

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





Main trends

Over the past decade more Council of Europe member states have been setting formal language and knowledge of society requirements as part of their migration and integration policies.

Most member states set formal language and knowledge of society requirements when migrants apply for citizenship. In half of the member states migrants need to meet these requirements for residency - in one third also prior to entry.

There are substantial and striking differences in the specific level of language proficiency required between member states.

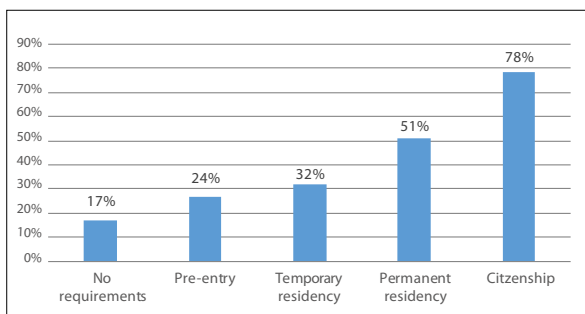
Vulnerable groups (minors, refugees, low-literate learners) are rarely exempt from tests.

Many member states use tests that have not been subject to appropriate quality control. The impact of tests on migrants is very rarely investigated.

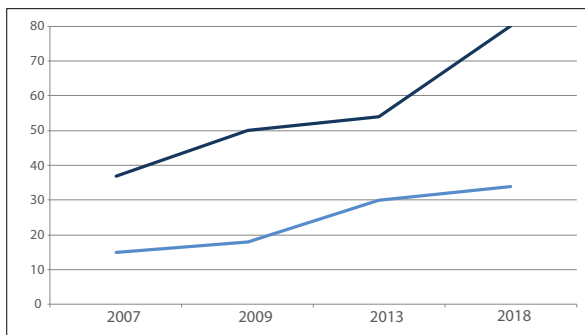
Almost all member states provide language learning opportunities for migrants, but the number of hours provided is often insufficient, especially for vulnerable groups.

Requirements and tests

Of the member states surveyed in 2018, 78 percent had language and/or knowledge of society requirements for citizenship. 17 percent had no such requirements as part of their migration policy:



Between 2007 and 2018 more countries have started implementing language tests (dark blue) and knowledge of society tests (light blue) especially for citizenship purposes:



Language requirements are almost always expressed in CEFR levels, but there is little consistency in the levels required for the same purpose across member states.

Learning opportunities

Language courses for migrants are often state-provided and quality-controlled. In most cases, however, migrants only receive up to 250 hours of language instruction free of charge:

Hours of language instruction provided free of charge

	All learners (n = 24)	Low-literate learners (n = 22)
0 – 250	11	13
250 – 500	8	4
500 – 1000	4	2
1000 – 1500	1	2
2000 – 3000	0	1

Many member states offer knowledge of society courses. In most cases they are only provided in an official language of the host country.

Few member states pay sufficient attention to vulnerable groups in their integration policy: For minors, there are few language learning provisions outside of the compulsory school system, and the specific needs of refugees and low-literate learners are rarely catered to.

Recommendations

- ▶ Since courses are likely to be more beneficial to integration than tests, learning opportunities should be affordable and accessible to all.
- ▶ If tests are used for migration purposes, they should meet the highest standards of quality and fairness.
- ▶ When designing migration and integration policies, particular attention should be devoted to vulnerable groups.
- ▶ Due to human rights concerns, the use of pre-entrance requirements for family reunification is strongly discouraged.

Of the 47 Council of Europe member states,
40 participated in the 2018 survey:



The Council of Europe and ALTE survey was
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Download the full report:
www.coe.int/lang-migrants
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