

Pursuant to paragraph one of Article 28 of the Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 86/04 and 8/10) and Article 109 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], No. 92/07 – official consolidated text, 105/10, 80/13, 38/17 and 46/20), the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia at its session of 1 July 2021 adopted the

## RESOLUTION

### ON THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGE POLICY 2021–2025 (ReNPJP21–25)

#### 1 Introduction

##### 1.1 Premises and assessment of the situation

This document is the third resolution on the national programme for language policy of the Republic of Slovenia. The first resolution outlining language policy for the 2007–2011 period was followed by a resolution for the 2014–2018 period. Slovenian society, like all other societies, is constantly changing and along with it are its linguistic needs and tasks, so the establishment of a five-year cycle in which the language policy of the Republic of Slovenia is reassessed in a comprehensive manner is a relevant achievement. An important step forward in the period of the last resolution was the introduction of an annual report on the implementation of the tasks envisaged in the resolution and towards the end of the period, a targeted study on the adequacy of the current language policy. The establishment of a five-year cycle of resolutions, an annual review of the fulfilment of tasks and a one-off study on the adequacy of the current language policy provides professionals and politicians with a sound basis for well thought-out and systematic guidance of the linguistic situation in Slovenian society. The most general objective pursued by the Slovenian language policy in the 2021–2025 period on this basis is to ensure a high-quality linguistic life for all, which is also in line with the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030.

An analysis of the Slovenian language policy, which provided one of the foundations for the drawing-up of the Resolution on the National Language Policy Programme for 2021–2025, was carried out in the targeted research project [\*Jezikovna politika Republike Slovenije in potrebe uporabnikov \(Language Policy of the Republic of Slovenia and User Needs\)\*](#) (2016–2017, headed by K. Ahačič; co-funders: ARRS and MK). This is the first empirically supported study of its kind in Slovenia directly aimed at preparing a new resolution on the national programme for language policy. Although the study was criticised in terms of applied methodology,<sup>1</sup> its credibility is also supported by the fact that through individual collaborators, a large number of major linguistic institutions in Slovenia participated in it, and in addition to the linguistic profession, certain other professions relevant to linguistic policy took part in the study as well.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Logar, Nataša, P. Gantar, Š. Arhar Holdt, V. Gorjanc, I. Kosem, S. Krek, M. Stabej (2017). "Response to the 'Survey on the Slovenian language' as part of the project Language Policy of the Republic of Slovenia and User Needs", *Slovensčina* 2.0 5/1: 27–37.

<sup>2</sup> The authors also upgraded the research report with a monograph titled *Legal Regulation and Programme Documents on Language Use and Practices of Language Users in the Republic of Slovenia and Users of Slovenian Language in Neighbouring Countries* (2018, ZRC SAZU, Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language, ZRC Publishing House), and some co-authors discussed specific aspects of the topics discussed in this research in more detail in the articles of the thematic issue of *Slavia Centralis* magazine (No. 2, 2018). Both provided an additional basis for the preparation of the Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy for 2021–2025.

With regard to the drawing-up of a new resolution on the national programme for language policy, the Ministry of Culture organised a *Public consultation on the new national language policy programme* in November 2017, which also highlighted the positive aspects of the last resolution and pointed out its shortcomings. One of the main conclusions of the consultation was that the 2014–2018 national programme was still relevant and that – also in order to avoid excessive influence of the interests of participating individuals<sup>3</sup>, as well as excessive influence of competing institutions and the deepening frictions on the language policy scene<sup>4</sup> – instead of drawing-up a completely new programme, it would be better this time to merely air out and revise particular chapters from the last programme which are in need of this under the new circumstances, while the rest should be kept as it is.<sup>5</sup> The new resolution is based on this premise, with the acknowledgment and description of the state of language policy in all segments and with a vision for the future, with a view to maximising improvements and significant developments, upgrading the areas highlighted in this national programme, while a new chapter on the linguistic landscape has also been added.

The Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of Slovenia's Language Policy, established in March 2014, which is led by the head of the Slovenian Language Service and includes representatives of the main state institutions responsible for language policy, was in charge of the umbrella monitoring and promotion of implementing the measures and achieving the goals of the 2014–2018 national programme throughout this period. The Group informs the government of the Republic of Slovenia about the success of its implementation, and the government in turn informs the National Assembly through an annual report.

Both experts and politicians have in recent years, at the level of strategic papers, identified some of the challenges which this resolution is trying to respond to in a comprehensive manner. Below, this resolution focuses on the areas of language education and language infrastructure, the general language culture and the linguistic landscape, and the forthcoming Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2021.

### **1.1.1 General linguistic landscape in the Republic of Slovenia<sup>6</sup>**

The state, influences and effects of language policy are clearly reflected in the language culture and the linguistic landscape of the country. At all times and in all places, speakers of the Slovenian language encounter the visible use of Slovenian, as well as with its inadequate use and violations. At the forefront are the names of various institutions, companies, shops, bars, buildings and events. In short, in names, public information and advertising in a (non-)Slovenian language. All such designations,

<sup>3</sup> In the text, both forms are given for denominations of persons for whom separate forms for the masculine and feminine grammatical genders are widely used. In places where this seems less appropriate for textual reasons, the terms given only in male grammatical form refer to all persons irrespective of their biological sex or social gender (also in the spirit of requirements for plain language of public communication in the Resolution on the National Language Policy Programme for 2014–2018). Terms that contain a form for male or female grammatical gender on a deeper structural level are used as the only currently available terms, with no intention of any exclusion.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Savski, Krištof (2017). "Language policy at times of instability and struggle: the impact of fluctuating will and competing agendas on a Slovenian language strategy", *Current Issues in Language Planning* 18/3: 283–302.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Stabej, Marko (2017). *Spetletka? B. Lipovšek and S. Bergoč (ed.). Public consultation on the new National Programme for Language Policy: papers, articles.* Ministry of Culture. Pp. 7–8. Cf. Members of the Department of Slovenian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. 2017. *Statement on the occasion of a public consultation on the new national programme for language policy on 28 November 2017.* B. Lipovšek and S. Bergoč (ed.). *Public consultation on the new National Programme for Language Policy: contributions* Ministry of Culture Pp. 9–10.

<sup>6</sup> See about this: *The linguistic landscape in the Republic of Slovenia and the provisions of the applicable legal regulation: use of Slovenian in selecting names of legal persons of private law and of natural persons performing registered activities (sociolinguistic aspect)*, Nataša Gliha Komac, Simona Klemenčič, Nina Ledinek and Jani Kozina, *Jezikoslovni zapiski* 22, 2016; *Targeted research project titled Language policy of the Republic of Slovenia and user needs (research report)*, edited by: Nataša Gliha Komac, Head of Project: Kozma Ahačič, Ljubljana, October 2017; *Pogled na slovensko jezikovno krajino (A view of the Slovenian linguistic landscape)*, Marko Snoj, Frana Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language at ZRC SAZU, *Slavia Centralis* 2/2018; *5th Statement*, Commission for Slovenian Language in Public Use at SAZU, Ljubljana, 29 November 2018.

advertisements, invitations and the like in a foreign language, especially English, are all the more questionable and incomprehensible because they are selected, used and published by Slovenian legal and natural persons, and are mainly intended for the Slovenian public and users, and have been increasing in number over the years. They may indeed be easily understood by many Slovenian consumers, but this violates the language rights of the majority, shows a lack of respect for the mother tongue as a value and does not emphasise local characteristics. It is a matter of placing self-restrictions on the Slovenian language in public use, supported by the repeatedly expressed view that Slovenian is an obstacle to (international) economic activity and development.

Provisions, regulations and laws governing the public use of the Slovenian language (the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act, sectoral laws and implementing regulations) are, as indicated by expert records, contributions in the media, studies, research and similar, as well as the findings of competent inspection services in the event of citizens' complaints, insufficiently binding and effective, and sometimes too restrictive, vague or unclear when new and different circumstances of the use of a language/languages arise, thus allowing for different interpretations. They should also cover and take into account the broader needs and different interests of Slovenian language users in all areas of public life. Accordingly, some amendments to legislation will probably be necessary. Monitoring and action by the competent inspection services will also need to be stepped up. Naturally, the rules of bilingualism must be observed in ethnically mixed areas.

Speakers should continue to be made aware of the importance and role of the public use of Slovenian, to which the public media can actively contribute. This also includes widely and quickly accessible online language advice with examples and clear-cut explanations, therefore attention and support should also be directed towards professional staff and institutions that provide them. Projects, programmes, different activities and research relating to the state of affairs and plans to improve the image of the linguistic landscape and promote the Slovenian language and culture in conjunction with reading literacy should be encouraged and co-financed. There is also a need to strengthen language loyalty and the awareness of language as an identifying and connecting cultural element. Foreign languages are and will continue to be present in our environment and their learning is encouraged, but the Slovenian language should have the primary place in the Slovenian speaking space. Equipped with greater knowledge, an aware and well informed speaker will be able to competently and significantly influence the priority use of Slovenian in all segments of life and work, with the goal of creating an appropriate linguistic landscape, and with the least possible discrepancy between the current legal regime and the expected or desired state of affairs.

The topic of public signage, i.e. the designing of the linguistic landscape, thus remains a topical issue within the context of language policy in the Republic of Slovenia and carries great symbolic significance.

### **1.1.2 Language education**

Language education is a very complex field of language policy. The thematic areas which it seeks to integrate into a coherent whole are: Slovenian as a first language in Slovenia, Slovenian as the first language of Slovenians around the world, Slovenian as a second language, languages of the Italian and Hungarian national communities and the Roma community, languages of members of various minority ethnic communities, languages of immigrant communities, foreign languages, persons with special needs and adapted methods of communication, language in higher education, etc. The participation of all relevant stakeholders in this field is essential. The aim is to provide the appropriate conditions for carrying out these activities and thereby access to learning and knowing languages, and enhancing communication skills. The aim of these efforts must be to ensure equal social participation for all speakers, including from an intercultural

perspective.<sup>7</sup> The first responsibility of language policy, as far as language education is concerned, is the Slovenian language in the Republic of Slovenia.

Learning Slovenian as a first language is an activity that must be jointly planned and evaluated by various professions, such as pedagogy, linguistics and sociology. This is all the more important today, when the goal of Slovenian language policy can no longer be limited to a concern for language competence, but must strive to continuously strengthen its widest reach: communication skills. For several years, Slovenia has been participating in studies under the PISA programme (the programme for international student assessment), thus endeavouring to implement what is stated in the 2011 White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, namely that the internationally comparable education of our students requires not only the international harmonisation of standards of knowledge, but also the international harmonisation of knowledge assessment criteria with the countries with which we want to compare ourselves. The PISA survey also examines reading literacy, which is defined as an individual's capacity of understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts in order to achieve specific goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to fully participate in society. Reading literacy develops through all subjects, both linguistic and non-linguistic. Regardless of the fact that reading literacy goes beyond the teaching of Slovenian, it is nevertheless closely related to it, as it is precisely in the classes of Slovenian language that students are made aware of different reading strategies and it is where the desire to read literary texts and similar is cultivated.

While previous surveys carried out as part of this programme – the most important of which is the PISA 2009 cycle, in which reading literacy was highlighted – found that the results of Slovenian 15-year-olds in reading literacy were below the OECD average, while the PISA 2015 survey, whose results were published in 2016, showed above-average results of Slovenian 15-year-olds in reading literacy among the 72 OECD countries and their partners. As low reading literacy poses a problem in terms of personal development and social integration of individuals in the community, as well as the effective economic development of a sustainable society, and as the concern for the continuous development of reading literacy is also reflected in the recommendations of the European Union, the previous below-average results were given considerable attention by both professional and general public, and the 2014–2018 Resolution and the Action Plan on Language Education envisaged several measures to improve reading literacy. Given the significant positive shift in the results of the PISA programme, it seems reasonable to continue or build on the orientation and actions of the recent language policy in the field of education. The latest PISA survey carried out in 2018 again highlighted reading literacy for the first time since 2009, and the results were still above average, although they declined slightly compared to 2015.

Alarming, however, in the latest international comparative survey of adult skills (PIAAC, 2012–2015), Slovenia found itself below the OECD and EU average in all measured areas of skills, including text skills. In Slovenia, a third of the population between the ages of 16 and 65 have such low levels of text skills that this hinders them in their work and social integration, and they are only able to read short and simple texts. Furthermore, the results show that higher levels of skills are closely linked to higher levels of productivity, employment and income. However, these skills are also crucial in promoting social participation and inclusion, as people with better skills have more trust in institutions, are more active in civic and political life, and enjoy better health.<sup>8</sup> Similar to the Reading Literacy of Children and Adolescents (PISA) survey, the trend in adult text skills is also positive, as Slovenian adults performed better in textual skills in the PIAAC survey than in the previous IALS survey (1994–1998). However, the fact that Slovenia is well below the OECD average in adult text skills remains a problem for the language policy.

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<sup>7</sup> The term speakers is understood here in the broadest sense, so that it also includes sign language users and blind speakers, for whom the ensuring of equal social participation is particularly relevant in the context of the use of written language, etc.

<sup>8</sup> OECD Skills Strategy – Summary of the Final Assessment Report: Slovenia 2017. Paris: OECD Publishing.

With regard to the positive shift in the achievements of the PISA adolescents' reading literacy survey, it is worthwhile in the future to focus on a clearer recognition of the measures that are considered to have contributed most to improving the results, so that the improvements observed in the PISA survey can translate into the sustained provision of high reading literacy levels and thus to lasting benefits for Slovenian society. Until this is known, and according to the results of the PIAAC survey on adult text skills, it is important to continue to promote and develop all aspects of literacy at all ages through the widest possible range of measures. Action should be taken in line with the general priorities as well as the specific objectives of developing reading literacy and reading culture by individual age groups set by the [National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the 2019–2030 period](#), with a particular sensitivity to the developing language skills of vulnerable groups. The National Strategy states: "Reading literacy is the continuously evolving ability of an individual to comprehend, critically evaluate and use written information. This ability includes developed reading skills, the (critical) understanding of what has been read and reading culture (the perception of reading as a value and motivation to read). As such, it is the foundation of all other literacies and is crucial for developing individuals' potentials and for their successful participation in society". In continuation, the strategy explains: "An important part of literacy is reading culture, which is defined as the attitude (a set of perceptions and values) of an individual and society towards books and reading".

In September 2020, the Court of Audit issued an audit report *Reading literacy of children in the Republic of Slovenia*, which examined whether the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency were effective in developing the reading literacy of primary school children in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018. The Court of Audit found that they were partially effective and prepared a list of recommendations to be taken into account by the aforementioned institutions in the further development of the field.

In view of the important role played in children's development, reading literacy is also included in the new *Programme for Children 2020–2025*, as it is necessary to ensure the development of reading literacy as well as a reading culture for children in both formal and non-formal education. The PISA survey on reading literacy shows that students and adolescents in the Republic of Slovenia do not have properly developed motivation for reading, so it is necessary to provide conditions for the development of children's interest in reading at an early age (family and kindergarten) – reading should be a value in kindergarten and school, as well as in the family and during leisure time (socialising with peers).

Due to its fundamental role in personal development and the social inclusion of individuals in the community and its importance for effective economic development of a sustainable society, reading literacy is also included in the *Slovenian Development Strategy 2030*. In language education, all educational levels, including language policy in higher education, need to be comprehensively planned and monitored; in particular in the context of reforming higher education, there has been lively debate in recent years on how to balance the tendency for scientific and higher education excellence on the one hand and, according to the opinion of part of the interested public, on cross-sectional concern for the development and strengthening of the Slovenian language in this area on the other. Language policy in Slovenia should also monitor with special concern the learning of Slovenian as the neighbour language for the majority of residents of the neighbouring countries of Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. This is also important for overcoming the difficulties and misunderstandings encountered by members of the autochthonous Slovenian national minority in many border zone sections (of all four neighbouring countries). The Schengen openness of state borders could thus be better used to promote the cultural and political vision of a common Slovenian cultural space. Although the situation has been gradually improving since Slovenia's accession to the European Union (better reputation of Slovenian as one of the official languages of the European Union), there is still insufficient progress in some areas.

### 1.1.3 Language infrastructure

In the area of language infrastructure, the previous resolution identified challenges that require swift and effective action. These covered both challenges in terms of language description and regulation, as well as in terms of language technology tools and resources. Major achievements from the period of the 2014–2018 resolution were: setting up and launching the CLARIN.SI research infrastructure for language resources and technologies, which is organised as an interinstitutional consortium and ensures the construction and operation of a unified computer platform that provides research communities with permanent storage and free access to language resources, applications and advanced computer processing tools for Slovenian and other languages; replacing the Dictionary and Text Database portal with the Fran portal and multiple upgrades or development – including the integration of additional resources – of this portal into a widely used website, where both specialised and general users have access to a large amount of mainly lexicographic data on Slovenian; the reference corpus of written Slovenian Gigafida 2.0 – a corpus of standard Slovenian, Synonyms 1.0 – dictionary of synonyms of contemporary Slovenian and Collocations 1.0 – a collocation dictionary of contemporary Slovenian; obtaining a basic description of the grammar of Slovenian sign language, the first description of the language of the deaf and hard of hearing which is not made in Slovenian but in the mother tongue of the users; the Handy Video Grammar of Slovenian Sign Language project was co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Slovenia, and it is an important source for learning and further researching this language for both the deaf and the hearing.

Despite some important achievements from the period of the last resolution, an overarching survey on the state of language policy at the end of the resolution period concludes that one of the fundamental problems in Slovenia's creation of linguistic infrastructure is that the tasks already included in the national programme 2014–2018 and the accompanying Action Plan on Language Infrastructure are not being implemented. As a general response to some of the challenges of language infrastructure, including the aforementioned problem of the lack of implementation, in March 2017 the Government of the Republic of Slovenia established the Council for Monitoring the Development of Language Resources and Technologies, which started operating immediately after its establishment. The council's tasks were: directing further developments in language resources and technologies, supporting comprehensive solutions in the digitisation of Slovenian, evaluating the usefulness of past achievements in the field of language resources and technologies and possibilities for upgrading them, setting guidelines on language resources and technologies in state administration, setting guidelines on open access to language resources and technologies, setting technical standards for products and services that ensure the interoperability of individual elements, establishing an online repository for resources and technologies for further use, making proposals and initiatives to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia regarding the further planning of language resources and technologies development, annually reporting to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on its work and, if necessary, establishing operational working subgroups and the supervision of their work. As the council (particularly in its first year of operation) worked effectively, it is worth reflecting on re-establishing a similar national working body.

