



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE COMMISSIONERS

Fifth Annual Conference of the International  
Association of Language Commissioners  
“MULTILINGUALISM: VALUE AND/OR  
OBLIGATION”

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## Background

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The fifth annual conference of the International Association of Language Commissioners was held on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The host to this event this time was the Office of the language Commissioner of the Republic of Kosovo. This Association's mission is to support and advance language rights, equality, and diversity by supporting the Language Commissioners around the world to work on the highest professional standards. Members of the association share experience, research, and information; facilitate trainings and cooperate with like-minded organizations. This year's conference was on "Multilingualism: value and/or obligation". Many members of the International Association of Language Commissioners were present and some of them held their presentations in some of the sessions. At the conference there were also present many members of the civil society, professors, and civil servants.

## Welcome Remarks

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The ceremony was opened by the Kosovo Language Commissioner Mr. Slaviša Mladenović who offered a warm welcome for all the conference participants. In his speech Mr. Mladenović among other things stated that protecting and promoting language rights is an obligation for protecting basic human rights and essential for good governance. These rights are very important for a democratic society, they are a constitutive element to preserve cultural identity, prevent marginalization and discrimination. They are very important in preventing tensions and conflicts between the majority community and non-majority communities. Kosovo has a very advanced linguistic legal framework by having the Law No.02/L-37 on the Use of Official Languages in the Constitution and regulation No. 07/2012 on the Office of the Language Commissioner. The Albanian and Serbian languages have equal status as official languages of the Republic of Kosovo. Although, Kosovo has a modern legislation on language rights there are still difficulties in implementing them in our everyday life in Kosovo. This year's conference will offer the possibility to exchange ideas and good practices to overcome the challenges in promoting and protecting language rights.

Mr. Slaviša Mladenović introduced the next speaker, his excellency the Prime Minister of Kosovo Mr. Ramush Haradinaj. He informed the public that Kosovo has two official languages – Albanian and Serbian. Even though Serbian has its difficulties in being implemented, all the governmental legislation is prepared in both languages. He encouraged everyone to learn the language of each other. Mr. Haradinaj had a public request which was that in our European future we need to know the language of each other and respect the language of the other. He said that, "we show respect to others if we know their language and greet them in that language."

The next speaker Meri Huws, the Welsh Language Commissioner and Outgoing Chair of the International Association of Language Commissioners spoke highly of the association to which she has been a chair of for two years and acknowledged the work of all the representatives of each jurisdiction and language commissioners of each member of the association. "This association is not a baby anymore, it has grown and each member of it knows its role on the linguistic rights to the place they represent. We as an association share experiences, we are individuals that support each other, we share analysis and Kosovo is very much a part of it" said Meri Huws among other things. The annual Association conferences have

proved to be very important in strengthening our international understanding and learn from other jurisdiction's experiences and best practices.

## Session 1: Enhancing service delivery in official languages: Active Offer

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The Chair of the Session was Ivan Nikolić, Director of NGO "CSD" Kosovo. He stated that in Kosovo we do have an issue in implementing the official languages. For this reason, his organization has drafted plans and strategies in cooperation with the Office of the Language Commissioner. His message to all the youngsters of all the ethnic communities in Kosovo is to learn the language of each other to respect each other.

The first speaker of the session Mr. Raymond Théberge, Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada in Ottawa held a presentation on "Enhancing service delivery in Official Languages: Active Offer". *Active Offer*<sup>1</sup> is a tool which as Mr. Théberge said is the work of his team back in Canada for government employees.

Before continuing to explain what the active offer is he presented the context upon which this tool was developed. According to a 2011 census, 98% of Canadians can conduct a conversation in either official language. More than 94% of Canadians speak one of the two official languages on a regular basis at home, 57% speak English as their first language, 21.7 % speak French as their first language. This linguistic duality is reflected across Canada in the offer and provision of services by federal institutions which are required by law to provide services in both languages. In 2016, they conducted a survey which pointed out that federal employees are not aware that making an active offer is their obligation and they assume the client's language preference and that the client is aware of the services offered in both official languages.

