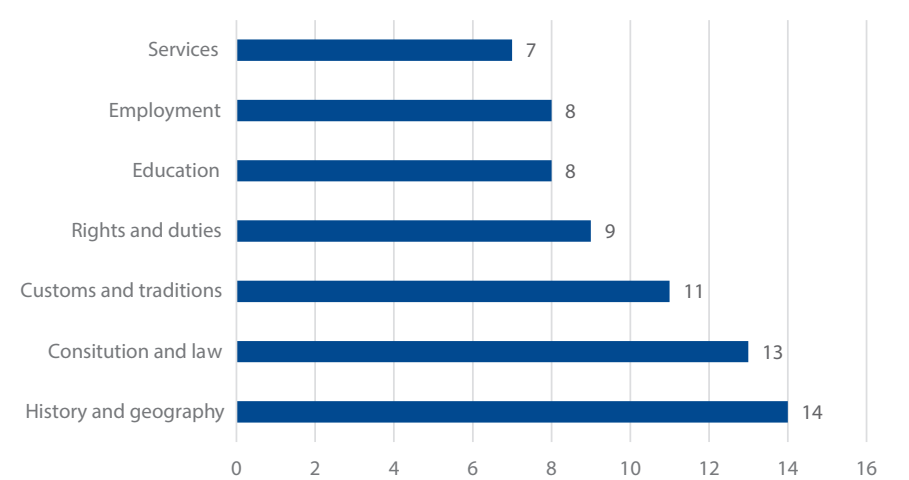
*Table 12 – KoS test characteristics*

Country	Content							Format			Language		
	Constitution and law	Education	Employment	Rights and duties	Services	History and geography	Customs and traditions	Oral	Paper	Computer	Official language	Candidate L1	Lingua franca
Andorra	1					1	1		1		1		
Austria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		
Cyprus	1					1	1	1	1		1		
Czech Republic	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		1		
Denmark						1	1				1		
Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1			1		1		
Greece	1					1	1	1			1		
Hungary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1		
Italy	1	1	1	1	1			1			1		

Country	Content							Format			Language		
	Constitution and law	Education	Employment	Rights and duties	Services	History and geography	Customs and traditions	Oral	Paper	Computer	Official language	Candidate L1	Lingua franca
Latvia	1			1		1			1		1		
Moldova	1	1		1		1	1	1			1		1
Netherlands	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1		
Norway	1	1	1	1	1	1				1	1	1	
Russia	1		1			1	1		1	1	1		
Switzerland	Responsibility of cantons										1		
UK						1	1			1	1		

With only two exceptions (Norway<sup>18</sup> and Moldova), KoS tests are in the language of the host country. This means that the KoS test in most cases serves the purpose of an additional, implicit language requirement, the level of proficiency of which is unspecified. It is reasonable to assume that the language level required to take a KoS test exceeds A2 in reading or listening.

**Figure 15 – KoS test content**



18. In Norway, the KoS test for permanent residency has been developed in 28 minority languages, while the KoS test for citizenship is in the language of the host country.



As is clear from Figure 15, KoS tests primarily focus on history and geography (14 out of 16), constitution and law (13 out of 16), customs and traditions (11 out of 16), and rights and duties (9 out of 16).

**Figure 16 – KoS test format**

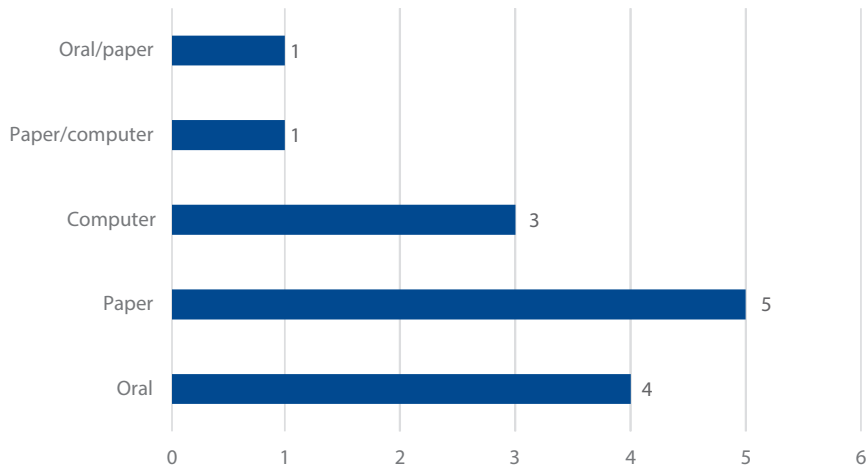


Figure 16 focuses on the format of KoS tests. When KoS tests are administered, they are typically presented in writing, either on paper (5 out of 16), on paper or computer (1 out of 16) or only on computer (3 out of 16). When KoS tests are administered in an official language of the host country, and when they require reading or writing skills, they constitute an additional language and literacy requirement, potentially disadvantaging migrants with a low-literate profile. In four countries the KoS test is administered orally.

**1.3. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Council of Europe member states vary when it comes to the degree to which they offer migrants learning opportunities for language and KoS, the number of hours provided, the cost of the courses and the extent to which the courses are tailored to different groups. The results in this section are based on the 36 countries that responded to this part of the survey.

**1.3.1. Language courses**

In most contexts surveyed, language courses are provided for migrants. The only member states where this was not stated to be the case are Bulgaria and Hungary. The tables below are based on the responding member states/regions that do provide language courses (*n* = 34).

In 32 of these member states/regions, the national or local government provides or finances language courses for migrants. The exceptions are Albania and the

Slovak Republic, where this does not seem to be the case. The quality of the courses is monitored and assured by a central authority or an external body in 30 of the 34 contexts. In 21 member states/regions, teachers are inspected and in 23 member states/regions, teachers receive specific training. Table 13 summarises these results.

*Table 13 – Language courses*

Availability of language courses	Number of countries
Language courses are provided	34
Courses are provided or financed by government	32
Courses are quality controlled	30
Teachers receive specific training	23
Teachers are inspected	21

Table 14 below presents the number of hours of language tuition provided for migrants in general in the different Council of Europe member states/regions (for results regarding the number of hours provided for vulnerable groups, we refer readers to Chapter 4).

*Table 14 – Hours of language tuition provided free of charge*

Number of hours	Number of countries
0 – 250	11
250 – 500	8
500 – 1000	4
1000 – 1500	1
2000 – 3000	0
3000+	0

Summing up, most Council of Europe member states provide learners with opportunities to learn the language of the host country, but the countries vary greatly when it comes to the number of hours provided free of charge (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of this point).

### 1.3.2. KoS courses

In 25 of the 35 member states/regions, KoS courses are provided and/or funded by the government. In 20 member states/regions the quality of the KoS courses is checked by an external or government body.

Regarding cost, the KoS courses are:

- ▶ completely free for all migrants in 17 contexts;
- ▶ completely free for certain groups of migrants in 7 contexts;
- ▶ partially funded for certain groups of migrants in 1 context.