The implementation of the measure, which is mentioned by the said survey as a prerequisite for the more effective implementation of the objectives already identified, namely that tasks in the infrastructure area should be clearly ranked according to the priority and order of implementation, is one of the first achievements of the Council for Monitoring the Development of Language Resources and Technologies. In 2017, the council decided that the focus in the context of the development of language resources and technologies, within the limits of the available funds, should be placed primarily on speech technologies, the maintenance and upgrading of corpora, semantic resources

and technologies, machine translation, a terminology portal, spelling and grammar checkers and the central infrastructure centre for language resources and technologies. The priorities identified by the council were mainly related to the fields of language technology and the dissemination of linguistic resources and technologies, while the manual section and the language description in a broader sense, crucial throughout the language education process and important for a wide variety of users, remained completely overlooked. Those priorities reflect the fact that the development of information and communication technologies in this millennia is creating a globalised environment in which the delay in technological development could result in making individual languages less attractive and competitive, and thus endangered in the long-term perspective. Especially when it comes to national languages, this also has extensive detrimental consequences for society. To prevent this from happening, individual languages need to be as present as much as possible on the World Wide Web, and they need to have as developed digital resources and language technology tools as possible. In the coming period, in addition to taking into account the priorities set by the Council for Monitoring the Development of Language Resources and Technologies which are already being implemented, and in addition to the concern for language and technological infrastructure of Slovenian, greater attention will need to be paid to supporting Slovenian with language resources and to developing linguistic description (especially support to long-term lexicographical works and basic linguistic handbooks or reference works). A great deal of attention should also be paid to formats and technologies that provide access to information and materials in Slovenian to blind and partially sighted and to other people with reading disabilities (people with dyslexia, deaf and blind persons, persons who are unable to use printed publications due to various physical disabilities, people with developmental disabilities, etc.), as well as the basic descriptive, linguistic and technological infrastructure of other languages that fall within the framework of Slovenia's language policy, such as Slovenian sign language.

#### **1.1.4 Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2021**

From July to December 2021, Slovenia will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time. One of the priorities of the current Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is the long-term comprehensive promotion of Slovenia, which includes the language. To this end, additional training of state administration employees will be carried out within the Ministry of Public Administration and/or the Administration Academy in the use of the Slovenian language according to various communication skills and the promotion of Slovenian language in Europe and beyond.

On the other hand, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union represents a challenge for Slovenia to achieve the set goals through the efforts of state administration employees and to do it perfectly. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has therefore adopted a staffing plan which provides for the timely recruitment of additional staff in proofreading, translation and interpretation to cover the needs of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in key areas of work relating to European content. The intention is that the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union is sustainable also in the area of language policy, with the aim of ensuring and attaining the goals at a purely practical level.

#### **1.2 The framework of the national programme for language policy**

The current language situation in Slovenia demands a well thought-out and active language policy, one that will take into consideration the historical background and traditions as well as take on new tasks and achieve new goals in today's circumstances. A development-oriented language policy is based on the belief that the Slovenian state,

the Slovenian language and the Slovenian language community are vital and dynamic realities which must continue to evolve and generate new energy. In the areas which need special attention in order to maintain the extent, vitality and dynamics of the Slovenian language, it is imperative to put in place measures that will, if necessary, help improve the existing situation. The broader context of the Slovenian language policy is the language policy of both the European Union, which aims to ensure that every citizen of the European Union speaks at least three languages (two additional languages in addition to the first, mother tongue), as well as of the Council of Europe, which emphasises the implementation of human rights, and the inclusiveness and quality of language education as a prerequisite for a democratic and peaceful Europe.

An essential element in the implementation of fundamental human rights is the right of individuals to use their own language and to connect as language communities. The Slovenian language policy must put in place adequate measures in order to ensure that the Slovenian language remains the prevalent choice for native speakers to the largest possible extent in both private and public use, as otherwise its multifunctionality is compromised. Should experience show that a significant number of speakers of Slovenian is willing to discriminate against their mother tongue, for example at public events where a foreign language is also used, the binding legal regulation of its use in certain public or formal language situations may not be waived in advance. What is even more important for further boosting the vitality of the Slovenian language and strengthening its position is to enhance the awareness of Slovenian native speakers of its multifunctionality and, through the systematic development of skills, capacities and a knowledge of the possibilities for expression offered by the Slovenian language, educate and create sovereign, confident and motivated speakers of Slovenian while better equipping them with all the tools required by any modern language and its users.

The Republic of Slovenia is aware of the importance of the accessibility of high-quality literature in the Slovenian language to all target groups of the population, which is why it also pays special attention to the development in the field of books and reading culture, and to the development of a library and bookshop network. A significant part of the tasks in this field are carried out by the Slovenian Book Agency, as well as by the National and University Library.

With regard to native speakers of Slovenian, attention is also paid to the development of communication skills of various vulnerable groups (early leavers from education, the socially disadvantaged, etc.), especially adults who have not developed this ability sufficiently during their schooling or who have not nurtured and developed it in adulthood. In the spirit of strengthening family literacy, it seeks to promote the development of communication skills and a positive attitude towards language and language culture in the family, which is an important factor in a child's success during schooling. In line with the recommendations of the European Union, it is particularly important to ensure the accessibility of quality cultural and educational content, including reading culture, to children from various vulnerable groups, and to pay particular attention to children from socio-economically and culturally less supportive environments.

Slovenian language policymakers are also aware of the particular responsibility of such policy to Slovenians who live outside the national borders and take into consideration all speakers whose mother tongue is not Slovenian: members of the Hungarian and Italian national communities, the Roma community and various minority ethnic communities, immigrants, and all other people who are or who want to be in contact with Slovenian either within the borders of the Republic of Slovenia or beyond. The policy encourages the learning and use of Slovenian at all levels and by all target groups. It attaches great importance to the ongoing raising of awareness of the multifunctionality and usefulness of Slovenian among all new foreign speakers in the Slovenian context who do not yet speak Slovenian when they arrive in Slovenia, and to enable them to learn effective communication in Slovenian as quickly as possible. At the same time, the policy systematically takes care of the language needs of the Hungarian and Italian national communities, the Roma community, other language communities



and immigrants on the one hand, and provides for the best possible system of teaching foreign languages in Slovenia and their appropriate diffusion according to Slovenia's cultural and economic needs on the other. According to the 2011 ESLC survey<sup>9</sup>, foreign language teaching in Slovenia was good and even slightly above average compared to other European countries, but there is still room for improvement, especially in organising and implementing the teaching of the second foreign language.

With particular sensitivity, it provides for speakers with special needs and adapted methods of communication. In this context, special care is devoted to the deaf (the Slovenian sign language as a first language for most deaf persons), the blind and partially sighted (texts in Braille and information and communication technology which is designed to make written texts and written communication available to the blind and partially sighted), to deafblind persons (adapted modus of communication with deafblind persons and information communication technology intended for deafblind persons), persons with specific disabilities (such as dyslexia, impaired reading and learning abilities, speech and language disorders, colour blindness, etc.), persons with reduced mobility and persons with mental disorders.

An important aspect of the fulfilment of language rights is the creation of conditions for tolerant and respectful communication. In all spheres of public life (education, media, business, etc.), Slovenia provides, through various incentives or regulatory mechanisms, a modus of communication that ensures all social groups equal participation in society (non-discriminatory and inclusive use of language, respect for cultural diversity as reflected by language, etc.).

### 1.3 Language policy vision

Although the National Programme for Language Policy is a response to the overall language policy situation, its primary concern and the focus of the proposed measures is the Slovenian language (i.e. the regulation of its status, corpus and use), while also devoting attention to all other languages covered by the Slovenian language policy. Today Slovenian is an internally whole, socially and structurally integral and developmentally open language, and it should remain so in the future. Slovenia therefore intends to ensure that Slovenian is used and further developed in all areas of public life within its territorial borders, in the areas inhabited by Slovenian communities in the neighbouring countries and emigrants and also in the relevant European and international forums. It is mindful that its citizens and inhabitants have the opportunity to enter into communication processes which enable them to participate on an equal basis in the national and international community, to acquire and share knowledge, and to satisfy their personal, professional and cultural needs. The main goal of Slovenia's language policy is to build a community of autonomous speakers with advanced language competence in Slovenian, with high-quality and sufficient knowledge of other languages, with a highly-developed reading culture in Slovenian, with a high-degree of language self-confidence and an adequate degree of motivation to accept language and cultural diversity. For this purpose, the state organises the collection and analysis of, and ensures permanent accessibility to, authoritative grammatical, lexical and stylistic information on all manifestations of Slovenian, in particular on the language in its standardised and cohesive form. It also maintains data language resources needed by the speakers of other languages to learn and use the standard Slovenian language, and those resources needed by the speakers of Slovenian to learn and use other languages. It is also concerned with the data and resources needed for the use of Slovenian sign language, Slovenian Braille and adapted methods of communication for deafblind persons.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rutar Leban, Tina, with colleagues (2012). *Povzetki rezultatov Evropske raziskave o jezikovnih kompetencah (Summaries of the results of the European Survey on Language Competences) (ESLC 2011)* ([https://www.pei.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/povzetki-rezultatov\\_ESLC-2011.pdf](https://www.pei.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/povzetki-rezultatov_ESLC-2011.pdf)).

The Republic of Slovenia guarantees the Slovenian language's dominant role in official and public life within its territory, as well as ensures that its citizens, other residents and visitors can communicate and receive information in other languages within the existing financial possibilities in accordance with their legally and democratically legitimate communication needs. Slovenia advocates the strengthening and consistent exercise of the language rights of the Slovenian language community in neighbouring countries and the rights of speakers of the Slovenian language as one of the official languages in the European Union and international institutions. Even in the past, Slovenian was not the only language option communication in many areas for its speakers. However, with the increased globalised movement of knowledge, goods, services and people, which, like the principled concern for language equality, is a strong direction of the European Union, and with ever more effective learning of foreign languages, the possibilities of choosing the language in which to satisfy one's communication needs will continue to increase, which might hinder the multifunctionality of Slovenian. This is the reason why the Slovenian language policy must, through a variety of measures, ensure that Slovenian remains the dominant voluntary (and obvious) choice for native speakers in the widest possible range of private and public use, while through appropriate encouragement and good learning opportunities, the Slovenian language should be attractive and accessible for learning and use to as many speakers of other languages as possible, and mandatory for all professionals in the sphere of public communication and in language-sensitive working positions in general, with realistically and reasonably designed language requirements in individual areas of work.

While ensuring the predominant role of Slovenian in official and public life within the country, the Republic of Slovenia also pays attention to the strengthening and consistent implementation of the language rights of certain national communities protected by its constitution and facilitates the preservation of the use of the languages of other language communities and of immigrants.

#### **1.4 Institutions responsible for an active language policy**

Bodies directly responsible for the language policy of the Republic of Slovenia are the state bodies that plan, implement and monitor the language policy activities in cooperation with universities and other entities founded by the state, and non-governmental organisations. At the national level, the language policy must be designed in such a way that individual authorities are responsible not only for its implementation and financing, but also for its content. During the last resolution period, certain changes were made which, to a certain extent, make this possible. Today, the Slovenian Language Service of the Ministry of Culture is the principal body coordinating the Slovenian language policy. Given the central role of the Slovenian language in this policy, it seems sensible for the service to continue to carry out this task. The Ministry of Culture has so far cooperated closely and successfully with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, which is responsible for many areas within language policy, and will continue to do so. Namely, in terms of content, the Slovenian language policy reaches far beyond the mere planning of the status and image of the Slovenian language. Ensuring the harmonisation of regulations relating to the Slovenian languages (and other languages within the territory of Slovenia) is certainly necessary, but an active language policy, to which Slovenia has committed itself in the *Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act*, presupposes measures reaching out to a variety of other fields and thus involving other executive power mechanisms.

In order to enable individual state bodies as the main institutions responsible for language policy, to assume responsibility for its implementation and give initiative for its content, an Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of Slovenia's language policy was established in March 2014 as a realisation of the commitment of the National Programme 2014–2018. The working body, which operates

under the direction of the Head of the Slovenian Language Service at the Ministry of Culture, includes the representatives of all key state institutions responsible for language policy. Their tasks include:

- monitoring and promoting the implementation of measures and the achievement of the goals set out in the national programme,
- adopting reports on implemented measures,
- ensuring, where appropriate, the coordination of the implementation of measures that require the participation of several government bodies or holders of public authority;
- providing initiatives to change the legislation in the field of language policy,
- making proposals and giving initiatives on further language policy planning;
- ensuring the promotion of the national programme in public administration and its implementation in the general public.

The Inter-Ministerial Working Group made sure that the relevant ministries or bodies, in accordance with their respective competences, reported annually to the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which in turn reported to the National Assembly, on the success of language policy implementation as outlined in the National Programme 2014–2018 and in the Action Plans. The comprehensive reports (<https://www.gov.si/zbirke/delovna-telesa/medresorska-delovna-skupina-za-spremljanje-izvajanja-jezikovne-politike-republike-slovenije/>) provided a thorough annual review of the implemented measures and, in this respect, the continuous and comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of the planned national language policy. However, the Working Group does not have the proper competences to influence the (non-)implementation of the language policy as a whole, nor to influence the (non-)implementation of concrete measures. These competences remain within individual state bodies or bearers of individual measures, therefore the implementation or non-implementation of individual measures often remains a matter of partially determined and ad hoc priority choices. At the same time, the Working Group has no decision-making powers when deciding on solutions in the language policy field or in their implementation or supervision.

Language policy is an integral part of other policies, from educational to economic and cultural policies. In December 2019, the Republic of Slovenia adopted the [\*National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the 2019–2030 period\*](#), which envisaged the establishment of the National Council for Reading Literacy. The National Council for Reading Literacy was established on 11 February 2021 and consists of literacy experts spanning pre-school education to the third stage of life, who cover various aspects of literacy development, and of representatives of ministries that are crucial to literacy development. One of the main tasks of this council will be to monitor the implementation of the strategy. It is sensible and desirable for active policy-makers to inform and complement one other.

Various institutions and public systems, such as cultural and art institutions, public libraries and others, can, through their actions, greatly contribute to the attainment of the general objectives of this programme for language policy, as well as its concrete objectives. For example, in terms of libraries, general and school libraries are the most important in view of achieving the objectives of the language resolution. They can directly contribute to the use, development and preservation of Slovenian, play an important role in developing literacy for all target groups of language policy (e.g. various groups of speakers of Slovenian, speakers of Hungarian, Italian and Romani languages, Slovenian dialects and the Prekmurje language version as a supra-dialectal regional language, and users of the Slovenian sign language), contribute to the lifelong development of reading culture for all target groups of language policy and provide support to family literacy. By providing material to persons with special needs and adapted methods of communication and their promotion, they can also make an important contribution to raising awareness of other forms of communication, and they can contribute to multilingualism and raising awareness of the social presence of other languages by providing texts in the languages of various minority ethnic communities and immigrant communities and in foreign languages. In this manner, libraries, like primary education institutions, are present in all,

even the smallest, local communities and are active and important institutions responsible for language policy.

In accordance with Article 33 of the Librarianship Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 87/01, 96/02 – ZUJIK and 92/15), the National and University Library of Slovenia is responsible for the collection, processing, preservation and accessibility of all publications in the Slovenian language, providing information about them through the *Slovenian Bibliography* portal and ensuring the presence of Slovenian books in all major libraries around the world. By maintaining the *dLib* portal, it provides online access to Slovenian language resources.

The Slovenian Book Agency (JAK), whose founder and funder is the Ministry of Culture, is also responsible for achieving the objectives of the language resolution. The Slovenian Book Agency is responsible for the development of the entire book chain in Slovenia, ensuring the accessibility of quality literature and humanities in Slovenian language, paying special attention to the development of reading culture in Slovenian and promoting Slovenian literature abroad.

Similarly, Radio-Television Slovenia, which contributes directly to the achievement of the language policy objectives, is also one of the institutions responsible for language policy. Its tasks, several of which are already defined in the Radio-Television Slovenia Act, include, for example, ensuring accessibility of content in the Slovenian sign language, ensuring accessibility of the Radio-Television Slovenia programmes across borders and providing content for the Italian and Hungarian national communities and the Roma community, all of which directly contributes to the development of the communication capacity of minority communities in their mother tongue and majority community in a foreign language, or to raising the intercultural and multilingual awareness of the majority community. By educating professional speakers, maintaining a larger language revision service and ensuring a high-quality translation of foreign-language broadcasts, Radio-Television Slovenia, within its capabilities, nurtures the language culture and promotes the high-quality public use of the Slovenian language and contributes directly to the development and use of language technologies designed to make the content accessible to vulnerable groups, e.g. technologies for the transcription of audio content and live subtitling, especially the real-time recognition of Slovenian speech, and audio formats of recordings, high-quality speech synthesis and upgrading the eBralec (eReader).

The assessment of the funds listed below for each measure is based on the implementation reports of the previous national programme, and where the amount is higher, the funds have only been planned and are not yet provided. The available funds are to be defined in the annual *Implementation of the Republic of Slovenia Budget Act*; in the case of the European Social Funds, new and additional funds largely coincide with the new cohesion programming period of 2021–2027.

## **2. Delineation of Slovenia's language policy for 2021–2025 with objectives and measures<sup>10</sup>**

### **2.1 Introduction, general objectives and measures**

A knowledge of languages is both a symbolic and practical asset which must be accessible to all, regardless of cultural and educational background or financial situation. The recognition and facilitating of the development of multilingualism and/or the language repertoire of each individual throughout different periods of life lead to a linguistic tolerance and respect for language differences, the language rights of individuals and groups, and a freedom of expression. For this reason, Slovenia guarantees language education at various levels throughout their lifetime to all its citizens

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<sup>10</sup> Note that the numbers of individual objectives or measures do not indicate prioritisation.

and inhabitants and also to all Slovenians living outside its borders, as well as Slovenians around the world. Language activities (including the development of a reading culture) at pre-school level are crucial for high-quality speech development and emerging literacy. Special attention is also paid to foreigners who come into contact with the Slovenian language area.

The Slovenian language policy provides for the best possible teaching of Slovenian as a first language within Slovenia and for the largest possible accessibility of Slovenian classes for Slovenians abroad.<sup>11</sup> In the education system, it strives to take into account as much as possible the needs of those children and young immigrants for whom Slovenian is the second language, which also applies to deaf and hard-of-hearing children whose first language is the Slovenian sign language. It also promotes the improvement of Slovenian in adult speakers, the learning of Slovenian by adults for whom Slovenian is the second or a foreign language, and the learning of Slovenian abroad. It provides high-quality education in Italian and Hungarian in municipalities with Italian and Hungarian national communities, works to safeguard the use and development of the Roma community language, and grants to all other minorities, immigrant communities and others the right to use, maintain and revitalise their own language and culture. In education, the language policy also takes into consideration the rights of speakers with special needs and adapted methods of communication, and reading and writing.

The priority of the language policy set out by the Republic of Slovenia is the best possible knowledge of the Slovenian language, consistent provision of Slovenian company names and an awareness of the special status of Slovenian as a mother tongue (especially in areas outside the Republic of Slovenia), and in line with the traditional positive assessment of knowledge of foreign languages and considering the contemporary need for Slovenia to be competitive, open and democratic, the respect of linguistic diversity and promotion of functional multilingualism is duly considered. The aim is to ensure that speakers of Slovenian are linguistically trained and informed and that they achieve the ability to effectively use their first foreign language effectively and to have the opportunity to learn a second foreign language or additional language according to the needs of both general and professional use. At the same time, it is necessary to deepen the awareness that Slovenian is the official language of the Republic of Slovenia, that Slovenian is the mother tongue of the majority of its population, that it is the second or foreign language for numerous speakers of other languages, and that all languages are equally important.

