



LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY PROFILE: ALBANIA

Country Report

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List of Abbreviations

AEDP	Albanian Education Development Program
ANAD	Albanian National Association of the Deaf
ASL	Albanian Sign Language
BEE	Basic Education Examination
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment
CREFECO	Francophone Regional Centre for Central and Eastern Europe
ECML	European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe
ELP	European Language Portfolio
ELTA	English Language Teachers Association
EO	Education Offices
FAD	Finnish Association of the Deaf
IDE	Institute for Development of Education
INSTAT	National Statistics Institute
IQT	Institute for Qualification and Training of Teachers
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoSWY	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
NAVETQ	National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications
NEA	National Examinations Agency
RED	Regional Education Directorates
SGE	State Graduation Examination

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for Language Education Policy Profile

Albania has undertaken several reforms in the field of language education since 1996. The pivotal reform, which took the longest period of time and was also the most profound one ever taken, was the reform of curricula. The reform of foreign language curricula completely changed the educational approach, from traditional grammar and translation to communicative language competence. This reform was undertaken in compliance with the national strategies for the improvement of education laid out by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). The reform has proceeded smoothly from one stage to the other.

In January 2000 the Ministry of Education and Sports approved the National Curricula for Modern Languages and in the same year it also introduced foreign language learning for young children (at grade 3 of elementary class.)

In 2001, Albania joined the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) whose projects contribute in many ways to teacher development. In the same year, as part of the European Year of Languages, Albania took several initiatives, among them the European Day of Languages, which became a means of promoting plurilingual and multicultural policies. Several activities were organized in the framework of European Day of Languages, which has become a regular school activity, taking place each year on 26 September.

In 2007, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*¹ (CEFR) was translated into Albanian, and it has served as the basis for the review of the Albanian curricula for foreign languages. Today, the CEFR is a very important reference document for all initiatives in the field of languages.

In 2008-2011, Albania became part of the European initiative to develop local versions of the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) as a means of promoting and using the CEFR. Three Albanian ELPs were accredited, for pupils aged 11-14, 15+ and 18+ as English for Special Purposes (ESP). In 2014, Albania also registered three ELPs (Italian version) and completed the system with this important document. These models are currently in use at an increasing number of schools.

In 2004, Albania joined CREFECO (Francophone Regional Centre for Central and Eastern Europe). Joining this centre has helped significantly in supporting the French language and training teachers and trainers to use European standards and tools in French language teaching.

In 2005, the content-based Foreign Language Curricula were replaced by objective-based curricula. Since 2013, the most recent reform has been in progress, which entails the introduction of competence-based curricula.

As one of the countries trying to make progress and seeking quality in education, Albania has requested the support of Council of Europe in preparing the country's language education policy profile. The principal objectives are:

- to strengthen the plurilingual and multicultural profile of Albania,

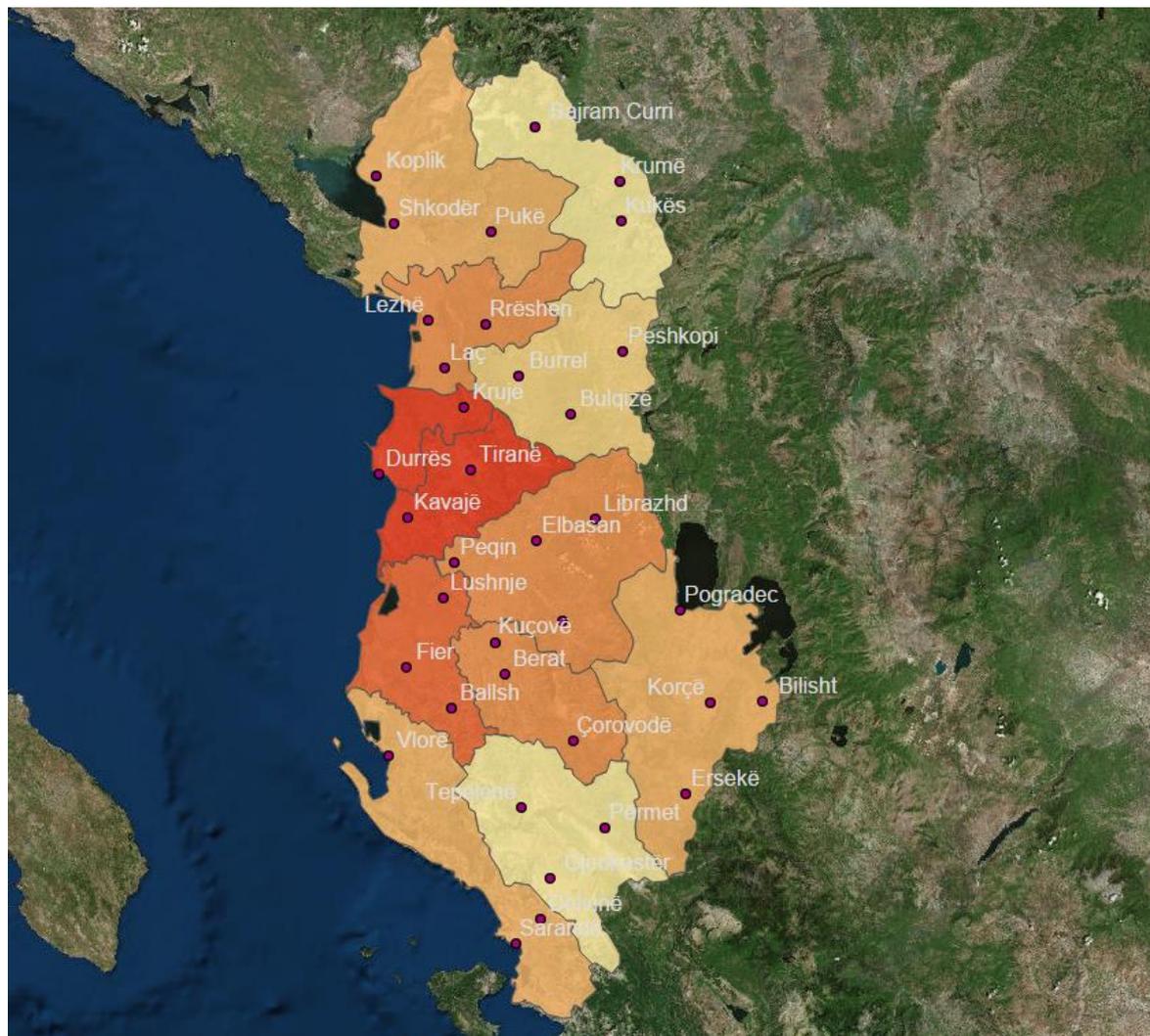
¹ Council of Europe, 2001. www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

- to prepare a document which will support the development of clear policies for language learning and teaching in Albania,
- to elaborate curricula in compliance with European standards and Albania's situation;
- to set priorities in the professional development of language teachers.

The Albanian education system is currently undergoing a thorough and complex reform and language education is a priority field. The success of this reform requires well-defined standards, clear responsibilities, high professional qualifications for teachers and high quality teaching. These are important prerequisites for the success of the short-, mid- and long-term implementation of this reform.

An Albanian working group, composed of three experts in the field of foreign languages, was charged with the task of writing this Country Report, which will be part of the "Language Education Policy Profile", together with the report (the "Profile") to be developed by the Council of Europe team. Based on documents provided by institutions, focus groups, interviews and responses to questionnaires, the Albanian experts drafted this report as a provisional audit of Albanian language education that takes account of Council of Europe policies and actions. The report provides input to educational reform in Albania; documents current and past policies and their implementation; and identifies challenges that language education has encountered within the framework of the education system.

1.2 Geographical Position and Population



Source: Albanian Institute of Statistics (Online Atlas)

Albania is located in the south-western part of the Balkan Peninsula and it has a total area of 28,748 km². Albania borders on the Republic of Montenegro in the north, the Republic of Kosovo in the northeast, the Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) in the east and the Republic of Greece in the south.

According to the Albanian Institute of Statistics, as of 2014, the resident population of Albania numbered 2,893,005 inhabitants. Three ethnic minorities live in Albania – Greek, Macedonian and Montenegrin – which constitute about 1.9% of the entire population, or some 52,700 inhabitants. The official language is Albanian, which is one of the oldest languages in the Indo-European language family.

The number of pupils and students who attend different levels of education in Albania:

	Type of Education	Number of pupils / students
1.	Pre-school	91,971
2.	9-year school	173,994
3.	High school	345,644
4.	University	277,193

Source: Albanian Institute of Statistics

2 CURRENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA

2.1 Education System in Albania

2.1.1 Legal Framework for the Albanian Education System

The education system in the Republic of Albania is regulated by three main laws and a by-law drafted by the MoES. These are:

1. Law No. 69/2012, dated 18.07.2012 “On Pre-university Education System in the Republic of Albania” (amended).
2. Law No. 8872, dated 29.03.2002 “On Vocational Education and Formation in the Republic of Albania” (as amended by Law No. 10011 dated 30.10.2008, amended by Law 63/ 26.06.2014.)
3. Law No. 80/2015, dated 22.07.2015, “On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania”.
4. Normative Provisions on “Pre-university Education System”.

The educational institutions operating in the Republic of Albania are either state-run or private institutions. Their opening, functioning and closing are under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The education system in Albania functions at three levels (central, local and school levels) and is supported by various institutions.

At the central level: **The Assembly** ratifies the government program, annual budget, and specific laws, including the education sector. **The Parliamentary Committee on Education and Media** deliberates on draft laws before their ratification by the Assembly. **The Council of Ministers** approves sectoral or national development strategies, the mid-term framework of expenses and the draft annual state budget; it also issues decrees and directives on the enforcement of laws. The **MoES** is the main government institution in charge of the implementation of education policy and the management of the education system. These responsibilities are carried out by the management and personnel of the Ministry and 13 administrative entities at the local level. Besides these, there are also four main inter-related institutes operating in the educational sector.

The **Institute for the Development of Education (IDE)** is an important educational institution. The history of this institution started in 1970, when the Institute of Pedagogical Studies (IPS) was set up. The IPS was functional in the field of education until 2003, when it was split into two independent bodies: the Institute of Curricula and Standards (ICS) and the Centre for Training and Qualification in Education (CTQE). In 2007, the Institute of Curricula and Qualifications (ICQ) was created by merging the ICS and CTQE. In march 2010, the Institute for the Development of Education was created. This institute has three directorates: the directorate of curricula, standards and qualification; the directorate of didactics and teaching technologies and the directorate of education policy development.

The **National Examinations Agency (NEA)** is responsible for the design of state examinations in pre-university education system, admissions to the Institutions of Higher Education, state examination for regulated professions. The history of the institution started in 2001 with the inception of National Education Centre for Assessment and Examinations

(NECAE) with the main responsibility to design standardized national examinations. In 2007, this institution was divided into two agencies: Central Agency of Assessment of Students' Achievements and Agency of Admissions to Institutions of Higher Education, with responsibilities for SGE and admissions to institutions of higher education respectively. In 2010, the National Agency of Examinations was created, with three main responsibilities: state examinations in pre-university education system, admissions to the institutions of higher education, state examination for regulated professions.

The **National Agency of Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ)** is responsible for implementing reforms in education and professional qualifications. Its role is to (a) draft the national list of professions, (b) draft the framework curricula for education and professional qualifications, (c) draft professional qualifications, and (d) evaluate, accredit, and certify service providers, currently under the management of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

The **Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education (AAHE)** is responsible for assessing quality in higher education institutions, accrediting programmes of academic study, and supporting of universities in the self-assessment process.

At the local level, **Regional Education Directorates (REDs)** are located in 12 regions of Albania plus one in the city of Tirana. They are responsible for the implementation of policy in pre-university education at regional level. They are also responsible for managing human resources, organizing inspection schedules in public and private schools, assessing the quality of services, and organizing teacher qualification in cooperation with specialized institutions. Education Offices (EOs) are located in 24 cities around the country, and they are responsible for managing human resources in the respective cities, collecting statistical data and information, supervising classes and extra-curricular activities, and managing financial resources for some elements, such as teaching materials and resources.

Local government level: **District Councils** are elected organs at the regional level, which are responsible for the distribution of investment funds for municipalities in the field of education. **Municipal Councils** are responsible for the use of investment funds allocated to municipalities for education, as well as central government funds from state budgets such as grants for school maintenance.

School level: **School Directorates** are usually composed of one school director (principal) and three vice-directors, depending on the number of students attending the school. School directors report to Education Offices or Regional Education Directorates. School directors are responsible for the quality of the teaching process in their schools and other administrative issues as laid out by the Regional Education Directorate. Council of Parents serve for the strengthening of relations and ties between the school and the families. These councils are advisory bodies and their level of commitment varies from school to school. School Boards is also an advisory body, which aims at involving the community and business enterprises in solving school problems.

2.1.2 Formal Education

The structure of the education system in the Republic of Albania includes:

- Pre-school education (nursery, age 0-3; kindergarten, age 3-6)
- Basic education (elementary, secondary and special-needs education, age 6-15)

- High school education (comprehensive high schools, vocational schools, socio-cultural schools, age 15-18)
- Higher education (age 18 and over)
- Adult education

Pre-school education

Pre-school education in the Republic of Albania is public or private. This kind of education includes nurseries (for children of 0-3 years of age) and kindergartens (for children of 3-6 years of age). Nurseries are under the management of local government authorities, whereas kindergartens are under the management of the MoES. Kindergartens are of two types: part-time and full-time. Pre-school education is not compulsory in the Republic of Albania.

All pre-school education is conducted on the basis of programs approved by the MoES. The pivotal mission of pre-school education is child education and personality development in close cooperation with parents, as well as preparing children for school life. Kindergartens operating in the minority areas provide teaching in the pupils' respective mother tongues.

Foreign languages are not part of the pre-school curriculum, but some private kindergartens offer simple elements of foreign languages.

Basic Education

Basic compulsory education starts at the age of 6 and lasts for 9 years; pupils are legally obliged to attend basic education until the age of 16. The basic education system is unified and its institutions cover the entire territory of the Republic of Albania. All citizens who reach the age of 16 without graduating from basic education can attend part-time schools to meet the legal requirements.

Basic compulsory education aims at developing intellectual, creative, practical and physical skills and pupils' personality, providing them with the essential elements of culture and citizenship.

Basic education has two levels: elementary (classes I-V) and secondary (classes VI-IX). At elementary level the teaching process is class-based, whereas at secondary level it is subject-based. In remote areas with a limited number of pupils, basic education functions in collective classes, with one teacher in charge for elementary level and two or three teachers for secondary level.

Pursuant to Article 59, paragraph (f), of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, "health rehabilitation, specialized education and integration of disabled people into society", the Law on Pre-university Education, Articles 3 and 40, and the National Strategy for People with Disabilities approved by Council of Ministers Decision No. 8 date 07. 01. 2005, the education of individuals with disabilities is carried out in specialized schools, in specialized classes within regular schools, or by integrating these individuals in normal classes. The integration of the disabled in regular schools takes priority in the education policy of the MoES.

The Law on Pre-university Education guarantees the right to operation of private education institutions at all levels of pre-university education. Secular private education institutions using Albanian as language of schooling are subject to licensing by the National Licensing

Centre when approved by the MoES. Private education institutions teaching through a foreign language and institutions teaching religious subjects require special approval by the Council of Ministers, upon proposal by MoES, and are also licensed by the National Licensing Centre.

The right to education is guaranteed to all individuals in detention awaiting trial and all convicts serving their terms in penitentiaries. This is legally supported through a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Justice. This memorandum aims to meet an important human right as prescribed in the Constitution.

The Law on Pre-university Education, Article 11, paragraph 11.2, and the Normative Provisions for Pre-university Education, Article 13, stipulate that “the right to education in the Republic of Albania is guaranteed for foreign citizens, Albanian pupils (foreigners and asylum-seekers) from other countries”. The registration procedures are laid out in MoES Directive No. 32 dated 26.10.2009.

The Law on Pre-university Education, Article 10 stipulates that pupils who belong to national minorities are entitled to education in their respective mother tongues. They are also entitled to learn their own history and culture within the framework of the pre-university curriculum.

Comprehensive High School Education

All pupils are entitled to attend high school upon successful completion of basic education. High school education is regulated by Law No. 7952. Article 28 of this law reads: “All citizens have the right to public high education after they have completed compulsory education.” According to article 9 of this law, “the state guarantees and provides the education facilities, materials and personnel to all pupils attending public education institutions free of charge”. High school education is not compulsory.

High school education in the Republic of Albania is organized in two main types of schools: comprehensive high schools (part-time and full-time) and vocational high schools.

Full-Time Comprehensive High Schools A new structure for full-time comprehensive high schools was devised and implemented for the first time during the school year 2009-2010. It was based on the changes necessitated by the Law on Pre-university Education. This structure was approved by MoES Directive No. 9 on 28.02.2008.

Comprehensive public high schools provide pupils with an education that is designed to deepen and extend the knowledge acquired in basic education. By the provisions of Law 7952, the duration of high school education was 4 years. Article 5 of Law No. 9985 dated 11.09.2008 prescribes: “The duration of high school education is three years and it is completed with the state graduation examination.”

According to Council of Ministers Decision No. 78, dated 08.02.2006, “On the Creation of State Graduation Examination (SGE) and Admissions to Higher Education”, “students attending all high school education branches shall take the state graduation examination.”

Nine fields of study are included in the program:

1. Arts
2. Physical education and sports
3. Foreign languages

4. Albanian language and literature
5. Career development and life skills
6. Mathematics
7. Technology and ICT (Information and Communication Technology)
8. Sciences
9. Social sciences.

The comprehensive high school curriculum is made up of two main parts: the core and elective subjects.

Part-Time Comprehensive High Schools These schools function on the basis of MoES Directive No. 52 dated 27.12.2007. They provide high school education for adults. The duration of studies in part-time high schools is 4 years and the process ends with the pupils taking of the state graduation examination. The curriculum and syllabuses are subject to approval by the MoES.

Socio-Cultural-Oriented Education

By Law No. 69/12, this type of education includes high schools specializing in the arts, sports, foreign languages, and some other specific educational fields.

Foreign Languages High Schools These schools are part of the high school education system and aim to provide students with thorough formation in two (or more) foreign languages in addition to the general curriculum. The duration of studies in these schools is 3 years. Their curriculum includes two main parts: the core curriculum and elective subjects. At the end of their studies in these schools, all students take the state graduation examination.