Active offer is an offer that federal employees should make to their clients for the purpose of informing them that service is available in both languages and make them comfortable. Even though there are visual signs that show availability of services in both languages it is the verbal active offer makes people comfortable with asking services in their own language. Active offer must be offered by federal employees at all levels to ensure excellence in service. Managers also have a role to play because they should make sure that there are employees to offer services in both languages and should include it in the performance evaluation of their employees. Executives should demonstrate leadership to show that active offer is a priority. A culture of active offer starts with the leadership, and that should be a part of every organization. Make sure that clients can come to their offices and be sure that the services will be offered in their first language. It is important that a person that is in a position of power should also make an active offer since people are insecure when dealing with these authorities and forget to ask for the service in their own language.

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<sup>1</sup> Active offer. Available at: <http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca/sites/default/files/active-offer-tool.pdf> [Accessed May 20, 2018]

The next speaker Mr. François Boileau, Language Commissioner in Ontario, Canada supported the previous speaker in the Active Offer and held a presentation on “*Making Active Offer Integral to Any Official Languages Act*”.

He said it is not the same to talk about language rights here with those in Canada. Mr. Boileau comes from Ontario which is the largest province in Canada where English is the main language because only 5% of the population is French speaking. This small percentage of French speaking population makes them a minority in that area and delivery of services in French is not always equal to English services even though there is a *French Language Services Act* to ensure the rights to communication and services delivered in French are respected by the provincial government. For this issue, the office of the French Languages Services Commissioner of Ontario issued a *Special Report on Active offer of Services in French: The Cornerstone for Achieving the objectives of Ontario’s French Language Services Act*<sup>2</sup>. This report includes the shortcomings in the offer of service and reflects the effects on the quality of the services.

Mr. Boileau mentioned six key elements to improve the shortcomings:

- Ensure that the public is informed about the availability of services
- Make the offer of service in both languages, starting with the first contact
- Assure client that they have the choice of using either language of service
- Ensure that the service is provided in a culturally appropriate way
- Ensure that the client feels comfortable with how the services are provided
- Ensure the service offered is of equivalent quality to that in majority language

There are many real-life examples in the lack of French language services in some of the most crucial services such as healthcare and justice which put French speakers in a position of disfavor.

The last speaker for this panel was Mrs. Rozafa Ukimeraj – Çuni, Secretary general, Ministry of Local Government Administration in Kosovo. She had a presentation on the work of the Ministry of Local government on enforcing the use of all official languages of Kosovo. In some of the municipalities of Kosovo there are more than two official languages e.g. Turkish or Roma community language.

The municipalities draft regulations regarding the use of official languages and today 34 out of 38 municipalities have their own regulations. It is important to mention that during municipal meetings there is simultaneous translation for non-Albanian members of the meeting. However, in most cases municipalities do not respect multilingualism when drafting regulations and translate documents. This is sometimes linked with the high cost of translating official documents. This will continue to be a challenge as long as the municipalities do not have enough budget to cover these expenses. The municipalities have updated their webpages and they are in Kosovo’s two official languages and English. All the different reports of the respective municipalities can be found in three languages.

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<sup>2</sup> Special Report on Active offer of Services in French: The Cornerstone for Achieving the objectives of Ontario’s French Language Services Act, 2016. Available at: [http://csfontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OFLSC-257785-Special-Report\\_October-2016\\_ENG.pdf](http://csfontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/OFLSC-257785-Special-Report_October-2016_ENG.pdf) [Accessed May 20, 2018]

## Honorary Speeches

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Jan Braathu – Ambassador to the OSCE Mission in Kosovo spoke about how delighted he is that the conference is taking place in Prishtina this time because OSCE mission has continuously supported community rights in Kosovo, including here language rights as well. He stated that the whole spirit of a community is embodied in a language. We must understand the language of our neighbors to understand their culture.

In the past Kosovo people spoke Albanian, Serbian, and even Turkish languages interchangeably and that is not being embraced by the Kosovo youth today, perhaps because of lack of opportunity to learn these languages. Kosovo is multilingual and it's worth it to keep nurturing it into the future. Its youth are eager to learn other languages, why not learning the language of the communities that live in their country. He recommended to read the *Oslo recommendations* of 1998 which is about Linguistic rights of National Minorities and OSCE has been actively promoting them in Kosovo since the beginning of the mission.

Mr. Kuno Schlaefli, First Secretary – Human resource Adviser at the embassy of Switzerland held the speech on behalf of the Embassy of Switzerland in Kosovo. He stated that language is politically sensitive in Kosovo and that language is power – it can be used to divide or to integrate. Knowing two or more official languages of the country you live is an advantage. In Switzerland if one knows French it has a possibility of getting a 40% higher salary.