Figure 17 shows additional characteristics of KoS courses. In most cases they are either in the official language of the host country ( $n = 19, 54\%$ ), or in a lingua franca ( $n = 17, 49\%$ ); in 11 countries (31%) KoS courses are in the migrants' mother tongue.

**Figure 17 – KoS course characteristics – language of tuition**

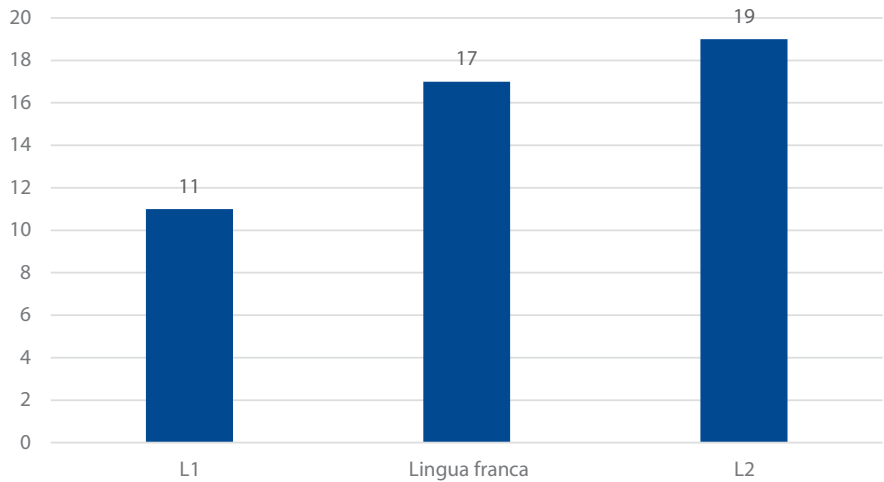
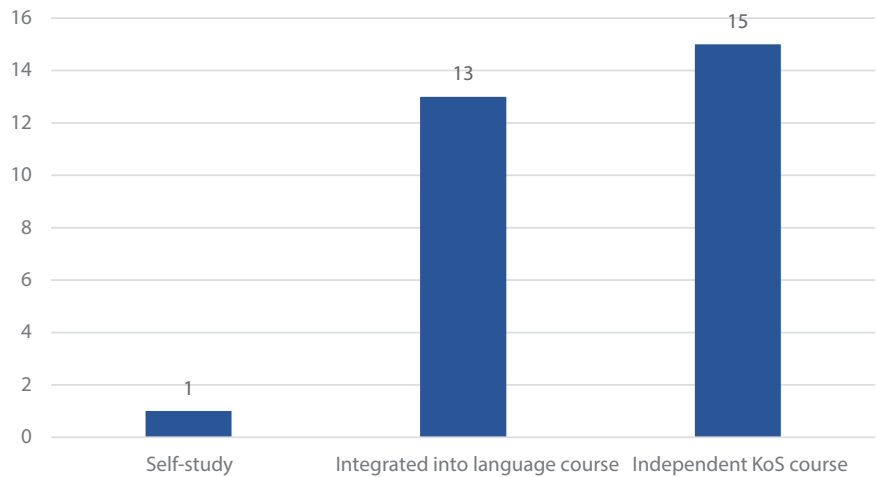


Figure 18 shows that in 15 member states/regions, KoS courses are unrelated to a language course, and in 13 they are about as often independent courses ( $n = 15, 45\%$ ) or integrated into a language course ( $n = 13, 37\%$ ). In one context, the KoS course relies on self-study.

**Figure 18 – KoS course characteristics – mode of tuition**





## Chapter 2

# Vulnerable groups

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### 2.1. MINORS, LOW-LITERATE LEARNERS, REFUGEES

**L**earning a new language and passing a language and/or KoS test is not equally easy for all learners. A language proficiency level reachable for some learners after a relatively modest number of hours of instruction may require a considerably longer time and more effort for other learners. This is familiar among language teachers and language test developers, and it is well-documented in research on language acquisition and language assessment (Dörnyei and Skehan 2003, Allemano 2013). Success in language learning is not a mere question of how much a person wants to learn a language (motivation) but is heavily influenced by factors such as the relative distance between the learners' first language and the target language, educational background, age, level of literacy and trauma, to mention the most significant (Doughty and Long 2003).

Some groups are therefore more endangered than others when language and KoS requirements are imposed as part of the immigration and integration policy, and have a more pronounced need for tailored language and KoS courses and exemptions from requirements. Therefore, the 2018 survey focused specific attention on vulnerable groups, minors, low-literate learners and refugees in particular, the reasons for which are explained below.

Minors are asylum seekers and refugees under the age of 18. A substantial number of minor refugees have fled without the company of their parents or other adults with parental responsibility for them, and are referred to as unaccompanied minors. Some of the minors have been separated from their parents during the journey, others are sent alone with traffickers and yet others are orphans. Many of these children have suffered trauma, abuse and danger before and during their journey, and many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (El-Awad et al. 2017; Jakobsen 2018). As a consequence, minors, and unaccompanied minors in particular, are among the most vulnerable of migrants.

Low-literate learners (LESLLA learners<sup>19</sup>) are migrants who for different reasons have not had a chance to attend school or have interrupted schooling, leading to no or only limited literacy skills in their first language. UNESCO estimates that 750 million young people and adults at the global level cannot read or write.<sup>20</sup> While there is a substantial body of research on adult second language learning, adult learners with low levels of schooling in their first language have been subject to little research interest (Tarone 2010). We therefore lack empirical knowledge on how a new language is acquired without the support of script and, consequently, how to best cater to these learners. Also, there is a lack of teacher training and teaching material to support language learning for this group (Windisch 2015).

The third group of particularly vulnerable migrants in focus in the 2018 survey are refugees. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) defines a refugee as:

someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. (UNHCR 2019)

The difference between a refugee and a migrant who has moved voluntarily to another country to work or study is significant. The main difference is that refugees have often suffered war, conflict and abuse before and during their journey, and the fear of being returned to an uncertain future in the home country is often considerable. Many refugees have had to leave part of their family behind or have been separated from their children and spouse during the journey. Worries for one's children left behind have been found to significantly affect adult refugees' language learning and integration process (Djuve et al. 2017).

Table 15 lists how many member states/regions<sup>21</sup> allow exemptions from language and KoS requirements for minors, low-literate learners and refugees for different contexts. Low-literate learners receive the fewest exemptions and minors the most. Overall, minors are exempt from language requirements 3 times out of 10 – considerably more than low-literate learners and refugees (respectively 10% and 15%). The same trend holds true for exemptions from KoS requirements (minors: 26%; low-literate learners: 5%; and refugees: 10%).

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19. LESLLA learners refer to adult second language learners with little prior schooling and/or low levels of literacy, and the acronym refers to Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults, see <https://www.leslla.org/research>.