Slovenia respects fundamental human rights and, in line with the principles of the European Union, the Council of Europe and other international organisations, is committed to encouraging mutual understanding, solidarity and social cohesion. Activities are aimed at raising public awareness that everyone has the right to participate in public life, that diversity must be accepted with tolerance and sympathy, and that different groups of speakers of Slovenian and of other languages have different communication needs and different levels of language competence. In this context, it is also important to make speakers aware of the necessity of using language with an adequate sensibility when entering into social contacts (the use of inclusive language, the use of adequate expressions for potentially vulnerable groups, etc.). Language education plays a key role in the implementation of the above-mentioned orientations. In this context, it is necessary to extend the basic understanding of the role of teachers of both Slovenian and other languages, as well as non-language subjects. All teachers are also teachers of language, reading literacy and reading culture; they are not only communicators of language, but also of culture, civilisation and inter-cultural knowledge, and are thus a link between different languages, cultures and identities. Key support of these activities is provided by school libraries whose role needs to be strengthened by the consistent implementation of standards that provide for their operating conditions.

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<sup>11</sup> The term "teaching of the Slovenian language" is used here in a broad sense, i.e. as the teaching of the Slovenian language in the sense of achieving comprehensive communication skills in Slovenian, including various aspects of literacy (reading literacy, functional literacy, etc.).

Certain objectives and measures of language education must be planned in a coordinated and unified way, regardless of the fact that they may address different languages and different target groups. Planning and providing language education must be based on reliable data on the language standard, language use, communication needs, expert opinions on language development and so on; preparation and collection of such data is provided for by this document. More general measures adopted in order to achieve the objectives of this chapter may be followed by the inclusion of more concrete and context-related measures from the same umbrella area in other chapters.

### Objective 1: Harmonisation of language policy activities at all levels

#### Measures:

- providers of individual measures ensure the flow of information between all relevant institutions responsible for language policy, regularly inform the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the monitoring of language policy, and report on the entire area that they cover, including institutions that fall under their competence (public institutes, agencies, etc.);
- continued operation of the Jezikovna Slovenija web portal (continuous co-funding).

#### Indicators:

- informing and effective functioning of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for monitoring the implementation of the language policy,
- informing the users on the language policy on the web portal as the common/entry point.

Approximate funds required<sup>12</sup>: regular activities and EUR 50,000 (within the context of regular activities).

Expected effects: the coordinated and efficient planning and implementation of the language policy in the field of language education resulting in a higher level of functional literacy for all categories of speakers; awareness of the general public about the Slovenian language situation and language policy.

Institution responsible: MK (in cooperation with other state administration authorities).

### Objective 2: Awareness of the importance and role of public use of Slovenian language

#### Measures:

- raising awareness of the importance and role of the use of the Slovenian language in all areas of public life, including in specific areas, such as the non-discriminatory use of language;
- raising awareness of the importance of appropriate language use in all areas of public life and the importance of language revision services in all areas of public life (media, business sector, public institutions, etc.).

#### Indicators:

- number of projects and awareness-raising campaigns,
- scope of language-revision services.

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<sup>12</sup> These approximate funds required are planned everywhere for the entire period of the national programme, i.e. five years.

Approximate funds required: EUR 60,000.

Expected effects: informed users of Slovenian, a greater presence of Slovenian in the entire linguistic landscape (public signage, company names, names of catering establishments, etc.).

Institution responsible: MK.

### Objective 3: Monitoring the language situation in different areas

Measure:

- promotion of applied and fundamental studies on contemporary Slovenian (both spoken and written language and their relationship), its history, its users (Slovenian as a first language, Slovenian as a second or foreign language), their language skills, reading literacy and reading culture, communication needs, communication practices, expert opinions on language development; promotion of contrasting and socio-linguistic research; promotion of research into regional versions of Slovenian and Slovenian outside the Republic of Slovenia; promotion of research on all other aspects of language policy in the Republic of Slovenia (accessibility of Slovenian publications and other sources, minority languages, languages of immigrant communities, foreign languages, communication of persons with special needs), with special studies listed in specific chapters.

Indicator:

- number of studies.

Approximate funds required: EUR 2,250,000.

Expected effects: coordinated and more efficient planning, development and implementation of language policy in different areas.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ (ARRS), USZS.

### Objective 4: Developing the skills of all speakers of Slovenian, including persons with special needs, to use language manuals (language reference works) and language technologies

Measures:

- educating and training all speakers of Slovenian to use language manuals (language reference works) and language technologies, promoting the use of language resources and technologies;
- continuous informing on the methods of teaching the use of assisting and supporting technology to persons with special needs.

Indicators:

- number of training sessions and speakers involved, number of promotional activities carried out.

Approximate funds required: EUR 60,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: increasing the number of trained general users of the Slovenian language skilled in the efficient use of manuals and other language resources; an increased number of users skilled in language technologies and the widespread use of language technologies; more efficient educational processes.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ.

Objective 5: Developing awareness of the diversity of communications needs and communication methods (forms of communication)

Measures:

- raising awareness of the diverse communication needs and skills of different groups of speakers and promoting acceptance of different forms of communication;
- preparation of multimedia material including information on the pressing aspects of the communication needs of vulnerable groups of speakers in the Republic of Slovenia;
- preparation and implementation of a high-profile public awareness-raising campaign.

Indicators:

- events and materials contributing to the implementation of the measure,
- multimedia awareness-raising material,
- implemented awareness-raising campaign.

Approximate funds required: EUR 10,000.

Expected effects: better and more tolerant communication among different groups of speakers.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ, MDDSZ.

Objective 6: Providing access to high-quality Slovenian translations of foreign-language works

Measure:

- supporting the translation of high-quality literary, scientific, educational and other foreign-language works into Slovenian, of foreign guest theatre performances in Slovenia into Slovenian, and similar.

Indicator:

- number of new translations.

Approximate funds required: EUR 2,000,000.

Expected effects: improved access to high-quality original foreign-language works, strengthening the use of Slovenian to access important original foreign-language works, improving linguistic skills in Slovenian.

Institution responsible: MK.



### Objective 7: Promotion of the Slovenian language and culture in the European Union.

#### Measures:

- strengthening the existing mechanisms for the systematic translation, promotion and/or distribution of translations of Slovenian literary works into foreign languages, and devising new approaches for greater effectiveness in this area;
- "live" promotion of the Slovenian language through promotional events and performances by Slovenian artists in the European Union and beyond.

#### Indicators:

- evaluation of the current measures and preparation of new ones (expert report);
- number of promotional events;
- number of works by Slovenian authors translated into foreign languages;

Planned funds: EUR 2,400,000.

Expected effects: greater visibility of Slovenian literary creativity and Slovenian language in the world, encouraging the creation of works by Slovenian authors in the Slovenian language.

Institution responsible: MK

### Objective 8: Multilingual and intercultural awareness

#### Measure:

- raising awareness and informing people on the importance of multilingual and intercultural communication and/or intercultural dialogue.

#### Indicator:

- number of events and materials contributing to the implementation of the measure.

Approximate funds required: EUR 60,000.

Expected effects: better and more tolerant communication among different groups of speakers, raising the tolerance threshold in multilingual/multicultural environments.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ.

## **2.2 Language education**

### **2.2.1 Slovenian as a first language**

#### **2.2.1.1 In the Republic of Slovenia**

Slovenian as the official language and the first or mother tongue for the majority of the population is naturally given the most attention in the planning of the language policy. In the context of language education in the next programming period, the language policy will pay special attention to the teaching of Slovenian within the Slovenian educational system, to promoting research of the Slovenian language, and to

evaluating and analysing language education in Slovenian, and will make recommendations for improvements based on the findings. It will strive to raise the awareness of the importance of a clear and understandable language of public communication and provide for lifelong language training of public employees that will give them with the skills to contribute responsibly to the written and spoken image of Slovenian in public contexts and to enable them to speak clearly and concisely and use plain language in public communication.

The current concept of teaching the Slovenian language as the first and learning language in Slovenia's educational system set as one of its fundamental objectives the development of communication skills as the skills enabling an individual to understand and produce texts of various kinds. Since an individual has to take on an increasing number of language roles in their personal, professional and social life, the focus is on the need to understand the social dimension of the language and culture in which communication takes place. As an upgrade to traditional literacy and broader reading literacy, media literacy, e-literacy and/or digital literacy and similar are becoming increasingly relevant. The educational system should enable both young and adult speakers of Slovenian as their first language to develop their language skills in this language, evolve into language-skilled persons and equip themselves according to their needs for efficient, i.e. clear and acceptable, public and official communication and other types of specialised communication.

Based on studies and evaluations of the teaching of the Slovenian language, which should be carried out independently of other activities linked to the teaching of Slovenian, and on the basis of the results of reading literacy studies (PISA), text skills (PIAAC), contemporary findings of relevant disciplines, results of national examinations and Matura (school-leaving) exams, and opinions formulated by higher education institutions and of the interested public, a new concept of teaching Slovenian as a first language should be envisaged; in addition to the established and well-proven methods of teaching Slovenian, it should take into account the following premises:

- one of the basic objectives of teaching Slovenian must be to enhance the language confidence of speakers of Slovenian.
- The teaching of Slovenian must take into consideration the wider cultural (extra-linguistic) context, as well as contemporary knowledge in the fields of linguistics and language didactics. In particular, special attention must be paid to fusing the teaching of literature and language, and special focus should be placed on the development of children's and young people's reading culture (development of interest in reading different works, developing a positive attitude towards reading, etc.).
- The responsibility for developing communication competences may not be delegated solely to the teaching of Slovenian as a first language. The development of teaching and professional language is the task of every professional working in education. It is necessary to establish a system of different cross-curricular integration, including of Slovenian with all languages and non-language subjects in primary and secondary school curricula (see the chapter on foreign languages).
- The teaching of Slovenian is also the first point of contact for many people with general linguistic concepts, as such knowledge is an essential part of critical communication competence and a prerequisite for successful higher-level problem-solving. The teaching of this content must continue to be linked (also) to practical text-type aspects, but the current restriction to the directly applicable ("functional") knowledge must be superseded. In this context, the communication needs and skills of the learning population should be taken into account and attention should also be given to the development of their reading culture.
- The awareness of individuals (children and adults and their teachers) should continue to be raised and they should be continuously trained to be able to develop their own communication skills autonomously.

Objective 1: Developing and improving the language competences of speakers of Slovenian as a first language and enhancing their skills of efficient communication

Measures:

- informing principals and teachers of the national language policy on Slovenian as a first language;
- informing principals and teachers as well as parents of the important role of developing reading literacy and reading culture for effective communication;
- preparing evaluations of the suitability and consistency of curricula, teaching materials, teaching lessons and external examinations of the Slovenian language (carried out independently of the institution responsible for curricula and their introduction and for monitoring the teaching of Slovenian), and continuing activities related to the improvement and implementation of curricula, teaching materials (in printed and online form) and innovative didactic approaches based on the evaluations carried out;
- training teachers in the use of language technologies in the teaching of Slovenian;
- continuing the professional training of educators and teachers of Slovenian in the areas of language and didactics; training of teachers of all subjects in the Slovenian language and communication skills in the context of other subjects and in language-sensitive teaching that takes into account the language repertoire of a particular pupil;
- continuing professional training of educators and teachers to promote the development of a reading culture as an important part of reading literacy and developing a roadmap for a consistent development of reading literacy at all levels of education;
- encouraging cross-curricular integration of teachers of Slovenian in linguistic and didactic fields with teachers of other subjects;
- organising and implementing appropriate language teaching which is adapted to the communication needs of various target groups at all educational levels;
- encouraging the development of language competences and reading culture in vulnerable groups of all ages and adults in general who have not developed it to a sufficient extent during regular schooling nor later on in adulthood;
- promoting the development of Slovenian e-textbooks and e-materials from all areas intended for learning and combined learning<sup>13</sup> of various target groups;
- translating foreign expert literature relating to didactics into Slovenian and vice versa;
- providing (free) access to a wide range of printed and online form materials as the basis for the development of reading literacy.

Indicators:

- number of measures taken to develop language competences and reading literacy and reading culture,
- number of professional training events for principals, educators and teachers, especially expert training events for the development of reading culture,
- number of external evaluations of teaching of Slovenian carried out,
- number of refurbished printed and online teaching materials,
- number of projects to promote innovative approaches,
- number of additional language learning courses and targeted training,
- number of new online materials,
- number of translated expert works.

<sup>13</sup> A combination of different approaches to learning and teaching that combines virtual and physical resources (source: *Slovensko-angleški pojmovnik s področja vzgoje in izobraževanja*, Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport, 2015, <https://www.termania.net/slovarji/142/slovensko-angleski-pojmovnik-s-podrocja-vzgoje-in-izobrazevanja>).

Planned funds: EUR 400,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: coordinated and more efficient planning, development and implementation of language and education and training policies, improved language competences of speakers of Slovenian.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MK.

Objective 2: Clear language of public communication and enhanced language skills of public employees

Measures:

- preparation of online training to upgrade the language competences of public employees;
- targeted language training as part of training for newly recruited public employees and additional language training for public employees and raising their awareness of the social role of the Slovenian language, including in specific areas, especially for those who prepare and edit texts on the websites of the state administration and public institutions, prepare various written materials or legislative texts;
- raising awareness of the importance of choosing the Slovenian equivalent where there coexist a synonymous Slovenian term and adopted term or linguistic element;
- targeted training for employees, in particular for those who prepare and edit texts on the websites of the state administration and public institutions, or prepare various written material or legislative texts, to use simple language, facilitate easy reading and improve the accessibility of information by using simple language; where necessary and urgent, also by using the so-called easy reading format;
- infrastructure and accessibility of language sources and technologies and the promotion of their use;
- raising awareness of the importance of non-discriminatory and inclusive use of language;
- encouraging the compliance with the standard Slovenian language in the state administration's texts.

Indicators:

- preparation of online training,
- number of additional language learning courses and targeted training for public employees,
- number of materials with improved accessibility.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: improved clarity of language of public communication and its harmonisation with adopted language standards; increased number of public employees possessing adequate language skills; wider and easier access to services by users of administrative procedures.

Institution responsible: MJU.

## 2.2.1.2 Outside the territory of the Republic of Slovenia

### 2.2.1.2.1 Slovenian national communities living in the neighbouring countries

The use of Slovenian on the outskirts of the Slovenian national territory – particularly in Porabje, in Carinthia and Styria in Austria, in the western Venezia-Giulia, Val Canale and Resia and Trieste region in Italy, in the Goriško and Videm regions and in Croatia, is rapidly decreasing and needs to be urgently addressed and analysed with particular attention and support (see the project [Opportunities and Possibilities for the Conservation and/or Revitalisation of Slovenian language in the Slovenian minority community in neighbouring countries](#)). The Slovenian language policy promotes the principle that the right to know and to use Slovenian in neighbouring countries must be exercised in all situations and environments where the use of Slovenian is granted by law and/or where speakers of Slovenian desire that the Slovenian language be used. The particular situation of Slovenian national minorities creates specific needs in terms of language policy and development; to fulfil these needs requires complex and continuous research into the national and (socio)linguistic situation of Slovenian national minorities, of their use of the standard language and dialects, as well as constant work on raising the understanding of Slovenians living in Slovenia regarding the language situation and language needs of Slovenian national minorities in neighbouring countries.

The language policy must create the conditions for speakers of Slovenian – both those for whom Slovenian is the first language and those for whom it is a foreign (heritage) language – to acquire and upgrade their language skills in the best possible way, so as to have the basis for confident and effective communication in Slovenian in diverse communication situations. At the same time learners and teachers must be given the opportunity to constantly upgrade and expand their Slovenian language proficiency.

#### Objective 1: Monitoring the language-policy situation

##### Measures:

- monitoring the situation concerning the use of Slovenian (for example, the implementation of language-policy plans, language skills, language use, views on the Slovenian language, the effectiveness of Slovenian language teaching, the development of reading culture, especially reading books in Slovenian compared to reading in other languages, the presence of Slovenian books in the libraries of Slovenian minorities and in school libraries of schools with Slovenian as the language of instruction, access to COBISS, etc.);
- promoting cooperation between neighbouring countries' institutions dealing with linguistic issues.

##### Indicator:

- number of research studies and/or quantity of useful findings.

Approximate funds required: see Objective 3 of Chapter 2.1.

Expected effects: the basis for continuous fulfilment of the remaining sectoral objectives of the resolution and the ongoing development of guidelines for further language policy in a particular area inhabited by the Slovenian national minority or the Slovenian language community.

Institutions responsible: MK, USZS, MIZŠ.

## Objective 2: Expanding or upgrading language competences and areas of use of Slovenian as a first language

### Measures:

- removing administrative and other obstacles to facilitate access to university education in the Republic of Slovenia;
- providing scholarship funds for residence and education in Slovenia and striving for systematic activation of former scholarship holders for the needs of the wider Slovenian community in their home environment;
- promoting higher education of Slovenian minority members from neighbouring countries in Slovenia;
- creating a new category of candidates for enrolment in higher education study programmes; instead of the current category “Slovenians without Slovenian citizenship”, the introduction of a new category “Slovenians with permanent residence outside the Republic of Slovenia”;
- active informing of Slovenian students with permanent residence outside the Republic of Slovenia with the possibility of enrolling in the Year Plus university programme and encouraging them to do so;
- organising seminars on Slovenia and Slovenian culture and on bilingualism and multilingualism in society, in the family and at the personal level;
- providing support in the preparation of specific teaching materials and textbooks of Slovenian for target groups in the areas in neighbouring countries inhabited by the members of the Slovenian national minority;
- promoting reading culture in Slovenian;
- language support for employees in the public administration of bilingual areas and those responsible for contacts with the Slovenian community (language education and training, providing information on terminology, raising awareness of the need for quality translations);
- supporting the Slovenian national minority in sports activities and links with the Republic of Slovenia in sports;
- providing teaching materials and Slovenian literature for school libraries of schools with Slovenian as the language of instruction beyond Slovenian borders;
- encouraging Slovenian national minority in cultural activities and links with the Republic of Slovenia in culture (for example: supporting Slovenian societies, theatre and library activities, media, provision of language training in Slovenian, promotion of cultural and educational links with Slovenia, especially with border areas where daily contact is possible, support for media from Slovenia in integrating the topics of the Slovenian community in neighbouring countries, etc.);
- promoting the use of Slovenian dialects by maintaining the awareness of the specific character of the Slovenian language and dialect as one of its variants, and by supporting creativity in local literary versions;
- providing telecommunication coverage in the Slovenian speaking area and/or ensuring access to the Slovenian radio and television also in the areas inhabited by the members of the Slovenian national minority in neighbouring countries;
- encouraging the use of Slovenian in the materials of printed and online formats, such as writing and reading printed books and e-books in the Slovenian language, accessing e-resources in Slovenian, promoting the use of software for smartphones, tablets and computers in Slovenian language;
- promoting the use of Slovenian at events and in advertising in the areas inhabited by Slovenian communities;
- concern for the presence of Slovenian language within the linguistic landscape in the areas inhabited by the Slovenian national minority in neighbouring countries;
- promoting the use of Slovenian place names beyond Slovenian borders in the public media of Slovenia and abroad;
- drawing up and updating freely accessible online lists of Slovenian settlement names in neighbouring countries;

- preparation of relevant online freely accessible bilingual terminological dictionaries of Slovenian and of the majority languages of neighbouring countries;
- co-funding of projects that enable the preservation, development and promotion of the Prekmurje language version ("prekmurščina") as the former standard Slovenian language and the current supra-dialectal, regional language, which is part of the Slovenian intangible cultural heritage.