In Kosovo there is a situation where no Serb learns Albanian and no Albanian learns Serbian. Kosovo should draft a strategy to offer a systematic solution to this situation since there is a Serb/Albanian majority issue. He concluded his speech with a quote: *“Language is a weapon – keep it sharp.”*

## Session 2: Encouraging learning of official languages through education: challenges and opportunities

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This session was chaired by Mr. Adrian Zeqiri, Executive Director of NGO “ECMI”- European Center for Minority Issues, Kosovo and Mrs. Safete Grajçevci, Coordinator for compliance assurance on the Office of the Language Commissioner of the Republic of Kosovo.

“ECMI” developed a project to advance the language law that will provide legal and policy framework for the use of languages in Kosovo. It was the Office of Language Commissioner that laid out language rights of each community in Kosovo, equal official use of Serbian and Albanian and has worked tirelessly on the implementation of the law.

The first speaker of this session Mr. Sadik Idrizi, professor at the University of Prizren, Kosovo held a presentation on “The importance of higher education in the minority languages. Case study: The University of Prizren”. Mr. Idrizi started his presentation by speaking in general of language and community rights. Using your own language is one of the fundamental rights and that language defines you as a member of a community and culture, it allows us to preserve and transmit our culture to future generations. It does not matter if your language is one of the minority languages of that country, it still is

one of your fundamental rights. Language rights in Kosovo are defined by core legislation documents of the Republic of Kosovo. *Article 5 of the Constitutions of Kosovo*<sup>3</sup> defines Albanian and Serbian as the two official languages in Kosovo while Turkish, Bosnian and Roma languages have the status of official languages in the municipal level. Kosovo has a good legal basis for official languages, but the problem is still its implementation.

The University of Prizren which was established in 2009 and has started working from 2010 is the second public university in Kosovo and today has around 15,000 students. The university of Prizren is the only university in Kosovo that offers Bachelor and Master studies in three languages: Albanian, Bosnian, and Turkish. However, there are difficulties in accrediting the Bosnian and Turkish programs because the Kosovo Accreditation Agency requires at least 4 professors in a concentration to accredit it. Some of the concentrations in these other languages do not have enough professors to be accredited. As a result, many of the minority students register in Albanian programs.

Up to date 573 students have graduated the University of Prizren from the programs in other languages, 349 from the Bosnian program and 224 from Turkish program. However, these programs need more logistical and technical support, its study programs need to be redefined and harmonized with contemporary trends in European education and in accordance with community and market needs.

The next speaker Lowri Wynne Williams, a Senior Policy Officer in Wales presented “Welsh medium education – to fly or to flounder?”. She started by giving some background on the Welsh-medium education. The Welsh Government has set itself a target to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050 as well as to increase the percentage of people who speak Welsh daily from 10% to 20%. In 1911, there were nearly a million Welsh speakers over three years old in Wales. By 1981 the number was down to 504,000. Some underlying factors for the decline were immigration, outmigration, an increase in the dominance of the English language and the resulting negativity towards a minority language.

During the 1960’s there was an increased awareness of the decline of status of Welsh language and Welsh speakers protested wanting more status and measures to stop and reverse this decline. For this reason, in 1967 *The Welsh Language Act*<sup>4</sup> was passed and gave more rights to people to use Welsh in legal settings and official documents. Today, Welsh is an official language as a result of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure in 2011. This measure also set up the Welsh Language Commissioner and obliged public institutions to comply with standards to give more rights to Welsh language speakers.

The Welsh Government together with local authorities are responsible for the direction and focus of the education system in Wales. Schools have different language categories. The medium of teaching all subjects are English and Welsh and other languages vary according to the category. There are four categories of schools: Welsh-medium, Bilingual schools, English-medium and other schools. There has been a decline in the number of schools in Wales over the past ten years which means fewer Welsh

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<sup>3</sup> The constitution of Kosovo, 2008 Available at: <http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/Constitution1Kosovo.pdf> [Accessed May 21, 2018]

<sup>4</sup> The Welsh language Act of 1967 Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/66/enacted> [Accessed May 20, 2018]

medium schools. However, the percentage of Welsh medium schools out of the total has remained constant. This does not fulfil the targets set out by the Welsh Government.

There has been improvement in higher education due to significant investment and planning on behalf of a body dedicated to developing the language in higher education. Education has been key in stopping the decline of the Welsh language over the past forty years. “However, we have come to a point where there is no increase” said Mrs. Williams.