20. See <https://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy-all>.

21. In the table *n* refers to the total number of countries that have language and KoS requirements for the different contexts.

**Table 15 – Exemptions from language and KoS requirements for vulnerable groups**

	Minors	Low-literate learners	Refugees	(n)	Minors	Low-literate learners	Refugees	(n)
	Language				KoS			
<b>Pre-entry</b>	4	1	4	(10)				(2)
<b>Temporary residency</b>	4	1	1	(13)	3	1	3	(9)
<b>Permanent residency</b>	8	4	4	(22)	4	0	0	(15)
<b>Citizenship</b>	7	2	3	(33)	4	1	1	(16)

Table 16 lists the 28 member states/regions that provide learning opportunities for vulnerable groups. The table distinguishes between minors in general and unaccompanied minors in particular, and differentiates between instruction within or outside the compulsory school system.

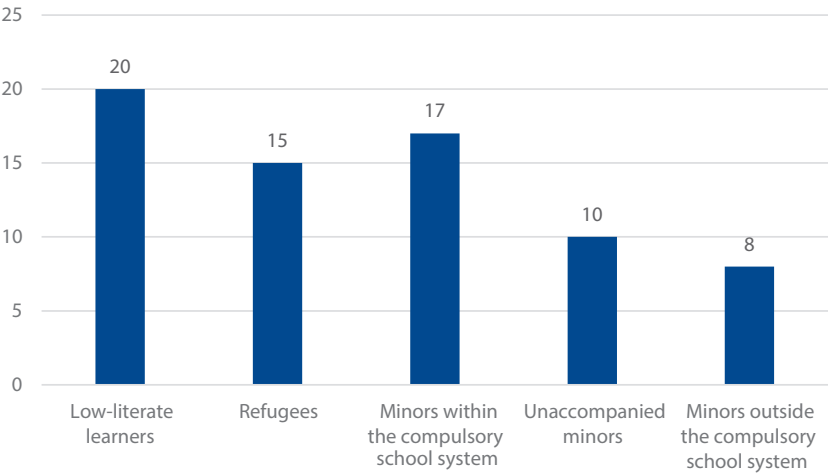
**Table 16 – Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups**

Country	Low-literate learners	Minors within the compulsory school system	Minors outside the compulsory school system	Unaccompanied minors	Refugees
<b>Austria</b>	X		X	X	X
<b>Belgium (Fl.)</b>	X	X			
<b>Belgium (Fr.)</b>	X		X		X
<b>Cyprus</b>	X	X		X	X
<b>Czech Republic</b>			X		X
<b>Denmark</b>	X	X			
<b>Finland</b>	X		X	X	
<b>Germany</b>	X	X		X	X
<b>Ireland</b>	X	X			
<b>Italy</b>	X	X		X	
<b>Luxembourg</b>			X		
<b>Malta</b>	X				
<b>Moldova</b>		X			
<b>Monaco</b>		X			
<b>Netherlands</b>	X	X			X
<b>Norway</b>	X	X			

Country	Low-literate learners	Minors within the compulsory school system	Minors outside the compulsory school system	Unaccompanied minors	Refugees
Poland			X	X	X
Portugal	X	X		X	X
Romania	X				X
Russian Federation			X		X
San Marino		X			
Slovak Republic					X
Slovenia	X	X		X	X
Spain	X	X			X
Sweden	X	X			
Switzerland	X	X		X	X
Turkey	X	X			X
UK	X		X	X	

Figure 19 shows how many member states/regions offer language courses that are tailor-made to the needs of low-literate learners ( $n = 20$ ), minors (within the compulsory school system,  $n = 17$ ; outside it,  $n = 8$ ; and unaccompanied,  $n = 10$ ) and refugees ( $n = 15$ ). Again, most adjustments are provided for minors. Courses that cater to the specific needs of refugees are offered in just under half of the member states/regions where language courses for migrants are provided.

**Figure 19 – Language courses for vulnerable groups**





Low-literate language learners generally need more time to acquire a language than the general migrant population. Table 17 shows, however, that this group of learners rarely receives more hours of language tuition to compensate for their learning pace. With few exceptions, low-literate migrants do not receive additional hours free of charge to help them attain the required level.

*Table 17 – Hours of language tuition provided free of charge for low-literate learners*

	General	Low-literate learners
0 – 250	11	13
250 – 500	8	4
500 – 1000	4	2
1000 – 1500	1	2
2000 – 3000	0	1
3000+	0	0



## Chapter 3

# Developments from 2007 to 2018

**T**he Council of Europe has carried out four surveys on member states' language and KoS requirements as part of the immigration/integration policy, in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018.<sup>22</sup> The number of participating member states/regions has increased with every study, from 26 countries in 2007, to 32 in 2009, 37 in 2013 and 41 in 2018.

Table 18 shows which countries took part in the different surveys. The countries that took part in all four surveys are marked in italics.

*Table 18 – Participating countries through the years*

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018	Total
Albania			1	1	2
Andorra			1	1	2
Armenia	1	1		1	3
<i>Austria</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Belgium (Fl.)</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Belgium (Fr.)</i>	1	1	1	1	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina			1		1
Bulgaria				1	1
Croatia	1			1	2
Cyprus		1	1	1	3
<i>Czech Republic</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Denmark</i>	1	1	1	1	4
Estonia	1	1	1		3
Finland		1	1	1	3
<i>France</i>	1	1	1	1	4

22. For earlier Council of Europe reports, see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/surveys>.

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018	Total
<i>Germany</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Greece</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Hungary</i>		1	1	1	3
<i>Iceland</i>				1	1
<i>Ireland</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Italy</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Latvia</i>	1		1	1	3
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	1	1	1		3
<i>Lithuania</i>		1	1	1	3
<i>Luxembourg</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Malta</i>		1	1	1	3
<i>Monaco</i>			1	1	2
<i>Netherlands</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>North Macedonia</i>			1	1	2
<i>Norway</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Poland</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Portugal</i>			1	1	2
<i>Republic of Moldova</i>			1	1	2
<i>Romania</i>				1	1
<i>Russian Federation</i>			1	1	2
<i>San Marino</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Serbia</i>		1	1		2
<i>Slovak Republic</i>	1	1		1	3
<i>Slovenia</i>		1	1	1	3
<i>Spain</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Sweden</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Switzerland</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<i>Turkey</i>	1	1		1	3
<i>Ukraine</i>		1			1
<i>UK</i>	1	1	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	26	32	37	40	

Table 18 shows that 19 member states/regions have participated in all four Council of Europe surveys: Austria, Belgium (Fl.), Belgium (Fr.), Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The longitudinal analysis relies on two sets of data: (a) the raw numbers showing the situation in the participating member states in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018, and (b) a comparison of the 19 member states/regions which took part in every single survey. Using the first approach means that no member states are excluded from the dataset, but since the number of participating member states increases from one survey to the next it is important to consider the proportions.