Indicators:

- number of removed administrative and other obstacles to facilitate access to university education in the Republic of Slovenia,
- amount of tendered and awarded resources for scholarship funds,
- documented active work of scholarship recipients for the benefit of the Slovenian community,
- amount of resources for Slovenian societies and associations,
- amount of resources for the media,
- amount of resources for cultural creativity,
- amount of resources for the development of reading culture in Slovenian,
- amount of resources for sports activities,
- number of organised promotional activities advertising education opportunities in Slovenia,
- number of seminars organised and number of training courses taken by individual persons,
- amount of resources and the number of materials and textbooks for teaching Slovenian, and the volume of literature in Slovenian,
- telecommunications coverage of the Slovenian speaking area,
- use of Slovenian in information material, at events, for place names, in advertising,
- volume of the lists containing Slovenian settlement names,
- number of bilingual terminological dictionaries.

Approximate funds required: EUR 5,000,000.

Expected effects: increasing the number of participants in education processes in Slovenia intended for children, youth and experts from neighbouring countries, coordinated support to the development and accessibility of all forms of media presence of Slovenian in ethnically mixed environments, supporting access to literature in Slovenian and activities that encourage various target groups to read literature in Slovenian, supporting the development of cultural creativity and providing adequate tools and infrastructure.

Institutions responsible: MK, MZZ, USZS, MIZŠ.

Objective 3: Improving the quality of teaching and learning Slovenian

Measures:

- systematic training of teachers and educators in kindergartens and schools providing instruction in Slovenian in bilingual kindergartens and schools, and in schools teaching Slovenian in the form of specialised courses, with the aim of establishing an educational environment supportive to multilingualism that will help learners realise their language potential, develop wide and functionally diverse communication skills in Slovenian as a first language and develop such skills in Slovenian as their second or foreign language;

- training of educators and teachers in kindergartens and schools providing instruction in Slovenian, in bilingual kindergartens and schools, and in schools teaching Slovenian in reading literacy and reading culture;
- if necessary, the provision and co-funding of qualified teachers and assistants from Slovenia;
- preparation of online materials for (self-)learning of Slovenian in multilingual environments;
- raising the parents' awareness of the importance of knowledge and preservation of the mother tongue, the advantages of bilingualism for the child and encouraging reading culture in Slovenian;
- organisation of prolonged stays and courses of Slovenian language in the Republic of Slovenia for pupils and students of secondary schools providing instruction in Slovenian, and bilingual schools in neighbouring countries;
- implementation of the Slovenian system of assessment and certification of Slovenian language skills in line with European guidelines (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages);
- production and upgrading of teaching materials for (self-)learning of Slovenian at a distance;
- promoting cooperation and exchanges between schools in the Republic of Slovenia and schools providing instruction in Slovenian, schools providing courses of Slovenian language or bilingual school centres in the neighbouring countries;
- providing opportunities for school and professional practice in Slovenia;
- implementing e-language courses of Slovenian for members of Slovenian communities living outside the Republic of Slovenia;
- informing about Slovenian publishing production through the national mutual bibliographic system (COBISS) and providing access to printed and e-sources in Slovenian;
- promoting inter-university cooperation, for example, by establishing a joint study programme between a university from a neighbouring country and a university or another higher education institution from the Republic of Slovenia.

Indicators:

- number of completed training courses for educators, teachers and learners,
- number of professionals involved in education and training,
- implementation of the Slovenian system of verification and certification of Slovenian language proficiency levels;
- number of teaching materials adapted to different environments, ages and levels of knowledge,
- number of printed and e-resources available in Slovenian,
- number of cross-border cooperation events with a language awareness-raising component carried out in the field of interfaculty cooperation and school exchanges.

Approximate funds required: EUR 600,000.

Expected effects: improving educational processes and harmonising their planning and development, increasing access to these processes and the relevant materials; educating self-confident and sovereign users of Slovenian who are aware of their rights and work for the benefit of the wider Slovenian community.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MK, MZZ, USZS, universities and other higher education institutions.



### 2.2.1.2.2 Expatriation and emigration

Some speakers of Slovenian as a first language emigrate for a limited period of time, mostly because of work. They are often accompanied by their children who, for a certain period of time, grow up and are schooled in environments with two or more languages outside their home country.

Slovenia's language policy must ensure to all expatriates and emigrants, in particular children, possibilities for widening and advancing their Slovenian language competences. Although these children can primarily acquire and maintain their knowledge of Slovenian in the family circle, it is imperative that they be provided with systematic teaching of Slovenian as a first language in all its functional diversity as provided to children living in Slovenia by the national educational system. Therefore the Republic of Slovenia must strive to ensure that, at least in part, the schooling of pupils and secondary school students abroad, i.e. the acquisition of knowledge in non-language subjects, is also carried out in Slovenian, bearing in mind the fact that perhaps later they will continue their education in Slovenia. The possibilities available for organising such systematic education are of course limited, and often it is only possible to provide distance learning, but more may be done in environments where there is more demand because of the large number of schoolchildren (as in the case of children of the speakers of Slovenian in Brussels and Luxembourg).

Attention should also be paid to the preservation of the language between expatriates and emigrants who have been living abroad for a long time, or among the descendants of Slovenian emigrants born outside Slovenia.

In the expatriate community, where the position of Slovenian is even frailer than in the minority communities in neighbouring countries, it is imperative that the language policy promotes the use and learning of Slovenian in all circles and in all situations where a certain interest exists, and to strengthen such interest where it is weaker.

#### Objective 1: Widening or improving competences in Slovenian as a first language for expatriate and emigrant children and youth

Measures:

- removing administrative and other obstacles to facilitate access to university education in the Republic of Slovenia;
- preparation of online materials for independent learning of Slovenian as a first language and of other subjects in Slovenian at a distance and for combined learning;
- providing e-sources accessible online in Slovenian and the presence of printed sources in Slovenian in the environments where Slovenian emigrants live;
- establishing a system of verification and certification of knowledge of Slovenian as a first language for those who are attending or have already finished schools outside the Republic of Slovenia, and providing structured assistance for these persons in their reintegration into the education system;
- increasing the number of seconded teachers of Slovenian and other Slovenian staff in European schools and efforts to create Slovenian language sections in European schools in Brussels and Luxembourg;
- introduction of visits of instructors to teachers of Slovenian from Slovenia in schools and associations in Slovenian communities in overseas countries;
- maintaining and introducing additional measures that strengthen the language competences in Slovenian as a first language for expatriate and emigrant children (summer schools or camps in the Republic of Slovenia, organisation of cultural events, exchanges, etc.).

Indicators:

- number of removed administrative and other obstacles to facilitate access to university education in the Republic of Slovenia,
- number of online printed materials and e-resources in Slovenian,
- number of seconded teachers of Slovenian and other Slovenian staff in European schools,
- number of organised educational and other events,
- establishment of a system of verification and certification.

Approximate funds required: EUR 5,000,000.

Expected effects: increased number of participants in language education processes for expatriate and emigrant children, greater accessibility of adequate teaching materials, increased level of knowledge of Slovenian among the children in expatriate and emigrant communities.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, USZS.

## Objective 2: Training of teachers to teach in bilingual and multilingual environments

Measure:

- systematic training of teachers of Slovenian to enable them to help learners to realise their language potential and to develop functionally diverse communication skills in Slovenian as a first language or as a "second" language in a bilingual and multilingual environment.

Indicator:

- number of different training programmes for teachers.

Approximate funds required: EUR 600,000.

Expected effects: increased number of participants in targeted educational programmes, implementation of adequate teaching methods abroad.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, universities, USZS.

### **2.2.2 Slovenian as a second or foreign language**

Extensive migrations both in Slovenia and outside its borders are increasing the number of persons interested in learning Slovenian as a second or foreign language. For members of both ethnic communities, the Roma community, various minority ethnic communities, immigrant communities, the Slovenian expatriate community returning to Slovenia, and for all other foreigners residing in the Republic of Slovenia permanently or staying in the Republic of Slovenia for a longer period of time, access to knowledge (or learning) of Slovenian is of fundamental importance. Knowing the language facilitates their inclusion in society and offers them equal opportunities for personal development, employment, access to information and similar, comparable to that enjoyed by the majority population. At the same time, their right to maintain and revitalise their own languages and their own cultures must be provided for by the law within the budget framework. Since the personal situations are also identical for persons with the status of repatriated persons and for descendants of Slovenian emigrants who come to Slovenia

with the purpose of permanent settlement, this category should also be taken into account.

The Republic of Slovenia has recently taken a number of steps in the education and integration of immigrant children in the education system, which must be moulded into a systemic whole at all educational levels. Efforts should be made to upgrade the solutions already in place in the area of integration of immigrant children, to provide funds for the transfer of the already existing content and materials and to integrate them into the further education process. In exercising the rights of primary and secondary school immigrant children to education, the integration of immigrants in Slovenia is based on an inclusive approach (in the context of the fastest possible integration in regular classes) and ensures their effective integration and the formation of an intercultural society. The foundations for the development of the integration of immigrant children were laid particularly after 2007, when the strategy for the integration of children, pupils and secondary school students of migrants into the education system of the Republic of Slovenia was adopted, on the basis of which the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport published, in the period 2008 to 2016, nine calls, co-financed by the European Structural Funds, which directly or indirectly deal with this topic. The right to the integration of primary and secondary school immigrant children in the Slovenian educational system is supported by various legislative documents; among other things, they provide a normative basis for the provision of state budget funds for the learning of Slovenian as well as for the teaching of the mother tongue for immigrant children included in regular primary and secondary education. We are committed to such action by European Union legislation (e.g. *Council Directive of 25 July 1977 on the education of the children of migrant workers*). Focusing on the earliest possible acquisition of Slovenian and at the same time emphasising the preservation of the mother tongue and taking into account the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, the basis for the successful integration of immigrant school children into Slovenian society consists of taking into consideration the needs of both the immigrant and majority population.

In 2018, as part of the project “Challenges of Intercultural coexistence”, a *Proposal of the programme of work with immigrant children in preschool, primary and secondary education*<sup>14</sup> was created, which offers a range of direct educational activities for immigrant children and their families, including a model of basic level teaching of Slovenian in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, and training opportunities for professional workers.

In secondary education, the model of basic level teaching of Slovenian is also duly supported by the legislation (*Act Amending the General Upper Secondary School Act* and *Act Amending the Vocational Education Act*, which entered into force in the 2018/2019 school year, improved the conditions for the successful integration of secondary school students with their primary education completed outside the Republic of Slovenia or whose mother tongue is not Slovenian, and the *Rules on Slovenian language courses for secondary school students*), and in September 2019, the *Rules on norms and standards for the implementation of the primary school programme* were adopted in the field of primary education, which provided for additional professional assistance in learning Slovenian for immigrant students. Three new curricula (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, [*Uradni list RS*], No. 21/20) were validated and apply to the first, second and third educational periods. The validated curricula will enable schooling immigrants to improve their language and social integration into the education system. At the same time, the curricula also enable for them to be tested in practice and evaluated, and supplemented and upgraded in search of more effective options. In the future, special attention will have to be given to this topic in the context of the pre-school curriculum. Parallel to that, in the period of 2017–2019, a national evaluation study titled “*Evaluation of models of learning and teaching Slovenian as a second language for pupils and secondary school students whose mother tongue is not Slovenian*” was

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.medkulturnost.si/program/>.

carried out. The final report with recommendations for further work was approved by the Quality and Evaluation Council in January 2021<sup>15</sup>.

Immigrants from so-called third countries are granted free access to learning Slovenian as a second language by the *Decree on the methods and extent of providing programmes of support for integration of third-country nationals (the Initial Integration of Immigrants – ZIP programme)*<sup>16</sup>. The *International Protection Act* and the *Decree on the methods and conditions for ensuring the rights of persons with international protection* during the implementation of the personal integration plan enable persons with international protection to take part in a 300-hour Slovenian language course. In 2017, the teaching of Slovenian as a second or foreign language within the Year Plus preparatory module became a regular activity of the University of Ljubljana, and as of 2018 also of the University of Primorska.<sup>17</sup>

Slovenia also promotes learning and studying Slovenian and researching the Slovenian language abroad through a network of lectureships at foreign universities; in Slovenia, this is done by providing scholarships to persons who study Slovenian outside Slovenia and who come to Slovenia for short- or long-term courses. However, such scholarships, with the exception of the *Seminar of Slovenian Language, Literature and Culture* at the University of Ljubljana, are currently limited to ethnic Slovenians. Given the diverse target groups and communication needs, the priority objective is defined as indicated below:

Objective: Enhancing or upgrading language skills in Slovenian as a second or foreign language

Measures:

- defining the scope and forms of learning, norms and standards in learning Slovenian as a second language in kindergarten;
- inclusion of the subject of Slovenian as a second language in the ethnically mixed area of Slovenian Istria in the list of subjects eligible as the third subject in the national examination of knowledge in primary school;
- the inclusion of Roma children in pre-school education in kindergartens<sup>18</sup> and the introduction of additional Slovenian lessons as a second language for Roma pupils in primary schools;
- the integration of children of Slovenian immigrants and repatriated persons in pre-school education in kindergartens and the introduction of additional hours of Slovenian as a second language in primary schools;
- the production of e-materials (including manuals such as grammar books and dictionaries) intended for self-learning and combined learning for a wide variety of target groups, and continuous production of readings with adaptations at the physiological, verbal and syntax levels in accordance with each target group;
- ensuring an appropriate selection of materials in Slovenian, which supports the teaching of Slovenian in bilingual schools and schools with Italian as the language of instruction;
- providing the legal, financial and organisational conditions for maintaining and developing the network of Slovenian lectureships at foreign universities, the

<sup>15</sup> The final report is also to be discussed by the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education (March 2021).

<sup>16</sup> The stated legal basis is in the phase of amendments, because the umbrella law, i.e. the Foreigners Act, is being amended. Full funding of integration programmes is being abolished, and the choice of knowing the language is no longer left to the foreigner, but is a condition that they must meet if they want to obtain a certain permit in the Republic of Slovenia.

With the entry into force of the amendments to the Foreigners Act, the responsibility for the integration of foreigners (which also includes Slovenian language courses for foreigners) will be transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Office for the Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. <https://www.uni-lj.si/studij/leto-plus/>, <https://www.upr.si/sl/studij/vpis-up/prijava-in-vpis-za-tuje-drzavljanje/leto-plus>.

<sup>18</sup> The National Programme of Measures for the Roma for the 2017–2021 period (Objective 3.3.1.1.2).

training of teachers of Slovenian in foreign universities, and providing printed and e-resources in Slovenian in support of these activities;

- informing principals, educators and teachers of the national language policy on Slovenian as a second/foreign language and on multilingual didactics;
- defining the competences of educators and teachers who provide linguistic assistance or additional hours of Slovenian to children and pupils whose first language is not Slovenian;
- systematic training of educators and teachers in teaching pre-school children, pupils and secondary school students for whom Slovenian is not their first language but who are included in Slovenia's educational system (teachers of Slovenian and other subjects, librarians);
- systematic upgrading of selected/individual school libraries with training materials for professionals;
- support to the inclusion of study content of Slovenian as a second language and language sensitive teaching in 2nd cycle pedagogical programmes and support to the training of already employed teachers in such content;
- training of Slovenian language teachers who teach adults in *Initial Integration of Immigrants* courses;
- preparation of specific programmes and courses for the training of teachers to teach literacy to illiterate foreign speakers in Slovenian;
- sensitisation and training of public employees to work with foreign speakers of Slovenian.

Indicators:

- integration of Slovenian as a second language in primary and secondary schools in accordance with new models,
- number of educational institutions that implement the models of initial and continuing teaching of Slovenian as a second language for immigrants,
- number of new online materials,
- number of training courses for educators and teachers (of Slovenian and other subjects) in teaching pre-school children, pupils and secondary school students for whom Slovenian is not their first language but who are included in Slovenia's educational system;
- number of pedagogical programmes at the 2nd cycle that include the contents of Slovenian as a second language and language-sensitive teaching,
- number of training materials for professionals in school libraries and amended legislation in accordance with the envisaged measures,
- number of training sessions of public employees for working with foreign speakers of Slovenian.

Approximate funds required: EUR 4,000,000.

Expected effects: the coordinated planning and development of such teaching; improving teaching quality and its greater availability (including materials) to different groups of speakers, both teachers and learners, the successful integration of immigrant children into the entire education system and society.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MNZ, MK, USZS, UOIM.

### 2.2.3 Slovenian sign language

The Slovenian sign language (SSL) is an independent language, separated from Slovenian in the modality of expression and at all language levels. Unlike the Slovenian language, it does not belong to the Slavic language family. It is the primary sign language in the territory of the Republic of Slovenia, thus sharing most of its primary geographical area with Slovenian. Sign language is the form of communication of the majority of deaf adults: when communicating with other deaf or hearing persons who understand the sign language, they use the same language code. Slovenian sign language is the first natural language of the deaf and is therefore considered a minority language in Slovenia.

Following the adoption of the *Use of the Slovenian Sign Language Act*, which grants the deaf the right to use sign language in all spheres of work and life with the assistance of Slovenian sign language interpreters, the scope of work and the workload of interpreters have greatly increased, as have the expectations of the users (deaf people themselves). In turn, the increased and diversified tasks of interpreters require better knowledge and standardisation of Slovenian sign language, as the current development level of this language does not cover the communication needs of a modern and knowledge-based society. The right to assistance by a professional worker or interpreter specialised in the Slovenian sign language in education is also regulated by the *Placement of Children with Special Needs Act* and the *Act Regulating the Integrated Early Treatment of Preschool Children with Special Needs*.

Taking into account the situation described above, the language policy concerning the Slovenian sign language has set certain objectives listed below, and the Council of Slovenian Sign Language is also available for expert assistance to the institutions responsible in achieving these objectives.

#### Objective: Developing communication skills in the Slovenian sign language

##### Measures:

- analysis of the status of Slovenian sign language (sociolinguistics, grammar, etc.);
- the establishment of a study programme and in-service training to provide competent professionals in education;
- providing ongoing training for interpreters of the Slovenian sign language;
- assessing the appropriateness of current models of learning and teaching the Slovenian sign language (SSL) and Slovenian language and interpretation of the SSL in pre-school education, and primary and secondary education programmes;
- modernisation of education and training of the deaf and hard-of-hearing, including education and training in the SSL and through adapted development of language skills in Slovenian for the users of the SSL at all levels of education (from pre-school level throughout the entire educational system);
- ensuring the access of the deaf and hard-of-hearing to textbooks and other teaching materials by designing, printing, providing storage in digitised form, publishing content online and online official administrative documents in formats adapted to the deaf and hard-of-hearing;
- preparation of didactic materials for learning/teaching of the SSL at all levels of education;
- certification of proficiency in the SSL;
- systematic supplementing of the stocks of selected/individual school libraries with SSL materials and expert materials, related to the teaching and use of the SSL;
- systematic training of teachers and educators and other professionals in education to use the SSL in the educational process and to develop language

competences in Slovenian for the users of the SSL at all levels of education in accordance with the above indents;

- improving the Slovenian language competences of users of the SSL as a natural language;
- providing high-quality literature for children and adolescents and its accessibility in libraries and online, and promoting reading culture;
- adapting the cultural programme to the deaf and hard-of-hearing (subtitles of performances, induction loops in institutions, stocking libraries with materials adapted to deaf and hard-of-hearing, etc.);
- including video material in sign language on official authorities' websites.