The development of Welsh in Education is an important part of the Government’s 2050 Strategy. It includes targets and outcomes such as increasing the proportion of learners leaving school able to speak Welsh, increasing the proportion of learners in Welsh medium education and important targets also for increasing the numbers of teachers able to teach the language as a subject and through the medium of the language. The targets and performance indicators have been taken from the Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-2021 that goes hand in hand with the 2050 Strategy. This is a very critical time for Welsh medium-education. It is a time of great opportunity but if it is not done right it is also a time of great risk.

The next speaker of the session Orla de Burca, a Communications manager from Ireland thanked the Language Commissioner of Kosovo and his team for their hospitality and for organizing this year’s conference.

Mrs. De Burca works with the Irish Language Commissioner (An Coimisinéir Teanga) whose office was set up in 2004 under the *Official Languages Act*<sup>5</sup>. Her presentation was on the “The challenges accessing Irish language education and the possibility of overcoming them”. She presented the two main elements of the *Official languages Act* the first one being the Direct Provisions and the second one Language schemes. The direct provisions included the right of the members of the houses of the parliament to use either official language, to reply on written communication in the same official language, to make signs and regulations in both official languages, certain publications such as public policy proposals, annual reports, audited accounts and statements of strategy as well as official place names be in both official languages. The language schemes are to be drawn up when requested by the Minister and should include websites, counter services, telephone services, forms and leaflets, public meetings etc. Each scheme lasts 3 years, however it is recommended that the scheme system be replaced by a system of standards.

In 2016 parents complained to An Coimisinéir Teanga about the decision of the Minister for Education and Skills not to award patronage for an all-Irish multi-denominational primary school in a specific area (Drumcondra/ Marino/Dublin 1) despite a high level of demand for Irish language multi-denominational education in the area (361 students). Awarding patronage is the first step in the establishment of a new school. A new competitive process had been put in place by the Department of Education where patronage is awarded to the patron with the highest number of students – similar to a tender process.

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<sup>5</sup> Official Languages Act 2003 Available at: <https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/Guidebook-Oifig-an-Choimisineara-Teanga-Version4.pdf> [Accessed May 20, 2018]



The Language Commissioner's first step was to examine the relevant legislation – specifically the *Education Act 1998*<sup>6</sup>. The Act contains a number of objectives – 13 in total, two of which were relevant for the case:

- (1) To contribute to the realization of national policy and objectives in relation to the extension of bilingualism in Irish society and in particular the achievement of a greater use of the Irish language at school and in the community
- (2) To promote the linguistic and cultural needs of students having regard to the choices of their parents

A new independent body had been set up by the Department called the New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG) to review the applications for patronage once they had been screened and filtered by the Department. The NSEG were charged with making a recommendation to the Minister in each case. The body were provided with three specific criteria: geographical, numerical and diversity of ethos. The Department maintained that the word 'diversity' referred to both ethos and language.

The Department advised, however, that they had now decided to add a section of language choice to the form to be completed by parents as part of the patronage application. Ethos and language will in future be presented as two separate choices. A new online system is being introduced by the Department, which will facilitate analysis of data and breakdown of demand into streams.

The findings if the new body have not been published yet, but will be in our Annual Report, which is to be launched next week. However, they are in line with the Coimisinéir Teanga's view of the importance of education and the relative strength of the Education Act.

The final speaker for this session Mr. Dukagjin Pupovci, an expert on education from Kosovo talked about "Challenges of learning the official languages in Kosovo". Mr. Pupovci started his presentation with a personal example which he hoped it would help him explain the complexity of learning the languages of the community in this country. He was part of a generation where they learned the Serbian language in school as well as in the streets. In 1981 he has started his studies at the university of Prishtina in the field of mathematics. At that time most of the professors recommended that they read Russian literature because the Soviet Union continuously published quality books and literature. For them they were easily accessible and cheap. "While my generation and myself knew very well Serbian we did not have problems in understanding the Russian literature" said Mr. Pupovci. This has helped them a lot getting through university.