The second dataset consisting only of the 19 countries offers the most robust and reliable picture of the trends since 2007. It is quite possible to generalise from the trends represented in this section to the wider context of Council of Europe member states, since the evolutions described here can be also discerned among member states that have participated in fewer than four surveys.

### 3.1. PRE-ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

#### 3.1.1. Pre-entry requirements, raw data (all participating member states)

Pre-entry requirements (Table 19) were investigated for the first time in the 2009 survey, which is why there are no data for this context from 2007.

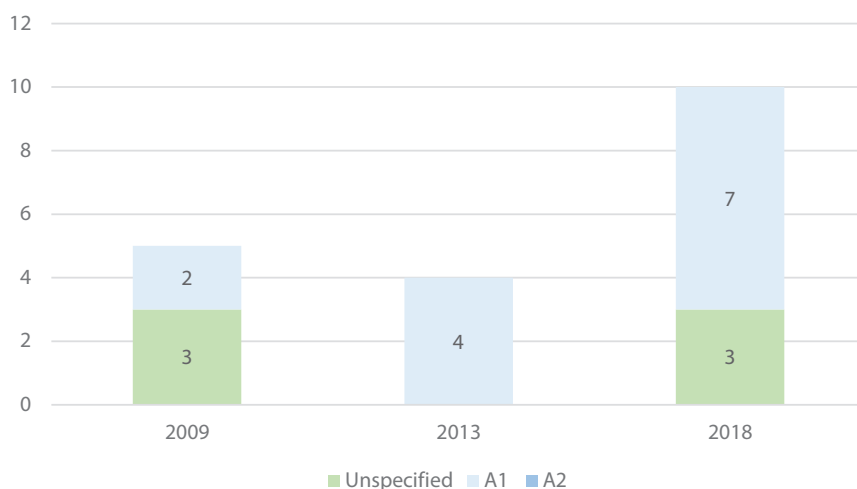
*Table 19 – Pre-entry requirements in 2009, 2013 and 2018*

Country	2009	2013	2018
Austria		A1	A1
Denmark	A1		No
France	Unspecified		A1
Germany	Unspecified	A1	A1
Hungary	No	No	Unspecified
Lithuania	No	No	Unspecified
Netherlands	Unspecified	A1	A1
North Macedonia		No	Unspecified
Romania			A1
Turkey	No		A1
UK	A1	A1	A1

Figure 20 below presents the results graphically. The most considerable change over time is the substantial increase in the number of member states setting formal language and/or KoS pre-entry requirements in 2018 (10) compared to 4 in 2013. A1 is the most commonly used CEFR level prior to entrance, but in 2018 as well as in 2009, several member states set unspecified requirements, which makes it impossible to know what level is required.

To allow for a graphical representation, the levels were standardised following the procedure presented in Chapter 1.

**Figure 20 – Pre-entry requirements in 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)**



### 3.1.2. Pre-entry requirements, subset comparison (19 member states)

Below, only the 19 member states that took part in all 4 Council of Europe surveys carried out between 2007 and 2018 are included. This approach gives the most reliable comparison of the development over time. It is also the approach used in the Council of Europe report from 2014 reporting on the 2013 survey. Note that pre-entry requirements were not part of the 2007 survey. Table 20 and Figure 21 display the results.

**Table 20 – Pre-entry requirements over time (19 member states)**

Country	2009	2013	2018
Austria		A1	A1
Belgium (Fl.)			
Belgium (Fr.)			
Czech Republic			
Denmark			
France	Unspecified		A1
Germany	Unspecified	A1	A1
Greece			
Ireland			
Italy			
Luxembourg			
Netherlands	Unspecified	Unspecified	A1

Country	2009	2013	2018
Norway			
Poland			A2
San Marino			
Spain			
Sweden			
Switzerland			
UK	A1	A1	A1

**Figure 21 – Pre-entry requirements (19 member states)**



## 3.2. PERMANENT RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

### 3.2.1. Permanent residency requirements, raw data (all participating member states)

Table 21 displays the member states/regions with language requirements for permanent residency for each of the four surveys.<sup>23</sup> The table includes all respondents each year, so again, the apparent increase of demand in 2018 partly reflects a larger number of respondents rather than a true proportionate increase. For the most reliable analysis of development over time, we refer to section 3.2.2.

23. The table contains 20 countries, since Moldova doesn't seem to have formal language requirements, only KoS requirements.

**Table 21 – Permanent residency requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018**

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Austria	A2	A2	A2	A2
Belgium (Fl.)	No	No	No	A2
Cyprus		No	A1/A2	A2
Czech Republic	No	A1	A1	A1
Denmark	B1	B1	A2	B1
France	A1	(A1)	A2	A2
Germany	B1	(B1)	B1	B1
Greece	A2	(A2)	A2	A2
Iceland				Unspecified
Italy		(A2)	A2	A2
Lithuania		Unspecified <sup>24</sup>	A2	Unspecified
Luxembourg		A1	A2	A2
Malta		No	100h	Unspecified
Netherlands	A2	(A1)	A2	A2
North Macedonia			No	Unspecified
Norway	No	No	No <sup>25</sup>	A1 oral
Portugal			A1	A2
Russian Federation				A2
Switzerland			A2	A1
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

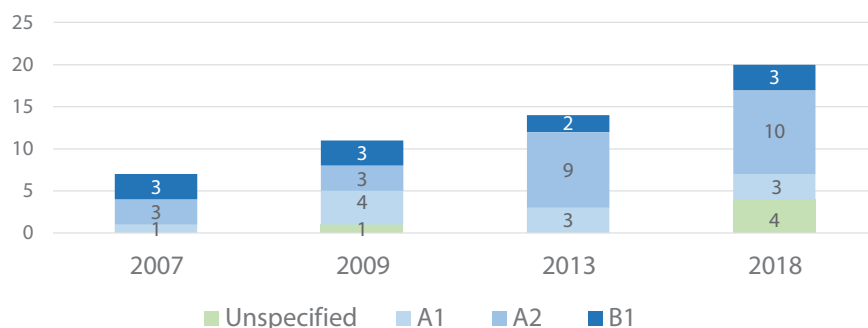
Again, to allow for a graphical representation, the levels were standardised following the procedure presented in Chapter 1. Figure 22 visualises the situation for permanent residency requirements from 2007 to 2018.

24. In 2009, Lithuania reported level “A2/B1 to work”. Since this doesn’t relate to residency permits as such, we have changed it to “unspecified” in this report

25. Before 2017, Norway did not have a language requirement, but a requirement to attend a certain number of hours of compulsory language and KoS classes.



**Figure 22 – Permanent residency requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)**



### 3.2.2. Permanent residency requirements, subset comparison (19 member states)

As mentioned already, there has been an increase in the number of member states setting formal language requirements for permanent residency over time. Within the subset of countries that took part in every survey, the proportion has steadily increased from 7 out of 19 (37%) in 2007, to 10 (53%) in 2009, to 11 (58%) in 2013 and to 13 (68%) in 2018. The member states/regions within this subset that did not have language requirements for permanent residency at the time of data collection are Belgium (Fr.), Ireland, Poland, San Marino, Spain and Sweden.