There are 5 such regionalized high schools in Albania: in Tirana, Shkodra, Elbasan, Korça and Gjirokastra. Depending on the school, they offer their students between two and six foreign languages. These schools have long served as resource schools for the faculties of foreign languages, which is why they are located in the same districts as these faculties. A foreign language is one of the three mandatory subjects in the state graduation examination for this type of high school. Foreign languages can also be tested through internationally recognized examinations.

Foreign Languages High Schools have greater flexibility in foreign language textbook selection and they can also opt to make use of textbooks published by foreign publishing houses. This is guaranteed by a special MoES Directive.

Bilingual School Sections offer high school education in two languages (Albanian and a foreign language) in the ratio 45-50%. Their functioning is based on bilateral agreements with foreign governments and memoranda. The duration of studies in these schools is 3 years as they follow the general structure of high school education.

Schools in this category require students to learn the foreign language in question intensively from an early age (currently in class VI of basic education), so that they acquire the linguistic competence they need to deal with all curriculum subjects. To date this arrangement has worked well. Students attending these school sections take a dual state graduation examination in which the examination for subjects in the foreign language is prepared by the Ministry of Education of the respective state, their school offices in Albania or their

diplomatic service. Students attending these school sections have access to the universities of the respective country, on an equal footing with that country's nationals.

Bilingual School Sections were initiated in 1998 with the Albanian-French school section in Korça, which clearly evoked the French Lyceum which operated in the city from 1917 to 1939. There are three types of bilingual school sections in Albania: French (in Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Korça and Shkodra); Italian (in Tirana, Korça and Shkodra); and German (in Tirana). Each of these schools is supported by two or three basic schools at which the respective language is more intensively taught by native speaker teachers.

High School Education in the Arts and Sports

This type of high school education is divided into three branches: applied visual arts (six education branches), music (three education profiles), and ballet (two education profiles). The duration of studies in high schools specializing in Visual Arts and Music is either 3 or 4 years, depending on the artistic direction being taught and when the student starts the education process in these schools. Choreography School has only one profile, dancing, and its duration is three years. The admission of students to these schools is based on specialized aptitude tests.

Schools of this type give priority to foreign languages due to their special focus and structure and the special activities they engage in at home and abroad.

Vocational Education

Vocational education is available to all students who graduate from basic education. It aims to provide students with appropriate knowledge and practical skills for a successful professional life. This kind of education not only prepares capable students for the world of work but also aims to offer them the necessary knowledge for their higher education studies, when they choose to attend higher education institutions. Until 2008-2009, a two-level structure was used: 3 years and 3+2 years.

Since the school year 2009-2010, vocational education has been based on a new structure in accordance with Law No. 10011 dated 30.10.2008, "On Some Amendments to Law No. 8872", dated 29.03.2002, "On Vocational Education and Formation in the Republic of Albania", with levels and structure in harmony with higher education studies in the Republic of Albania.

The new structure of vocational education is based on the structure of vocational qualifications as recommended in the Albanian Framework of Qualifications. This new structure guarantees:

- *Balance between the needs of a specific profession (specialized field) and the need for professional flexibility during future career (wider field);*
- *Broad-based start of preparation and higher-level specialized continuation;*
- *High adaptability to changing needs in the labour market;*
- *Possibility to attend higher education;*
- *Fundamental competence of the profession, as mastery of profession requires further work experience and specialized training courses;*
- *Schooling in vocational education at several levels.*

Vocational education offers a long-term schooling opportunity in compliance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), as well as with the draft Albanian Framework of Qualifications and the European Framework of Qualifications.

Foreign language learning is a natural priority in vocational education and these schools are in the process of reviewing their curricula, paying particular attention to the pragmatic linguistic aspect which is also a labour market need. With the support of the British Council, the curricula of Economic Vocational Schools, Information Technology Schools and Hotel & Tourism Schools have been improved. The initiatives are known as “English for the World of Work” and “English for Skills”.

Assessment of achievements in the Albanian education system

Basic education in Albania ends with the state examination for basic education. Previously pupils had to take to examinations in two subjects, Albanian and mathematics. Since 2015, a foreign language has been added as another mandatory examination in basic education, besides the two traditional ones. The National Examinations Agency (NEA) has published on its website the examinations for the foreign languages tested in 2015: English, Italian, French and German.

This examination aims to test candidates on their foreign language competence at level A2 of the CEFR. The examination comprises a Reading Section, a Use of Language Section and a Writing Section. Listening and speaking skills are not tested. The overall descriptors for level A2 of the CEFR have been used to guide the content and level of the examination.

Prior to 2005, students’ achievements were evaluated through national examinations prepared by MoES and administered and scored by the schools. Starting in school year 2005-2006, the State Graduation Examination (SGE or Matura Shtetërore) was created. It transformed student assessment and admission into state higher education institutions, strengthening the external evaluation process. This change was implemented by a specialized agency set up for the purpose.

Since its introduction in 2005, the SGE has undergone several changes aimed at improving its smooth functioning. The SGE currently includes 5 examinations, three mandatory (Albanian, mathematics and a foreign language) and two elective. All students who have completed high school education must sit for the SGE. Those who wish to pursue higher studies in the fields of Physical Education and Sports or Fine Arts must take a professional aptitude test conducted by the respective higher education institutions and monitored by the MoES.

The new Law on Pre-university Education introduced a mandatory foreign language examination at the end of both basic and high school education. A new development in this field concerns English, with the introduction of two internationally recognized examinations for the first time since in 2015-2016: APTIS for Teens in basic education (British Council) and TOEFL Junior Standard for high school education.

Higher Education

The University of Tirana was founded in 1957 and at that time it had six faculties. In 1991, when it had 11 faculties, the engineering faculties were separated to form the Polytechnic University of Tirana. In its first academic year, back in 1957-1958, the University of Tirana had 3,613 students studying in 15 different branches.

Nowadays, the University of Tirana is the largest university in Albania. It has six faculties – Law, Economics, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, History and Philology, and Foreign Languages – which are divided into 34 departments. In January 2012, the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Nursing were legally separated from the University of Tirana to create the University of Medicine. Currently about 40,000 students study at the University of Tirana.

The majority of foreign language teachers in Albania graduate from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana. The Faculty dates back to the creation of the Department of Russian Language in 1947, which initially functioned within the framework of a two-year Institute, which became the High Pedagogical Institute four years later, in 1951. When the University of Tirana was created in 1957, the Department of Russian Language became part of the Faculty of History and Philology. The Faculty also included the Departments of English, French and Italian. In September 1991, these departments formed the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The Department of German was created in 1992 and the Department of Slavic-Balkan Languages in 1995. This latter department comprises Russian, Turkish (added in 1996), and Greek (added in 1998). In 2008, the Department of Spanish Language was also created. Teachers of foreign languages also graduate from similar faculties or departments in the Universities of Shkodra, Elbasan, Korça, Gjirokastra and Vlora.

The study programs on offer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages include three different levels. At **bachelor level**, students take a degree in the respective language they have chosen to study (English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Turkish and Greek). Students also study a mandatory second language and they have the opportunity to chose a third elective language. Chinese language has been recently introduced as an elective language. At **master's level** they choose one of three different branches: language teaching, translation and interpretation, or intercultural communication and tourism (in the respective language they have studied at the bachelor level). The third level covers **doctorate** studies.

Albanian higher education has undergone a thorough reformation and restructuring in compliance with the principles of the Bologna Process, following Albania's official entry into this process with the signing of the Bologna Declaration on 18 September 2003. These developments have also been in compliance with the National Strategy for Higher Education 2008-2013, which sets out the Albanian government's strategic policies for the development of higher education over the next decade.

In accordance with the rules and principles of the European educational space, higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania enjoy academic freedom and autonomy as prescribed by Law No. 9741 dated 21.05.2007 on "Higher Education in the Republic of Albania (amended)". On 22.07.2015 the Albanian Assembly passed a new law on higher education which took effect on October 2015. Law 80/2015 enhanced the freedom and autonomy of higher education.

Albania's higher education system includes: universities, academies, professional colleges, higher education schools and inter-university centres, all of which offer accredited study

programs. The system comprises higher education institutions (11 public and 22 private) and the Centre for Albanological Studies. Higher education institutions offer full-time study and distance learning courses.

Studies in higher education are organized at three successive levels: bachelor, master's and doctorate. The bachelor level is organized in study programs comprising 180 ECTS and lasting for 3 years, while the master's level is organized in study programs with 120 ECTS and a normal duration of 2 years. Integrated study programs at master's level are organized in study programs with not less than 300 ECTS and a normal duration of 5 years.

Doctorate level studies are entirely academic and are based on scientific research and independent creative activities. This level is organized in study programs of a duration of at least 3 years with organized studies comprising 60 ECTS.

2.1.3 Adult education in Albania

In Albania, within the framework of life-long learning, adult education is delivered in a number of ways:

- through special programs in compulsory education offered to individuals over 16 who have not completed their basic education;
- through special programs in part-time high schools offered to individuals interested in completing their high school studies;
- through courses in professional formation and vocational training offered to young people and adults by public and private centres officially recognized by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY).
- through (formal or informal) programs of professional development implemented by state institutions for the training and qualification of their staff (it is worth mentioning here the training and qualifications offered to teachers, police officers, civil servants, etc.);
- through informal training programs implemented by private companies and businesses for their personnel.
- through informal training offered to different categories of adults by public and private institutions and organizations (especially projects organized by different donors or NGOs);
- through informal teaching and experience exchange activities offered to adults in various different ways.

Higher education institutions offer continuous development study programs as a form of life-long learning. These specialized programs provide short-term qualifications or knowledge updates. They also offer opportunities for advanced studies and research for individuals interested in their professional qualification and advancement.

Within the framework of continuous studies and formation, higher education institutions also offer other forms of teaching activity such as summer schools and issuing participants with certificates.

2.2 Language education and policies in Albania

2.2.1 Language of schooling and national language

Albanian belongs to the Indo-European language family. It does not derive from any other languages in the family but constitutes a separate branch. There are two main theories concerning the origin of Albanian, one Illyrian and the other Thracian. The former has found wide historical and linguistic support.

Based on historical Latin and Byzantine resources, along with linguistic and onomatopoeic evidence, it has been concluded that Albanians are the autochthonous descendants of ancient Illyrians. This view is supported by the following arguments:

1. Albanians nowadays live in autochthonous regions and there is no evidence of Albanian migration from other parts.
2. Certain linguistic elements – names of objects, names of clans, glosa, etc. – known to be of Illyrian origin can be explained with reference to Albanian.
3. When compared with their present-day equivalents, ancient place-names in Illyrian-Albanian regions have developed in accordance with the phonetic rules of Albanian, having been passed down through the generations by the Albanian population.
4. The relation of Albanian to ancient Greek and Latin indicates that the Albanian language was formed and has developed alongside these two languages on the Adriatic and Ionian coasts.
5. Archaeological evidence, coupled with material and spiritual evidence of culture, suggests a cultural continuity from the ancient Illyrians to present-day Albanians.

First written evidence of the Albanian language

The first written document in the Albanian language is “The Baptism Formula”, which dates back to 1462. “The Baptism Formula” was found in Laurentiana Library in Milan and it is just one short sentence in Albanian (“Unte paghesont premenit Atit et birit et spertit senit”) inserted in a directive written in Latin by Pal Engjelli, the archbishop of Durrës and a contemporary of Scanderbeg.

The second document written in Albanian is “The Glossary of Arnold von Harf” in 1496. This glossary contains 26 words, 8 idioms, and the numbers from 1 to 10 and from 100 to 1000. The glossary includes German translations of all items. Since its earliest beginnings, Albanian has been documented in two main dialects: geg (in the north) and tosk (in the south).

The first book known to have been written in Albanian is “The Prayer Book of Gjon Buzuku” (1555), which marks the beginning of Albanian literature. This book is written in the geg dialect of the north-west, making use of the Latin alphabet supplemented by some special letters.

The genesis of Albanian literature is to be found in the Arbëresh (medieval name of the Albanians) community of Italy in the 16th century. The second oldest work, after Buzuku’s prayer book, was written by a priest, Lek Matrenga, entitled “E mbesuame e krishterë” (The Christian Faith), and published in 1592.

During the Ottoman period, the Albanian language encountered difficulties, and there are claims that its written use was banned by decree of the Sultan. The Ottoman administration

did not allow the official teaching and learning of Albanian, although the language was taught and learnt clandestinely. The first school to use Albanian was opened in Korça on 7 March 1887.

Spread and dialects of Albanian today

The Albanian language is the official language of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Kosovo, but it is also spoken in Montenegro, Serbia, FYROM, Turkey, Italy and Greece. Albanian is also spoken by Albanian immigrant communities in many other countries.



Regions where Albanian language is spoken

The natural border separating geg and tosk, the two dialects of Albanian, is the Shkumbini river, which runs through Middle Albania. The differences between the two dialects are not numerous and the speakers of both dialects can easily understand one another.

The standard version of the language was determined by a scientific congress on the Albanian language held in Tirana on 20-25 November 1972. All Albanian-speaking regions were represented and the standard that emerged has become the widely recognized official version of Albanian.

The Albanian language in the diaspora

Teaching the Albanian language, history and geography and the national cultural heritage to the children of Albanian emigrants abroad is regarded as an important basis for maintaining and strengthening Albanian national identity. This is also stipulated in Article 11 of Law 69/2012 “On the Pre-university Education System in the Republic of Albania.”

Albanian complementary schools, which have been functioning for many years, play a key role in fulfilling this important national objective. It was through the efforts of Albanian emigrant communities, organised into associations, that the opening of these schools became possible and now there are very good examples in this field.

In 2010, the MoES designed and approved “The Integrated Program for the Teaching of Albanian Language in the Diaspora”, which aims to support and maintain Albanian language and culture. The program provides complementary teaching of Albanian language and culture to the children of Albanian emigrants living in other countries. Textbooks entitled *Learning*

Native Albanian Language and Culture 1, 2 and 3 (for age groups corresponding to classes I-III, IV-VI, and VII-IX) have been published, and since the school year 2011-2012, they have been distributed free of charge to complementary schools that request them, along with the joint Albanian-Kosovo primer. This practice will continue in the future.

The Ministry of Education and Sport of Albania and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kosovo regard the Albanian diaspora as a unity, which is why the two Ministries have developed a joint approach to the teaching of Albanian language and culture in the diaspora. On 23 March 2015, they signed the agreement “On the joint organization of the teaching of Albanian language and culture in diaspora and migration”.

These joint efforts have contributed to an increase in the number of countries which offer the teaching of Albanian in their institutions. They are also a direct support for Albanian complementary schools, functioning thanks to the voluntary commitment of Albanian teachers abroad.

Efforts to finalise inter-governmental agreements on the inclusion of Albanian as an elective subject in schools in host countries (a practice implemented in Scandinavian countries, some regions of Germany and Switzerland, and areas of Italy where the Arbëresh communities reside) will be an important challenge for the Albanian authorities.

2.2.2 Foreign language policy in Albania

The Albanian education system offers pupils the opportunity to learn foreign languages throughout their schooling, starting in class III in public elementary schools (class I in private schools). The tendency is to offer regional and European foreign languages in conformity with the Council of Europe’s orientation towards plurilingualism and multiculturalism.²

The policies on foreign languages are clearly reflected in the support provided for them in the National Strategy of Pre-university Education 2009-2013, and they are also present in the new strategy for 2014-2020. They are also included in the laws on pre-university education and higher education and scientific research, as well as in ministry directives and guidelines and Council of Europe recommendations

The spread of foreign languages and the number of weekly classes in pre-university education are specified in the school curriculum, which is subject to approval by the minister of education and sports. In recent years, foreign languages have undergone several changes, which have not affected the quality of foreign language teaching. Based on the new education plan, the first foreign language will have three weekly classes and the second foreign language will have two. This change is intended to improve the quality of teaching and to meet European standards.

The curricular policy on foreign languages in pre-university education is based on two important documents: the National Curriculum for Modern Languages in Public Pre-university Education, which introduced the communicative approach (Decision No. 149 dated 24.12.1999 of the Minister of Education and Science), and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, translated into

² The Council of Europe introduced the concept of “plurilingual competence” in the CEFR and makes a distinction between *plurilingualism* (a speaker’s ability to communicate in two or more languages) and *multilingualism* (the presence of two or more languages in a given territory or society).

Albanian and introduced in our education system in 2006. Currently, a new curricular reform is under way; it has started in classes I and VI in basic education and the intention is to add new classes each year.

A foreign language was introduced as a compulsory subject from class III of **basic education** as part of improvements to the teaching plan in 2004, and approved by the Minister of Education and Science. This initiative launched early language learning. Foreign languages in basic education are taught as compulsory and elective subjects. Pupils from classes III to V have to take their first foreign language as a compulsory subject, which continues in the following classes. Pupils who do not start their first foreign language in class III take the compulsory subject in class VI, with one additional class per week to help them catch up. In class VI, a second foreign language is offered on an elective basis.

Currently, slightly less than 2% of pupils in basic education do not take a foreign language, usually because their school has collective classes or lacks qualified teachers. This figure was 11.2% in 2003-2004. The marked improvement has occurred due to the implementation of education policies that have constantly underscored the importance of foreign languages and making them available to all pupils in Albania, regardless of their geographical location and social conditions.

The syllabuses for foreign languages in basic education are drafted by the Institute for Development of Education and approved by the Ministry of Education and Sports. The syllabuses are based on the curricular framework, which currently emphasizes communicative competence. The curriculum embodies all the necessary conditions for pupils to build their knowledge on competences, attitudes and values which are useful in different life situations and educational contexts.