Four years later, in 1985 Mr. Pupovci started teaching at the same university, he continued the practice of recommending his students the Russian literature. This practice lasted until 1991 when they were taken out of university. At that time from one university two universities were created: the Serbian university supported by the state and the Albanian university persecuted by the state. It was interesting that at the time when the university was split in two parts, both parts had the same programs while the Serbian university did not have a program in Albanian and the Albanian university did not have a

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<sup>6</sup> Education Act 1998 Available at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/enacted/en/pdf> [Accessed May 21, 2018]

program in Serbian. Since 1991, Albanians decided not to learn the Serbo-Croatian language and Serbs had earlier decided not to learn Albanian. It was part of the national identity of each group not to learn the language of the other – it was not patriotic to do so. The Russian program in the Albanian university was closed after around three years because no one wanted to learn that language of the country that supported the Milosevic occupation.

The after-war period brought an even bigger gap between Serbs and Albanians to the point where even if one knew the language of the other they preferred to communicate in English. During these 19 years of post-war period there was no serious attempt from the Kosovo youth to learn the language of each other. Today, people who know the languages of each other are 32 years or older. Our society has not understood that by learning the language of each other we do not lose our own culture.

### Panel 3: Dealing with the past: Language status in post conflict societies, and its effect on reconciliation

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The third and the last session concerning the language status in post-conflict societies was chaired by Mrs. Remzije Istrefi, a professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Prishtina.

The first speaker Mr. Hilmi Jashari, the Ombudsman of Kosovo expressed gratitude to the organizers of the conference for their work they do and for organizing the conference. He started his speech by an English quote: “No size fits all” meaning that Kosovo has had a unique past comparing to other countries because it has been under an international administration for a period of 8 years. This administration’s language of operation was English and it’s amazing the amount of influence that this administration has had upon our institutions as a lawmaking authority, as a leader of the judicial council and other executive roles that now the prime minister has, “even the queen of England will be jealous with the power an administration like this had upon Kosovo” said Mr. Jashari.

In 2008, Kosovo finally gets its own constitution created with international standards and above all ensuring equality regarding the usage of official languages – having Serbian as an official language which is a good indicator of their inclusion in Kosovar institutions. For a future perspective, Kosovar leadership should choose their mechanisms wisely in a way that they would help integrate the Serb community.

Mr. Jashari presented an example from one of his own experiences where it was required that the ombudsman helps resolve the issue. The story is about a village which was particularly split in two parts: the Serbian part and the Albanian part. Each of them needed something from the other part, the Albanian part needed to use the mill which was in the Serbian part and the Serbian part needed to have access on the water pipeline which was on the Albanian part. The first step that was undertaken to resolve the issue was setting a meeting with both parts. At this meeting all it was talked about and discussed were political tensions and mutual accusations in general. On the second meeting, they started to discuss the actual problems they had in accessing the mill and the water pipeline. On the third meeting, the ombudsman did not need to say a word because they were doing the talking by themselves and offering practical solutions to the problem, even forgetting that the ombudsman was there. This is an example that dialog between two communities can happen and can resolve major mutual issues.

The exclusion of the minority communities in decision making process tells us that there is still a lot to do in this aspect. The ombudsman can build the multiethnic inclusion on the society by addressing all the concerns that are a continuous part of our everyday lives. The office of the ombudsman of Kosovo each year issues a report on the cases it has worked and where does each community stand. This report each year is handed to the Kosovo Parliament and it was never discussed or considered. The assembly deputies did not understand that this report does not go to the assembly to be voted but it's a way of telling them where we stand as a society and it is supposed to help them when drafting policy and changing laws. The Kosovar authorities should at least respect the constitution which represents the way of living of this country if not by looking at reports and strategies offered by the ombudsman.

Mr. Rafael Sainz de Rozas Bedialauneta, the head of the Language Rights Department in the Basque Country was the next speaker with a presentation with the topic "Looking into the future: Normalizing bilingualism as a path towards reconciliation in the Basque Country". Mr. Sainz de Rozas stated: "We come from a community that has just come out of a war. ETA has dissolved and there will not be any more fighting – yesterday they officially announced their dissolution." The dirty war against terror and human rights violations have finally come to an end. One of the reasons this conflict was fueled was the lack of language rights, the Basque language is spoken only by 36% of the population.

During the Franco years (1937-1975) when the political and legal uniformitarian process was happening linguistic diversity was seen as a threat. You were considered a patriot if you spoke Spanish and no other language. When the Dictatorship ended in 1975 language rights were recognized for the Basque Country, they could use both official languages orally and in writing. The following fundamental rights were recognized:

- Right to communicate in Spanish or in Basque with the Administration.
- Right to receive education in both official languages.
- Right to receive periodic publications, to listen to radio or TV programs and other mass media in Basque.
- Right to develop professional, labor, political and union activities in Euskara.
- Right to express in Euskara at any meeting.

