



# **Education and Language Rights for New Minorities: Integration through Diversity Governance**

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# General consideration and main issues

- Accommodating diversity, including linguistic diversity of new minorities originating from recent migration flows, is a powerful tool to reduce tensions and prevent conflicts
- Which public policies, in the field of education and language rights for new minorities, should be implemented to achieve a diverse and cohesive society ?

# Legal Framework on Education and Language Rights for New Minorities - General Recommendation

International **human rights** norms : access to education + provisions concerning the development of the child's cultural identity, language and values of the child's country of origin.

Most international instruments for the **protection of migrants** refers to the teaching of the **migrant workers' native language** for their children ; but the aim of the provisions concerning native language tuition is mainly the **return** of these children to the **country of origin of their parents** rather than the protection and promotion of their identities.

EU Directive 486/EEC (1977) *On the Education of the Children of Migrant Workers* : it is limited to children of workers who are **nationals of other EU Member States** (no TCNs)

The extension of the **scope of application** of standards/provisions for minorities **as to include new minorities** too would be then most appropriate.

# Finding a difficult balance

Proficiency in the language of origin is increasingly considered to be of **great importance** for migrant pupils (easier to learn **home/instruction language**; new educational/professional **opportunities**; **self-esteem**; **social ties**)

But:

it is also acknowledged that children **who do not** speak, read, or write the language of instruction to the level of their peers **perform less** well in school

**Finding a balance** between the two languages is perceived, especially by teachers and parents, as a **worthwhile, though difficult, goal** due to :

- **complications of the teaching assignment** and **decreased educational quality** because of restricted linguistic competences of the children;
- difficulties to **convince** parents and administrations that it is **profitable** to teach languages of countries of origin of new minorities, like Turkish or Arabic, which for many are seen as **largely irrelevant** to European societies.

**Tension between a state defined as monolingual and a reality that is multilingual**

# Models and Main Recommendations

- Common models of language education for new minorities are:
  - Assimilationist model
  - Separatist model (as transitional or long-term arrangements)
  - Inclusive or pluralist model (bilateral agreements; diplomatic missions; home country's educat. system; NGOs in/outside public schools)
- Studies conducted in this field indicate that countries that tend to have a small performance gap between children of new minorities and children of majority groups are those that have introduced :
  - Heritage-language programs for new minorities based on the inclusive/pluralist model
  - Long-standing systematic language support programs
  - Clearly defined goals and standards

# Conclusions and final recommendations

The recognition of language rights of new minorities and its protection as for old minorities would send out a powerful message that new minorities are **no longer seen as the “legal Other”** but as an **integral, though distinct, part of the nation**.

However :

- cultural attachment to a language other than the official state language should **neither compete with nor replace** the requirement of skills and fluency in the **official language(s)** of the country. A **common public language** is necessary for **the state to function** and **proficiency** in the state language is an important tool by which **integration is assured**;
- to spark solidarity and social trust, and thus social cohesion, recognition and protection of **diversity is not sufficient**: states must also tackle social structures and mechanisms that result in **systematic deprivation and exclusion** of new minorities from their equal public standing.
- **Synergies** between old and new minorities, their representatives, international organisations and academics are necessary to find **common and innovative solutions** in the field of education and language rights. This does not mean that all sets of rights recognised to old minorities should be equally recognised to new minorities. However, **a common but differentiated approach for old and new minorities could be very beneficial** in the quest for a more cohesive and stable society for all: **minorities (old and new) AND majority groups**.

# THANK YOU !

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