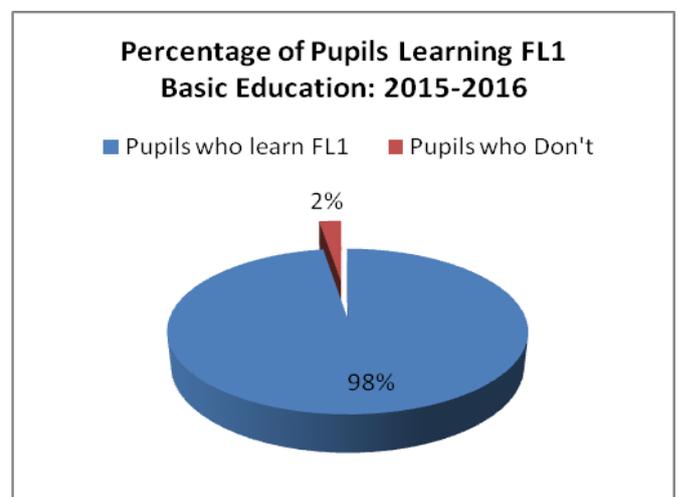
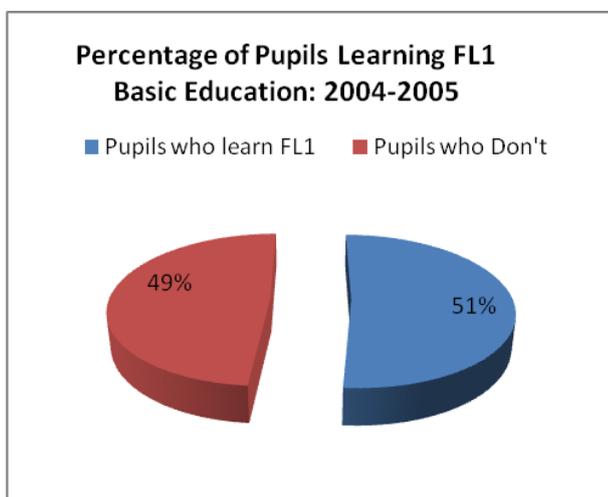
“Language and communication” is one of seven curriculum fields; its purpose is to enable pupils to use languages as a means of communication in everyday life and activities and it includes: Albanian, the national language (for ethnic minorities), English, and other languages. Albanian is taught at all levels of the curriculum, from preparatory classes to class XII.

Academic Year	Registered pupils: Total Number	Pupils FL 1: Total Number	English Total Number	French Total Number	Italian Total Number	German Total Number
2004-2005	475065	243700	176007	57919	7595	0
2005-2006	450702	243720	184144	49312	10264	0
2006-2007	429933	249770	190181	50869	8720	0
2007-2008	410602	267197	206814	50420	15623	0
2008-2009	354197	294995	227152	53998	13845	0
2009-2010	341269	302988	242519	47225	13244	0
2010-2011	322303	297471	246239	41173	10059	0
2011-2012	308933	290258	241905	36611	9645	97
2012-2013	370288	283420	239239	34844	9296	41
2013-2014	356347	274230	229844	34581	9794	120
2014-2015	342744	265343	225907	31075	8661	120
2015-2016	257243	250876	213044	29355	8297	120

Table 1: Statistics on foreign language learning in basic education in Albania for the period 2004-2016.

These figures indicate a steady and sharp decline in the school-going population, which has been mainly brought about by three major factors: there has been a significant drop in the birth rate in the country; these figures do not include the number of students attending private education and emigration to other countries has also played a part in this drop.

The following charts show the percentage of pupils learning a foreign language in basic education during the school year 2004-2005 and the progress made in 2015-2016.



Foreign language teaching in **high schools** is based on the plan and curricula for high schools, vocational schools, foreign languages schools and bilingual school sections. The education plan and curricula are drafted by the Pre-university Directorate and the Institute for Development of Education and are approved by the Minister of Education and Sports. Since 2009, foreign language teaching in the framework of reforms carried out in high school education has been considered as a priority. The number of weekly classes was increased from two to three throughout the education system. Subject syllabuses are based on the

curriculum, which in turn is designed to be in harmony with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

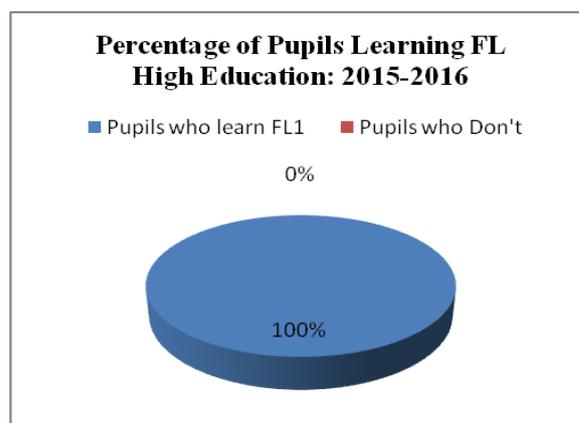
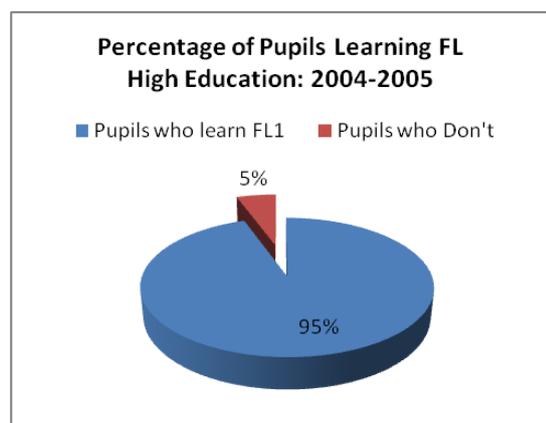
The curriculum for pre-university education stipulates the teaching of two foreign languages, the first one as a compulsory subject and the second one as an elective subject; both languages are begun in basic education.

Foreign language learning in vocational education is based on the plan and curriculum drafted for this type of education by the Pre-university Directorate and the Institute for Development of Education and approved by the Minister of Education and Sports. These schools offer one compulsory foreign language and a second elective one. The school for hotel management and tourism offers two compulsory foreign languages.

Academic Year	Registered pupils: Total Number	Pupils FL 1: Total Number	English Total Number	French Total Number	Italian Total Number	German Total Number
2004-2005	129622	122620	90219	25659	6682	0
2005-2006	138726	130263	96240	25401	8269	305
2006-2007	138672	135166	101835	24763	8417	141
2007-2008	141189	139073	107234	25640	10476	70
2008-2009	103943	98852	74789	16298	761	154
2009-2010	109374	105052	81251	16918	6595	288
2010-2011	116424	115852	92449	17090	6168	145
2011-2012	119488	119488	96939	16382	6019	148
2012-2013	121540	121540	100034	15886	5495	125
2013-2014	120020	119382	99890	14665	4720	107
2014-2015	111300	111027	94445	10508	5495	579
2015-2016	112259	112259	96367	10974	3967	285

Table 2: Statistics on foreign language learning in *high school education* in Albania for the period 2004-2016.

The following charts show the percentage of students learning a foreign language in high schools during the school year 2004-2005 and the progress made by 2015-2016.



Foreign languages are learnt and taught in more depth in the foreign languages high schools and bilingual school sections. The foreign languages high schools offer between two (the school in Gjirokastra) and six languages (the school in Tirana: English, French, Italian, German, Spanish and Russian.) The curriculum for the foreign languages high schools, as

specialized schools, stipulates that two foreign languages are offered as compulsory subjects with 4 weekly classes each, and another elective foreign language with three weekly classes.

In the last decade, bilingual school sections have been introduced in French, Italian and German. In these school sections, 40-50% of the subjects, including the foreign language, are taught in one of the above-mentioned languages. In cooperation with the Ministries of Education of the respective countries, bilingual school sections have been applying the state graduation examination in two languages. The curriculum for these schools is drafted in accordance with bilateral agreements and the foreign language in question has 5-8 classes per week. Native speaker teachers are employed in these school sections, teaching the respective language and other subjects as well. Since the academic year 2011-2012, these school sections have received support from specific resource sections in basic education.

In the wake of the legal changes which took place in 2012, pupils' first foreign language was included in the compulsory examination in basic education and high school education, in addition to Albanian and mathematics. The language level tested in this national examination in basic education is A2 and in high school education is B1.

All the foreign languages on offer in high school education are included in the list of elective subjects for the state graduation examination and the language level is B2. The writing section has become an important part of these examinations in the recent years. The National Agency of Examinations experts design these tests based on the national school curriculum which in turn is based on the CEFR. The experts involved in designing these tests have had training about test design.

The national language exams are the responsibility of the National Examinations Agency; tests supplied by international language testing agencies are also recognized. In 2015-2016, two foreign tests were used for English: APTIS for Teens in class IX and TOEFL Junior Standard as elective subject. The Ministry of Education and Sport and the National Examinations Agency, in cooperation with specialized institutions (e.g. the Pedagogical Institute (CIEP) in Sèvres) have drafted examinations based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

The graduation exam in foreign languages for bilingual schools is drafted by specialised institutions in the partner countries, such as the Ministry of Education in Italy, the Linguistic and Cultural Section of the French Embassy, and the Zentralstelle für Auslandsschulwesen des Bundesverwaltungsamtes, which prepares the Deutsches Sprachdiplom.

All pre-university foreign language teachers make use of textbooks published by foreign publishing houses. The process of the alternative textbooks, introduced by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2006, increased the variety of textbooks in the Albanian market. The procedure for textbook selection is as follows: MoES sets up a central commission made up of expert teachers in textbook evaluation. The evaluators select the three best alternatives based on the standards set by the MoES. Then the commission produces the final textbook catalogue which goes to all the schools. Foreign language teachers have freedom in the selection of textbooks which suit their pupils' needs.

In support of government policy, priority was given to the English language when it became part of the initiative "Anglophone Albania". The Minister of Education and Science³

³ The title of the Ministry of Education and Sports prior to 2013.

approved the “Mid-Term Program for English Language” No. 5312 Prot. dated 27.08.2007 to achieve this goal.

In pursuance of the Council of Europe’s recommendations, Albania participated in the European Year of Languages and developed European Language Portfolio models as an important tool in the concrete implementation in classrooms of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, as well as a tool for self-assessment.

The in-service training of foreign language teachers has been oriented not only towards the transfer of knowledge but also towards the preparation of pupils for their life after school and the world of work. The professional development and training of foreign language teachers is carried out by expert groups through themed workshops and conferences, training courses, distance learning. This process is carried out by MoES and IDE (Institute for the Development of Education) in cooperation with the University of Tirana, Regional Education Directorates, schools and foreign language teachers' associations. Besides this, teachers can attend training courses on an individual basis.

As schools have been supplied with computer laboratories and multimedia equipment, including tablets, the goal in the field of foreign language learning has been to facilitate e-teaching through the use of technology. The number of teachers using technology in foreign language teaching is constantly increasing.

The British Council, the French Embassy through its linguistic service and cooperation, the Alliance Française, the Goethe Institute, the Austrian KulturKontakt, the German Embassy, the Italian Embassy through its office for schools, the Italian Cultural Institute , and the Public Relations Office of the US Embassy have all supported teachers of foreign languages in the use of new technologies. In addition, Albanian teachers have benefited greatly from training seminars, workshops and material provided by the Council of Europe’s European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria. The updated materials on offer in the libraries of these institutions, the specialists they have invited to train teachers, and the workshops organized for this purpose have been an invaluable, important and direct contribution to the development of foreign language teaching methodologies and didactics. Distance training of foreign language teachers has also played an important role in this field.

2.2.3 Foreign languages in higher education

The languages which are taught in higher education in the Republic of Albania are: English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Russian, Turkish and Greek. Chinese language has also been recently introduced as elective language. At the end of their higher education, Albanian foreign language students are awarded a degree in one of three fields: language teaching, translation and interpretation, or intercultural communication and tourism.

There are two specialized academic structures in the Republic of Albania offering degrees and qualifications in the field of foreign languages: the Faculties of Foreign Languages in the Universities of Tirana and Shkodra. In the other five universities, there are departments of foreign languages, where students graduate in English, French, German and Greek. The duration of university studies is based on the Bologna process standards.

The foreign language curricula are drafted by the academic staff of the foreign language faculties or departments and approved by the appropriate body in each institution. When a new foreign language program is introduced at bachelor level, the curriculum is subject to

accreditation by the Accreditation Council of Higher Education, the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Council of Ministers in order to guarantee the best quality standards.

In all public higher education institutions the teaching of a foreign language as a curricular subject for all students is intended to serve three purposes: to enhance their general formation, to add to their communication skills, and to give them access to scientific literature in a foreign language. Priority is given to English, French, Italian and German. The duration of these foreign language programs varies from one institution to another, ranging from 2 to 3 academic years.

Based on the law on higher education and bilateral agreements, foreign professors can teach in Albanian higher education institutions.

Within the framework of the Bologna Process, foreign language learning plays an important role. The transfer of studies from one study program to another, within Albania or abroad, as well as the student and academic staff mobility require competent use of one or more foreign languages.

2.2.4 Albanian Sign Language

The Albanian government has officially recognized Albanian Sign Language by Council of Ministers Decision No. 837 dated 03.12.2014. Pursuant to article 102 of the Constitution and Law No. 69/2012 dated 21.06.2012 “On Pre-university Education in the Republic of Albania”, article 63 stipulates: “People who do not hear and speak are entitled to the right of communication in sign language.”

Based on a Cooperation Agreement between the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) No. 3019 of Prot. dated 16.04.2015, a working group was set up by the Ministry of Education and Sports by Order No. 402 dated 26.10.2015 which is carrying out a study on the current situation of deaf people in Albania.

Statistics on the number of people with hearing impairment in the Republic of Albania

According to the 2011 Census carried out by INSTAT (National Statistics Institute), there are 5,300 people who have “total hearing loss” in Albania. This amounts to 2.4 people per 1,000 inhabitants. The Institute of Deaf People, founded in 1963, currently uses oral methods and typing as a means of communication.

Albanian Sign Language (ASL) has undergone considerable development in recent years. There has been an increasing awareness of ASL in Albania since 2000, when the project for development and cooperation Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) - Albanian National Association of Deaf (ANAD) was initiated.

In 2003, for the first time in Albania, ANAD began to research and document ASL. Members of the Deaf community were filmed and the most widely used signs identified; then, in 2005, ANAD published the first dictionary of ASL. The second edition will be published in 2016.

ANAD is continuing to research ASL and enrich the dictionary in close cooperation with the Deaf community. Since 2007, ANAD has been studying the grammar of ASL with a view to establishing a recognized standard. The Deaf community has contributed to the enrichment of ASL, which is now a recognized language and used by the vast majority of the community.

In February 2013, Albania ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. So far, no thorough study on the situation of people with disabilities has been carried out in Albania.

A statistical study was considered necessary to enable the ministries to make appropriate proposals for amendments to the existing legislation. In March 2014, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth decided to set up a working group which will work for the recognition of ASL. ANAD (Albanian National Association of the Deaf) and FAD (Finnish Association of the Deaf) were charged with carrying out a dedicated observation of the situation in cooperation with INSTAT and the Humak University of Applied Sciences in Finland.

In a survey of Deaf people over the age of 18, interviewees were tested for their reading skills. 61% were illiterate, 37% had difficulty in understanding written text in Albanian, and only 2% had satisfactory reading skills. Deaf people were asked during the interview to assess the communication skills of their teacher. 97% responded that their teacher had poor communication skills, and 3% that their teacher had average communication skills; none of the interviewees assessed their teacher's skills positively.

Based on the present situation of Deaf people, their representatives consider the following measures necessary:

- The creation of a training program for classroom assistants and ASL instructors (two academic years, 120 ETCS), so that they become expert in ASL and Deaf culture. They can then work as classroom assistants in the Institute of Deaf People. These experts will be very useful to teachers, parents and ASL interpreters.
- The drafting of a 10-year strategy for the development of education for Deaf people. It must be taken into account that the education of this group of people is a long process.
- A plan to transform the Institute of Deaf People into a resource centre.
- A review of the curricula of the Institute of Deaf People and the drafting of a concrete development plan for this school.

2.2.5 Minority languages in Albania

The Greek and Macedonian communities are recognized as ethnic minorities in the Republic of Albania, whereas the Roma and the Arumun are recognized as ethno-linguistic minorities.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which has been ratified by Albania,⁴ serves as the foundation for the protection of minorities and their fundamental rights. It also constitutes the grounds for implementation of policies concerning minorities in the country. The Albanian Constitution guarantees equal rights and freedoms, as well as equality before the law, for all national minorities. Albanian policy for the protection of minority rights is based on:

- legal provisions and respect for the rights of all citizens: national minorities have the same human and civil rights as all other Albanian nationals and are to be treated without discrimination;
- concrete measures and actions to protect and uphold the rights of all members of national minorities, such as their right to freely choose their ethnicity, to maintain their identity, to learn their native language, develop their identity, carry out cultural activities, freely exercise their religion, etc.

⁴ Ratified by Law No.8496 dated 3.06.1999 which took effect on 01.01 2000.

According to the national census of 1989, minorities in the Republic of Albania totalled 64,811 inhabitants or 2.01% of the country's population.

The census of 2011 included a question on ethnicity, which implied that individuals were free to choose their ethnicity. The questions on ethnicity and religion were optional, which was meant to reduce the reasons for citizens to distort reality or not to respond at all to the questions. According to the census of 2011, the percentage of minorities is 1.4% of the total number of residents in the territory of Albania.⁵

One important challenge, which has been repeatedly reiterated by all the representatives of ethnic minorities in the State Committee on National Minorities, is the absence of a law on minorities, in which many of the challenges would find legal solutions.

The Ministry of Education and Sports deems the education of minorities an important priority of the Albanian education system and has supported the development of an adequate legal and infrastructural framework for the education of ethnic minorities, in line with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Council of Europe's legal framework.

Law No. 69, dated 21.06.2012 "On pre-university education in the Republic of Albania" lays the legal basis and upholds the right of all citizens to be educated in their native language. Article 10 of the law guarantees the educational rights of national minorities. Paragraph 1: "People belonging to national minorities are provided with the possibility to teach and learn in their native language, to learn their history and culture in line with the plans and curricula". Paragraph 2: "In order to guarantee an equal and active participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the Republic of Albania, pupils belonging to national minorities are provided with the conditions to learn the Albanian language and to learn the Albanian history and culture." Paragraph 3: "Teaching curricula and programs, as well as the ratio of the use of the native and official language are prescribed by special order of the Minister."

Schools and classes where minorities learn their native language

The **Greek ethnic minority** in Albania is located in the Regional Education Directorate of Gjirokastra and in the Education Offices in Saranda and Delvina, whereas the Macedonian minority is mainly located in the Regional Directorate of Korça.

For the Greek minority, there are 8 schools/classes in the EO of Delvina with about 134 pupils; 7 schools/classes in the EO of Saranda with about 357 pupils, and 6 schools/classes in the RED of Gjirokastra with about 319 pupils. In these schools, 98 teachers are employed to teach a total of 810 pupils, in a ratio of 1 teacher to 8 pupils.

Pursuant to the MoES Directive No. 4, dated 03.09.1994 "On the education of members of ethnic minorities in their native language", 11 textbooks have been written in Greek and 46 other titles have been translated from Albanian into Greek.