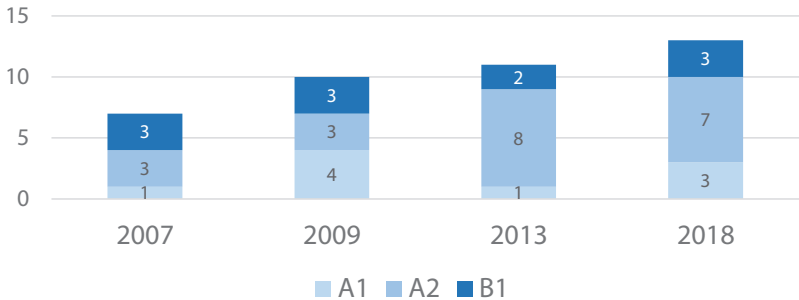
**Table 22 – Permanent residency requirements over time (subset)**

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Austria	A2	A2	A2	A2
Belgium (Fl.)				A2
Belgium (Fr.)				
Czech Republic	No	A1	A1	A1
Denmark	B1	B1	A2	B1
France	A1	(A1)	A2	A2
Germany	B1	(B1)	B1	B1
Greece	A2	(A2)	A2	A2
Ireland				
Italy		(A2)	A2	A2
Luxembourg		A1	A2	A2
Netherlands	A2	(A1)	A2	A2
Norway				A1 oral
Poland				
San Marino				

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Spain				
Sweden				
Switzerland			A2	A1
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

As can be seen from Table 22 and Figure 23, there is no evidence that the language requirements for permanent residency per se have become stricter. In other words, more member states do indeed set requirements for permanent residency in 2018 than in earlier years, but the member states/regions that already had requirements for permanent residency in 2007 have not introduced stricter requirements over time for permanent residency. In 2007 only 7 of the 19 member states/regions had formal language requirements, but 3 of these had a B1-level requirement. In 2018 a larger number of member states/regions have introduced requirements, but the number of member states setting a B1-level requirement has not increased. It is still Denmark, Germany and the UK that have a B1-requirement for permanent residency. Over time, it seems that A2 has gained status as the most commonly set language requirement for permanent residency.

**Figure 23 – Permanent residency requirements (subset)**



### 3.3. CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS

#### 3.3.1. Citizenship requirements, raw data (all participating member states)

Table 23 and Figure 24 display the member states/regions with language requirements for citizenship in each of the four surveys.

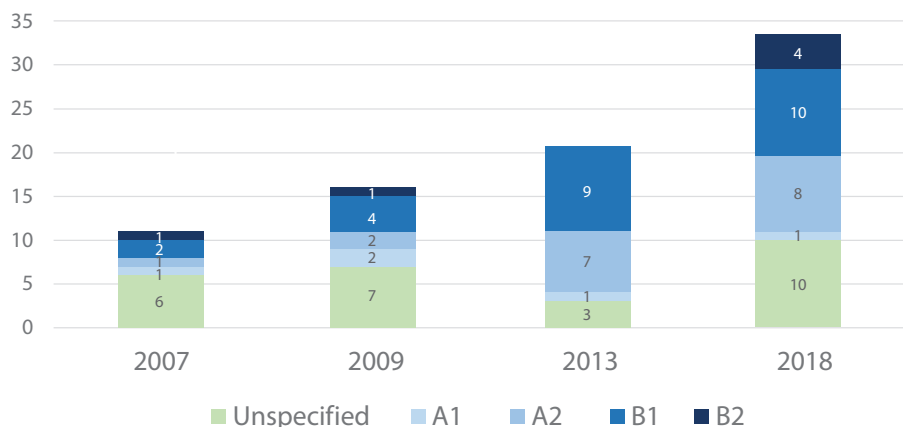
**Table 23 – Citizenship requirements since 2007**

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Albania			Unspecified	Unspecified
Armenia	Unspecified	Unspecified		Unspecified
Austria	Unspecified	A2	B1	B2

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Belgium (Fl.)	No	No	No	A2
Belgium (Fr.)	No	No	No	A2
Croatia	No			Unspecified
Czech Republic	Unspecified	A2	B1	B1
Denmark	B2	B2	B1	B2
Finland			Unspecified	B1
France	Unspecified	Unspecified	B1	B1
Germany	B1	B1	B1	B1
Greece	A1	A1/A2	A2	B2
Hungary		No	No	Unspecified
Iceland				B1
Italy	No	No	No	B1
Latvia	No		B1	Unspecified
Lithuania		Unspecified	A2	Unspecified
Luxembourg		A1	A2/B1 oral	A2/B1 oral
Malta		No		Unspecified
Moldova			A1/A2	B2
Netherlands	A2	Unspecified	A2	A2
North Macedonia			No	Unspecified
Norway				A2 oral
Poland	No	B1	(B1)	B1
Portugal			A2	A2
Romania				A1
Russian Federation			A2	A2
Slovak Republic	Unspecified	Unspecified		Unspecified
Slovenia		B1	A2/B1	A2
Spain		No	Unspecified	A2
Switzerland		Unspecified	A2/B1	A2 written B1 oral
Turkey	Unspecified	Unspecified		Unspecified
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

To allow for transforming the data into a graphical representation, “in-between levels”, or differentiated levels for different skills were standardised according to the procedures presented in Chapter 1.

**Figure 24 – Citizenship requirements in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018 (raw numbers)**



### 3.3.2. Citizenship requirements, subset comparison (19 member states)

Table 24 shows which of the 19 member states/regions that took part in all 4 surveys had formal language requirements for citizenship in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018.

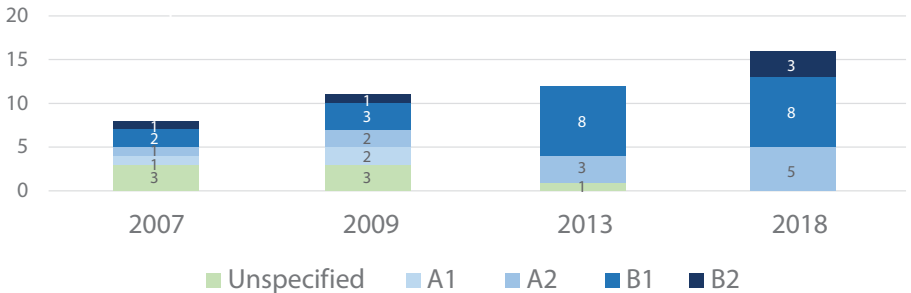
**Table 24 – Citizenship requirements over time (19 member states)**

Country	2007	2009	2013	2018
Austria	Unspecified	A2	B1	B2
Belgium (Fl.)	No	No	No	A2
Belgium (Fr.)	No	No	No	A2
Czech Republic	Unspecified	A2	B1	B1
Denmark	B2	B2	B1	B2
France	Unspecified	Unspecified	B1	B1
Germany	B1	B1	B1	B1
Greece	A1	A1/A2	A2	B2
Ireland				
Italy	No	No	No	B1
Luxembourg		A1	A2/B1 oral	A2/B1 oral
Netherlands	A2	Unspecified	A2	A2
Norway				A2 oral
Poland	No	B1	(B1)	B1
San Marino				
Spain		No	Unspecified	A2
Sweden				
Switzerland		Unspecified	A2/B1	A2 written B1 oral
UK	B1	B1	B1	B1

Table 24 shows that the number of member states/regions setting language requirements for citizenship has increased steadily over the 10 years since the first Council of Europe survey was conducted. In 2007 only 8 of the 19 member states/regions had requirements for citizenship. This number had increased to 11 in 2009; 12 countries had such requirements in 2013, while in 2018, the number was 16 out of 19. Only 3 of the 19 member states/regions did not have formal language requirements for citizenship in 2018 (Ireland, San Marino and Sweden).