Indicators:

- number of measures carried out,
- an evaluation study on the teaching models of the SSL and Slovenian language and interpretation carried out,
- number of training sessions for teachers and educators,
- adoption of amended or modified pre-school, primary school and secondary school education programmes,
- number of different training programmes for interpreters,
- number of didactic materials published and the number of new high-quality literature for children and adolescents available in school libraries,
- number of equipped public spaces, adapted materials in libraries, adapted cultural programmes.

Approximate funds required: EUR 450,000.

Expected effects: the coordinated planning and development of language education forms in this field, improving society's attitude towards the needs of the users of the SSL, eradicating prejudices towards the SSL, increasing the communication opportunities of users of the SSL and thereby increasing their active involvement in society.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MDDSZ, MK.

#### **2.2.4 Adapted methods of communication**

Persons with special needs, which in this document means people with special communication needs (e.g. people with dyslexia) and disabled persons (e.g. deaf and hard-of-hearing, blind and partially sighted, people with moderate, heavier, severe and combined mental disorders), must fulfil their communication needs in other ways: the deaf using the sign language, the blind using Braille and enlarged print, conversion from written format to sound format, the deafblind using several other adapted methods of communication and similar. Providing the possibility of using such methods of communication is essential for preventing the isolation of people with special needs and enabling them to exercise their fundamental rights on an equal footing with other people and actively participate in social life. Slovenia has committed itself to provide equal opportunities to all its citizens by various documents (*Slovenia's Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the European Parliament Resolution on Sign Languages*); however, their implementation is often left to non-governmental organisations and volunteers.

The priority objective of the language policy is to empower speakers with special needs, such as the deaf/hard-of-hearing, blind/partially sighted, deafblind, persons with specific disorders (e.g. dyslexia, poor reading and learning abilities, speech and language disorders), or persons with mental disorders, to fully develop the skills that will enable them to use alternative forms of communication. This also includes the provision of basic language resources and technologies and teaching materials for speakers with special needs. In this context, an important goal of the language policy is to give these alternative forms of communication the same status as afforded to the Slovenian language (for the deaf, for instance, Slovenian is not the first but the second language). This also implies the need to raise society's awareness about the specifics of communication needs and forms of communication among the aforementioned persons, and by respecting the principle of inclusion it facilitates communication between all communicating persons.

Objective 1: Developing and strengthening the communication competences of the blind and partially sighted and providing the conditions for the effective implementation of the language policy and the regulatory arrangements in this field

Measures:

- training and education of the blind and partially sighted for communication using alternative forms of communication, adaptation of all levels of the education system to the blind and partially sighted, and the development of didactic methods and guidelines in this field and/or methodologies for adapting content to the means of communication used in alternative communication forms;
- systematic training of teachers, educators and other professionals in education;
- training of relatives;
- adaptation of public spaces, buildings and areas to the blind and partially sighted (including markings and/or audio-description);
- providing access for the blind and partially sighted to all types of written content by designing, printing, providing storage in digitised form, publishing content online and online official administrative documents in formats adapted to the blind and partially sighted (books, newspapers, official forms, instructions for filling in official forms, textbooks and other teaching materials for all levels of education, product labels, etc.), and distributing such content to the blind and partially sighted;
- adapting cultural programmes to the blind and partially sighted (the provision of literary and other works in sound form and in Braille, and equipping cultural products (e.g. exhibitions) with signage for the blind and partially sighted, theatre for the blind, increasing the range of library materials for the blind and partially sighted, etc.);
- ensuring the accessibility of high-quality literature to children, adolescents and adults and the development of a reading culture;
- provision of teaching materials and high-quality literature and appropriate technical equipment for its use in school libraries where blind and partially sighted children and adolescents are educated, as well as typhlopedagogical literature for the professional staff at these schools.
- ensuring access to technical equipment such as Braille typewriters and computers, players, electronic magnifying magnifiers and the like, together with supporting software.

Indicators:

- number of measures carried out,
- number of training sessions for teachers and educators carried out,
- number of adequately furnished public spaces, equipped or adapted cultural heritage products, adapted contents, adapted cultural programmes,



- number of new high-quality literature for children, adolescents and adults,
- number of school libraries supporting the schooling of blind and partially sighted children and pupils,
- number of available pieces (software) of technical equipment.

Approximate funds required: EUR 500,000.

Expected effects: increasing communication opportunities for the blind and partially sighted, thereby increasing their active participation in society, improving the public's attitude towards the needs of the blind and partially sighted, increasing the accessibility of all types of written content to the blind and partially sighted.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MDDSZ, MK.

Objective 2: Developing and strengthening communication competences of the blind and partially sighted and providing the conditions for the effective implementation of the language policy and the regulatory arrangements in this field

Measures:

- identifying the status of alternative (especially tactile) forms of communicating with the deafblind;
- recognising the right of the deafblind to use Tadoma communication methods, Braille fingers, Haptic methods of communication, Lorm's alphabet, etc., and the recognition of the right to use an interpreter for deafblind persons in all areas of life;
- development and implementation of the concept of integrating alternative forms of communication with the deafblind in kindergartens and schools, and facilitating the education of deafblind children and adults by means of properly adapted methods of communication;
- training of teachers, educators and other employees working daily with deafblind persons in various institutions to use adapted methods of communication to communicate with pupils and other deafblind persons;
- providing training for interpreters for deafblind persons and for professionals working with the deafblind, thereby ensuring an adequate number of suitably qualified interpreters for the deafblind;
- training deafblind persons and their relatives to use different adapted methods of communication with the deafblind;
- furnishing public spaces and cultural heritage products with tactile markings for the deafblind and adapting various contents (e.g. books, official forms, instructions for filling in official forms, teaching materials) for the deafblind;
- developing new individual forms of communicating with the deafblind (e.g. Haptic methods of communication).

Indicators:

- number of measures carried out,
- number of training sessions for teachers and educators carried out,
- developed concept of integrating adapted methods of communication with the deafblind in the education system and implementing the solutions,
- training deafblind persons and their relatives,
- number of training sessions for interpreters carried out,
- number of properly furnished public spaces and cultural heritage products and quantity of adapted content.

Approximate funds required: EUR 250,000.

Expected effects: harmonised planning and developing of language education in this field; improving the overall attitude of the population towards the needs of speakers with special needs and enhancing their possibilities for communication.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, MDDSZ.

Objective 3: Developing and strengthening the communication competences of persons with specific disorders (e.g. dyslexia, poor reading and learning skills, speech and language disorders, colour blindness), and of persons with development disorders and physically impairments, and providing the conditions for the effective implementation of the language policy and regulatory arrangements in this field

Measures:

- establishing the conditions for the identification of functional literacy among different groups of persons with special needs;
- training and education of persons with special needs for communication using adapted methods of communication, adaptation of educational processes at all levels of education to these target groups and the development of didactic methods and guidelines in this field, and/or or methodologies for adapting the content to the means of communication used in alternative forms of communication;
- training of all professionals in the education system (teachers, educators, librarians and similar) for communication or working with people with special needs;
- training of relatives, medical staff, officials and others in communication or working with persons with special needs;
- designing, printing, providing storage in digitised form, online publication of content and online official administrative documents in formats adapted to persons with special needs (e.g. books, newspapers, official forms, instructions for filling in official forms, teaching materials, product labels, materials in an easy reading format, materials adapted to the colour blind and physically handicapped), distribution of these content to users with special needs with the support of libraries;
- ensuring the availability of digital technology for alternative communication of the physically handicapped;
- adapting the cultural programme to persons with special needs (the provision of literary and other works in an easy reading format and equipping cultural products (e.g. exhibitions) with markings for persons with special needs, etc.).

Indicators:

- number of implemented training sessions for various target groups indicated above,
- alternative educational processes and developed didactic methods and guidelines,
- number of adaptations of public spaces to users with special needs,
- quantity of digitised and personalised content (books, newspapers, forms, instructions, teaching materials, product labels, etc.), adapted for persons with special needs,
- number of adaptations of cultural programmes for persons with special needs.

Approximate funds required: EUR 250,000.

Expected effects: harmonised planning and development of forms of communication for persons with special needs.

Institutions responsible: MJU, MK, MIZŠ, MZ, MDDSZ, MZI.

### **2.2.5 Languages of the Italian and Hungarian national communities, the Roma community, various minority ethnic communities and immigrant communities in the Republic of Slovenia**

Members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities enjoy the constitutionally guaranteed right to equal public and private use of their languages in the municipalities in which they live. The Slovenian language policy in this area is based on the expert assumption that well-developed language competences in one's first language, which for members of minorities, including immigrant communities, is not Slovenian, is a prerequisite for the development of language skills in Slovenian.

Slovenia guarantees the right to use and develop their first languages and culture to both autochthonous national communities; these two languages enjoy the status of official languages in the municipalities where the Italian and Hungarian communities reside. In these areas, all legal entities governed by public law have an obligation both to do business and to communicate in the language of the national community. Furthermore, the maintenance and development of the Romani language<sup>19</sup> and culture is promoted on the basis of the valid legislation (e.g. the *Roma Community Act*). The right to the equal use of the Italian and the Hungarian languages, and the commitment to actively promote the Romani language, together with a number of concrete tasks, are also enshrined in the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, which was ratified by Slovenia in 2000.

According to the *Basic School Act*, the possibility of learning the mother tongue is also provided to the speakers of other language communities, as this Act determines that upon entry into basic school and in cooperation with the countries of their origin, classes of their mother tongue and culture must be held for children who are residing in the Republic of Slovenia and whose mother tongue is not Slovenian. The exercise of these rights is not systematised, as countries of origin, with the exception of Northern Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia, do not financially support the supplementary teaching of mother tongues and cultures. Some languages of immigrants and their descendants are also included in the range of elective subjects which are intended for the entire population and are treated as foreign languages. As part of its development work, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport strives to establish language-friendly learning environments, including the training of professionals in the use of multilingual didactics. The basis of language policy in this area is Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, which determines that everyone has the right to freely express affiliation with his or her nation or national community, to foster and give expression to his or her culture, and to use his or her language and script. Thus, all speakers whose first language is not Slovenian have the right, in compliance with human rights and the principles of the European Union, to maintain and/or revitalise their language and culture. In this respect, the principles and rights of language communities defined by the *Declaration on the Situation in Slovenia of National Communities of Members of Nations of the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* are duly observed. Maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity is also promoted on the basis of a treaty between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Austria.

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<sup>19</sup> The Romani language in the Republic of Slovenia is not standardised, i.e. all Roma in Slovenia do not speak the same version of the Romani language, so the latter is understood in the text of this programme as "one of the versions of the Romani language used in the Republic of Slovenia".

It is important to stress that members of different minority ethnic communities and immigrants also share the responsibility for implementing various forms of maintaining their mother tongue and culture.

Objective: Promotion of bilingualism or multilingualism and plurilingualism<sup>20</sup>

Measures:

- awareness-raising activities about the importance of knowledge and maintenance of the mother tongue and the advantages of bilingualism;
- activities to address prejudices about bilingualism;
- activities to address prejudices against the Romani language, the languages of minority ethnic communities and immigrants;
- development and testing of approaches and training of professionals to strengthen multilingual and intercultural competences (including through the implementation of pluralistic approaches to learning and teaching languages and cultures);
- promotion of learning Hungarian and Italian languages outside ethnically mixed areas;
- promoting the implementation of the "Romani culture" elective subject and introducing the learning of the Romani language;
- providing publications in the Romani language and in the mother tongue of immigrant children and adolescents in school libraries in the educational institutions in which they are schooled;
- providing adequate capacities in public media programmes in the Italian, Hungarian and Romani languages.

Indicators:

- promotion materials,
- number of bilingual publications,
- number of carried out workshops, lectures for children, parents, principals, etc.,
- number of schools carrying out activities to maintain Italian or Hungarian outside ethnically mixed areas,
- number of training courses for professionals,
- number of schools in which the Romani culture elective subject is taught and the number of pupils enrolled,
- number of media publications or productions (e.g. radio and/or television programmes) in the Romani language or on Romani culture in Slovenia,
- number or length of contributions on the Italian, Hungarian and Romani languages.

Approximate funds required: EUR 700,000.

Estimated effects: information on the importance of maintaining the first language or mother tongue; increased interest of schools and universities in teaching the following subjects: Italian, Hungarian, Romani culture; increased visibility of the languages of the

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<sup>20</sup> Plurilingualism differs from multilingualism, which is the knowledge of several languages or the coexistence of different languages in a society. Multilingualism can be achieved simply by increasing the number of languages available in a school or education system, or by encouraging students to learn more than one foreign language, or by reducing the dominance of English in international communication. Plurilingualism, however, goes further and highlights the fact that when an individual's experience of language in different cultural contexts expands, from language in the home environment to language in wider society and then to the languages of other peoples (whether or not learned in school or directly in a second language environment), this person in his or her mental representation does not divide these languages and cultures into something independent and separate, but builds communication competences which are contributed to by a comprehensive knowledge of languages and experience with them and in which all languages connect and interact. In different circumstances, such person can flexibly activate different parts of these competences to achieve effective communication with a specific interlocutor. (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – SEJO 2011, p. 26)

Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities and of the Roma community; raised awareness of professionals about the diverse language repertoires of pupils and their competences to use the language and culturally sensitive approaches, raised awareness of the existence of languages of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities and of the Roma community among other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ.

### 2.2.5.1 Italian and Hungarian languages

Objective 1: The provision of conditions for the effective implementation of the language policy in the education and culture of national communities

Measures:

- research on the vitality of Italian and Hungarian in ethnically mixed areas;
- inclusion of Italian as a second language in the ethnically mixed area of Slovenian Istria in the list of subjects eligible as the third subject in the national examination of knowledge in primary school;
- preparation of the basic premises for testing the knowledge of Hungarian as a second language in bilingual schools;
- support to the selection of Hungarian and Italian as elective subjects for interested pupils at all levels of education;
- raising awareness of the importance of knowledge of minority languages among professional workers in bilingual areas;
- facilitating the learning of Italian and Hungarian languages outside ethnically mixed areas for students who have completed primary school in the language of nationality or bilingual primary school (in accordance with the *Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 35/01, 102/07 – ZOs-F and 11/18);
- co-financing of activities and programmes of the umbrella organisations of the Italian and Hungarian national communities, radio and television programmes for the Italian and Hungarian national communities and information activities (newspaper, magazines, etc.);
- co-financing of cultural activities of institutions established by the umbrella organisations of the Italian and Hungarian national communities and the cultural programmes of other entities selected by the umbrella organisations of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities (theatre, historical activities, publishing activities, contacts with the nation of origin, language conservation activities, etc.);
- preparation of a plan of measures on the implementation of regulations in the field of the exercise of the rights of the Italian and Hungarian national communities in the Republic of Slovenia for the 2021–2025 period (description of the state of play, review of applicable regulations, their implementation, projects, programmes, etc.).

Indicators:

- research studies and surveys carried out,
- inclusion of Italian as a second language in the ethnically mixed area of Slovenian Istria in the list of subjects eligible as the third subject in the national examination of knowledge in primary school,
- preparation of the basic premises for testing the knowledge of Hungarian as a second language in bilingual schools;
- number of secondary school pupils enrolled in Italian and Hungarian courses,

- frequency of offering elective subjects of Hungarian and Italian at universities and the number of students enrolled,
- funds earmarked for co-financing umbrella organisations,
- funds earmarked for co-financing radio and television contributions and information activities,
- funds earmarked for co-financing cultural activities and programmes,
- monitoring the implementation of the action plan through proposals and initiatives; annual reports on the implementation of the measures set out in the plan.

Approximate funds required: EUR 20,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: ensuring the continuity of the learning of Hungarian and Italian languages of members of both national communities and the majority population at all levels of education, thereby improving their language skills; the conservation and development of the language of both national communities; in-depth understanding of the situation of Italian and Hungarian languages in ethnically mixed areas; eliminating the inconsistencies between normative regulation and practical implementation; coordinated planning, development and implementation of language policies; raising awareness among the population that it is a nationally mixed area.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ, competent ministries, MJU, UN.

Objective 2: The provision of conditions for the equal public use of Italian and Hungarian languages in the areas of the municipalities in which the Italian and Hungarian national communities live

Measures:

- realising the goal of ensuring visible signs of bilingualism;
- promotion of the languages of national communities.

Indicators:

- number of new bilingual signs,
- number of activities and funds earmarked for the promotion of the languages of national communities.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: conservation and development of the language of the two national communities; increased public use of the language of the two national communities; ensuring the implementation of their statutory rights; creating a visually bilingual linguistic landscape; raising awareness among the population that it is a nationally mixed area.

Institutions responsible: MJU, MK, competent ministries, administrative units, municipalities.

### 2.2.5.2 Romani language

Objective: Strengthening communication competences and providing the conditions for the effective implementation of the language policy and the regulatory arrangements in the field of Romani language

Measures:

- strengthening the language and communication competences of Roma people in the Slovenian language at all levels of education with an emphasis on pre-school education;
- promoting the production of high-quality literature, especially for children and young people, and promoting a reading culture in the Romani language;
- co-financing projects that enable the preservation, development and promotion of the language of the Roma community and which are carried out by non-governmental organisations and authors in the area of the Roma community.
- promoting the preservation and learning of the Romani language at all levels of education and the preparation of bilingual textbooks and other teaching materials in the Romani and Slovenian languages;
- providing suitably qualified staff to teach Roma pupils, including the training of all professional workers in the basics of bilingualism and plurilingualism for working with Roma pupils;
- the establishment of a specialised school library for the collection, processing, storage and lending of publications in the Romani language;
- co-financing activities for better communication between the Roma people and other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia;
- co-financing the functioning or programmes of the Roma community's umbrella organisation and co-financing of radio and television programmes for the Roma community;
- setting up an expert group to address the issue of the standardisation of the Romani language.

Indicators:

- number of new high-quality literature and the number of activities that promote reading culture in the Romani language,
- number of cultural projects implemented by NGOs and authors,
- scope of media content in the Romani language,
- number of bilingual teaching materials and the number of Romani language courses carried out, and the number of participants in Romani language courses,
- number of professional training events and workshops and the number of participants, publications, teaching materials or other programmes that contribute to better communication between the Roma people and other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia,
- funds earmarked for co-financing the activities of the umbrella organisation and the funds earmarked to co-finance radio and television broadcasts,
- setting up an expert group and forming a position concerning the standardisation of the Romani language.

Approximate funds required: EUR 600,000.

Expected effects: improving the communication skills of Roma children in Romani and Slovenian languages; improving the skills of professional associates, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the teaching of Roma children; increasing the number of people who can speak and write in the Romani language; the preservation and promotion of the Romani language; increasing the number of Roma journalists and media content

coverage in the Romani language; encouraging NGOs and authors to carry out various activities to preserve the Romani language; strengthening the language competences of the Roma people in the Slovenian language; more effective communication between the Roma people and other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia; making a decision on one or more standardisations of the Romani language; gaining an in-depth understanding of the situation of the Romani language in the areas of the Republic of Slovenia with a condensed Roma settlement.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ, MZ, competent ministries, UN.