Based on mutual agreements between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Greece, all pupils belonging to the Greek minority who study in public schools in Gjirokastra, Delvina and Saranda are provided with textbooks free of charge. The plan and curriculum are drafted in cooperation with the teachers of this ethnic minority and the specialists of RED of Gjirokastra. Some of these ethnic minority teachers are authors of the textbooks.

⁵ As far as this question is concerned, 13.96% of the residing population preferred not to answer (out of the total number of 2.800.138 residing inhabitants).

Private schools teaching through Greek include: “Kryqi i nderuar” and “Frymë dashurie” in Durrës; “Omiros “ and “Platon” in Korça, “Arsakeio” and “Protagonistët” (12 vjeçare) in Tirana, “Omiros” in Vlora, “Kryqi i nderuar” in Gjirokastra and “Frymë dashurie” in Delvina.

For the **Macedonian ethnic minority**, there are 6 schools/classes with 174 pupils in the RED of Korça, in the villages of Liqenas, Gorica e Madhe and Gorica e Vogël.

Even in the Macedonian ethnic minority schools the structure of textbooks in use follows the same pattern: 11 textbooks in authentic Macedonian language and 46 other titles as translations into Macedonian from Albanian language. The publishing costs for ethnic minority textbooks is high due to small circulation of these textbooks.

The **Serb-Montenegrin ethnic minority** is mainly located in the district of Shkodra. The representative of this group claims that there is more to be done in the field of education for this minority. There are no classes teaching Serb-Montenegrin, despite the repeated demands for such classes made by the representative of this group.

The “Jedinstvo” Association, which represents the Serb-Montenegrin minority, has requested that a language course be introduced in the small village of Rreth-Libofsha in Fier. However, this request did not adhere to the legal framework that regulates the procedures and criteria for such an activity. MoES and RED of Fier have offered the necessary expertise to achieve a legal resolution of this issue.

Significant efforts have been made in recent years to improve the general situation of **Roma people**, and their education has been an important priority.

The current legal framework gives priority to the education of children from the Roma and Egyptian communities. According to Council of Ministers Decision No. 672 dated 07.08.2013, “On Financial Payments for Food in Rectories and Dormitories, State Scholarships, and Pupils and Students’ Payments Attending Public Institutions for School Year 2013-2014”, all Roma and Egyptian students are entitled to obtain scholarships from local government. By Council of Ministers’ Decision No. 565 dated 27.06.2013, “On admissions quotas and higher education schooling fees in public education in full-time bachelor studies and in integrated study programs of the master level for academic year 2013-2014”, Roma and Balkan-Egyptian students are exempt from study fees.

The piloting of an integrated approach, “school and food for free”, for pupils in this category was made possible through inter-institutional cooperation. Within this framework, “Naim Frashëri” school in Korça was supported with 335 scholarship/food quotas for Roma and Egyptian pupils. This special support continues. However, the challenge to send every Roma child to schools remains, as the number of illiterate Roma community members is still high. The initiative “Every Roma Child to School” is designed to address this issue.

Some other very positive developments have included the concession to allow Roma children to enrol in schools without presenting a birth certificate; the project to supply them with free textbooks; and the granting of scholarships to Roma students at all levels of education. Since 2009, by Council of Ministers’ Decision, about 20 Roma students are admitted in each study program level. Their study fees are 50-100% supported by scholarships.

The Department of Slavic-Balkan Languages at the University of Tirana and the Department of Greek Language, Literature and Civilization at the University of Gjirokastra are responsible for the formation of teachers who work with ethnic minority pupils. A Department of Roma Language and Language Teaching recently opened at the University of Elbasan.

Within the framework of improving the legal basis and educational situation in minority schools, from the meetings between representatives of minorities and education authorities, the need arose to make improvements in the following fields:

- a) subjects must be taught in the native language in classes I-V in basic education, but at the same time the number of Albanian classes must be increased so that pupils master the language they need for their subsequent education;
- b) local education authorities suggested that science classes be taught in Albanian, including biology, which is currently taught in minority languages;
- c) the grouping of national minority schools must be reconsidered;
- d) harmonization of the Greek primer used by pupils with the primer used by children in Greece. The current primer has been designed by Greek minority teachers and published by Omiros Publishing House.
- e) the competence-based approach must be taken into account when using Greek language textbooks in classes I-V;
- f) the ratio of Albanian to Greek is 56% to 44%. This calculation has been made with reference to MoES Directive No. 186 dated 15.05.2015;
- g) the problems that minority schools face in the supply of textbooks, the number of textbooks supplied being much lower than the real need for them;
- h) reviewing the professional preparation of teachers in their initial formation. There are Greek language science teachers who have difficulty with Greek terminology. It was proposed to train these teachers for some months in teaching the language based on professional objectives.

3 PLURILINGUALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM

3.1 Cooperation with Council of Europe

Albania became a member of the Council of Europe on 13 July 1995. The Council of Europe has continuously served as a political and strategic partner for Albania in the orientation of linguistic policies through recommendations and active support in drafting fundamental documents in the field of foreign languages. In cooperation with this institution, the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Albania started to work for the improvement of educational documentation and practices and their alignment with European standards at all levels of education system.

The Council of Europe, through its structures such as the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice, aims to provide support for member states through recommendations and possibilities to implement local, regional and pan-European projects and programs. The assistance provided by the Council of Europe and its structures has been extensive in pre-university and university education. The Council of Europe has assisted in important issues, such as educational legislation, support programs for plurilingualism and multiculturalism, the fight against corruption, inclusive education, and many other fields.

As a direct result of Albania's membership of the Council of Europe, an extensive working group was set up in 1996, composed of experts in different European languages, with the aim of drafting national curricula for modern languages. This enterprise concluded with the official publication of the national curricula in 2000.

3.1.1 The Language Policy Unit

Shortly after joining the Council of Europe Albania began co-operation on language policy and participated in two major conferences organised by the Unit: a) the final Conference on the project on "Language learning for European Citizenship" (Strasbourg, 1997); and the intergovernmental conference on "Linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe - Towards a framework for language education policies" (Innsbruck, 1999).

Albania took active initiatives during the European Year of Languages, organised by the Unit in 2001, and 26 September was set as European Day of Languages by Minister's Directive. On 26 September 2001, Albania organised some 86 different activities country-wide related to the promotion of foreign languages and the cultures associated with them. Durrresi was announced as the city of the European Day of Languages.⁶

During the period between 2008 and 2016, six Albanian portfolio models for different age groups were accredited and registered.⁷

3.1.1.1 *The Impact of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning, Assessment (CEFR) on the Albanian education system*

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* was published by the Language Policy Unit in 2001: Albania started the translation and recognition of the

⁶ For more information see link: www.ecml.at

⁷ For more information see link: www.mash.gov.al

CEFR in 2006-2007 and it has become a crucial document on which the curriculum is founded.

Foreign language learning and teaching have been regarded as an important priority by the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports. This is why the MoES initiated an extensive enterprise which aimed at reforming the foreign language curriculum in pre-university education, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), especially concerning language levels, learning objectives and assessment.

During the period between 2002 and 2005, reform of university education was under way in order to bring it into line with the principles of the Bologna Charter, which had been ratified by the Minister of Education. Since the very beginning, the CEFR has had a direct and indirect impact on foreign language learning and teaching in the Albanian education system.

Some of the concrete activities undertaken were directly related to the main actors involved in language learning and teaching such as teachers, pupils, students, testers, textbook authors, and education managers. The implementation of the CEFR and its principles as a descriptive rather than a dogmatic document became central to discussion in schools and academic circles, because this document offers the opportunity for all its users to reflect on their didactic choices, the objectives they aim to achieve, and the expected outcomes in the form of competences in the field of foreign languages.

The concrete activities carried out by institutions in the field of foreign languages included:

Institute for Development of Education (IDE):

- Improvement of the existing programmes for different languages, in the first stage.
- Drafting the curricular framework and the national standards for achievements in foreign languages.
- Drafting the curricula with reference to the principles and levels of the CEFR.
- Translation of the CEFR into Albanian.
- Drafting and piloting European Language Portfolio models.

National Agency for Examinations:

- Foreign languages become part of the State Graduation Examination (SGE) as elective subjects.
- Orientation programs and examinations of the SGE were organised in line with the levels of the CEFR.
- Prescribing Diplome Elementaire de Langue Française (DELFF), Deutsches Sprach-Diplom (DSD II), and Certificazione Lingua Italiana (CELI 3) for students attending bilingual school sections.
- Development of an examination results database for language examinations.
- Designers of foreign language exams trained by experts from the International Centre for Pedagogical Studies (CIEP - Sèvres, Paris).
- Introduction of international English language tests in national examinations for basic education (APTIS for Teens) and in the compulsory elective examinations of the SGE (TOEFL Junior).
- Introduction of five internationally recognised examinations in the master's and doctorate levels of university studies.

The following concrete activities were conducted in the field of teacher education:

Institute for Development of Education (IDE):

- Creation of a new network of teacher trainers qualified within the country and abroad by foreign experts.
- Organization of seminars and workshops by Council of Europe experts on the application of the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio in foreign language teaching and learning.
- Participating teachers played the role of trainers by organizing other seminars for their home district colleagues.
- Increased teacher participation and interest in the seminars organized by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.
- Introduction of a module on the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio in university language teaching programs and curricula.

Interest in the introduction of the CEFR is greater and more obvious than its concrete day-to-day application in the teaching of foreign languages. There is still work to do as regards the explanation of its overall objectives and its usefulness at many levels of language teaching in addition to the language levels (A1–C2) used in student evaluation.

The particular interest in our context lies in clearly determining the contribution of the CEFR to the reform of foreign language learning and teaching by providing concrete examples of how foreign language teachers can make use of this tool to achieve their objectives.

The commitment to use the CEFR is ambitious and challenging, and it requires all foreign language teachers to accept change, reflect on their teaching practices, reconsider the role of pupils by favouring learner autonomy by highlighting pupils' achievements and successes. Classroom language activities must aim at language learning with clear objectives which are useful for everyday life.

During teacher training courses, difficulties arose as teachers constantly refer to textbooks in use and the impact of the CEFR is absorbed through them. The European dimension embodied in the CEFR encourages teachers and students alike to design exchange projects with foreign partners in order to gain access to concrete and authentic everyday communication. In this respect, student exchanges with Italy, France and Germany within the framework of the bilingual school sections have played an important part.

Continuing teacher education that focuses on the various applications of the CEFR remains one of the short-term challenges for the MoES. Offering an abbreviated version of the CEFR together with additional teaching materials and concrete examples covering all its dimensions (language learning and teaching, evaluation, curricula, and the intercultural dimension) may be one way to address the challenge.

3.1.1.2 European Language Portfolio (ELP) - A New Instrument in Support of Plurilingualism

After the translation into Albanian language of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in 2002, the initiative to develop ELP models was undertaken. The ELP, based on the CEFR principles encourages student autonomy and self-assessment.

Three language portfolio models developed by the Ministry of Education and Sports were accredited by the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio Validation Committee:

- 96.2008 Albania - Ministry of Education and Science - Model for upper-secondary learners aged 15+
- 103.2009 Albania - Ministry of Education and Science - Model for students aged 18+
- 106.2010 Albania - Ministry of Education and Science - Model for learners aged 11 to 14

In 2014 three other portfolios were registered, starting from elementary level to high education.

- ELP for learners aged 8 to 10 2014.R020 Italian version
- ELP for learners aged 11 to 14 2014.R022 Italian version
- ELP for learners aged 15 + 2014.R023 Italian version

A series of activities took place prior to the drafting of Albanian ELPs:

- The training of foreign language teachers started so that they would recognize and use the potential of the ELPs in some districts of the country, and the working group which would draft the ELPs was trained.
- The foreign language curriculum was reviewed in line with the principles of the CEFR and language standards were set.
- The foreign language examinations would be in line with European standards and the working groups responsible for drafting language examinations in accordance with the language levels proposed in the CEFR receives appropriate training.
- Professional development qualifications for language teachers were intensified.
- The intensification paved the way for the challenge of introducing foreign languages as an examination component in SGE.

The ELP provided students with direct motivation in foreign language learning and encouraged them to make a self-assessment of their achievements in their classroom experience and beyond.

During the two years of the piloting process, the ELP was implemented on the basis of MoES Directive No. 32 dated 20.08.2008 on "Implementation of plans, programs and textbook in pre-university education for school year 2008-2009", paragraph 7.5 and MoES Directive No. 23, dated 31.07.2009, on "Implementation of plans, programs and textbook in pre-university education for school year 2009-2010", paragraph 5.3.

The ELP was piloted on a voluntary basis in the RED where the language teachers were trained. The process was also used to evaluate teachers' awareness in introducing ideas and materials which require a personal contribution and commitment to leave behind traditional ways of teaching foreign languages.

Based on the analysis of the RED responses on ELP use, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The teachers who were trained to use the ELP considered it important or very important. Some teachers in vocational schools, however, regarded the ELP as not very important. It is important to cooperate more closely with this category of schools, because the ELP is an important self-assessment tool particularly useful for students entering the labour market. In the first piloting stage in the Economic School in Tirana the interest was great but it has been on the decrease since then.

The ELP has made teachers aware of the need for a more accurate assessment of students' knowledge. Using the ELP makes teachers feel better about their evaluation of students when they see that students take their self-assessment seriously. The ELP's "I can" checklists clearly indicate what students should be able to do in the foreign language at each proficiency level. This has changed teachers' and students' attitudes to evaluation.

The REDs regard the ELP as part of the process of reforming high school education and curricula, and as a prerequisite for the introduction of foreign language examinations in the SGE.

The ELP is valued across the board as a very informative didactic support for teachers and highly relevant to their further professional qualification.

The recognition and acceptance of the ELP as an important tool is mainly observed in the spread of its use in these districts and the great support provided by the RED authorities for the schools and teachers using it. The RED officials have not voiced any difficulties in understanding the ELP and have not asked for support or assistance from the trained working group.

For the successful use of ELP, the Regional Educational Directorates suggest:

- More training sessions for teachers.
- Exchange of experience with groups of teachers from other districts.
- Selection of textbooks based on the CEFR proficiency levels and piloted with pupils.
- Additional literature used for reference purposes and helpful to teachers.
- Increased teacher, student and parent awareness regarding the use of the ELP.
- Gradual increase in the number of students using the document until all students use the ELP.
- Different activities with students and exchange of experience at school, district or national level.

▪ **Teachers' evaluation of the ELP**

Analysis of the questionnaires completed by teachers using the ELP reveals that teachers involved in the piloting process were 179 out of 302 trained teachers in 7 different REDs (59%). About 60% of the trained teachers using the ELP state that they have included this document in the teaching process.

Some teachers used the ELP once a semester, for purposes of evaluation, while others used it at the end of every module or every other module. Teachers stated that the ELP helped them

significantly in setting clearer objectives for their students. They also mentioned that the descriptors for the different levels are very useful in setting objectives for groups of pupils. Teachers also remarked that the ELP had greatly improved teacher-student relations as it provides a new approach to evaluation that involves the students themselves. Teachers also noticed that students had become more aware of their progress in the foreign language and of their overall knowledge after using the ELP.

Teachers did not encounter any difficulties using the ELP in interaction with the textbook and the curriculum because the three documents had been drafted in the same language. The ELP helped to give teachers a clearer understanding of the link between the CEFR and the curriculum for each foreign language.

The foreign textbooks which have been in use in recent years include work that is directly relevant to the ELP. Some teachers, on the other hand, have raised the concern that more lessons are needed to work with the ELP.

The ELP has introduced new evaluation practices, including student self-assessment. All teachers stated that the ELP makes students aware of approaches to evaluation in Europe and helps them to develop self-assessment skills, not just in one language, but in all the languages they are learning.

Considering its novelty, all teachers thought that the ELP should be used both at home and in classroom, as there have been cases of students asking for the teacher's help in completing different sections. For instance, in Durres 75% of the students needed the teacher's help in completing the document.

Students have become more objective in their self-assessment and more conscious of the learning and teaching process. The ELP encourages them to work in groups formed according to their interests and level. The ELP has also helped students to organize their work more effectively in ways that reflect their performance and achievements.

Analysing the questionnaires, it is clear that students were sceptical about the ELP in the beginning, but as they used it their interest gradually increased, mainly because it allowed them to set their own learning objectives. For this reason, many teachers suggested that awareness-raising campaigns should be launched to promote the ELP on a national level, with students from schools that use the ELP sharing their experience with other students.

▪ **Role of pupils in using ELP**

3,264 of the 20,262 pupils using the ELP (about 16%) completed the questionnaire, according to statistics received from the REDs. This demonstrates that the REDs must be more aware of the importance of questionnaires designed to elicit information about instruments that aim to support pupils' language learning.

The teachers who were trained to use the ELP were also trained to promote it to students and the public. Students confirmed that they mostly learned about the ELP from their teachers, though their peers using the ELP in class also provided them with information. Although rare, personal initiatives sometimes played a role.

Encouraging use of the ELP on a voluntary basis has stimulated discussion about the document's importance. Students were urged to purchase and make use of the ELP only when

they were fully aware of the importance of the document in terms of setting learning objectives and analysing the process of evaluation.

One of the most important questionnaire findings is that 3,264 students stated that the ELP had helped in the evaluation of the four linguistic skills; they could now determine their own linguistic level. Students also pointed out that the ELP had increased their awareness of the need to learn foreign languages. They communicated with one another and evaluated one another's language skills and ability to meet the objectives set for the language class. The ELP helped students to identify their language level based on the self-assessment grid.

One of the ELP objectives is the effective evaluation of the student's language knowledge. About the difficulties encountered in the evaluation of their own language level, students have responded as follows: - 2,847 students agreed that the teacher has an important role to play in introducing and implementing the ELP, arguing that it is difficult to apply a new document to classroom activities.

What about the parents?

The knowledge and information that parents have about the ELP is another very important element. The main source of information for parents has been their children using the document at home. Another source of information has been the monthly teacher-parent meetings held by teachers in schools.

3.1.2 The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)

In 2001, Albania joined the European Centre for Modern Languages, a Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe based in Graz, Austria. Albania's cooperation with the ECML has been extensive and very important. The MoES acts as contact point for the ECML, and Albania's member of the Governing Board comes from the University of Tirana. The ECML's program is determined by the Governing Board acting on behalf of the member states and reflects national priorities in language education. Albania has been unable to take part in board meetings, because the previous member of the board (until 2015) was inactive. This has had consequences for the project-related decision-making process in the ECML. The Minister of Education and Sport has recently appointed a new Governing Board member .