When the Spanish Constitution was drafted in 1978 during the decentralization process there were recognized two separated autonomous communities: The Basque Community and the Community of Navarre. The language rights were recognized and outlined in *Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution*<sup>7</sup> and *Article 6 of the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country*<sup>8</sup> as cited below:

Article 3 of the Spanish Constitution:

- (1) Castilian is the official Spanish language of the state. All Spaniards have the duty to know it and the right to use it.

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<sup>7</sup> The Spanish Constitution 1978, Available at: <https://www.boe.es/legislacion/documentos/ConstitucionINGLES.pdf> [Accessed May 21, 2018]

<sup>8</sup> Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country. Available at: [http://www.basquecountry.eus/contenidos/informacion/estatuto\\_guernica/en\\_455/adjuntos/estatu\\_i.pdf](http://www.basquecountry.eus/contenidos/informacion/estatuto_guernica/en_455/adjuntos/estatu_i.pdf) [Accessed May 21, 2018]

- (2) The other languages of Spain will also be official in the respective autonomous communities, in accordance with their Statutes.
- (3) The richness of the linguistic modalities of Spain is a cultural patrimony which will be the object of special respect and protection “

Article 6 of the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Country:

- (1) Euskara, own language of the Basque People, will have as does Spanish, official status in the Basque Country, and all its inhabitants will have the right to know and use both languages.
- (2) The common institutions of the Autonomous Community, taking into account the sociolinguistic diversity in the Basque Country, will guarantee the use of both languages, regulating their official status and they will arbitrate and regulate the measures and resources required to assure its knowledge.
- (3) Nobody can be discriminated against for reasons of language use.

It is very important the role of schools in learning the language. Today, in the Basque Country there is freedom to choose the language according to 3 models: Model A – Spanish (+Basque and English), Model B – Basque and Spanish (+English) and Model D – Basque (+Spanish and English) and the percentage of students under 17 years old that attend Model D is the highest.

Even though, the Basque Country has two official languages, they are not normalized. Affirmative Action should be taken to achieve real equality in an unbalanced situation as well as language planning. Normalization not only means the co-existence of the two languages but also the respect for language rights in a complex and rapidly changing society.

The next speaker for this session Mr. Shkumbin Munishi, an associate professor at the University of Prishtina discussed about the concepts of linguistic planning and their inclusion in the planning of the status of languages in Kosovo, considering the impact of the linguistic policies of the European Union. Language as a tool of communication between people is linked closely with the ability of them to use it. Through language the socio-economic and cultural position of a specific nation is reflected. On the other hand, considering that a community lives and operates in a common territory with one or more communities that speak a different language, the relationship they create with each other's language are reflected on the respect they have for the other's culture and traditions in general.

Equality of languages is a form of regulation of interlingual relationships which is part of the language planning and linguistic policy of a social entity. Language planning is a self-conscious activity that is conducted to regulate linguistic problems with the support of political and cultural elites. Considering the fact that many social and governmental entities are multilingual, even in the cases when we have minority communities, defining the status of language is a sensitive but an important issue. In multilingual societies the influence of other non-linguistic factors such as economic, cultural and political factors build unfavorable relations between these communities.

The status of the languages is not enough for language rights and should be elaborated further. During the UNMIK period in Kosovo, English has been the most important language, at that time the law on languages that made Albanian and Serbian the two official languages of Kosovo was approved. Since then there is no inclusion of either language on the other language's school curriculum. The government

of Kosovo should take the necessary measures to make it obligatory for the Albanian students to learn Serbian and for Serbian students that go to school in Kosovo to learn Albanian.

The last speaker for the session and for the whole conference was Mr. Nexhmedin Spahiu, a political sciences professor in Kosovo. Mr. Spahiu is from Mitrovica, a city which is split in two parts after the war. The northern part is inhabited with Serbs and the southern part with Albanians. He explained how this geographical separation has brought differences in the spoken language as well. However, Mitrovica was not the same as it is today. In the times of ex-Yugoslavia it was the most diverse city in Kosovo by having the two languages equally co-existing in the community. Since a long time ago the television of Mitrovica except in Albanian has had programs in Bosnian and Turkish. This television set an example for the National television of Kosovo as well. The role of media was crucial in building relationships between all communities living in Mitrovica and across Kosovo.