### **2.2.5.3 Languages of the members of various minority ethnic groups, immigrants and their descendants**

#### Objective: Strengthening language skills

##### Measures:

- Continued support to mother tongue classes for immigrant children in primary schools (in accordance with Article 8 of the *Basic School Act*); Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 81/06 – official consolidated text, 102/07, 107/10, 87/11, 40/12 – ZUJF, 63/13 and 46/16 – ZOFVI-L) and raising awareness of the existence of mechanisms provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to support implementation;
- training of professional associates in the basics of plurilingualism and multilingual didactics and language-sensitive teaching to work with immigrant pupils;
- promoting the inclusion of library materials written in the languages of immigrant communities which are present in a significant number in the Republic of Slovenia, in school and general libraries;
- training of public employees as well as officials to communicate more effectively with immigrants;
- translation and interpretation support to the work of courts and police due to an increasing migration trend (e.g. in asylum procedures);
- development of a concept for translation and interpretation support to work due to an increasing migration trend in health care and education (especially for the purposes of communication between foreign-language parents and teachers in pre-school and primary school education, and in the field of health);
- training of translators and interpreters for languages that may be in short supply (within the context of interpreting needs for the community);
- finding a systemic solution for teaching foreigners with special needs (e.g. deaf foreigners);
- co-financing projects of various minority ethnic communities and immigrants for the preservation, development and promotion of their own culture, language and identity.

##### Indicators:

- number of pupils and/or secondary school students enrolled in supplementary classes of mother tongues and cultures,
- number of pupils and/or secondary school students who attend an elective subject of foreign languages (excluding English and German),
- number of training events carried out,
- number of materials in the languages of immigrants in school and general libraries,
- scope of translation and interpretation support,
- number of co-financed projects in culture.



Approximate funds required: EUR 1,000,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: exercising the right to preserve one's own language, improving the linguistic capacities of speakers in their mother tongue, strengthening language capacities in the Slovenian language, multilingualism, increased visibility of languages of various minority ethnic communities and immigrant communities, and increased awareness of the other citizens of the Republic of Slovenia about multilingualism.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ, MZ, MDDSZ.

## 2.2.6 Foreign languages

Planning of foreign language teaching is becoming an ever more important part of national language policies within the European Union. Currently in Slovenia this area is not harmonised and lacks uniform guidelines at both national and regional levels. This is reflected with particular force in the scope of the teaching of individual foreign languages, where there are imbalances between the cultural, economic and political role of individual languages and the opportunities available for their continuous learning. The teaching of the first foreign language is carried out from the second grade onwards within the compulsory part of the primary school curriculum. Optionally, however, pupils can learn it from the first grade onwards. Compulsory learning of the first foreign language is continued after primary school until the completion of secondary general and vocational education programmes (excluding lower vocational education programmes). In their programmes, schools choose between English and German, but they can also offer and carry out courses of both languages. A primary school's decision to offer an additional second foreign language is based on the prescribed set of languages in compulsory elective subjects in the third educational period and in optional elective subjects of the extended primary school programme (from the second educational period onwards). Pupils can learn an additional second foreign language from the second educational period onwards as an optional elective subject, and in the third educational period as a compulsory or optional elective subject. In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of pupils who choose to learn a second foreign language as an elective subject. In the general upper secondary school curriculum, in addition to the first foreign language, the second language is mandatory as well, and there is also the possibility of choosing a third foreign language, with the school offering languages from a prescribed list. In secondary vocational and secondary professional education, only the learning of the first foreign language is compulsory. Learning additional languages in secondary professional education is possible only if the school decides to offer them. Classes of the mandatory second foreign language are carried out only in six programmes.

The Slovenian language policy therefore intends to examine this aspect with particular care with the aim of shaping a uniform policy for teaching foreign languages in the educational system. On the basis of an analysis of the situation in learning and teaching foreign languages at all educational levels, this policy will provide starting points and guidelines for the following:

- appropriate introduction of a second foreign language in primary and secondary schools;
- providing a suitable and well-founded distribution of the teaching of foreign languages throughout the country and within regions, and establishing among them a balance based on their cultural and economic-political roles and their place within the broader European and global context and the narrower local context;
- motivating and training principals and providing counselling services to schools and their management boards for them to be able to provide a suitable and consistent offer of language teaching which will be included in education at all levels in such a

- way as to encourage pupils to continue their learning (strictly non-compulsory) and achieving the highest possible level of competence in at least two foreign languages;
- establishing a system of verification and certification of knowledge obtained both at and outside school;
  - introducing modern approaches to planning and practising teaching of foreign languages within school curricula, which also take into account distance education and the use of digital resources and tools.

In primary and secondary schools, the teaching of all languages must be planned and practised in a way that enables integrated learning, so that languages refer to and complement not only each other (regardless of their role in the curriculum, i.e. as first, second or foreign language) but also other subjects. This correlation and interconnection must encourage positive transfers among subjects and the harmonisation and upgrading of language and intercultural knowledge (for instance, by using pluralistic approaches<sup>21</sup>, appropriate teaching strategies and activities, and through the appropriate organisational forms of classes).

The range of foreign languages taught in primary and secondary schools should be broad, but narrower for the first foreign language and broader for other second foreign languages. The transition from primary to secondary school should be flexible enough to enable pupils either to continue learning their second foreign language from primary school or to choose another second foreign language. Pupils must also be taught to use language technologies. An adequate place should also be ensured for classical languages (Latin and Ancient Greek) at all levels of education. In those parts of the Republic of Slovenia where Italian and Hungarian are not official languages, they must be given an adequate place as foreign languages.

In the context of adult learning, foreign language exams at the level of proficiency (C1/C2) should be prepared. In seconding Slovenian experts to the European Schools system, a knowledge of a foreign language at the C2 level is required. Such certificates are only offered by private language schools in Slovenia.

### Objective: Quality assurance and optimisation of teaching and learning foreign languages

#### Measures:

- promoting research of foreign languages which will serve as a basis for the preparation of a comprehensive language policy in the field of language education;
- providing continuous expert support to the development of the learning and teaching of all foreign languages that are part of the educational system, and planning to supplement the offered range of languages (Slovenian sign language, Japanese, Arabic, Esperanto, etc.);
- when introducing a mandatory second foreign language in primary school, the range of languages should include at least the foreign languages included in the Matura exam (English, French, Italian, German, Russian, Spanish and Latin) and the neighbouring languages (Italian, German, Croatian, Hungarian);
- supplementing the legislation to regulate the system of the range of second foreign languages offered, which will allow for the adequate dispersion of different foreign languages at national and regional levels, and the keeping of records on the number of pupils per individual language offered in schools, regions and nationwide;

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ROPP: Referenčni okvir za pluralistične pristope k jezikom in kulturam/Reference framework for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (M. Candelier et al., 2017, Zavod RS za šolstvo/National Education Institute Slovenia; <https://www.zrss.si/digitalnknjiznica/ropp-referencni-okvir-za-pristope-k-jezikom/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#1>).

- informing principals and teachers about the national language policy in foreign languages teaching and training for adequate professional decision-making on planning and providing (foreign) language education;
- promoting contemporary and innovative approaches to learning and teaching languages (in content and language integrated learning – CLIL, language portfolio, intercultural and multilingual approaches, etc.);
- promoting cooperation among teachers of foreign languages and teachers of Slovenian, and librarians, within schools by designing a common language curriculum which will lead to the creation of language-friendly learning environment;
- encouraging the continuous training of teachers and librarians in the language they teach and in teaching methods;
- training teachers of Slovenian and school librarians in foreign languages, and teachers of foreign languages in Slovenian;
- informing and counselling learners and their parents when choosing a foreign language;
- foreign language exams at the level of proficiency (C1/C2) should be prepared.
- in teaching Slovenian, the inclusion of contents that will enhance the understanding that a knowledge of foreign languages is important for good communication and will promote understanding language diversity as a value.

Indicators:

- number of studies, surveys and measures carried out,
- amended laws, regulations,
- number of pupils per language in schools, regions and nationwide,
- number of training courses carried out for principals and teachers,
- number of regulated foreign language examinations at the level of proficiency (C1/C2)
- number of teaching materials,
- number of teaching content on language diversity.

Approximate funds required: EUR 500,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: harmonised planning and development of the overall language platform for the teaching of foreign languages; increasing the level of teaching and knowledge and use of foreign languages; widening the range of foreign languages within and outside formal educational processes and increasing the opportunities for choosing among them; greater dispersion of the teaching of other specific foreign languages at the national level.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ (in cooperation with relevant expert institutions), MK.

### **2.2.7 Legal framework governing language in higher education and science**

In its fundamental legal document (*Higher Education Act*), Slovenian higher education defines Slovenian as the language of instruction in higher education, while care for the development of Slovenian as the language of academic disciplines and science is entrusted to higher education institutions. Important tasks at the national level include concern for the development of the Slovenian language at universities abroad, the learning and supplementary education of the Slovenian language for foreigners and Slovenians without Slovenian citizenship, and seminars, symposia and other expert meetings intended to ensure the development and learning of the Slovenian language.

The field of science, which is inseparable from the field of higher education, is by its nature integrated into an international context. It is therefore crucial to establish a balance between the use and development of the Slovenian scientific language and the Slovenian language of academic disciplines, and the use of foreign languages. In cases where the use of a foreign language is necessary to achieve the objectives of scientific excellence (e.g. parts of evaluation procedures involving foreign experts), such use should be allowed, while ensuring that the results of studies are properly accessible and presented in the Slovenian language. It is also necessary to reasonably lay down the procedures in which the translation of documents into the Slovenian language would not bring added value to the development of the Slovenian language, but may considerably complicate the implementation of such procedures. Nevertheless, in cases where there is a legitimate interest of the participants, proper accessibility of this content in the Slovenian language must be ensured.

On 28 July 2016, the Slovenian Government adopted the *Strategy for the Internationalisation of Slovenian Higher Education 2016–2020*. One of the five key chapters is dedicated to "promoting the development of intercultural competences". Here, a special emphasis is placed on the preservation of Slovenian as the language of academic disciplines, which is the dominant language of teaching and research in Slovenia. Therefore, special attention is dedicated to foreign students and teachers who will come to Slovenia through exchange programmes or for longer periods, by providing additional, particularly linguistic content, by means of various shorter and longer language courses and elective subjects of the Slovenian language and culture. Accordingly, higher education institutions began to introduce various additional activities before the arrival and upon the arrival of foreign students at higher education institutions to facilitate their integration into a new learning, social and cultural environment. The strategy sets out five direct and financially supported actions to this end: a range of courses of Slovenian language and culture for foreign students, information about life and studying in Slovenia, a range of courses of Slovenian language and culture for foreign higher education teachers and teachers, the training of higher education teachers and teachers in the field of intercultural competences and placement, and the role of Slovenian lecturers at foreign universities. According to the Action Plan 2016–2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport carried out a call for proposals worth more than one million euros in 2016, financing 15 projects of higher education institutions. Higher education institutions have received funding for support activities in the field of mobility of individuals (establishment of information points for foreign higher education students and teachers, orientation days for foreign higher education students, courses of Slovenian language and culture for foreign higher education students and teachers, preparation and experimental implementation of a preparatory module for foreign higher education students, special activities for the integration of immigrants), and for various aspects of internationalisation at home (training of Slovenian higher education teachers for the development of intercultural and other competences of Slovenian and foreign higher education students, training of Slovenian higher education teachers for teaching groups in which, in addition to Slovenian, there are also foreign higher education students, adaptation of the subject/subjects or parts of the subject/subjects of higher education study programmes for parallel implementation in a foreign language).

The development of Slovenian language and terminology in higher education and science will also be ensured through the availability of study content in the Slovenian language. An important step in the development of the Slovenian language in the field of science is also the consistent introduction of the principles of open science into the research process, which will in particular increase the availability of scientific results to the general public. This will make the results of scientific activities (co-)financed from public funds available readily and free of charge to all interested stakeholders.

Objective 1: Preservation of the status of Slovenian as the official and teaching language of higher education

Measure:

- evaluation of the state of implementation of the provisions relating to the concern for the Slovenian language at higher education institutions as laid down by the law.

Indicator:

- evaluation with recommendations for possible improvements prepared by the end of 2022.

Approximate funds required: envisaged own resources of higher education institutions and/or resources from the basic and development pillars of public higher education funding.

Expected effects: recommendations for the integration of a care for the Slovenian language into the accreditation and evaluation procedures of higher education institutions.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ, VŠZ, NAKVIS.

Objective 2: Facilitating the mobility of students and teachers

Measure:

- further development of the system of efficient learning of Slovenian for foreign students and teaching staff within individual higher education institutions.

Indicators:

- learning systems of Slovenian for foreign students, professors and lecturers for shorter and longer study stays.

Approximate funds required: own resources of higher education institutions and resources from the basic and development pillars of public higher education funding, the European Social Fund's resources.

Expected effects: successful language integration of foreign teachers and students into the Slovenian higher education area, effective and reciprocal exchange of scientific ideas and achievements.

Institutions responsible: higher education institutions.

Objective 3: Developing communication competences in the language of academic disciplines

Active multilingualism in Europe is envisaged in numerous documents to which Slovenia has committed itself. It is, therefore, paramount to enable, at the higher education level, the learning of Slovenian as the language of academic disciplines, contrastive terminology, and contrastive academic and scientific writing, while providing an adequate level of mastering professional communication in other languages for students and teachers alike. Despite their autonomy, universities, according to this document, are expected to adhere to the measures envisaged.

## Measures:

- a syllabus covering the above language contents, based on the results of thorough research and analysis of academic and technical articles at the tertiary level, on examples from abroad, and considering the specificities of individual programmes, will be drafted as an introductory class in the first year of all first-degree study programmes;
- a plan for training teachers to be able to adequately communicate in Slovenian and foreign languages and a plan of verification of language competences in other languages for those teachers who teach elective modules and programmes in other languages will be prepared;
- publishing high-quality tertiary-level textbooks in Slovenian and translating high-quality textbooks from foreign languages will be promoted;
- a master's study programme will be created, culminating in a lawyer linguist degree, for those who wish to pursue a career in European Union institutions;
- strengthening the interdisciplinary field of digital linguistics (Master's study programme);
- introduction of the course Professional and Scientific Slovenian at all Slovenian universities and/or their faculties.

## Indicators:

- syllabus for academic writing course/programme,
- plan of training and verifying teachers' proficiency in communicating in Slovenian and English,
- syllabus for the lawyer linguist programme.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: harmonised and more efficient planning and developing of teachers' language proficiency in Slovenian and English; development of the academic and technical language of individual disciplines, including the development of contrastive terminology.

Institution responsible: MIZŠ.

#### Objective 4: Improving the status of Slovenian as a language of science

Currently, the criteria for electing higher education teachers to titles of distinction, and provisions for accreditation of tertiary education programmes and institutions (Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) are mainly the result of the recognition of the importance of internationally confirmed quality of Slovenia's scientific achievements. The same criteria are applied by the Slovenian Research Agency for evaluating the excellence of Slovenian scientists in awarding project funds.

From a developmental point of view, publishing in foreign journals and in foreign languages is logical, considering that the university professorship policy aims to overcome the confinement of the research achievements of Slovenian researchers to the national territory and set it against work done abroad, and in this way increase the excellence of research work. When publishing abroad was more the exception than the rule, it was logical for the universities to stress the importance of such publishing in foreign languages.

However, such a policy resulted in the neglect and in certain cases complete abandonment of scientific publishing in Slovenian as a prerequisite for the appointment to academic titles, for supervising doctoral students and for heading research projects and programmes. This is thus a harmful policy in at least two aspects, i.e. as it results in the poor development of Slovenian terminology and Slovenian as an academic teaching

language and the decline of high-quality scientific journals published in Slovenian. A result of the current policy of academic career development in certain disciplines is that Slovenian is becoming a marginal language. Academic and professional publishing in Slovenian is a prerequisite if we want the academic sphere to effectively inform the Slovenian public of its achievements, to contribute to the establishment of a knowledge-based society, and to return to society the invested public resources.

For instance, the criteria for the lowest teaching title of higher education teacher do not include "mastering of Slovenian as the academic and technical language of the discipline", while research excellence criteria as a rule only consider publishing in world-renowned scientific journals, but the fact is that these are as a rule published in foreign languages.

If, in the past, it was necessary to promote publishing in foreign languages, while today the situation is reversed: in order to encourage the development of Slovenian as an academic language, it is necessary to promote quality publishing in Slovenian. This is why Slovenia's universities, the Slovenian Research Agency and the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education must create a balance between international and national visibility and encourage academic publishing in Slovenian as well.

Measure:

- universities should provide, within their professorship policies, incentives for publishing of academic and scientific articles in Slovenian. Universities, the Slovenian Research Agency and the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education must, for appointment to academic titles and for funding of programme groups, introduce the requirement of compulsory publishing of textbooks, terminology materials, academic articles and books in Slovenian (the exceptions for very niche fields, where this would not be feasible, are to be determined by the Slovenian Research Agency), as these are the pool for the creation of terminology and language databases and other resources (see following section).

Indicator:

- adoption and implementation of a system of professorship rules and a system of evaluating programme groups, where special emphasis is put on academic publishing in Slovenian.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: increased number of published academic articles in Slovenian; development of Slovenian technical language and terminology; informing the Slovenian public of the development of Slovenian scientific achievements.

Institutions responsible: universities, NAKVIS, ARRS, MIZŠ.

## **2.3 Language infrastructure**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

The extent to which Slovenian and the Slovenian language community are provided with language resources, reference works, tools and (advisory and supporting) services is among the key factors that will determine how a large number of the objectives of the language policy will be realised. In accordance with the findings of the research titled *Language policy of the Republic of Slovenia and the needs of users*, the coverage of language infrastructure is limited primarily to essential language reference works, resources, tools and services enabling Slovenians and foreign speakers of

Slovenian to efficiently communicate in the language, to learn and teach the language, to exercise their constitutional right to use their language, and to exercise rights granted to persons with special needs. The accelerated digitisation and development of information and communication technologies in the last decade provide a framework for the further development of the infrastructure, which, considering the pace of change and European and world outlines, will be predominantly digital, online and mobile. The language policy of the European Union, which is the framework for our own policy, co-shapes and takes into account social and technological developments, therefore investing in the development of digital resources for the official languages of the European Union and other European languages. Slovenia must embrace this trend and ensure that language manuals, resources, tools and services for Slovenian are in line with the EU policy goals that the European Union has set for all its official languages, as well as national goals in the field of digital infrastructure for the Slovenian language.

Objective 1: Continuous scientific research of the Slovenian language in support of the development of language infrastructure

Measures:

- promoting studies about the Slovenian language;
- establishing stable funding for activities in research institutions where researchers systematically and from a long-term perspective engage in language research while possessing adequate professional references.

Indicators:

- number of research projects.
- level of stable funding of research groups dealing systematically and from a long-term perspective with research of the Slovenian language and other languages that fall within the framework of the Slovenian language policy.

Approximate funds required in the context of regular activities: EUR 2,250,000.

Expected effects: the provision of scientific bases in the form of monographs, articles, research reports for a modern description of the language, for the recognition of the modern norm and creation of a codification of the standard language, for identifying the current socio-linguistic situation, for understanding the state-of-play of the language's use, for identifying the needs of the language community, for preparing plans aimed at setting up the language infrastructure and for their implementation with concrete and useful results, and for the formulation of the language policy.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ (ARRS), SAZU, MK.