In the last 15 years, Albania's participation in the work of the ECML has nevertheless made it possible for more than 100 Albanian teachers and language experts to participate in training programs and international conferences. This has been a direct and valuable contribution, which has also been translated into numerous domestic activities inspired by the ECML's programs.

Albanian teachers at different educational levels, including university lecturers of different languages, have regularly attended seminars, workshops and expert meetings focussing on specific projects related to innovation in foreign language teaching and plurilingualism.

Albania has participated in all the projects undertaken by the ECML, the most active being training related to the European Language Portfolio and EPOSTL. Within the ECML framework, Albania has also taken an active part in adopting projects like "ELP in Whole-School Use", implemented by "Sami Frasherri" High School, which organised promotional activities for plurilinguism, poster exhibitions and different types of contests.

The publication of EPOSTL was introduced in a workshop at the University of Tirana and was widely implemented by the University of Elbasan.

Albania has also made an expert contribution to projects related to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, like:

- drafting the guidelines for testing foreign language competences at university level (GULT),
- using the CEFR as the basis for a plurilingual and multicultural approach (CARAP/FREPA),
- drafting and using a language portfolio designed to support the teaching of foreign languages and plurilingual education at pre-school level (PEPELINO),
- using a portfolio to support the formation of students graduating in language teaching (EPOSTL)

The ECML's annual program is publicized on the MoES website. Participants in workshops are selected according to the profile established by the ECML. Some participants have organized training courses to introduce Albanian teachers to documents produced by ECML projects and to the concept of plurilingual education.

3.2 Cooperation with our partners (Embassies and other agencies)

The Embassy of Austria and K-Education Albania

Cooperation with these two important institutions, which began in 1996 and continues to this day, is focused on support for the teaching of the German language. This includes financial aid and the provision of expertise to help with the drafting of the national foreign languages curricula. These institutions have also made a valuable contribution to the education system by training Albanian teachers of German, bringing Austrian teachers of German to Albania, helping to establish the Albanian Association of Teachers of German and facilitating its smooth functioning. In addition they have supported the drafting of the ELP for learners aged 15 years and over and the training of teachers in ten different country districts.

Another notable contribution that is in line with the priorities of the education system is the support provided for vocational education. These two institutions have actively supported the vocational schools for hotel management, economics and agribusiness. A striking example is the opening of the first joint school of information technology, "Peter Mahringer", in Shkodra.

The Embassy of Italy, the Office for Education, and the Institute of Italian Culture

Cooperation with the Embassy of Italy has been continuous, intensive and successful. One early joint initiative was the introduction of the Italian language to bilingual school sections in 1998. Initial support and continuous training of teaching staff together with the provision of ancillary materials and equipment has been a very generous and valuable service provided by the Embassy of Italy. Bilingual school sections are functioning in the Regional Education Directorates of Tirana, Korça and Shkodra. This initiative brought to light the need to study the Italian language in pre-university education, and this led to the "Iliria" project (2002), which was based on memoranda of understanding between the MoES and the Italian Embassy. Aimed at introducing the Italian language into the Albanian pre-university

education, this project was implemented in 19 Albanian districts and has now been extended to the entire pre-university system.

Another field of cooperation has been the training of Albanian teachers of Italian. This activity has been successfully supported for over ten years and the Italian Embassy still provides training services and assistance, especially through a close cooperation with the Albanian Association of Teachers of Italian. In 2009, the European Union's "European Language Label" was awarded to the training programs carried out by the Italian Embassy and the Universities for Foreigners of Siena and Perugia.

In harmony with the MoES's vocational education priorities, the Embassy of Italy has actively supported vocational schools. Four regional centres have been set up and the Italian Embassy's contribution aims to support the Italian language and its teachers in Albania.

The Embassy of France and Alliance Française

Bilateral cooperation between the MoES and the Embassy of France in the field of pre-university education has been solid and long-term and has aimed at supporting the French language and the qualification of its teachers. The cooperation has also contributed to the general improvement of education policies in the country.

The intensive and continuous cooperation has been made possible by, among other factors, the great contribution of the representatives of this Embassy in the field of culture and language.

As a member of the International Association of La Francophonie, Albania aims to meet the required standard that 30% of all students who study foreign languages in the Albanian education system, must take French as their first or second foreign language. To make sure that this standard is met and to provide quality language teaching, the focus of cooperation has been on:

- the alignment of Albanian education with European standards,
- the qualification of teachers and the consolidation of teacher training.

The French Embassy has also provided great support in other areas:

- contributing to the drafting of the national foreign languages curricula and the creation of a cohort of Albanian trainers of teachers of French;
- supporting teachers and students via courses offered by the Alliance Française free of charge;
- supporting bilingual (Albanian-French) school sections in general comprehensive education and in culture-oriented language and vocational education;
- creating multimedia centres in each section;
- supporting basic and high school education with ancillary materials and equipment;
- helping schools to join the network of Southeast European Schools;
- drafting the European Language Portfolio for learners aged 11-14, which was accredited by the European Language Portfolio Validation Committee in Strasbourg in March 2010;

- supporting the dissemination and spread of European language policies and teacher training programs in Albania and abroad, mainly through the Regional Centre of La Francophonie for Central and South-eastern Europe;
- supporting career counselling for Albanian students, mainly through the Francophone University Agency.

The Embassy of Germany, the Office for Foreigners and German Diplomas, and the Goethe Institute

Cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany in the field of education has strengthened in recent years, especially in relation to the bilingual (Albanian-German) school section program operating in some Albanian high schools.

In April 2009, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the MoES and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany on the opening of a bilingual (Albanian-German) school section. Pursuant to the provisions of this memorandum, six classes (two per year) are functioning at “Sami Frashëri” High School, where Mathematics and Geography are taught through German. This school section, which started in 2008-2009, now operates from the first to the third year of high school.

On 22 April 2013, the State Graduation Examination for “Sami Frashëri” comprehensive high school was officially recognized by the German authorities as being equal to the graduation process in German schools. As a direct result, the State Graduation Degree for “Sami Frashëri” High School combined with the German Language Certificate of the Conference of the Ministers of Education (DSD II) makes it possible for Albanian students to be admitted directly to all branches of higher education in Germany without having to take the German language foundation year (*Studienkolleg*). This arrangement came into force in the winter semester of 2013-2014.

In October 2013, by a decision of the conference of the Ministers of Education of the 16 German Länder, “Avni Rustemi” and “Jeronim De Rada” 9-year schools received the status of “Schools Offering the German Language Examination DSD I” (“Fan Noli” school already enjoyed this status). These three 9-year schools serve as resource schools for the two-language (Albanian-German) school sections, one class VI of 30 pupils taking classes through German as stipulated in the memorandum of understanding. In due course these pupils also take the Deutsches Sprachdiplom I (DSD I).

At this educational level, the cooperation and assistance provided by the German Embassy has focused mainly on regularly bringing native German language teachers to Albania to work in basic, high and vocational schools.

The Embassy of the United Kingdom and the British Council

Cooperation with the British Council has been long-standing, mainly in the following fields:

1. The training of English language teachers in pre-university education, which dates back to 1995 and continues to this day. To begin with, the training was carried out through the British Council, the university and the Regional Education Directorates. In 2001, training was focused on the English Language Teachers’ Association of Albania (ELTA), with the aim of supporting the language teachers’ associations.

2. The “Base Line Study” on English language teaching was drafted in 2003, in close cooperation with MoES. This document was prepared at the MoES’s request by a group of Albanian university professors and teachers under the guidance of the international expert, Mr. Tony Luxon. The document highlighted the need to strengthen English language learning and teaching and particularly English language teacher training and qualifications. The document was circulated to all institutions directly involved in English language learning and teaching.
3. Cooperation has also been successful in the field of vocational training, drafting school curricula and harmonizing vocational school curricula with the labour market needs.
4. The memorandum of cooperation for the project “English for the World of Work” in 2008 and participation in the regional project “Skills at Work” in 2009 and “English for skills” in 2011-2013 have been successful undertakings.
5. The British Council has provided valuable support for the ELTA. Initially it focused on the association’s consolidation, then on planning and organizing activities for the professional development of teachers in order to increase the quality of English language learning and teaching. The British Council has supported ELTA via training and sponsorship, and this has contributed to the association’s recognition at home and abroad. As well as receiving training, ELTA members have had free access to the British Council library. The Council has also provided financial support for conferences organized by the ELTA. Taking account of priority areas, during February 2008 the British Council provided British experts to train a national team of trainers who would be fully able to participate in training activities for English language teaching in Albania and abroad.
6. The British Council has also supported the development of a European Language Portfolio model for university students with an ESP focus. The working group included students from the Faculties of Economics, Law, and Social Sciences.
7. In cooperation with UNICEF and MoES, the British Council participated in the project “Albania Reads”, which supplied school libraries with books in English.
8. The British Council has organised summer courses for high school students designed to help them improve their reading. The initiative started in 2005 and went on for two years.
9. The three-year project “Global English” aimed to improve the use of the internet in English language learning and teaching.

3.3 Cooperation with francophone bodies

Membership in the International Organization of La Francophonie

Albania became an observer member of the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) in 1997 and a full member in 1999. The organization brings together countries which have a shared interest in the French language and culture. It includes 80 countries as members or observers and dates back to 1970 and the creation of the Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency, later renamed the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie. The organization was institutionalized with the adoption of the Charter of La Francophonie in 1997.

The objectives of the IOF are clearly reflected in its Charter:

- to intensify dialogue among cultures and civilizations;
- to increase understanding among peoples through mutual cooperation;

- to strengthen solidarity through multilateral cooperation to encourage economic development;
- to promote education and training.

The main goals of the IOF are to improve the quality of life by helping people to become the agents of their own development. It provides member states with support in drafting and consolidating their policies, conducting its international activities through multilateral cooperation, in compliance with its mission as laid out in a strategic framework:

- the promotion of the French language and of linguistic and cultural diversity;
- the promotion of peace, democracy and human rights;
- support for education and scientific research;
- strengthening cooperation for the benefit of sustainable development.

All activities of the IOF pay special attention to young people and women as well as access to information technologies and communication.

In Albania the activities of the IOF in support of the French language, education and research are carried out through CREFECO and AUF, with the active support of the Embassy of France in Tirana.

Cooperation with the Regional Centre of la Francophonie for Eastern and Central Europe (CREFECO)

This centre was created in 2004 by the IOF (International Organization of La Francophonie) and has as its main mission the spread of the French language and the improvement of French language teaching in the member countries. The ministries of the six member states (Albania, Armenia, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and Macedonia) signed a memorandum of agreement with the centre in order to secure more effective representation of the IOF in their language policies.

The centre supports teacher training at regional level (two courses per year for 25 participants each), and invites three teachers from each member state. It also employs specialised trainers who work in recognised training agencies or francophone universities. Courses have been given top marks in the evaluations of participating teachers.

Between 2005 and 2015, 298 out of 498 Albanian teachers of French have benefited from this training. 133 teachers (27%) have attended more than one course, and the others profit indirectly because those who attend are obliged to organise a similar course for their colleagues. This has the effect of creating a network of teachers trained according to their needs and on topics of their own selection. The teachers qualified by CREFCO have managed to organise quality training sessions at a similar level to those organised by their regional counterparts.

The regionalisation of these training seminars and the drafting of didactic materials by expert teams with members from participating countries prioritizes the exchange of experience, knowledge and competences, fosters mutual respect and friendship among teachers, and helps to change attitudes and beliefs.

Cooperation with AUF (Francophone University Agency)

Two Albanian public universities, the Polytechnic University of Tirana and the University of Tirana, are members of the FUA (Francophone University Agency). The University of Tirana has been part of this university network since 1998. The goal of this cooperation is to provide students with professional training and doctoral degrees. In order to meet its objectives, the FUA has opened regional offices and digital centres which serve as technology support points for the university and research community. One such centre has been opened at the University of Tirana. The centres contribute to the development of information and communication technologies at university level. They also facilitate research carried out by students, teachers and professors, granting them easy access to digital resources.

Campus numérique francophone de Tirana (at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana,) was opened in 2006 and it carries out teacher training and disseminates scientific and technical training. Since it was opened the campus has organised more than 20 courses in cooperation with other universities that are members of the FUA. The courses have served a variety of purposes in line with the expressed needs of the participants, such as:

- Building professional relations among participants that they can develop further after the course.
- Formation of a training nucleus with specialist skills in the use of information and communication technologies.
- Preparing individuals or professional groups to train their colleagues in the work place.

Within the framework of life-long learning, a considerable number of courses have been organised for students, teachers and professors of French. The courses have focused on improving the quality of language teaching, putting the student and his/her needs at the centre of the process. Participants in these courses have mostly been Albanian, but there have also been guests from Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Turkey, and Macedonia, which encourages cooperation with regional partners.

The digital campus organises courses in cooperation with member universities, CREFECO, and the Association of French Teachers according to the needs expressed by teachers. These courses have been given top marks in the evaluations of participating teachers and professors.

3.4 Cooperation with other partners

The Embassy of the United States of America

Cooperation with the Embassy of the United States of America in the field of pre-university education has been long-standing and has focused on:

1. Pedagogical expertise in drafting programs and didactic documentation. American experts worked for the Institute for Development of Education (English Fellows) from 1996 to 2000.
2. Training teachers and professors of English.
3. Support for in-depth studies via the Fulbright System (American Fulbright Scholars).
4. Help in establishing the English Language Teachers' Association.
5. Joint projects for the development of English language teaching and leadership skills, and the dissemination of information about important institutions like the United Nations. The "Debate" Program and "Albania Model United Nations" are two

important projects. Albanian Model United Nations (AMUN) offers Albanian high school students an opportunity to engage in diplomatic processes, enhance their research and debating skills, and learn about major world issues affecting global political, social, and economic spheres. Preparation for the AMUN final conference is a six-month process that involves weekly meetings, practice simulations, regional conferences, as well as visits to other Tirana-based embassies.

6. The competition organised with the support of the MoES and the RED in Tirana in 2007 involving pupils from 10 public and private schools on “American Presidents and their Role in the American Political System”.
7. The competition for students of the Faculty of Law, University of Tirana(second and third year students) on “Law and the Judicial System in the USA”.
8. An essay competition. In the framework of Benjamin Franklin Fellowship, Albanian students between 16 and 18 years of age are invited to write an essay on topics about democracy, open society, free press, community service and the like. The winning applicant is then send to the Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Summer Institute for a period of four weeks. The project aims to promote mutual understanding between American and European youth.
9. The piloting of the Junior TOEFL exam organised by the Embassy of the United States and the RED in Tirana.
10. Presentations given by senior officials at the Embassy to high school and university students on:
 - a. How to study in the USA
 - b. The education system of the USA

Cooperation in the field of education started in 1992-1993 with the appointment of pedagogical councillors for the formation of foreign language teacher trainers, endorsed by the Centre of American Culture in Tirana (now the Office for Public Cooperation).

In the period 1994-1996, the US Embassy, through the Centre of American Culture, actively supported the MoES program to reform English language teaching.

The Embassy contributed to the training of teachers and RED foreign language inspectors in using the new English curriculum and preparing teaching materials. It also provided authentic materials for teachers in basic education and the teacher journal “Forum”, an important resource with useful information and ideas in the field of language teaching.

The establishment of the English Language Teachers’ Association of Albania (ELTA) has made an important and continuing contribution to the professional development of English language teachers.

The Peace Corps

Cooperation with the Peace Corps has focused on:

- English language teaching in basic education, high schools and higher education;
- exchange of experience with Albanian teachers and professors as part of joint teaching practice, with the goal of improving the teaching skills of teachers;
- provision of ancillary language teaching materials like CDs;

- building and cherishing democratic values among Albanian students via programs like “Debate Program” and “Albania Model United Nations”;
- cultural exchange and mutual recognition.

Cooperation at the policy-making level is based on a memorandum of understanding and aims to provide support for educational institutions.

Cooperation also seeks to improve the quality of language learning and teaching by

- improving the teaching methods used by English language teachers via co-teaching and co-training, a notable example being the training seminar held in Berat on 10-11 December 2007.
- improving the quality and availability of teaching materials in line with the curricula. Peace Corps volunteers have prepared materials that have been made available to Albanian English teachers.
- improving teaching methods by direct involvement in basic and high school English language teaching.

The Peace Corps promotes cultural exchange and social development at all levels of Albanian society.

3.5 Youth Education with Values and Norms of European Citizenship through Foreign Language Learning

Present-day societies are increasingly multilingual and multicultural. Taking into account that individuals and different social groups live together and share common values, the education system in general and schools in particular play an important role in promoting tolerance in interpersonal and inter-community relations. Foreign language learning has a crucial role to play in this respect, because communicating with the Other is closely related to his/her everyday life and as member of the community.

The notion of European citizenship first appeared in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. European citizenship does not replace national citizenship, but it expands the rights of citizens of EU member states. In Europe, citizenship is based on respect for justice, human rights and fundamental human liberties, and the rule of law.

Albania is not a multilingual or multicultural country, due to the long period of isolation which closed it off from other cultures. The massive migration which took place in the 1990s, however, brought contact with other cultures and languages.

Albania’s political and economic development aims to bring its standards into line with those of other countries. Business investment and trade have created a need to learn and teach foreign languages and cultures, both of the region and of the wider world.

When Albanian citizens were granted free movement within the Schengen area, the need to learn foreign languages was intensified to meet the increase in trade, professional and family mobility, and tourism.

A new phenomenon which has been witnessed in recent years is the return home of emigrant families after a long period of residence in another country, bringing with them the language and culture of that country. This means that a plurilingual and multicultural environment is being created for which Albanian society must be prepared. According to the law on pre-

university education, the children of families who have returned home after long-term residence abroad have the right to be fully integrated in the Albanian education system, in accordance with the principles of mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.

These changes in Albanian society are reflected in the National Curriculum for Modern Languages (published in 2000), which emphasises that “through foreign languages the culture of foreign countries is also learned”. This curriculum is organised around themes and the program lays out a range of topics which are developed from one stage to the next, from elementary school to high school: foreign languages are learned through topics such as family and friends, holidays, leisure, food, everyday life, jobs, politeness, habits, traditions, the arts, cinema, history, and geography.

Several projects have been undertaken by international and domestic non-governmental organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, AEDP etc. to provide information on human rights, democracy at school, conflict resolution, eradication of discrimination, and promotion of tolerance.

The project on Intercultural Education and Human Rights at School 2002-2003, in cooperation with UNESCO and approved by the MoES, made a special contribution to the development of intercultural competence and the democratization of relations at school.