Figure 25 presents the levels required for citizenship in 2007, 2009, 2013 and 2018 for the 19 member states/regions that took part in all surveys.

**Figure 25 – Citizenship requirements (subset)**



When looking at the developments in the same 19 member states/regions from 2007 to 2018, there is an increase in the numbers of countries setting language requirements for citizenship over time and, in addition, the requirements are getting stricter. In 2007 and 2009, A1 was a level required by some member states/regions, while there are no countries setting A1 requirements for citizenship in 2013 and 2018. In 2013 and 2018, 8 out of the 19 countries (42%) set a B1-level requirement for citizenship. The level which stands out as used by most countries for citizenship in 2013 and 2018, then, is B1. In addition, while Denmark stood out as the only country setting an academic language requirement (B2) in 2007 and 2009, 2 other countries of the 19 that took part in all 4 surveys have introduced a B2 requirement for citizenship in 2018 (Austria and Greece).



## Chapter 4

# Discussion

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In this chapter, the results of the survey are connected to societal considerations. While the values underlying the discussion are those upon which the Council of Europe is founded, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the interpretation of the findings and related policy recommendations are based on the professional judgment of the experts who alone assume responsibility for them. The recommendations should not be interpreted as an expression of the views of the Council of Europe.

### 4.1. USING LANGUAGE AND KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIETY TESTS FOR INTEGRATION PURPOSES

Language tests measure language proficiency. High-quality language assessments can be helpful for migrants if used to encourage and guide them in developing their language proficiency according to their real-life needs and different abilities. When used in migration and integration policies, however, it appears that tests are often used as if they measure integration, willingness to integrate or success in the integration process. It should be clear that the reasoning behind this is largely unsupported by research. The direct relationship between societal integration and language proficiency alone is not sustained by research. In addition, and central to the focus of this survey, not everybody can reach the same proficiency level even if a substantial number of hours of instruction are provided. On the contrary, for learners with low levels of prior schooling and limited levels of literacy, CEFR-based requirements above A1 in writing may be out of reach. Since language proficiency is impacted by a wide range of variables, it is difficult to argue that a migrant's proficiency level in an official language of the host country is a reliable proxy for integration or willingness to integrate. If language requirements are part of the migration policy, the principles of fairness and equality of opportunity would dictate that all learners be provided with effective learning opportunities which take into account their prior educational experience, their learning needs and their individual capacities.

Together with the Council of Europe instances cited above and also the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2034 (2014), the experts question the use of pre-entry language tests and oppose them when used in the context of family reunification, where they constitute a breach of human rights. This position

is in line with concerns noted by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (“Family reunion is a human right and leads to better integration”) and the European Committee of Social Rights. Both have highlighted the substantive right to family reunification and have raised human rights concerns when language or KoS tests are used to regulate family reunification.

An additional reason why using language tests prior to entry is a particularly problematic practice is because not all migrants have had access to education or the possibility to learn the language of the host country before entering the new country. There is a very real risk that pre-entry language tests are disproportionately disadvantageous to refugees, women, or refugees from countries with a poor educational infrastructure.

## **4.2. THE LACK OF AGREEMENT ABOUT WHAT LEVEL IS NEEDED FOR THE SAME CONTEXT**

There is a striking lack of agreement between Council of Europe member states as to what proficiency level is appropriate for a given context. For citizenship, for example, the requirements range from no requirement or A1, all the way through to an academic level (B2). It is hard to see why access to the same societal status (e.g. citizenship) would require basic or no language proficiency in one country and academic language proficiency in another. This lack of agreement reaffirms that language requirements often fulfil a symbolic function and not real language needs, as emphasised by Böcker and Strik (2011):

As there is no proven relationship between integration and a specific level of language proficiency, it is difficult to understand why some member states should have higher requirements than others for the same purpose. These differences throw doubt on the argument that immigrants need the proficiency level they are required to demonstrate in order to successfully integrate. (Böcker and Strik 2011: 182)

It is important to repeat that higher CEFR levels (B2 and above) imply complex reasoning, abstract thinking and academic skills. Not all native speakers can write a text at the B2 level in their own language, let alone in a second language. B2 is the level most often required of foreign students in the context of university admission in Europe. Since it is clear that not all migrants (or indeed all native speakers) will ever attain the B2 level, it appears unreasonable to have it as a requirement for migrants and for non-academic purposes such as entry, residency or citizenship.

## **4.3. THE CEFR – ITS INTENTIONAL PURPOSE AND HOW IT IS (MIS)USED**

The CEFR was developed in line with the overarching values of the Council of Europe to promote plurilingualism, respect for diversity, mobility and communication across borders (North et al. 2018). Given the centrality of plurilingualism and the respect for diversity, as well as the positive view of what learners can do with language, it is striking to see that the CEFR is used in certain contexts as a monolingual obstructive



tool. This type of use runs counter to its intended purpose, as underlined by Bruzos et al. (2017):

It seems paradoxical that an instrument developed to acknowledge and facilitate the idea of a multilingual Europe is employed as a means to legitimize monolingual policies based on the requirement of given national languages. For that reason, there is a growing concern that the CEFR is becoming an instrument to control and restrict immigration. (Bruzos et al. 2017: 423)

It is particularly striking that so few member states set differentiated language requirements (i.e. different CEFR levels in reading, writing, listening and speaking) when the CEFR document so strongly encourages profiles over uniform levels. If the language requirements are intended to represent real language needs, one would expect more differentiated requirements in terms of an uneven modular profile, as opposed to a simplified global level. For most societal or professional roles, one does not need to master each skill at the same level. A taxi-driver or a kindergarten assistant might need oral skills (listening and speaking) at a higher level than the skills needed in reading and writing, for example. Since most learners perform better in receptive skills (reading and listening) than in productive skills (speaking and writing), and better in oral (listening and speaking) than in written modes (reading and writing), a lower threshold for writing would make the requirements more achievable for a larger group of learners. It should also be stressed that setting requirements in writing and reading skills discriminate against the most vulnerable of migrant groups: refugees and low-literate learners with limited prior schooling and low levels of literacy.