### Online Learning Language Platform

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The project manager of “Vocup” Mr. Veljko Samardžić presented the new online learning platform. This platform is created with the help of IOM and the British Embassy. It is an online platform for Serbs to learn Albanian and vice versa – it works both ways. Besides being available on the internet this platform will start showing on the national television RTK 2 and it will be in the form of a booklet. This will enable learning from distance, all you would need is internet, some time and a will to learn the other official language of the country you reside.

There are 20 lectures including both, the lesson, and the exercises for each lesson. This platform also has included a small dictionary created by the organization in cooperation with OSCE. Today, technology offers us countless methods to learn anything – one of them is this platform as well. This application does not have any restrictions, anyone can access it easily through internet. “Learning a new language should be a part of our everyday lives.” Said Mr. Samardžić at the end.

### Wrap up session

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Mrs. Remzije Istrefi wrapped up the conference by mentioning the most important issues discussed during the day. She expressed many thanks to the participants and the panelists for being part of this conference. She stated that support from political institutions is very important in implementing the official languages. From all the guest speakers today from abroad we can learn their methodologies and tools for implementing the legal framework defining the legal status of languages in that country. We can all learn from each other’s experiences; therefore, we are thankful to our institutions for the continuous support.

It was extremely important to hear the presentations from the representatives of Canada for their Active Offer on the first session about enhancing service delivery. This concept for was an innovation for us to hear. We believe that a similar tool will be considered and used from Kosovar authorities by adapting and modifying it to our country’s circumstances. A similar tool would create the grounds for the citizens of the Republic of Kosovo to feel better while getting public services.

Then, the representative of the Ministry of Local Government Administration of Kosovo discussed about the legal framework that is approved in municipalities across Kosovo for the use of official languages. There is progress at the municipal level, however there are struggles on the quality of translation of legal terms and documents. For this reason, it is recommended that a Translation Association be created at the central level with professional translators who know professional terms.

After that, there were two representatives of OSCE mission and the embassy of Switzerland who with their speeches reminded us all that these institutions have continuously helped Kosovo institutions implement the language law and regulations. However, they both reminded us that there are discrepancies in implementing these regulations and we should work on fixing them.

On the second session regarding the learning of official languages through education a professor of the University of Prizren presented the case study of this university as the first institution in Kosovo that offers Bachelor and Master degrees in Bosnian and Turkish language. Even though, it is beneficial for these other communities to have university programs in their language, this one faces many difficulties such as the lack of academic staff to keep it accredited.

There were two other presentations about challenges of learning the official languages in Wales and Ireland. The representative from Wales presented the Welsh language system of education and if the policies of learning a language don't change over time the situation stays the same. The legal framework is not enough to regulate in this case the Welsh education, but a continuous support and new strategies from the government are needed. While the representative from Ireland talked about challenges of accessing the Irish language. Her recommendations and ideas might be used in Kosovo as well.

The last speaker of the panel was an education expert from the University of Prishtina who talked about the historical character of learning the official languages in Kosovo while being a part of it himself. The differences that were created between the Albanian language speakers and the Serbian language speaker at that time in the 1990s are still present today.

The third session was regarding language rights in post conflict societies. The first speaker of this panel was the ombudsman of Kosovo who spoke about the challenges on implementing community and language rights in Kosovo and the necessary steps that need to be taken to overcome these challenges.

The representative from the Basque Country presented the language rights of the Basque Country and its continuous conflicts. Fortunately, this conflict has now ended and now the post-conflict period and peace building is awaiting the Country.

The last speakers for the conference spoke about the theoretical position of the status of languages in Kosovo as well as the role of media in building relationships between communities that speak different languages.

## Closing Remarks

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Mr. Ronan O'Domhnaill, the Irish Language Commissioner and the new chair of the International Association of Language Commissioners gave the final remarks for the conference. He thanked Mr. Slaviša Mladenović and his team for superbly organizing the 2018 Conference in Prishtina.

He continued to speak about the IALC as a valuable organization. Diversifying it remains a challenge in the future, this association needs to open itself to other members by explaining the work they do. The IALC is also going to develop a policy paper for the work each member does to the association and in that way, we can learn from each-other's best practices. "We rely on each other to survive, we rely on each other for help" said Mr. O'Domhnaill.

At the end, he took the opportunity to show appreciation for the work Mrs. Meri Huws did as the chair of the association for the last two years and concluded the 5<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the International Association of Language Commissioners.