A considerable number of Albanian teachers were trained in the teaching of civic education, literature, history, geography, and foreign languages. They were provided with information about children’s rights, pupils’ rights, conflict resolution, and the cultural dimension of the subjects taught in Albanian schools.

For this teacher training program a wide range of valuable pedagogical documents were prepared and translated, among them the UNESCO Directive on the review of textbooks used in pre-university education, which retain elements of Albania’s ideological past and display elements of gender inequality, partiality, prejudice, xenophobia, discrimination, etc.

Albanian Education Development Program of Soros Foundation (AEDP) has also made a substantial contribution to the promotion of democracy at school via teacher training and the publication of teaching materials that inform pupils about collective rules, add a historical and cultural dimension to their knowledge of the world, introduce them to procedural skills like asking for the floor in discussions and arguing in a debate, and emphasise the values and principles that underpin human rights and democratic life.

The Institute for Qualification and Training of Teachers (IQT) and the Institute for Development of Education (IDE) has started to publish a series of bulletins entitled Curricula and School, which is very helpful for foreign language teachers.

This shows that there has been a direct relation between teaching cultural and linguistic skills and civic education, especially when the latter element is underscored in official documents, such as the curricula and school textbooks and in international publications such as the CEFR and ELP, as well as (*FREPA*), *A framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to Languages and Cultures*, a project and a publication of ECML.

The curriculum framework of 2014 particularly emphasises that this concept of civic education should be formulated in the form of competences that pupils must learn: “At the completion of secondary education pupils evaluate and appreciate variety and demonstrate tolerance, respect and open approach towards distinctions; they manage and resolve conflicts in constructive ways.”

Thus, what remains to be done is concrete work with pupils, teachers, parents, school principals, decision-makers, and other stakeholders. Foreign language teachers are aware of the contribution they make and the role they play in the civic and democratic education of young people through the language and culture they teach, thanks to the formation they themselves have received in the respective language and culture. They have been motivated and inspired by participating in projects, conferences, seminars and workshops in the European context, which have made them pioneers in education for civic values and European citizenship.

Among the topics included in these programs have been: public life; services for citizens; peace and democracy; human rights and respect for them; gender equality; interpersonal relations; opposition to racism and discrimination. The programs have also addressed topics related to social and cultural movements, where besides foreign language learning, pupils and young people also learn analytical skills, critical thinking, and how to argue in defence of their point of view. This is a very motivating experience and highlights a very positive attitude not only towards the foreign language but also towards its native speakers.

4 CURRICULA

4.1 Historical overview of curricular changes

Prior to 1990, foreign language learning and teaching in Albania, like the entire education system, was politically and ideologically influenced by the political class in power. During that period pupils began to learn a foreign language in Class V (at the age of 11). The popular and widely taught foreign languages were French, Russian, English, and Italian. Priorities in foreign language education were subject to change on political and ideological grounds. Students (14-18 years of age) attending high schools in the big cities studied two foreign languages, whereas many schools in rural areas did not offer a foreign language.

Teaching followed the traditional grammar-translation method, and textbooks were written by Albanian authors and published in Albania. In specialised foreign language schools, foreign textbooks were also allowed, like *Essential English for Foreign Students* by C. E. Eckersley and *Cours de Langue et de Civilisation Française* by G. Mauger. The main objectives of foreign language teaching were related to the translation into Albanian of foreign scientific, political and imaginative literature but also to the dominant ideology of the time. These objectives explain the emphasis on grammar and translation. The communicative dimension was also considered, but it was not a priority, because Albania was an economically and politically isolated country. Communication with native speakers of foreign languages was either officially controlled or almost impossible.

The political changes in 1991, which brought an end to Albania's isolation, revealed the need for a rapid and radical improvement in our communication with the outside world. The changed political and social situation uncovered the inadequacy of the existing foreign language curricula, which could not respond to new challenges, especially the need to focus on teaching languages for communication.

Since 1991 the development of foreign language curricula has gone through three different stages:

Between 1996 and 2005 the whole teaching plan was reviewed and the concept of the curriculum was first introduced. The curriculum drafted at that time was entitled "The National Curriculum for Modern Languages" and it was approved and published by MoES in 2000. During the drafting process international bodies such as the International Institute for Curricula in the Netherlands (SLO) were consulted. Other partners involved in the drafting were the Council of Europe, Kultur Kontakt Austria, The Soros Foundation, CIEP France, IRSAE Lombardy. The Council of Europe provided valuable assistance through their trained experts who assisted the Albanian experts group.

The drafting of this new foreign languages curriculum arose from the need for significant change but also in response to the demand of Albanian society, shared by international partner organizations, for changes in our education system and especially innovation in the field of foreign languages. In its principles, goals and objectives, this curriculum integrates the positive aspects of foreign language learning in the past with new elements, aiming for more effective language acquisition and use. The drafting of this document enabled:

- an expansion of contacts and enhancement of professionalism in foreign language teaching, bringing our country into line with other European countries;

- a new role for teachers in the classroom, giving them more freedom in the use of textbooks and modern teaching materials designed to support their own and their students' creativity and independent thinking;
- a student-centred foreign language teaching process, where the student participated fully in classroom activities drawing on his/her life experience;
- a communicative approach to teaching and using the foreign language, thus fulfilling one the main curricular objectives;
- a greater variety of textbooks, which was positive for teachers and textbook authors alike;
- new ways of evaluating students, including self-assessment at all levels;
- greater tolerance and diversity among the peoples and cultures represented by the different foreign languages.

The second stage of curriculum reform started in 2005, when a review of this curriculum led to the adoption of an objective-based approach. The review did not affect the communicative dimension of the curriculum, which was strengthened. After four years of piloting, foreign language teaching in Class III was made official.

With the financial assistance of the Council of Europe, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) was translated into Albanian in 2007 (Institute for Development of Education website: <http://www.izha.edu.al/>). Subsequently, three European Language Portfolio models were accredited and three further ones were registered (see section 3.1.1.2).

The third stage of curriculum reform began in 2013. Albania's transformed reality created new educational priorities, and a further review of the curriculum led to the adoption of a competence-based model for foreign languages. This model is based on the belief that knowledge is a country's most important capital because it generates new ideas and increases general well-being. Knowledge is expanding at an unprecedented rate, and schools can transmit only a small portion of it to their pupils. That is why schools have the duty not only to equip young people with the competences necessary for life and work but to help them to develop competences in gathering and processing information for themselves.

Interdependence and mobility, which are constantly on the increase, have become characteristic features of our time. Countries are increasingly interdependent in the fields of communication, finance, education, culture, migration, lifestyle and the like. New developments in the labour market mean that young people must meet certain preconditions in order to move freely and compete successfully in local and international markets. They must be able to adapt to rapid and unexpected change caused by economic and financial crises, epidemics, warfare and the like. Interdependence and mobility also pose challenges to education, which must be able to respond rapidly. Current views of learning emphasize that learners have an active role to play in building, exploiting and evaluating knowledge.

School cannot accomplish its mission without *close and continuous cooperation and partnership* with the community in which it is located. It must be perceived as a multi-faceted centre, offering quality education services in cooperation with the community and at the community's service.

The curricular documentation, which previously was made up of subject syllabuses only, now comprises a full package composed of:

- Curriculum framework which contains the general objectives for high school, the general objectives for cross-curricular fields, and main principles of teaching and learning;
- Standards of achievements:
- Subject syllabuses,
- Guidelines for the implementation of the new curricula,
- Guidelines for subject fields (e.g. language and communication) and particular subjects

Previously there was only one curriculum for vocational education, and it did not correspond fully to the structure of the labour market. But curricular reform in vocational education has introduced the concept of a two-level curriculum: a central core drafted in line with the European Qualifications Framework and the Albanian Qualifications Framework, and a school-level curriculum which takes account of local market needs. The main curricular documentation has been drafted, and it is expected that vocational high schools will become more attractive choices for students and more supportive of the labour market.

4.2 Early language learning and the role of English

Prior to 1990, early language learning was a familiar practice in “experimental schools”, but it was not a country-wide practice.

In 1992, the Department of French at the University of Tirana, in cooperation with the French Embassy in Tirana and specialist lecturers, launched a pilot project in early learning of French by pupils in Class III. The project was carried out in four schools: “Edith Durham”, “Xhezmi Delli”, “Fan Noli” and “20 Vjetori”. The pupils were not assessed using marks, and traditional teaching methods were replaced by a communicative approach that sought to promote enjoyment in learning. At the end of the project, after about two years, it was confirmed that Class III was the most appropriate class in which to start early language learning.

In 1997, after a two-year study period, the MoES introduced the idea of early language learning and launched a national pilot project for its implementation in Class III. The teaching approach was new for teachers, who were used to the grammar-translation method. The need for training was met with the help of the British Council, the French Embassy and the Centre of American Culture.

Early foreign language learning was also introduced as one of the Council of Europe initiatives, corresponding with all the initiatives of the Council of Europe for the European Year of Languages. This initiative was made official with the drafting of the National Modern Languages Curriculum 2000 for Classes III-XII. The implementation of this initiative started in the school year 2005-2006, when the learning of a foreign language as a compulsory subject in Class III of elementary education was launched with two classes per week.⁸

The role of English

In the period 2005-20013, English language learning became a priority for the MoES. The objective was that Albanian students should develop a level of proficiency in English that would enable them to understand without difficulty lectures delivered in English by foreign lecturers.

⁸ For more information on the curriculum of grade III see Appendix 1.

Albania's goals – rapid integration in NATO, membership of the European Union, equal participation in the global labour market, and the acquisition and use of information technology – made learning English a necessity.

In the school year 2007-2008, 76% of all students who were studying foreign languages in pre-university education were learning English. In that year, an attempt was made to offer English even in peripheral and remote schools. English language teaching was carried out using communicative approaches and modern methods that include e-learning.

English became an elective subject in the State Graduation Examination, with the highest coefficient for admission to higher education. Proficiency in English also became an admissions criterion for second and third-level university studies, a contested measure which was only changed when the higher education law took effect in 2015.

The MoES provided financial incentives for English language teachers all over the country in order to meet the desired teaching standards and to discourage teachers of English from leaving the teaching profession. The inequality created by these incentives was contested by the teachers' associations.

A new Department of English was created at the University of Durrës to support the training of new teachers, complementing the work carried out in this field by the Faculties of Foreign Languages in Tirana, Korça, Shkodra, Gjirokastra, Elbasan, and Vlora.

The MoES has cooperated with the English Language Teachers' Association of Albania (ELTA) to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning. ELTA and its members have been very supportive of the MoES in the initiative "Anglophone Albania", which aimed to make English the *lingua franca* in 21st-century Albania.

School textbooks

Until 2005 the MoES managed the school textbook publishing house, and it was the MoES which selected a single textbook for each subject. This policy was abandoned when the MoES issued a directive on textbook reform with the following main characteristics:

- Introduction of alternative textbooks.
- Admission of foreign publishing houses to the Albanian market in foreign language textbooks.
- Evaluation commissions which assess textbooks anonymously, awarding points in accordance with a system of indicators including pedagogical aspect, scientific relevance, etc.

A central committee made up of specialists in the field is responsible for checking that the subject-specific evaluation commissions follow the correct procedures.

The state subsidises the cost of textbooks to parents. In accordance with the subsidy policy, in basic education priority is given to families in need and children with special needs.

With the introduction of the alternative textbook initiative, the MoES aims to make it easier for teachers to select textbooks which meet their students' needs in terms of present-day reality. Being able to use textbooks from reputable publishing houses and written by native-speaker authors, together with ancillary publications and training, has brought positive changes for foreign language teachers.

4.3 Quality and assessment in foreign language learning

Assessment plays an important role in promoting quality learning and teaching, and an assessment system based on standards produces a stable education system. The CEFR is a framework of reference that can contribute to quality in education.

The SGE is one factor in evaluating education, and the foreign languages exam is one of its most frequently chosen elements. Foreign languages are elective subjects, and students' achievements have been average, which is why the MoES will continue to rely on the CEFR as a key point of reference. The main objective is that by the end of Class XII, students will have learnt two foreign languages and proficiency in the first foreign language will be at the B2 level.

Pursuant to Law No. 69/2012 dated 21.06.2012, foreign languages are an obligatory part of the examination that pupils take at the end of basic education. The examination is prepared by the National Examination Agency (NEA), administered by specialists, and marked by the NAE. During 2015-2016, English will also be tested via an internationally recognised examination (APTIS for Teens) in cooperation with the British Council.

Recently, the State Graduation Examination has been changed. It will continue to serve as the high school graduation examination, but it will have no bearing on admission to higher education. The purpose of this change is to give more space to student merits, increase competition, and promote comparable test results among students, schools and local education units. The change also involves revision of the structure of national examinations and a review of question content, the points assigned, and the level of difficulty. Another reason why the foreign language examination of the SGE cannot be used for admission to higher education in Albania and abroad is that it tests only two language skills, reading-comprehension and writing.

Besides designing and administering the Basic Education Examination (BEE) and the State Graduation Examination (SGE), the National Examination Agency publishes evaluations that provide policy-makers and the public with reliable information about student results and the factors which influence them.

The Basic Education Examination (BEE) and the State Graduation Examination (SGE) are organised in the June term and the Autumn term, for students who either fail or do not take the exams in the June term. The BEE is regarded as a low-stakes examination because its results have no influence on the next level of education, whereas the SGE is regarded as high-stakes because its results directly influence the student's further education or work career. The SGE thus fulfils two main functions, pedagogical and social. The degree of difficulty of SGE exams has been average, in accordance with the difficulty degree prescribed in the SGE regulations.

There is room for improvement in the preparation of examination and its evaluation standards:

- training for specialists and professionals who prepare the examinations would help to improve quality;
- the National Examination Agency would benefit from expert assistance in the drafting of evaluation instruments, analysis of questions, and the psychometric interpretation of test results;
- clear and precise national evaluation criteria would improve the evaluation process and better reflect student achievement.

Based on stakeholder surveys, teacher questionnaires, personal experience and official documentation (tests, programs, directives and the like), there are some aspects of evaluation which remain to be addressed, related to:

- scientific standardisation of evaluation exams in line with the language levels of the CEFR;
- training of test designers especially as regards harmonising tests with teaching syllabuses.
- harmonization of evaluation with the competences required, as the new curriculum is competence-based.

In the interest of quality improvement the MoES and NEA are considering the possibility of offering foreign language tests that meet European standards as part of SGE and BEE.

- Because the foreign language exam in SGE 2015 did not influence the average grade and the general formula, the use of foreign examinations would be a novelty in both BEE and SGE.
- Foreign tests would give an additional assessment of the language level of pupils and could improve foreign language teaching and learning.
- Albanian pupils would recognise and take part in European tests and beyond.
- Foreign tests would support certification in accordance with the European standards required for admission to foreign universities, thus further implementing the CEFR.
- Foreign would help in the application of students in foreign institutions of higher education.

The practice of offering foreign tests in our educational system is already familiar in German, French and Italian bilingual school sections.

- For Albanian-German (bilingual) school sections, the test DSD II, language level C 1, is provided by the Central Agency for School Abroad (ZfA) and the test DSDI language level B1 for basic education, in the resource schools that provide students for these school sections.
- For Albanian-French (bilingual) school sections, the test DALF Scolaire, language level B2, is provided by the International Pedagogical Institute of Sèvres. This Institute also provided training for the test designers for SGE 2014.
- For the Albanian-Italian (bilingual) school sections, the test of Italian language and literature, level C1 is provided by the Ministry of Education of Italy. Test CELI 3, level B2 is provided by the Institute of Italian Culture.

Within the framework of cooperation with our partners in this field, we have taken into consideration recommendations from the Embassy of the United Kingdom, the British Council, the Embassy of the United States and ETS Global, the Italian Embassy and the Institute of Italian Culture, the Embassy of France and the International Pedagogical Institute of Sèvres. The French Embassy, through the International Pedagogical Institute of Sèvres, has proposed the provision of examination DALF scolaire, Level B2, for high school graduation and DELF Junior for pupils in basic education. The Italian Embassy, through the Institute of Italian Culture, has proposed the CELI 3 Examination. The British Council has provided the APTIS examination level B2 for the SGE 2015 in the print and electronic formats most suitable for the Albanian system. All of these examinations are aligned with the CEFR. The Embassy of the United States, through ETC Global, offers internationally recognised examinations, including all types of TOEFL examinations.

The State Graduation Examination

Prior to the implementation of the State Graduation Examination, all students obtained their high school certificate by sitting three examinations: Albanian language, mathematics and physics. The subject tests were standardized and were approved by the MoES. The tests were administered by schools and the marking was done by teachers. The examinations were in oral and written form. For university admission students had to take an admissions test.

The State Graduation Examination was created in the school year 2005-2006. It has these main features:

- the student obtains a graduation certificate upon taking two examinations, Albanian language and mathematics (examinations are only in written form);
- the examination is standardized and is prepared by the National Examination Agency;
- the examination is administered by education professionals who do not work in the school or areas under their administration, (i.e. if one teacher works in a particular school s/he cannot be an administrator in that school);
- examinations are marked centrally by teachers trained for this purpose;
- students' examination scripts are anonymous;
- students aspiring to attend higher education have to take two more elective tests;
- achievements in the State Graduation Examination were used as admission criteria for higher education institutions, but the new law introduced in July 2015 has changed that;
- higher education institutions are provided with five indicators: the student's average grade for all high school years and the four marks awarded for the two compulsory and two elective examinations;
- each higher education institution assigns a coefficient to each of the five indicators, which determines the number of students who will be admitted to the institution;
- based on the assigned coefficient, a list of students is provided to each branch of higher education;
- based on a system known as "merit-preference", all the data on the students' achievements are entered into a general database. Students are entitled to apply for ten branches listed in the application form, and the system builds the lists in relation to the other competing applicants.

This system did not meet expectations regarding the improvement of quality and administration, so the SGE was reformed and improved in two main directions:

- 1) Quality
- 2) Administration

Quality

1. The introduction of a compulsory foreign language examination was a new development in SGE 2014. This improvement in the status of foreign languages, although not affecting the calculation of points for admission to university, does not have a negative impact on the future of the first students to whom the change applies. Another innovation is that the elective foreign language examination is also compulsory, which has brought about an improvement in the quality of the examination. The level of the examination is in line with the MoES directive and harmonized with the university requirement for a high level of proficiency in foreign languages.