Nonetheless, the use of the same proficiency scale across Europe makes comparison of requirements possible. Since the CEFR is well known, it allows users to share reflections and experiences, and to work together in raising awareness and seeking solutions when countries set requirements (e.g. B2 for citizenship) that may result in damaging and discriminatory consequences for all or some groups of migrants. For this to happen, however, it is important that there be an informed, common understanding of what the CEFR levels actually represent and how they can best be adapted for use in migration contexts.

#### **4.4. PROVIDING MIGRANTS WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN**

The data presented in this report reveal that language courses addressing migrants' needs are provided in most of the Council of Europe member states. Even so, there is a considerable lack of consistency. The differences between member states primarily relate to the number of hours provided, the cost of the courses and the extent to which the courses are tailored to specific learner groups, but there are also considerable differences related to teacher training and quality assurance.

Regarding the connection between learning opportunities and requirements, the findings of the survey show that only in a few cases (Belgium and, in part, Italy) can migrants receive an exemption from government-provided language tests by attending language courses. Arguably, affordable and adequate language courses could be more effective than language tests in ensuring that migrants develop the required language proficiency level. In this respect, the Council of Europe Commissioner for

Human Rights has recommended that countries with language and KoS requirements offer enough free courses and support to enable all applicants to meet the requirements. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has welcomed the efforts made by some member states to offer free or inexpensive access to language courses.

It is crucial to ensure that language and KoS instruction are adapted to the real-world needs of learners and tailored to their learner profiles. Illiterate or low-literate learners may need literacy training as well as language training, and KoS courses might be more efficient if provided in a language the participants know, either in their first language or in a lingua franca. An example of good practice here is Norway, where the KoS courses are provided in 28 different languages and the KoS test required for permanent residency is provided in the same 28 languages.

#### **4.5. VULNERABLE GROUPS – LEARNING A LANGUAGE AND PASSING A TEST IS NOT EQUALLY EASY FOR ALL**

This report has focused particular attention on vulnerable groups. This was done to raise awareness of the fact that language learning is not equally easy for all learners. It is important to recognise that refugees who have fled their home countries because of war and conflict may have suffered from a lack of schooling and hence not had a chance to develop functional literacy skills. For these learners, proficiency in the new language has to be developed in parallel with learning to read and write, often in a language they do not understand. This is a more demanding task than learning a new language in itself. The lack of schooling also implies a lack of other school-related skills. Test literacy is such a skill, which is of particular importance when language tests are imposed as part of immigration policy. It is therefore important to underline the potentially discriminating effect of language and KoS tests on low-literate learners, especially if these requirements also comprise reading and writing.

Low-literate learners progress more slowly and often reach lower levels of language proficiency, particularly in the written modes. To accommodate to these learners' needs, they should receive more hours of instruction, at a slower pace and tailored courses as well as necessary exemptions from requirements. As the survey shows, low-literate learners are to a limited degree catered for in teaching and testing. Perhaps language learning courses may need to be treated as an entitlement, at least for migrants with limited proficiency, with specific courses for those lacking the necessary literacy skills.

#### **4.6. KoS TESTS AS IMPLICIT LANGUAGE AND LITERACY TESTS**

This report refers to language and/or KoS requirements throughout. The reason for this is that KoS tests are often administered in the language of the host country and hence function as implicit language tests. In many cases, it is therefore not easy to distinguish between the two. Most often, the KoS test requires candidates to read a question and pick the right answer from a list of written distractors. Hence, the KoS tests normally also require literacy skills.

There are some potential risks associated with KoS tests. First of all, if the purpose of the test is to measure knowledge of society, using a test format that requires additional skills, such as literacy skills and proficiency in the language of the host country invalidates the test as a measurement instrument. In a valid test, the result reflects the skills or knowledge measured in an unrestricted way and should only to a limited degree be affected by other irrelevant skills and knowledge.

The results of the survey show that most KoS tests focus on topics such as culture, history and law. Addressing these topics in a written test requires a certain language level and it is difficult to imagine how a KoS test about these topics could be developed at a language proficiency level below B1. As such, KoS tests may act as an additional, implicit language test, sometimes at a level that exceeds the CEFR level necessary to pass the explicit language requirements. The language level required to pass the KoS test, however, is typically not specified, which is an additional problem with such tests.

In Italy there is a combined language and KoS test for permanent residency. The test is oral (no reading and writing required) and the questions are developed so as not to exceed the A2 level, which is the explicit language proficiency level required for permanent residency. Consequently, passing the language and KoS requirements is not dependent on literacy skills, and the level of proficiency is specified and does not exceed the explicit language requirement. As mentioned above, another approach is taken by Norway, where the KoS test for permanent residency is developed in 28 different languages. The KoS courses prior to the test are also provided in the same languages. Hence, the KoS test is not an implicit test of the language of the host country, which makes it a more valid measure of KoS. However, the format is a written multiple-choice test, so it is an implicit test of literacy.



## Chapter 5

# Recommendations

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### 5.1. LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

It is important that migrants receive adequate and affordable opportunities to learn the language and gain the necessary knowledge of society (KoS) of the host country. In order to ensure learning opportunities, the following recommendations are made.

- ▶ Language and KoS courses should be tailor-made to different groups of learners, taking into account factors such as first language, educational background, literacy level and age.
- ▶ Countries should provide a sufficient and affordable number of hours of instruction. Low-literate learners who need to learn to read and write at the same time as learning the language need substantially more hours of instruction than learners with higher levels of prior schooling.
- ▶ The quality of the teaching materials and teaching staff should be regularly monitored, and adequate teacher training ensured.
- ▶ Learners' plurilingual repertoire should be seen as a valued asset in teaching and learning processes.

### 5.2. PROMOTING INTEGRATION

It has been shown that language and knowledge of society tests do not facilitate or measure societal integration. In fact, language and knowledge of society tests can lead to alienation from the host society.

- ▶ If the goal is to promote the societal integration of migrants, it is recommended to focus on learning opportunities rather than on tests. Courses are likely to be more effective than obligatory language tests to foster and facilitate the process of integration.
- ▶ If the goal is to ensure that the migrant population learns the language of the host country and has knowledge of the society, language and knowledge of society courses are to be preferred over requirements.

## 5.3. PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

In designing migration and integration policies, some groups of migrants receive comparably little attention.

- ▶ It is important to consider that not all goals may be attainable for all learners. For illiterate learners, levels above A1 in writing may be unattainable.
- ▶ It is recommended that vulnerable groups (e.g. low-literate/illiterate persons, refugees, minors, the elderly, disabled persons) be exempt from language and knowledge of society requirements.
- ▶ It is important to emphasise that refugees and those eligible for subsidiary protection should not be required to meet conditions that may put their current and future safety at risk. Language and knowledge of society requirements may add additional stressors or sources of insecurity to people already in a vulnerable situation.