Objective 2: Optimisation of the organisation of activities in the Slovenian infrastructure

Measures:

- establishment of a government working body or council to guide and monitor the development of language resources and technologies, to support comprehensive solutions in the digitisation of the Slovenian language and a care for the Slovenian language;
- systematic funding of language-infrastructure activities outside the funding of basic scientific linguistic activity;



- ensuring the parallel and balanced development of different language resources, technologies and other infrastructure units, including basic manuals, bilingual dictionaries, etc.;
- determining the hierarchy of linguistic infrastructure activities according to their importance based on the available surveys of users' needs;
- in the case of projects with linguistic infrastructure content, the introduction of a priority evaluation for projects which include among the results the creation or upgrading of a language resource or technology from the priority list, with the prior establishment of appropriate criteria for priority list ranking;
- for projects with language-infrastructure content, introduction of priority evaluation for projects that develop a language resource or technology up to the level of a mature product directly applicable to the end user (as opposed to the development of a prototype, test versions, concepts, etc.), with the possibility of publication on one of the established online language portals;
- promoting approaches to the building of language resources which include the user community (crowdsourcing) in addition to the participation of professional staff;
- as a basis for modernising language resources and technologies for Slovenian, promoting research among the general public, including people who (often) use language resources, as well as those who (generally) do not use language resources.

Indicators:

- establishment of a government working body or council to guide and monitor the development of language resources and technologies, to support comprehensive solutions in the digitisation of the Slovenian language and a care for the Slovenian language,
- a system of funding language infrastructure activities,
- demonstrated development of different types of language resources,
- a hierarchy of importance of language infrastructure activities,
- modified tendering rules,
- number of new resources using crowdsourcing.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: facilitating the continuous and planned implementation of language infrastructure tasks, ensuring a care for different types of language resources, maximising the applicability of the results of funded projects, faster progress and the development of openly accessible resources.

Institutions responsible: MK, MIZŠ.

Objective 3: Coordinated storage, acquisition and distribution of language resources and technologies within the CLARIN.SI consortium

Measure:

- ensuring the long-term funding of the CLARIN.SI consortium.

Indicators:

- resources and tools involved and their use.

Approximate funds required in the context of regular activities: EUR 400,000.

Expected effects: maintaining and strengthening the integration, collection, development and distribution of language resources and technologies; a centralised collection of freely accessible language resources and tools for working with the Slovenian language; improved long-term return on investment in language resources and tools; improved access to language resources and tools for all users; ensuring the continued applicability of language resources and tools; improved monitoring of the coherence of the development and quality of language resources and tools, enhanced coherence of the development and quality of language resources and tools.

Institution responsible: MIZŠ.

#### Objective 4: Open access to language resources

Measures:

- promoting consistent implementation of national open science strategies;
- continue the preparation of measures to implement the strategy's provisions in line with the current open science action plans;
- The integration of an open access condition according to the "*as open as possible, as closed as necessary*" principle, for all publicly funded results related to language infrastructure, except in considering the rights of potential original copyright owners of resources and tools that were not financed from public funds, or in respect of the protection of personal data;
- in the case of projects co-financed by public funds in the amount of at least 50%, the funder must request, and the operator must ensure, open access to all results;
- open results must be published or otherwise accessible in such a way as to enable them to be easily found, to be interoperable and to be re-evaluated and re-used;
- introduction of open access to scientific results into scientific research legislation in the context of the planned revision of scientific research legislation;
- financing legal proceedings relating to open access to language resources;
- the creation of legal bases for the submission of mandatory copies of published books in the National University Library also in electronic form for the creation of the relevant corpora of the Slovenian language;
- monitoring the issue of accessibility of standards of the Slovenian Institute for Standardisation.

Indicators:

- planned implementation of the current Action Plan for the implementation of the National Open Access Strategy, change of legislation.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: easier and wider access to content and products financed by public research funds, improved efficiency of public funds invested in research, increasing digital resources of Slovenian language and their capacity exploitation both directly for users and users and for re-exploitation.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ (ARRS), MK.

## Objective 5: Promoting the development of Slovenian Wikimedia

### Measures:

- implementation of projects that significantly increase the number and quality of Slovenian entries in Wikipedia, Wikisource, Wictionary and the related portals by means of crowdsourcing when entering and correcting entries or in some other ways;
- implementing projects that transfer to Wikimedia and thus digitise the existing non-digital resources;
- purchasing rights.

### Indicators:

- significantly increased data inputs in Wikipedia, Wikisource, Wictionary and the related portals, increased number of accesses to Slovenian Wikisources.

Approximate funds required: EUR 80,000.

Expected effects: improved access to open-access sources of knowledge online, strengthening the use of Slovenian to access information online, expanding the fields of use of the Slovenian language online.

Institution responsible: MK.

### **2.3.2 Language description**

Language description covers the preparation of resources and manuals describing various linguistic levels. The basic infrastructure at the level of the description of a particular language is formed by a fundamental monolingual dictionary and a fundamental grammar of the modern standard language, immediately followed by a variety of specialised language manuals. Due to the rapid development of the extra-linguistic reality today, language is evolving much faster than in the past, in particular in its lexical part, and therefore any such work is in principle only useful for a limited period of time. The databases on which the language description is based should therefore be structured in such a way as to enable language manuals and resources to be drawn up for as many different purposes and types of users as possible and to be updated on an ongoing basis.

Both in the recent past and today, *The Dictionary of Standard Slovenian* and *The Slovenian Grammar* by Jože Toporišič are considered to be the fundamental and authoritative dictionary and grammar of standard Slovenian. Although both fundamental works are still useful reference works, because of changes that have occurred in recent decades they no longer fulfil the needs of the current language reality. Another shortcoming of both fundamental works is also the fact that they were conceptualised as printed books and that only the dictionary was later digitalised, without, however, being fully adapted to the new digital environment because of its original print-based design. In 2014, the *Dictionary of Standard Slovenian* was supplemented and partially revised in 2014 (SSKJ<sup>2</sup>), but it is still mainly a matter of bridging the transitional period until the creation of a new dictionary of the Slovenian language. At the same time, the aforementioned fundamental grammar book is not freely accessible, and not even the dictionary meets all the requirements of open access to language data.

It is advisable to plan only one fundamental general language description (dictionary and grammar) for the next period. The description of modern Slovenian must be adapted to the digital environment. Methodologically, it must be optimised in such a

way that different data on the Slovenian language are available in one or more databases, in the context of a dictionary description ranging from semantic, interconnective, collocation, phraseological and idiomatic to nomenclature and etymological, pronunciation and so on. Data should be predominantly interconnective, multipurpose and openly accessible.

In order to improve the language infrastructure, dictionaries whose preparation is under way will have to be completed, compiled or adapted to the digital environment, such as a dictionary of synonyms, a dictionary of inflected forms of standard vocabulary (without proper names) including information on word stress, a dictionary of geographical names from the Slovenian national space and exonyms, and a dictionary of Slovenian names (personal names and family names). To preserve Slovenian as an academic and technical language it will be necessary to continuously compile terminological dictionaries of various professions and areas of human life and activity. All of this must be effected in such a way as to allow mutual compatibility as well compatibility with the authoritative dictionary (and in the future with the authoritative academic grammar) and their availability online.

In addition to the new fundamental authoritative description of Slovenian, manuals for other target users must also be prepared. Following the recent publication of one primary school and one secondary school level grammar and the freely available online publication of their content, these are mainly dictionaries for different educational levels of native speakers and grammars and dictionaries for those whose mother tongue is not Slovenian, and for people with special needs.

At the same time, it should not be forgotten that today Slovenian is not only the current standard language. Slovenian is also dialects, and a history that reaches far back. Special attention must, therefore, be paid to the research of dialects, especially the drafting of language atlases, dialect dictionaries, dialectological studies and monographs on particular dialects, and to historical and comparative linguistic research, both historical grammar and dictionaries of particular linguistic-historical periods, to a general linguistic historical dictionary and the production of a new etymology dictionary, etc. On the other hand, older dictionaries, grammars and other older linguistic texts also form part of the description of Slovenian, including the corpora created in the pre-digital age, which are also a source for the description of (older) Slovenian. These materials should be digitised as much as possible and made widely available through modern media.

In all of the aforementioned aspects of language description, care should be taken to ensure that the sources are accessible in as concentrated manner as possible. Various examples of a joined access to a larger number of sources for Slovenian include the Fran website, the webpage containing sources on the website of the Centre for Language Resources and Technologies of the University of Ljubljana, and the Presentation portal of online language sources for Slovenian on the websites of Trojina, Evroterm and Termania. It is also necessary to develop similar online hubs with language sources adapted for specific target groups of Slovenian users (pupils, etc.).

Objective: Preparing a comprehensive and authoritative description of contemporary standard Slovenian, specialised language descriptions, and dialectological, historical and comparative linguistic descriptions

Measures:

- preparation of authoritative and specialised reference works for Slovenian;
- maintenance and upgrading of freely accessible web portals, both for the general public and for professionals, with as much language data on Slovenian as possible; providing funding for their continued operation;
- making these resources accessible to all users, including users with special needs.

Indicators:

- number of basic and specialised reference works for Slovenian,
- number of active or maintained free-access web portals.

Approximate funds required: EUR 4,200,000 as part of the regular activities.

Expected effects: harmonised production of authoritative and specialised language reference works and ensuring their availability on the web (concentrated access to as much information on Slovenian as possible); accessibility also for groups with different disabilities, equality in accessibility.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ (ARRS), MK.

### 2.3.3 Standardisation

The identification of the contemporary linguistic norm starts with the identification of the actual use of words and with the assessment of such use in relation to the current literary norm – here, standardisation is closely connected with the systematic description of language and the first problem of the existing standardisation tools is the lack of up-to-date descriptions. To enable ongoing monitoring of the gap between the current language standard and actual use, it is necessary to envisage the availability of the planned use of language technology resources and tools for these needs. The development of such language technology infrastructure enables the generation of a partially automatic and (even more importantly) objective language database which may be used, with adequate linguistic interpretation, in all phases of the standardisation process.

Designing normative language reference works that are able to provide rapid and unequivocal answers to linguistic problems for the largest circle of users, is possible only on the basis of prior extensive research that will define how such reference works are to be compiled and what issues they should address. The process of recording the norm in reference works must take into consideration the latest changes in the language in order to meet users' expectations and be in line with the concept of minimum intervention.

In compliance with tradition and good practice, the basic codification manual or the Manual of Slovenian Orthography is approved, after consultation with all institutions competent for language planning, by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SAZU), which also participates in the preparation of all other basic normative manuals on Slovenian. In order to prepare a proposal to update the established spelling rules, a new SAZU Orthography Commission was appointed in 2013 and later renamed the SRC SAZU Orthography Commission. The Orthography Commission is composed of a working group organised in two bodies – working and advisory. The commission's functioning and progress in updating codification are presented on its website, which is also used for the ongoing collection of outside proposals on the reform of codification. Through the Fran portal, the commission presents new solutions planned for inclusion in the new codification manual. In line with past good practice, the commission will continue to look for codification solutions in the future, involving other institutions engaged in language planning and the wider interested public in the process. The updating of the established spelling rules is accompanied by a spelling dictionary which is not a purist manual that would direct the vocabulary, removed from context, from the foreign or loan words to the domestic, but above all, it is necessary to extend the rules that present to the user in a simple way the general principles regarding specific issues and therefore cannot cover all cases, but only the most typical ones.

The resolution on language policy for the 2007–2011 period already set the raising of the language self-confidence and reputation of Slovenian among its speakers

as an important goal. Since then, some studies and experiences with informal consulting points have shown that an advisory body which would quickly and effectively dispel language users' doubts about language-related issues could help to achieve this goal. In 2012, the *Language Advice Forum of the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian language at the ZRC SAZU* started operating. Free advice is provided through a dedicated web portal, where it is also possible to search the archives of already answered questions. At the same time, the services and data of the advice service also accessible via the Fran portal, which places the Language Advice Forum within the context of the basic Slovenian language manuals. Despite the co-existence of several other language advice points, this forum has relatively quickly become the main address for dealing with language issues relating mainly to Slovenian. By resolving language problems and satisfying linguistic curiosity, it helps to raise the linguistic self-confidence and reputation of Slovenian among its speakers and draws attention to various interpretive possibilities, which is often not possible to achieve through a rigid dictionary or the wording of a manual. It also bridges the inconsistencies between manuals, between manuals and textbooks, assesses discrepancies between manuals and textbooks, and indirectly supports the Orthography Commission in its tasks related to the updating of the language norm. This shows that language advice is necessary; therefore, the aim of the language policy in the coming period is to maintain and optimise the functioning of the Language Advice Forum.

Objective: Carrying out activities that ensure the updating and maintenance of the librarian standard, while ensuring that Slovenian speakers are familiar with and communicate in accordance with the standard language

Measures:

- functioning of a language advice service that operates via a freely accessible web portal providing as much available linguistic data on Slovenian as possible;
- drawing up new orthographic rules in line with the expressed needs of speakers and an updated language description;
- preparing the dictionary part of the orthographic manual based on normative problems;
- functioning of standardisation bodies.

Indicators:

- functioning of the advisory body,
- publishing the orthographic manual, i.e. spelling rules and the corresponding dictionary.

Approximate funds required: EUR 1,300,000.

Expected effects: harmonised development and accessibility of modern reference works on standard Slovenian and of language advisory services.

Institutions responsible: SAZU, MK in cooperation with MIZŠ (ARRS), universities and research institutions.

### **2.3.4 Terminology**

Terminology is of key importance for Slovenia on multiple levels, so it is imperative that activities under the national language policy be aimed at creating a language infrastructure and promoting the language training of experts in all fields. The emergence of high-quality terminological resources, such as terminological dictionaries,

involving both sectoral experts and linguists, should also be encouraged. Since terminology is a rapidly evolving part of every language, it is important to systematically support the provision of terminological advice, as this is the only way to respond quickly enough to the needs of experts who are usually the first to encounter a naming gap in the language when a new concept emerges. Experts should be offered continuous support in the development of linguistically relevant Slovenian terminology. Languages with a larger number of speakers are advantaged because they have a larger market and are strongly backed by the language industry (more accessible up-to-date databases, thesauruses, language corpora, machine translation systems, etc.), and this is the reason why the role of the government is so important for languages with fewer speakers. Considering this aspect, it is important to maintain the operation of a freely accessible terminology web portal with maximum available data on Slovenian, which also offers a web forum for the rapid exchange of knowledge and opinions on terminology solutions among professionals and linguists. Attention should also be paid to ensuring that these resources are accessible to users with special needs. Open access to databases, where possible, is also crucial for the further development of the Slovenian language.

While recognising the importance of specialised corpora and their use by means of language technologies or automated data acquisition, it should also be stressed that the latter alone is not sufficient for the production of terminology manuals; the production of high-quality terminology manuals also requires the active participation of relevant experts and linguists.

Measure: Setting up infrastructure and the preparation of freely accessible terminology resources and tools to support the learning and teaching of foreign languages, translation and terminology work.

Measures:

- production of modern terminological resources, such as terminology dictionaries, terminology databases, specialised corpora, etc.;
- setting-up terminology commissions for the production of terminology dictionaries, consisting of experts and linguists, and providing funding for their training and the operation of a freely accessible terminology portal with as much accessible linguistic data as possible on the Slovenian language, which includes terminology dictionaries, terminology databases and an effective language advice service, and which uses the possibilities of rapid exchange of knowledge and opinions between field experts and linguists provided by the internet;
- making these resources accessible also to users with special needs (e.g. A3C certificate accessible to all).

Indicators:

- developed terminological resources and databases,
- setting-up and/or updating the open terminology portal,
- continuous provision of terminological advice,
- level of funding.

Approximate funds required within the context of regular activities: EUR 800,000.

Expected effects: provision of modern interlingual dictionaries, databases and corpora, provision of terminology manuals, wide availability of multilingual and terminological databases, unification of terminology; added value to translators, teachers and general users of foreign languages; provision of basic linguistic resources for the development of machine translation and various multilingual applications.

Institutions responsible: MIZŠ (ARRS), MK – in cooperation with SAZU, universities and research institutions.

### 2.3.5 Multilingualism

In planning multilingual resources for the future, we can no longer consider only classic bilingual or terminology dictionaries, but must also envisage linguistic databases or cross-lingual knowledge bases that may be used either directly for checking information in the suitable web or other application (or in printed form) or incorporated into tools that assist in the learning of languages, translating or interpreting, such as machine-translation systems, computer-aided translation systems, and computer-aided interpretation systems. The aforementioned resources can be used if they are properly interconnected and machine-readable and systematically arranged (since inconsistency complicates machine processing), if connections and solutions form a complete set and are qualitatively and reliably interpreted, while the appropriate (web) infrastructure is established. The primary condition for compiling authoritative language reference works and providing technological solutions which may solve contrastive difficulties between two or more languages is the existence of modern resources and tools for Slovenian and the description of the Slovenian language.

To date it has been agreed that monolingual language resources and tools for Slovenian should be financed from public funds, while producing bilingual and multilingual resources and tools may be left either to interested individuals or to the commercial sphere. This concept has become insufficient in the digital age. The development of information and communication technologies has brought about a situation in which, after their transition to the digital environment, traditional bilingual and multilingual reference works have become much less attractive commercially (or of no interest at all), not only in Slovenia but also in Europe and indeed globally. On the other hand, in the digital environment it is much easier to exploit data from one database to compile new databases with similar contents; this is true for bilingual and multilingual databases, for terminology databases, etc. Adequate infrastructure also facilitates the creation of multilingual resources for those languages or for specialised thematic areas that have not yet been covered because of the small number of potential users.

Objective: Setting up of infrastructure for and the development of freely accessible multilingual resources and tools to assist in learning and teaching of foreign languages, in translation and in terminology work

Measures:

- development of multilingual resources and terminological databases;
- accessibility of these resources for users with special needs.

Indicators:

- developed multilingual resources and databases,
- level of funding.

Approximate funds required: EUR 400,000.

Expected effects: provision of modern interlingual dictionaries, databases and corpora, wide availability of multilingual databases; provision of basic language resources for the development of machine translation and various multilingual applications.

Institutions responsible: SAZU, MK in cooperation with MIZŠ (ARRS), universities and research institutions.



### 2.3.6 Language technologies

The term language technologies covers various computer tools and applications that use existing language (meta)data to solve users' practical dilemmas connected to language (systems for speech recognition and synthesis systems, machine translation systems, machine-aided human translation systems, spelling correction, grammar correction, automatic question-answering systems, text mining, speech to text conversion systems, etc.) and for computer analysis of natural languages for the production of digital language reference works and resources (tokenisation, morphosyntactic tagging, syntactic parsing, automatic word sense-disambiguation, automatic coreference resolution, named-entity recognition, etc.).

In the past fifteen years, the development of information and communication technologies has been creating a digital gap which will make languages that do not take part in this development less attractive and competitive in the generally globalised world. The digital gap separates languages that are sufficiently present on the internet, for which modern digital resources exist and which are developed in terms of language technologies, from those languages for which the delay in catching up with the rapid development of information and communication technologies is only increasing. Slovenia has also committed itself to preventing the creation or to closing of the digital gap between Slovenian and the leading European languages at a more general level in the national strategy for the development of the information society – *Digital Slovenia 2020*. In the last fifteen years, plans for developing digital resources and language-processing applications have been prepared for most official languages of the European Union, whereby some EU Members States and language communities provide for their languages to enter the digital environment in a systematic and planned way. The objectives of such plans are generally the following: (1) identification of factors concerning language description, language technology and resources; (2) systematic analysis of language use and the needs of the language community linked to such use; (3) making a list of existing digital language products and services for the research community and the general public and of what is still missing; (4) setting up of regulated storage, maintenance and distribution of existing reference works, resources and tools; (5) setting up of a long-term programme of preparing and developing digital language reference works, resources and tools; (6) cooperating with European initiatives in the exchange of digital resources and tools. Comparability of such programmes is ensured by taking into consideration European initiatives such as CLARIN.SI and DARIAH, and research infrastructures and infrastructure networks such as META-NET.