2. The increase of the average high school grade from 20% previously to 26% this year

The objective and expectation of this change is the improvement of the quality of the school.

3. Determination of the necessary cut off - 20% of the total points.

The candidate is not considered to have passed the examination if s/he gets less than 20%. This change is essential for the sake of transparency. Students and teachers are informed of the minimum pass level in advance, which contributes to a transparent evaluation process.

4. Selection of the test:

- a. The selection of the final examinations for the SGE will be conducted through computer-generated tests, which will bring about quality and security in the design of the examination.
- b. The examination will have three levels of difficulty: low, average, high.
- c. A new development will be the lack of the review process, which aims to increase the responsibility of candidates and examiners, who could lose their position if they mark the examinations inaccurately.

Administration

Increasing the quality of test administration in the facilities where the examinations take place

There have been changes in SGE Regulation 2014 aimed at increasing the quality of administration. At the same time penalties will apply to deficiencies in administration and evaluation.

Examination materials are distributed via the Albanian Postal Service. With the improvement in the distribution infrastructure and the postal services, a new distribution plan is being considered which will improve quality and lower costs.

1. Rearrangement of the students in facilities that will hold between 50 and 150 pupils. This should achieve more effective monitoring and invigilation.

2. Provision of the examination paper for each candidate, in line with the respective forms A1/ A1Z and put the examination papers in special boxes for each exam facility. The examination boxes are sealed.

SGE 2016 will be the first examination process which will mark the completion of high school education. Under the new law, higher education institutions will set their own criteria for the admission of students in higher education. These new criteria will improve students' chances of admission to university and the quality of their studies.

With the aim of improving the quality of students who wish to attend higher education, for the first time, the admission criteria for all applicants will be determined by the higher education institutions.

4.4 Language learning and potential for innovation at school

The ways in which individuals acquire information and receive services nowadays is constantly changing. For this reason, all individuals regardless of age must develop new competences appropriate to our digital world. The education system must aim to develop students' digital literacy, which is an essential part of complete functional literacy. The individual and his/her values are the main driving force in today's digital era.

The MoES has launched an initiative to introduce information and communication technology on a massive scale, in accordance with the World Bank report 34919-AL, on quality and equity in education. By equipping schools with computers, laptops, video projectors, and access to the internet, the preconditions have been met for another important stage in the development of education in Albania. There has been a decrease in verbalisation and an increase in visualisation. Innovative teachers and students are prepared to use technology to benefit teaching and learning.

The most recent development in this field has been the introduction of tablets for school use. Digital text has also offers new and promising developments in the field of foreign language teaching and learning.

In the National Strategy for Education 2014-2020 it is stipulated that:

1. As of 2018, high schools will be equipped with the functional infrastructure needed in order to make use of digital content in teaching.
2. As of 2018, digital school mapping will be become operational, providing an optical network for high schools.

These innovations are expected to bring about significant improvements in the efficiency and quality of foreign language education at the levels of curriculum, textbook and assessment. It is worth noting that the English language test for basic education will be conducted using tablets and digital content.

5 TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

5.1 Historical background

Prior to 1990s, there were two kinds of language teacher: those educated in universities abroad and the ones educated in the University of Tirana established in 1957. The university opened Russian, French and English departments in the 1960s and an Italian department in the 1980s.

Forms of in-service training for language teachers vary, but the most important ones are the following:

(i) National training courses which varied in duration from one, two or three days to one month. These are provided by the University of Tirana and the higher pedagogical institutes (Shkodra and Elbasan). The process was led by the Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with foreign language departments, the Institute of Pedagogical Studies (Tirana), regional education directorates and their pedagogical cabinets. These courses were organised during vacation periods (summer and winter) but also during the summer semester. They dealt with theoretical issues (the latest linguistic and methodological developments) and classroom practice, spoken and written language, grammar and phonetics. Teachers participating in these courses came from all over the country. The first one-month post-university course was organised in 1973 at the Faculty of History and Philology for Russian language teachers.⁹

(ii) Conferences, seminars, workshops and national meetings that lasted for one or two days. Teachers met regionally under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Directorates; courses were provided by university professors and specialists from the Institute of Pedagogical Studies. The first conferences for foreign language teachers were organised at intervals starting in 1953,¹⁰ while the last one took place in 1990.¹¹ As well as the themes addressed different specialists or teachers, open classes were also organised, and methodological guides were disseminated. In some cases, resolutions concerning the improvement of foreign language teaching were approved.

(iii) Regional seminars and meetings for districts, cities, groups of villages, schools and subject commissions. These events were organised by education directorates and pedagogical cabinets, and one or some lectures were delivered and discussions about them were encouraged. Teachers were invited to present their experience regarding classroom organisation, to explain how new instructional tools and language labs were equipped, to organise open classes, and to answer questions raised by colleagues.¹²

(iv) Periodic five or ten-year teachers' examinations (attestation), organised by the Ministry, regional education directorates and pedagogical cabinets. This form of qualification is undertaken at individual level and consists mainly in the study of suggested linguistic and pedagogical literature and an assessment of the extent to which it has been assimilated via panel discussions or oral and written examination.

⁹Xhaka, Q. & Shqerra, F., How is the post graduating qualification organised. *Teaching*, 11.07.1973

¹⁰Conference with educators that teach the Russian language in secondary schools. *Folk Education and Culture*, no. 2, 1954, p.57-58

¹¹Zaçe, A. & Veshi, D., New experiences in foreign language teaching. *Teaching*, Tirana, 3.04.1990

¹²For the qualification of foreign language teachers. *Teaching*, 2.07.1980; Gjokoreci, A., Where there is requirement and mobilisation, there are also results. *Teaching*, 13.01.1987; etc.

(v) Individual qualification that took the form of independent study of linguistic-didactic-methodological literature.¹³ Teachers, methodologists and foreign language specialists were invited to share their expertise by publishing in journals and newspapers. In pedagogical periodicals, such as *Education and Folk Culture*, *People's Education*, *Pedagogical Magazine* and the journal *The Teacher* ("Mësuesi"), but also in regional newspapers, articles were published referring to inspections carried out in different schools. Critical analyses were presented: comments and suggestions related to teaching focused on ideological, methodological, didactic and organisational levels and teachers were named. The experiences of distinguished teachers who achieved high results were also reported, and they too were named. Usually, however, their experiences were described at a very general level, and this mostly turned them into stale slogans and formulas that had little practical value.

After 1992, as a result of the radical political, social and economic changes that occurred in the country and in Albanian society, school curricula and approaches to teacher training have been the subject of radical reform, which continues to the present. A leading role is played by the Ministry of Education and its subordinate institutions (the Institute of Pedagogical Studies, which was later divided into separate institutes and centres with different orientations), in cooperation not only with local university institutions, but also with foreign universities and centres, and with financial and logistical support from the Albanian government and foreign institutions and agencies. The forms of in-service training are national conferences, seminars and meetings with the participation of foreign trainers.

An important innovation in this period has been the visits teachers have made individually and in groups to foreign education faculties and institutions in order to receive training and an enriching experience. Another innovation that dates back to the early 1990s is the establishment of the teacher advisors whose main task was observing classes and advising teachers to improve their teaching performance. Following the restructuring of education through the 2000s to the present, the responsible authority for teacher training is the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE), which selects the agencies that provide special training modules and cooperates with Regional Education Directorates.

5.2 Pre-service teacher education

The foreign languages taught in higher education in Albania are as follows: English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, and Greek. At the end of their studies, students of these languages graduate in different fields, such as foreign language teaching, interpreting/translating, and specialist language-related areas.

Two academic institutions specialize in educating foreign language teachers in the different study cycles, the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana and the University of Shkodra. There are foreign language departments at five other universities, where students can graduate in English, Italian, French, German, and Greek. The duration of studies corresponds to the study cycles defined by the Bologna process.

¹³Lako, P. & Napuçi, P., The teacher is a permanent student/In tack of a revolutionary initiative. Teaching, 2.02.1972

The foreign language curriculum is drafted by the academic staff of the foreign language faculties or departments and approved by the appropriate committees in each institution. When a new foreign language is introduced to the first cycle, the curriculum is approved by the Higher Education Accreditation Council of the Ministry of Education and Science and by the Council of Ministers, in order to ensure its relevance and quality.

A foreign language is part of the curriculum for all students who graduate from public higher education institutions in Albania; priority is given to English, French and Italian. This language learning serves to enhance students' general education, providing them with the ability to communicate and access scientific literature in their chosen language. Depending on curricular and institutional structures, the study period is usually two or three years.

Pursuant to the law on higher education and bilateral agreements, some teaching in public higher education institutions is provided by foreign professors. Learning foreign languages within the framework of the "Bologna Process" enables students to transfer from one study program to another, at home and abroad, in master's and Ph. D studies, when programs are provided in two languages or mainly in English and another foreign language. If all students graduate with foreign language skills, this will have a positive impact on Albania's integration in the global labour market and the free movement of its citizens. It will also help academic staff and students to secure internships, while access to scientific literature in foreign languages will improve the quality of higher education.

The Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana and foreign language departments in all the public universities of Albania have as their main mission educating foreign language teachers for secondary schools, interpreters and translators, and language and culture specialists with the scientific knowledge and practical skills needed to face the challenges of the labour market at home and abroad. In order to accomplish this mission, public universities have set realistic and achievable objectives with regard to teaching, research, and services.

The University of Tirana has been educating foreign language teachers since 1947, when the Department of Russian was established in the two-year Institute. Then, with the establishment of the Higher Pedagogical Institute in 1951, the learning of Russian became widespread. In 1955, the Department of Russian had 20 pedagogues and numerous students. With the establishment of the University of Tirana in 1957, the department became part of the Faculty of History and Philology. The Department of English was established in 1960; to begin with, its only function was to prepare future English language teachers for secondary and basic schools. Five years later, in 1965, the Department of French was founded, followed by the Department of Italian in 1984, the Department of German in 1992, and the Department of Spanish in 2008. In 1995, the Department of Russian was reformed and transferred to the Department of Slavic and Balkan Languages, which has two other departments, Greek and Turkish. Students in these three departments take English as a second compulsory language in the 10 semesters of the first and second cycle. Learning a third foreign language is foreseen as a future component of the curriculum. Students of Russian will choose another Slavic language, while students of Greek and Turkish will choose one of the languages studied at the faculty.

Since 1965 the Faculty of Foreign Languages has regularly updated its courses and has produced basic textbooks for many subjects. In this way, started to become a separate administrative unit and an independent teaching and research unit. Faculty members have not only worked in the field of teaching and teacher education; they have also supervised

postgraduate dissertations, compiled dictionaries, worked as interpreters and translators, etc. In order to meet labour market demands for specialists, in 1997-1998 new courses were drafted in those departments which foresaw the introduction of new study profiles – interpreting-translating, British and American studies, intercultural communication and tourism. The new courses were implemented for the first time in the academic year 1998-1999 and continued until the academic year 2004-2005.

Starting in 2005-2006, the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana and the foreign language departments at other universities began to implement new curricula within the framework of the Bologna Process.

University study programs

The study programs provided in the first (3-year) cycle are:

1. “Linguistics, Literature and Citizenship” of the respective language
2. “Translating and Interpreting”
3. “Linguistics and Communication”

In the study programs of the first (bachelor) cycle, students take subjects that provide them with a general education, as well as linguistic and cultural subjects. Pedagogical subjects are taught in the second cycle of studies, followed by internships in schools monitored by qualified teachers.

In addition to learning their “B” language, in which they will graduate, students can choose a second (“C”) language (40 classes, 4 credits) and a third (“D”) language (40 classes, 4 credits) each academic year with a view to achieving CEFR level B1 or B2.

The study programs provided in the second cycle of studies are:

1. 2-year master’s in “Teaching”
2. 2-year master’s in “Pragmatic-literary translation and interpreting”
3. 2-year master’s in “Linguistics and intercultural and tourist communication”

In 2016, in accordance with the new law on higher education, (Articles 74 and 77), an important step was taken towards plurilingualism with the introduction of a requirement that in order to register in a second or third cycle program, students must take an exam and receive certification in an EU language – English, French, German, Italian, or Spanish. The goal is to avoid an English monopoly.

In order to increase the quality of teaching, the academic staff of departments of the Faculty of Foreign Languages participate in seminars, symposia, and scientific conferences at national and international level. They attempt to improve quality by introducing the use of new technologies and contemporary didactic methods that encourage students’ active participation and build a bridge between theory and practice.

University admissions

The number of students admitted to the Faculty of Foreign Languages is determined by the Ministry of Education and Sports. According to the regulations currently in force, every student who completes the state Matura examinations can register. Approximately 700 students are admitted every year.

The quality of entrants is a concern. According to the State Matura procedure the Faculty of Foreign Languages does not set the criteria that determine student admissions, and the law

does not prevent students from registering at the faculty even if they do not know the language they intend to study. This has a serious negative impact on the quality of entrants and graduates, especially in those departments that receive a large proportion of such students.

Progress and pass rate of students

The poor quality of entrants is reflected in the large number of failures – almost 33% of students – at the end of the first year. Regardless of the efforts of the academic staff, the pass rate in some areas reflects the quality of the entrants. The Faculty of Foreign Languages needs to propose new admission criteria, one of which might be that before coming to the university students must pass a B1-level exam in their chosen language.

Policies on scientific research

Pursuant to the Law on Higher Education, the Faculty of Foreign Languages engages in research relevant to its various areas of study, including language teaching. This activity helps students to develop research skills and improves the qualifications of academic staff.

The faculty has a research policy which, in the coming years, plans to make research a priority by supporting projects at faculty and department level. The research to be carried out is planned, and the study programs of the second and third cycles are treated as research and included in the planning process.

Research in universities that educate teachers is undertaken with a view to improving teaching methods and the quality of student learning outcomes. The Council of Professors is responsible for ensuring that all Ph.D. studies have the potential to impact positively on teaching.

There is need for a framework of competences with which graduating students would comply and which would determine the structure and content of university studies, including the professional practicum element. A challenge for the future is to implement research and disseminate the findings to students through their study program. The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) might become part of the curriculum for future language teachers.

Foreign languages in other faculties, such as the Faculties of Economics, Natural Sciences, Law, and Social Sciences, and in other institutions – the Polytechnic University, the University of Medicine, the University of Agricultural Sciences, etc. – are part of the university curriculum as occupational languages. Students admitted to the first academic year used to study the foreign language they had studied in secondary school and for which they had received a grade in the Matura (English, French). English is currently the dominant language as a result of the project “Anglophone Albania”, but recently the Faculty of Economics has experienced an increase in demand for French (nearly 400 students) as a result of projects with French universities.

The range of foreign languages offered as occupational languages should be increased across the university system.

5.3 In-service teacher training

After graduating from university, students continue to be subject to a licensing and accreditation process in accordance with Albanian legislation.

An important step is the stipulation by law that teaching is a regulated profession as regards the professional practicum, state examinations, and the financing of pre-service teachers. In order to have the right to exercise the profession of teacher, every candidate must have completed second cycle studies in the field of teaching, finished the professional practicum, and passed the state examination.

Licensing a pre-condition for employment as a teacher. The procedures governing the filling of teaching posts are drafted and approved by the Government and MoES.

The in-service teacher training is carried out through teacher' training programs accredited by the commission of training activities.

Until 2009, in-service training for foreign language teachers was organised at two levels:

- At national level, training was organised by MoES and IDE according to cycles (teachers of elementary, 9-year or secondary schools); according to teachers' work experience (every 5 or 10 years); and according to urgent training needs (in cases of undergraduate teachers).
- At local level, training of teachers is organised by Regional Education Directorates and schools according to the priorities of districts, schools or departments within the schools.
- Foreign language teachers have received training from embassies accredited to Albania and from a variety of organisations (e.g. the British Council Office, CREFECO, the Alliance Française, the Italian Institute of Culture, DAAD, and language teachers' associations).

2005 saw the launch of the Program for Quality and Equality in Education, which aimed to implement new curricula and train teachers in appropriate methods. The main steps of this scheme were:

- Development of guides for teacher training (*Quality and Equality in Education Report, paragraph 4.2.5. A*), which will cover (a) general knowledge related to the new curriculum; (b) methods and procedures through which teachers can implement the new curriculum; (c) subject-based curriculum instructions.
- Establishment of a group of at least 200-300 trainers, including teachers of foreign languages. Their role would be to train a sufficient number of regional trainers who could then provide training for teachers from rural areas.

Organising training seminars at different levels:

- (a) *The staff of Ministry of Education and Sport:* Given that the MoES plays a key role in managing, monitoring and assessing the new curriculum, members of the Curriculum Department will deal with issues related to the implementation of the curricula.
- (b) *The staff of Regional Education Directorates* (especially the members of teacher training section that should also implement the curriculum, and that are supposed to possess the necessary knowledge and skills to monitor, support, facilitate and assess this process);
- (c) *School principals* will have the task of managing, supporting, facilitating, monitoring, and assessing implementation along with the School Council;
- (d) *Expert and substitute teachers* (selected from the best teachers as general "agents/facilitators/mentors" for the implementation of curricula or as "facilitators of the

subject-based curricula”) will support the implementation process and help teachers to understand the new curriculum and, if need be, the challenges of its implementation.

- (e) *Teachers of different subjects* should be trained about the structure of the curriculum, the aim and outcome; the new content; methodology etc.
- (f) *The training of members of the community outside the education system.* Other members of the community outside the education system who are involved (civil servants from the local administration, formal and informal community leaders etc.) or who could be involved (representatives of business, central or local civil servants, analysts etc.) may play an important role because the development of education in Albania is intended to meet the social and economic challenges of the future.

School-based professional development of teachers

Section 5.3.1 of the report on Quality and Equity in Education 2016 stresses that teachers will be given methodological and professional support for specific fields or subjects with the aim of *empowering/developing general methodology*. The process of professional development will facilitate the use of the *Curriculum Support Package*, which covers the following areas: innovative teaching methods (interactive methods, cooperative learning, critical thinking), cross-curricular approaches, school-based curricula, the organisation of group learning in schools, school management, teacher self-management, collaboration among departments etc.

The professional development programme provided:

- A programme of direct training/professional development organised at regional level.
- Professionally assisted self-development for individual teachers and teams of teachers based in schools
- Evaluation of teachers’ classroom practice.

The three phases of the integration process of professional training are described below. During this phase of training three groups will be formed:

- *The staff of teachers* (groups of 25-30 teachers invited either according to schools or according to the curriculum field/subjects that they teach in keeping with the planned schedule of trainers for the ongoing monitoring of the professional development at school level).
- *The staff of expert/experienced teachers* with special duties regarding the professional development of teachers at school or regional level (trainers who have participated in other projects, teachers with training qualification, counsellors etc.); they will be trained as mentors, facilitators or substitute teachers;
- *School principals* who will form separate groups.