## 5.4. TEST QUALITY

When language and KoS tests have an important impact on test takers' lives and prospects, it is of great importance that the test instruments are of high quality. The principles of equality and fairness are central to good practice in assessment. In the context of the current report, fairness would imply that all applicants for residency, citizenship or entry to a country have equal opportunities to meet the requirements.

- ▶ It is recommended that important tests be subject to external quality control. Language tests can be audited by organisations such as ALTE (the Association of Language Testers in Europe). Other major language testing organisations (the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA)) do not have auditing systems, but have published guidelines on developing valid language tests. Many of these principles also apply to knowledge of society tests.
- ▶ If tests are computer-based, test takers without sufficient computer skills should be offered learning opportunities to improve these skills. This is necessary if the test is to reflect their actual language or KoS skills.
- ▶ If tests are a compulsory component of a country's migration and integration programme, it is recommended that these tests be free or at least affordable for all migrants. Additionally, there should be no limit as to the number of times an applicant may sit the test.
- ▶ If knowledge of society is to be measured separately from a language test, the language of the KoS test should be one the migrant knows well. If not, the KoS test would serve as an additional language test, the level of which cannot be controlled. Furthermore, to avoid invalid measurement, migrants with low levels of literacy should be given the choice to take the test orally, possibly with the assistance of a cultural mediator.
- ▶ It is recommended that language requirements be based on a needs analysis. Not all professional or societal roles require the same proficiency level in the

four skills and an analysis of the real-world language requirements in the target contexts will help to clarify which language proficiency levels might be appropriate for which migrant profiles.

## 5.5. RESPONSIBLE USE OF TESTS

When language and/or KoS tests are used to control access to citizenship, residency and entry, they may have a severe impact on the lives and prospects of those who take them. Not only should the tests used for such purposes meet the highest professional standards, but they should also be used with a sense of responsibility and consideration for the human rights of the test takers.

- ▶ The use of pre-entry tests in the context of family reunification is strongly discouraged. Since there can be no guarantee that all applicants for entry have had access to language or KoS courses, pre-entry requirements can be considered highly problematic from ethical and human rights perspectives.<sup>26</sup>
- ▶ If policy makers decide to introduce language and KoS requirements, the body responsible for introducing the requirements should make sure that the consequences and impact of these tests on stakeholders are carefully investigated. Research should be carried out to check whether certain learner groups are discriminated against, what the impact of the policy is on migrants and society, and what consequences (intended and unintended, negative and positive) may occur. This requires that background variables from test candidates be collected.
- ▶ It is recommended that policy makers in individual member states consult language experts and language assessment professionals when setting language requirements or selecting tests as part of the migration policy.

## 5.6. RESPONSIBLE USE OF THE CEFR

There are certain responsibilities when using the CEFR to determine language requirements in migration or integration policies.

- ▶ It is recommended that language requirements be set at a level that is realistic for most adult learners. Levels B2 and above are out of reach for most language learners and even for many native speakers. These levels are cognitively demanding and require academic language skills. If used for migration purposes, requirements at these levels are likely to severely restrict equality of opportunity.
- ▶ It is recommended that language proficiency requirements be differentiated. Language skills that require reading or writing are especially challenging for low-literate learners and it is therefore recommendable to set lower level

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26. This point is in line with the recommendations of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, the findings in this respect arising from the monitoring of member states' commitments under the European Social Charter and the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2013, 2014).

requirements in reading and writing than in listening and speaking. Requiring proficiency levels in reading or writing above the A1 level goes beyond what could reasonably be expected of low-literate learners with a limited educational background. Similarly, for listening and speaking, the requirements should not exceed the A2 level.<sup>27</sup>

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27. Our recommendations of specific CEFR-based requirements are in line with those of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2034 (2014), p. 3.



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# Appendix

Link to the electronic survey: [www.surveymonkey.de/r/COE\\_languagepolicy\\_2018](http://www.surveymonkey.de/r/COE_languagepolicy_2018).

List of respondents<sup>28</sup>

Country	Department	English translation
Albania	Government of Albania	
Andorra	Govern d'Andorra	Government of Andorra
Armenia	Department of Public Administration	
Austria	Bundesministerium für Inneres	Ministry of the Interior
Belgium (Fl.)	Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering	Agency for Integration and Citizenship
Belgium (Fr.)	Association Jeunesse – Solidarité	Association for Youth and Solidarity
Bulgaria	ALTE contact	
Croatia	Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje	Ministry of Education
Cyprus	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	
Czech Republic	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	
Denmark	Ministry of Integration	
Finland	Valtion tieto	Government ICT Services
France	Ministry of the Interior	
Germany	Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik	Department of Information Security
Greece	Ministry of Education	
Hungary	Ministry of the Interior	
Iceland	Rekstrarfélag Stjórnarráðsins	Government of Iceland

28. Because of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) respondents are not listed with names and e-mail addresses, contrary to the practice of prior Council of Europe reports.

Country	Department	English translation
Ireland	Irish Government	
Italy	Ministry of the Interior	
Latvia	LR Izglītības un Zinātnes Ministrija	Ministry of Education and Science
Lithuania	State Enterprise Centre of Registers	
Luxembourg	Fondation RESTENA	ICT Network of National Education and Research
Malta	Foundation for Shelter and Support for Migrants	
Moldova	Ministrul Educației, Culturii și Cercetării	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
Monaco	Department of Education	
Netherlands	Ministry of Integration	
North Macedonia	ALTE contact	
Norway	Departementenes Sikkerhets- og Serviceorganisasjon	Ministry of Security and Organisation
Poland	Ministry of National Education	
Portugal	ALTE contact	
Romania	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Education	
Russia	Ministry of Education	
San Marino	Department of Foreign Affairs	
Serbia	Akadska mreža Republike Srbije - AMRES	Academic Network of the Republic of Serbia
Slovak Republic	Ministerstvo vnútra SR	Ministry of the Interior
Slovenia	Republika Slovenija Ministrstvo Za Javno Upravo	Ministry of Public Administration
Spain	ALTE contact	
Sweden	Skolverket	National Agency for Education
Switzerland	Fide	Swiss Programme for Promoting Linguistic Integration
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Migration is one of the most contentious issues in current international politics. To better understand this issue, the Council of Europe conducted an extensive survey among Council of Europe member states on requirements regarding language and knowledge of society that migrants must meet to obtain access to the country, residency or citizenship. This report, based on that survey, will be relevant to anybody interested in migration and language policy.

It pays particular attention to vulnerable learner groups and the degree to which member states provide migrants with adequate learning opportunities. In addition to discussing current trends, it also shows that language and knowledge of society requirements were gradually made stricter between 2007 and 2018. Based on the survey results and on available research, the authors formulate a number of policy recommendations, emphasising the importance of providing adequate learning opportunities and warning against requirements that might hinder, rather than foster, integration.



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