The training of the members of trainers of teachers sector and of the Regional Education Directorate, reserve teachers, facilitators and mentors

The staff of the Regional Education Directorates and education offices at local level, as well as experienced teachers who have been previously involved in training activities, will be trained in order to become a source teachers, facilitators or mentors.¹⁴ They will play an important role in supporting teachers’ self-development in schools.

¹⁴The name of the new function will be placed by MOES and over time it will be part of Professional Standards for the teaching profession in Albania.

It is important to mention that this is a new profession in the Albanian education system. The reference is made to a category of school councillors and the supporting personnel that can provide assistance to teachers and schools when needed. Instead of hiring new staff, we can use the services of existing staff in the Regional Education Directorates or Local Education Offices. Their functions will have changed according to their new duties. Mentors will be responsible for a number of schools and teachers, and their mentoring activity will mean a reduction in their teaching duties.

Training for this category will focus on:

- Familiarisation with the system of three-phase professional development.
- Familiarisation with the group of modules in the *Curriculum Support Package* and with the methodology for their implementation.
- Methods of organising, coordinating and assessing self-development activities at school level.
- Familiarisation with the toolkit for monitoring the quality of teacher self-development at school level.

The development of the Mentors' Guide should be included in the project.¹⁵

The training of school principals

In addition to the topics addressed earlier, school principals will be trained:

- Management and leadership
- School management
- Curriculum management
- Human resources and professional development management at school level
- Security/monitoring elements of quality

Modules on school management will be used to train school principals in the following:

- providing the support and logistics necessary for school-based training/development of teachers (for example, it is principals who organise the school schedules etc.);¹⁶
- ensuring an appropriate distribution of teachers in *reflection* and working groups according to their needs and interests;
- monitoring of the work of new teachers;
- carrying out other duties designated as a result of national, regional or local debates.

The mentor's role will be to:

- manage and monitor teacher self-development in schools;
- provide assistance to teachers individually or in groups whenever they need it;
- point teachers in the direction of additional readings, if need be;
- provide special training for newly appointed teachers;

¹⁵ It is recommended that the Mentor's Guide include: (a) instructions regarding the mentor's activity with the teachers at school level; (b) the mentor's means (worksheets that he/she will use etc.)

¹⁶ Every week, each curriculum field will have the so called "methodology day", when teachers do not teach, but they carry out methodology activities ("demonstrative classes", debates, teaching in groups for difficult topics, self-assessment etc.). The methodology day for a curriculum area will be set for the whole region or country to correlate all these activities.

- use the toolkit from the *Mentor's Guide* to support, monitor and assess teachers' performance.

Recommendations for teachers:

- comprehensive study of the modules in the Curriculum Support Package;
- discussions and debates among teachers;
- identification of the best practices in school;
- reflection on the best practices;
- production of a *Reflection Paper*, in which teachers can write what can be improved regarding these practices;
- interactive planning activities for the implementation of the methods studied (when, how, what kind of expected results);
- “demonstration classes”, supervision and discussion about school practices;
- preparation of teachers' or teacher groups' files.

It is recommended that every month two methodology activities should be organised for *reflective groups* in schools. Also, it is suggested that teachers work in pairs to monitor and supervise each other.

The role of pilot schools

These schools will operate as centres that provide other institutions with:

- spaces for conducting training on a larger scale, exchanging experience, organising seminars, roundtables etc.;
- training for teachers;
- activities for sharing best practice;
- consultancy about the most innovative practices carried out in schools.

Theoretically, these schools can organise days of professional training, when the staff of another school can visit. Such days can be organised as follows:

- participation of the invited staff in the school's daily activities;
- short training sessions based on what the visitors have observed (school management, organisation of methodological discussions, working groups, demonstration classes, innovative methods).

Evaluation of teachers' classroom practice and their performance of other tasks

During this period of change, the focus on professionally assisted self-development should help to improve teachers' classroom performance. It is not enough teachers participate in training activities; they must also improve their teaching methods by self-development so that their students achieve better results. In order for teachers to be awarded credits for the self-development activities they undertake, it is necessary for them to:

- take part in a three-day training session at regional level;
- take part in the activities of a reflective group at school;
- compile a personal development file;
- teach two demonstration classes, one at the beginning of the process and one at the end;
- be highly rated during class inspections (done at intervals so that the effects of individual development activity can be observed);

- take part in regional seminars on pedagogical innovations;
- meet the standards of professional development specified in the *evaluation form* by their mentors;
- take part in an interview with the group of mentors in their own or another school.

Teachers who successfully complete this professional development process will be awarded a certificate by a teacher training centre. The certificate will specify the number of credits acquired according to the criteria set by MoES and the teacher training centre, as a tool for the quality of the training.

According to data collected in the two last years, a situation exists which we wish to change as soon as possible since teachers are fundamental to the successful learning of foreign languages.

- In secondary and vocational schools, 94.6% of foreign language teachers have a university degree; of those qualified teachers 93% teach English and 97.3% teach German.
- 84% of the teachers in the system are qualified.
- 140 (8.9%) foreign language teachers also teach another subject, and 657 (41.9%) do not possess a relevant qualification.
- 56% of foreign language teachers involved in the training process have been rated “Good” (C), 22% have been rated “Very good” (B), and 11% of English language teachers have been rated "Poor.", which is an indication that the English language teachers received lower results.
- The recently graduated teachers have received lower marks because the level of difficulty of the test requirements has increased compared to previous years.
- 82% of foreign language teachers were registered for the state examination, of whom 67% passed and 33% failed.

To date the following reforms have been made to the professional development of teachers:

- A Directive of the minister provides a special fund from the state budget to allow schools to train their personnel.
- The fund is distributed “per teacher”.
- The fund is used for three purposes: (1) training, (2) to provide pedagogical counselling by specialists or outstanding teachers, (3) to allow teachers of the same subject to participate in professional networks.
- Training is provided in modules.
- Modules are divided into two types, optional and compulsory.
- The list of compulsory modules is designed according to the needs of central policies for the professional development of teachers and school principals.
- Teachers are assessed on the modules they select. The credits they acquire contribute to their progress up the professional scale.

Modular training has been used for teachers, principals and vice-principals of schools, as well as for specialists of REDs/EOs and school inspectors.

In 2009, MoES took into consideration the review of the new modules and the alternatives to the training of the teachers, apart from the basic training scheme of Institute of Curriculum and Training (nowadays IDE) and the central and local structures of the education system, such as the use of teachers' portfolios and credits, distance or online training. MoES

encouraged the creation of non-public institutions for the training of teachers as a way of supporting teachers' individual efforts to improve their performance in compliance with the requirements of the labour market (National education strategy 2009-2013, p. 24-26).

The reform of teacher training during this period marks a transition from a supply-based to a demand-based system, and this resulted in something approaching a free market in in-service training. Different providers of training services, like universities, private agencies, NGO, individuals, schools, etc., competed with one another. A central Accreditation Commission was established with the role of licensing the modules that were officially approved. Schools were free to choose the training agencies that provided the services most appropriate to their needs.

In 2012 and 2013, 51 training agencies were licensed; between them they offered 739 training modules for teachers based on an assessment process for the modules presented, of the trainers' qualification as well as of the setting provided for the training to take place. According to current data, this initiative was unsuccessful due to a lack of monitoring on the part of the Accreditation Commission and the poor quality of the modules provided.

Following the examination of 17,613 teachers throughout the country, the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE) presented its *National Report on the Identification of Needs* for the training of teachers and school principals in March 2016. The findings include the following:

- 25% of teachers had a very satisfactory knowledge of their subject, 64% had a satisfactory knowledge but needed some improvement, and 12% were seriously or urgently in need of improvement.
- The average score per teacher was 21.4 points out of 30.
- The scores of the teachers in rural schools were overall almost equal to and in some cases higher than the scores of the teachers in urban schools. This is true for both the overall rating and the fields such as; Planning; Teaching and learning; Ethics and Communication; Professional development.
- The lowest scores were found in the area of professional development, where the number of teachers assessed at levels 1 and 2 (teachers in serious or urgent need of improvement) was 35%.
- Vice-principals achieved higher scores, than principals and teachers.
- The REDs with the highest scores were Berat, Shkodra, Korça, Fieri, and Tirana. The REDs with the lowest scores were Kukësi, Dibra, and Vlora.

Besides the existing teacher evaluation scheme, the MoES introduced a new method to ensure the quality of teachers and to avoid subjectivity in the teachers' employment and increase transparency in this field, the ranking of teachers based on a new test was carried out and teachers were ranked in a public website according to their results.

As well as encouraging the creation of non-public institutions to provide in-service training and supporting individual teachers' efforts to improve their performance in compliance with the requirements of the labour market, the MoES should have created a mechanism to monitor the quality of the service provided.

Embassies accredited in Tirana have made many contributions to in-service language teacher training, like the project "Global English" and "English for Skills", which is an ongoing collaboration between the MoES and the British Council. The aim of these projects is to help

teachers of English, and teachers working in vocational schools use new resource online materials and adopting the curriculum to the market needs. The ILIRIA Project to train Italian language teachers continues to operate and is monitored by the School Office of the Italian Embassy in Tirana. Collaboration with CREFECO and AUF for the training of French language teachers is also ongoing, and the different language teachers' associations continue to play an important role in the professional development of teachers.

Regarding the training of foreign language teachers in grades III, IV and V there should be highlighted the particularity of teaching in these grades. From the legal point of view, it is necessary that these teachers be graduated and licensed to work with children of this age group, but in fact this kind of teaching is done by teachers graduated for teaching in 9-year schools (VI-IX). This discrepancy should be legally regulated. This challenge points out the need for foreign language teachers specialized in this age group.

GRADES 3 & 4 CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

Primary school lays the foundation for everything that society deems worthy of learning. English plays an important role in this learning. Having students begin English lessons at a young age has a positive influence on their development and their growing sense of identity, sensitising them to the concept of linguistic and cultural diversity. Through foreign language lessons in the primary school, children gain an early awareness of foreign languages and about learning in general.

The English lessons for young learners should

- *take advantage of the psychological and physical abilities of children, such as their enormous physical energy, their keen desire to learn, their need to communicate, their desire to express themselves creatively, and their ability to imitate;

- *offer children the possibility to develop in multiple ways; and

- *recognise that this age is an intensive period of learning, a most appropriate age at which to introduce the challenges of learning a new language (keeping in mind that learning of foreign language also accelerates children's intellectual growth.)

AIMS

The English lesson for this age group aims to

- *transmit to children a beginning foundation of a foreign language, giving them a "feel" for language as a means of communication

- *contribute to the multiple ways in which children are developing intellectual, physical, emotional and linguistic:

- *enables students to listen and understand, reproduce, and create some simple utterances in the foreign language; and

- *Create an environment in which students are eager to listen to the teacher's English and respond appropriately, ask and answer questions, and describe objectives in their immediate environment.

PRINCIPLES

1. A non - formal teaching environment: Teachers must respect the age- group abilities (physical,emotional, and intellectual) of their students.Children of this age learn best in non-formal environments.Therefore, games, song, poetry, storytelling, and hands on physical activities should characterise the lesson.

2.Variety and student self - expression: teachers should use a variety of methods, approaches, and techniques. In each lesson,students' creativity and self- expression should be encouraged through activities and tasks which stretch the imagination.

3.Listening input: Richly contextualized listening input is a crucial component in early language learning,and the teacher should provide many opportunities for the development of listening comprehension through such activities as storytelling based on pictures, photos, or other visual stimuli and Total Physical Response.

4.Approach to grammar: Grammatical awareness will be acquired through listening and communication rather than through explicit grammar explanation and instruction. Students at this age do not have the ability to profit from grammar instruction.

5. Dealing with errors: Making frequent errors in early language development is normal.With continued exposure to English, and plenty of practice,students will gradually move closer to the target language.Overcorrection can harm motivation and natural language development.

GRADE 3

PROFICIENCY DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE FOUR SKILLS

NOTE: The four skills should be integrated in each lesson

LISTENING

Students respond at near -normal speed to simple teacher instructions and commands with physical actions .They understand simple stories which are based on pictures and can point to the correct picture when story sentences are mixed up.They can identify a variety of objects by pointing when they hear the name.

SPEAKING

Students pronounce words and phrases they have learned in a compressible way.They give short responses to what they see or hear, expressing their wishes, feelings, and preferences.

READING

Students understand specific words,making correct sound - symbol correspondences. Students are able to read known words and phrases aloud.They demonstrate comprehension of very short,simple texts and dialogues.

WRITING

Students can copy words and short phrases they have learned.They are able to complete fill-in -the -blanks exercises, choosing the correct word from among a list of words.

TOPICS

1. EVERY DAY LIFE

Parts of the body
Home,rooms furniture
Clothes
Toys
Objects around me
Colours
Meals: food,fruit,vegetables.

2. SCHOOL LIFE

The classroom
My friends(classmates)
Objects around me
Mathematics: numbers 1-20.

3.THE WORLD AROUND US.

Nature
Animals, pets
Circus

COMMUNICATIVE ACTS\ FUNCTIONS

Greeting friends and teacher.

Good morning afternoon! Hello! Good bye! Bye- bye.

Introducing friends.

This is Mira. Agim, this is Artan.

Asking about people and answering.

What is your name ? My name is.....

Who are you? I am

How are you? I am fine. Fine thanks.

Who is this? he/she is

What is the name of your friend?

How old are you?

Have you got a brother,sister? Yes I have. No I have not.

Asking about things and replying .

What is this?

Where is the ball?

What colour is the shirt?

Being polite when handing things and thanking.

Here you are. Thank you. Not at all.

Asking and offering.

A ball please. Can I have a?

Expressing good wishes.

A happy New Year, Merry Christmas,Happy birthday to you!

Inquiring about location:giving location

e.g. Where are you from? Where is your school?

LANGUAGE STRUCTURES

Imperatives: Stand up! Sit Down! Repeat after me!

Verbs : to be, to have, can (affirmative,interrogative,negative.)

Tenses : Present tense

Present continuos tense

Articles: A, An,the

Plural of nouns (+ s) third form singular, e.g. : one dog - three dogs

Adjectives. Big,small,red, green,etc

A + adj. + noun . e.g. a red apple. a long pencil, etc.

Personal pronouns : I, you,he, she, it.

Possessive adjectives : My, your, his,her.

Prepositions: in ,on, under, near, far, behind, in front of.

There is, there are.

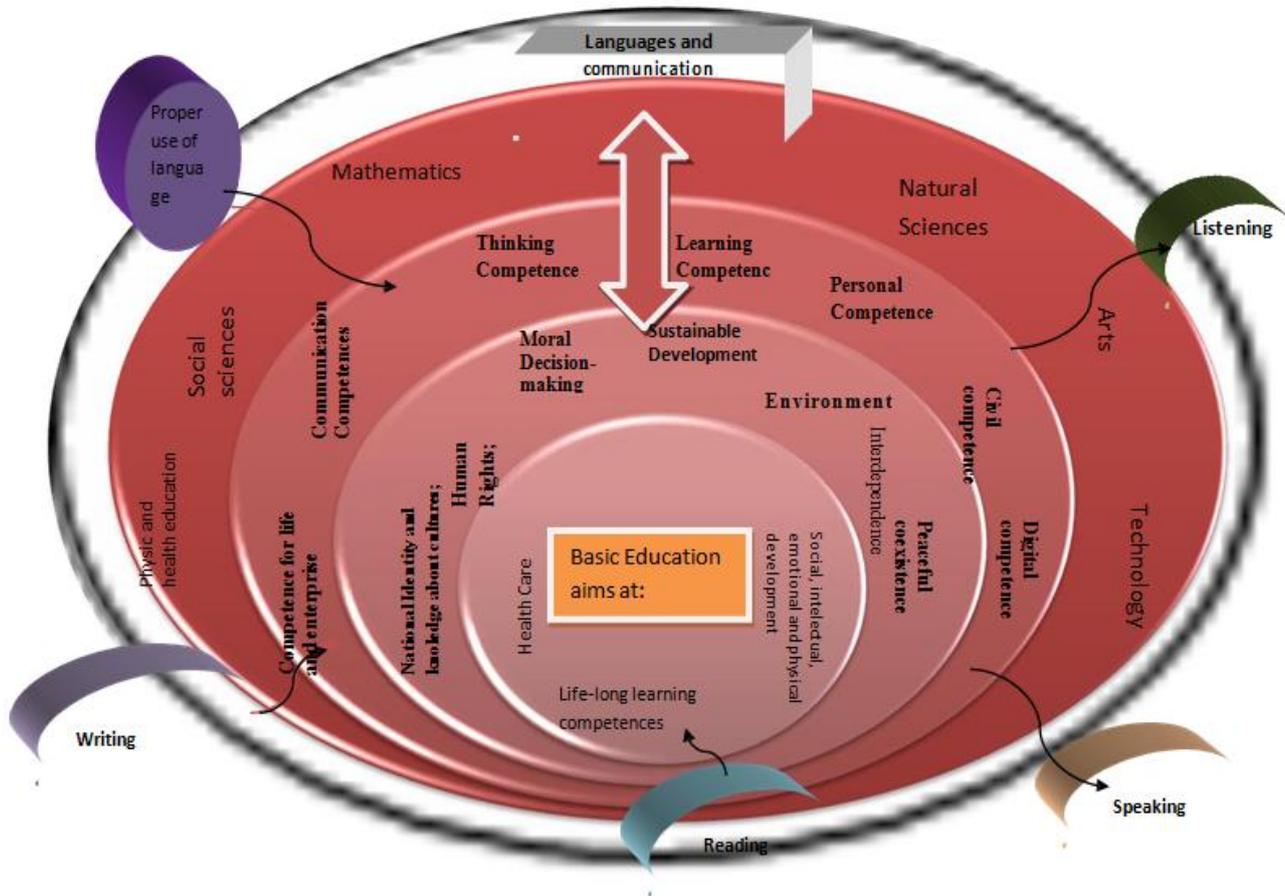
How many

Wh.questions.

Who, what, where This - That

Appendix 2: Conceptual Framework of Curricula based on Competences 2013

Coceptual framework of the curricula



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Agjensia Kombëtare e Provimeve - <http://www.akp.gov.al/>

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Other Documents

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment - http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

European Language Portfolio - <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>