The technological development of any language is typically evaluated according to the following indicators. Language technology resources (corpora and knowledge bases) include: (1) reference corpora, specialised corpora; (2) morphosyntactically and syntactically annotated text corpora (dependency treebanks); (3) semantically and discourse annotated corpora; (4) parallel corpora, translation memories, multilingual comparable corpora; (5) speech corpora (speech audio files, annotated audio corpora, dialogic corpora); (6) multimedia and multimodal databases (combining text and video/audio data); (7) semantic lexicons, synonym dictionaries, ontologies; (8) language models (statistical models for probability distribution at different language levels) and (formal) grammars; (9) lexicons of word forms and multiword units; (10) terminology databases. Language technology tools and applications (software systems) include: (1) spellcheckers and modules for checking grammar; (2) machine translation, machine-aided translation in different languages; (3) speech recognition and synthesis (audio systems, aids for learning standard spoken Slovenian, portable and embedded user interfaces, voice enabled management of technical systems); (4) tokenisation, morphosyntactic tagging, morphological analysis and synthesis; (5) syntactic parsing (surface or deep syntactic analysis of sentence structure, valency); (6) sentence

semantics (automatic word sense-disambiguation, semantic roles); (7) text semantics (automatic coreference resolution, context analysis, pragmatic information extraction, deduction via context); (8) discourse processing (formal structure analysis of texts, rhetorical structure analysis of texts, argumentative analysis, word-pattern analysis, genre-recognition, etc.); (9) information extraction (automatic indexing, multimedia information extraction, multilingual information extraction); (10) information retrieval (named-entity recognition, event-relation information retrieval, automatic opinion/relation recognition, text analytics and text mining); (11) speech synthesis, dialogue systems.

For the forthcoming period, it would be realistic to plan at least the following: (a) setting up, upgrading and maintaining the (standard) annotated reference and specialised corpora of Slovenian (reference speech corpus of Slovenian, corpora of expert and scientific texts for various professional fields, (balanced) syntactically annotated corpus of Slovenian, etc.), including the formulation of language models for statistically supported probability analysis of language use at different language levels, and tools and software programs for their computer analysis and visualisation, and (b) work on the most relevant tasks listed in the section on language technology tools and software programmes – applications (according to a list of research-based priorities).

In the production of language reference works and resources, common elements which will make possible connecting such corpora and thus contribute to more effective use of resources in the preparation of language reference works should be envisaged. Any new language resources, tools and technologies used should ensure maximum interoperability. In the future, with the rise of new advanced technologies, resources will be increasingly used not only by humans but also by machines, so resources must be prepared accordingly.

A significant drawback of the current system for the development of tools and resources financed by budget funds is the fact that after the termination of the project concerned, i.e. the relevant period of financing, such tools and resources were either no longer accessible for general use or impossible to find, access or use. Another problem in the same vein is the unclear copyright status of existing resources and software applications. In the future, the CLARIN.SI consortium will be responsible for overcoming these difficulties by connecting, collecting, developing and distributing language technology resources financed by public funds and will facilitate their continuous and, as far as possible, free accessibility for all users. For languages with a limited number of users, such as Slovenian, such resources must not only be freely accessible, but also available for commercial exploitation, where such use is admissible and possible, as this is one of the effective methods to promote the use of a specific language in the digital environment.

Objective: Development, modernisation and maintenance of basic language technologies for Slovenian and other languages falling within the framework of the Slovenian language policy, and ensuring that they are as freely accessible as possible

Measures:

- regular analysis of the state of play to identify needs regarding developing and modernising language resources and technologies by examining good practices of the development and financing of individual resources and technologies (e.g. the assessment for which types of texts it is reasonable to develop machine translation systems – general language, specific and scientific texts);
- compiling a list of language resources and technologies for priority development and/or development and modernisation based on studies on user needs;
- development, modernisation and maintenance of material resources, in particular language corpora;
- developing, upgrading, updating and maintaining of speech technologies for Slovenian and other languages that fall within the framework of the Slovenian language policy;

- adaptation and use of semantic resources and technologies of deep neural networks for the semantic support of language and technological tasks in the field of Slovenian and other languages covered by the Slovenian language policy;
- developing machine translation for the needs of Slovenian and other languages that are covered by the Slovenian language policy;
- developing a spell checker and grammar checker;
- integration into the established storage and distribution infrastructure.

Indicators:

- performed analysis,
- list of language resources and technologies for priority development and modernisation,
- volume of new materials in corpora,
- number of developed/upgraded material resources,
- number of developed/upgraded/updated/maintained technologies,
- number of developed/upgraded applications and language accessories,
- volume of freely available material in the established storage and distribution infrastructure.

Approximate funds required: EUR 4,500,000.

Expected effects: furnishing the language community with modern language technologies, enabling systematic linguistic research with modern technologies and based on high-quality data, providing important and modern language information to the general public, facilitating the development of new language resources and technologies, enabling free access.

Institutions responsible: MJU, MK, MIZŠ (ARRS).

### 2.3.7 Digitalisation

The transition to a digital environment means that all text and other materials (audio, video) representing Slovenian cultural and scientific heritage will be (freely) accessible in digital form. The accessibility of such language resources promotes their use in digital media, together with interconnectivity, and provides an empirical basis for the development of language technologies in the Slovenian language. Free access is provided through licences such as Creative Commons, where authors surrender a part of their copyright to the digital original, whereby they allow not only consulting, but also downloading and further dissemination of their language resources.

Digitisation of both contemporary and older language descriptions and their free access over the internet are essential. Slovenia has additionally committed itself to this in the national strategy for the development of the information society *Digital Slovenia 2020*. Under the 2007–2011 resolution, free online access was provided to the Dictionary of Standard Slovenian, Slovenian Orthography (2001) and to several other reference works. Under the 2007–2011 resolution, the number of both general and specialist (e.g. terminology) resources that became freely available via the web interface increased significantly, and the interfaces (e.g. on the Fran website and on the portal of the Centre for language resources and technologies of the University of Ljubljana) were upgraded as well. Especially with the encouragement of the CLARIN.SI consortium, the range of openly accessible language resources and language technology tools that enable the digitisation of materials also started to increase. In the future, online access will have to be provided, in compliance with Slovenia's legislation and internationally comparable rules, to the largest possible number of authoritative and specialist language descriptions and databases, both existing and in development, for their incorporation into software

applications and for promoting the further development of language technologies for Slovenian. Openness also means adequate technology, so language guides and resources must be prepared in compliance with appropriate international standards and guidelines, such as XML and ISO, in particular those prepared by the ISO/TC 37 – Terminology and Other Language and Content Resources, and by other relevant bodies, such as the Text Encoding Initiative.

In the second half of the 20th century, extensive collections of audio recordings of spoken language, which are now part of the archives of numerous research, educational and cultural institutions, were created along with dialectological, folklore, sociolinguistic, anthropological and other research studies. Due to its format, this material is largely inaccessible and remains completely unexploited, but it represents valuable intangible cultural heritage and is, at the same time, an important source for the study of spoken language in a specific time and space. The digitisation of such audio sources of spoken Slovenian will enable an appropriate representation of its exceptional spatial and genre diversity. This is also extremely important for the general public, who will thus easily access recordings in all Slovenian dialects. The implementation of this objective requires the establishment of a uniform standard for digitisation, labelling and the equipping of appropriate metadata. The archive collection thus established must be made available to both the general and the expert public; particular attention will have to be paid to ensuring the most complete documentation of endangered speeches or those already extinct from the periphery of the Slovenian language space, which can also be an important source for language revitalisation.

In Slovenia there already exists a series of digital libraries providing access to full texts. The central database is dLib, the Digital Library of Slovenia, which for the majority of older materials provides only scans and automatic OCR texts, but these contain (because of the age of the originals) many mistakes. Correcting such texts is a time-consuming, albeit necessary, part of the preparation of high-quality fair copies that may later be used by language technologies. The preparation of fair copies of older language production must also be promoted by using crowdsourcing for entering and correcting language resources – a case of good practice here is the collection of Slovenian classic literature on Wikisource.

The government must promote academic publications in the Slovenian language; this is also a valuable source of Slovenian science terminology and language. To date, possibilities for the capture, processing and distribution of such texts have not been fully exploited. If texts published in scientific journals and proceedings are accessible, they can be processed using language technologies and made available to scientific communities for terminology management. This would take place within the context of a comprehensive terminology portal which is part of a freely accessible online portal giving access to extensive digital linguistic data on the Slovenian language. The digitisation of materials must also take into account their accessibility to all, including for people with different disabilities. Some PDF formats of the so-called auxiliary technologies such as screen readers cannot be used, i.e. the content is recognised only as an image but not as text, and therefore these materials are not accessible to many persons, such as the blind and partially sighted.

Objective 1: Promoting the digitisation of and providing free access to all existing language resources and reference works representing Slovenian cultural heritage and scientific text production in the Slovenian language

Measures:

- digitising existing written and spoken Slovenian materials in such a way that digitised material is accessible to Slovenian speech syntheses, e.g. Govorec (Speaker), eBralec (eReader), and storing such material to enable as open access as possible;

- promoting projects that would also contribute to the digitisation of previously non-digital or unedited digital resources through crowdsourcing (modelled on the Wikisource project: Slovenian classic literature as an example of good practice);
- promoting projects (scientific projects, student assignments, etc.) that would enable the collection, recording and digitisation of older and modern non-standard language materials using different research techniques, e.g. standardised dialectological questionnaires, guided interviews, spontaneous speech capture, including through crowdsourcing;
- awarding infrastructure research funds to programmes that include the digitisation of written cultural heritage (this includes, besides scans, fair copies and critical editions of important documents) and the digitisation or adaptation to the digital environment of Slovenian language sources and reference works; and to those which provide online access to scientific texts in Slovenian.
- the mechanism of the selection of projects on the production of language resources and reference works financed by public funds must include the requirement that such language resources and reference works must be standardised and accessible online to the greatest extent possible;
- promotion of the digitisation of written and audio-visual materials in the archives of Slovenian communities outside Slovenia.

Indicators:

- number of works of written cultural heritage in digital form;
- number of Slovenian language reference works in digital form;
- number of accessible texts of scientific production in Slovenian in digital form.

Approximate funds required: EUR 1,000,000.

Expected effects: increased accessibility of works of written cultural heritage, increased number of digitised works of written cultural heritage, Slovenian language reference works and scientific texts in digital form.

Institutions responsible: MK, MJU, SAZU, MIZŠ.

Objective 2: Promoting the digitisation of archive audio material and the creation of a freely accessible digital platform of the older dialect spoken language of the 20st century (phonogram archives)

Measures:

- development of uniform standards for the digitisation of analogue audio archive material;
- digitisation of audio archive material;
- promotion of scientific, student and cultural projects contributing to the collection and digitisation of audio archive material from various institutions, in particular to the documentation of endangered and extinct speeches in Slovenia and in the archives of Slovenian communities outside the Republic of Slovenia;
- allocation of infrastructure research funds to those programmes that plan to digitise audio sources and publish them online.

Indicators:

- standard for digitisation of archive audio material,
- number of hours of audio recordings in digital form,
- access to digitised audio material.

Approximate funds required: EUR 700,000.

Expected effects: increased accessibility of intangible cultural heritage in the form of audio material, increased number of digitalised analogue sound sources of the older spoken language.

Institution responsible: MK.

### Objective 3: Increased production and accessibility of high-quality e-books in Slovenian

Measures:

- financial support for the publication of high-quality e-books in Slovenian, whether original Slovenian books or translations;
- further integration of e-books into the libraries.

Indicators:

- number of new e-books in Slovenian,
- number of new e-books in libraries,
- borrowing e-books in libraries.

Approximate funds required: EUR 700,000.

Expected effects: increased accessibility of Slovenian reading texts using modern technology and therefore less substitution of Slovenian for foreign language on the account of the easier access to foreign language equivalents; increasing Slovenian language competences.

Institution responsible: MK.

### **2.3.8 Persons with special needs and adapted ways of communicating**

Specific areas where the language infrastructure does not meet the requirements of persons with special needs are, in particular, the Slovenian sign language, aids for the blind and partially sighted, adapted ways of communicating with the deafblind and aids for deafblind, aids for people with speech and language impairments, and technical aids for people with dyslexia (reading and writing difficulties).

The Slovenian sign language is developed in compliance with the provisions of the *Act Regulating the Use of Slovenian Sign Language*. The present resolution encourages all activities that constitute the regular application of the provisions of this act. But the resolution goes further than this and looks at new opportunities offered by new technologies, and promotes the development of an infrastructure enabling the deaf to realise their right to use sign language in all proceedings before state authorities, public authorities and public service providers and also in any other context where deafness would pose an obstacle to fulfilling their needs. The infrastructure designed to fulfil these needs includes, in particular, the establishment of a multimedia glossary of sign language and any assistive technologies that cover sign language (for instance services for remote interpretation by video into sign language and automatic sign language recognition systems). Special attention will also be paid to the grammar of the Slovenian sign language, which is the basis for the successful standardisation of the Slovenian sign language and thus the strengthening of the language competences of native speakers of the Slovenian sign language, as well as for producing quality materials for learning Slovenian sign language as a second language.

Developing successful ways of communicating for deafblind people is the main task in the field of deafblindness and in the integration of deafblind people into society. These methods can only be developed together with deafblind persons who will be their

users. However, they must be assisted in their efforts by experts. The infrastructure that enables deafblind persons to integrate into society and fulfil their fundamental right to use their own way of communication are all technical aids and applications intended for deafblind people, and the development of a multimedia dictionary of ways of communicating with the deafblind.

The infrastructure designed for the blind and partially sighted includes most assistive technologies designed for all speakers. Most important here are automatic speech recognition and speech synthesis systems and language resources necessary for the setting up of such systems. This resolution promotes the development, updating and upgrading of language-specific technologies included in aids for the blind and partially sighted, such as devices for reading electronic files or listening to digital audio books, computer or mobile device screen readers, portable text readers, etc. Another important field is software localisation designed for the blind and partially sighted and assistive technologies to support language-specific requirements involved in working with Braille.

People with dyslexia (reading and writing difficulties) need specific technical aids such as e-book readers, devices for reading electronic files or listening to digital audio books, computer or mobile device screen readers, portable text readers, smart pens, etc.

For people with developmental disorders and other people with difficulties with reading and understanding what they have read (for instance persons with head injuries), it is important to develop advanced assistive technologies which simplify reading (also through simplification of contents).

Objective: Equipping persons with special needs with language-specific assistive technologies and aids

Measures:

- supporting the Slovenian Sign Language Institute responsible for establishing links between, collecting, developing and distributing language resources and technologies for the Slovenian sign language;
- fixing of the norm, standardisation and promotion of research of the Slovenian sign language and updating the Slovenian Braille topography and modernisation of Slovenian Braille;
- production of audio and video books for Slovenian sign language users (e.g. for developing reading literacy for persons with special needs);
- carrying out special activities and the production, updating and upgrading sources and tools for communicating with the blind and partially sighted, the deafblind and persons with dyslexia or developmental disorders which will enhance their communication skills.

Indicators:

- increasing the funds dedicated to the operation of the Slovenian Sign Language Institution,
- number of research projects carried out on Slovenian sign language adapted to methods of communication with the blind, partially sighted and deafblind, and on the language of people with dyslexia and mental disabilities,
- reference works describing the characteristics of the standard type of the Slovenian sign language,
- number of new audio and video books,
- number of activities performed and developed, updated and upgraded resources and communication tools for people with special needs.

Approximate funds required: EUR 650,000.

Expected effects: development of communication tools for persons with special needs with the aim of increasing their communication skills, providing better furnishing of people with special needs with adapted language and linguistic technology aids and tools than in 2020.

Institutions responsible: MDDSZ, MK, MIZŠ (ARRS).

## 2.4 Legislative and other legally valid documents of the Slovenian language policy

Further legislative and regulatory action concerning Slovenia's language policy is necessary; the question is whether it is more appropriate to adopt framework laws or regulations or include language-related provisions in other laws and regulations touching upon the issue of language use.

The task of evaluating and preparing proposals for revising or upgrading the legal framework of Slovenia's language policy lies primarily with the Slovenian Language Service of the Ministry of Culture, as well as each individual body responsible for legislation in its field. The formal legal framework for language policy must be based on some general principles:

- Legal provisions concerning the status, mandatory use and mandatory knowledge of Slovenian and other languages must be clear, binding, generally accepted by the public, coordinated and realistically feasible, must provide precisely planned phases of implementation, and must be, of course, in compliance with Slovenia's constitution and the EU acquis.
- The currently applicable laws and regulations which in principle regulate language matters, either by providing for the priority status of Slovenian or by granting rights to speakers of Slovenian and of other languages, but which, since their adoption, have either not been implemented or have been systematically disregarded or otherwise overlooked, will have to be either abolished or amended in accordance with the preceding point
- Legal provisions on the status, mandatory use and knowledge of languages must correspond to the legal and democratically legitimate communication needs of Slovenia's citizens, other inhabitants of the Republic of Slovenia and other speakers of Slovenian.
- The legislation must bind Slovenia's language sphere decision-makers to such behaviour in terms of language and language policy planning as is in line with the objectives of this language policy programme.

The *Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act* was adopted in 2004 and amended in 2010. Since its adoption, the circumstances in certain spheres of public life have changed so much that a comprehensive amendment of the Act seems a plausible option. However, any decision on changing the law must be based on a thorough review of its implementation (analyses of the language situation to be carried out), taking into account certain fields that have already been identified as needing reorganising.

The fields that are seen as problematic in terms of contents and implementation include the following: (1) *The Instructions on establishing linguistic conformity of the business name of any legal person governed by private law or of any natural person engaged in a registered business activity upon entry in the court register or any other official records* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], No. 53/2006), based on Article 19 of the Public Use of the Slovenian Language Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia [*Uradni list RS*], Nos 86/04 and 8/10), are not objective enough in terms of the procedure for establishing linguistic conformity, as they indicate as adequate both representative corpora and certain criteria related to origin and historical development. This looseness gives room for too much arbitrariness in deciding the conformity of a name; it is, therefore, necessary to improve the instructions. (2) Provisions concerning the necessary level of knowledge of Slovenian and of other



languages for individual professions and for other uses (the *Public Use of Slovenian Language Act*, the *Decree on required knowledge of the Slovenian language for certain professions or jobs in government bodies, bodies of self-governing local communities, public sector entities and bearers of public authority*, sectoral acts): presently, in compliance with the current certification system, it is possible to require proficiency in Slovenian at different levels only from foreign speakers of Slovenian; native speakers of Slovenian are considered to demonstrate their language skills through their level of education. At the same time, it would be necessary, at least for jobs in the public sector, to harmonise, in terms of regulations and contents, the requirements for certified proficiency in Slovenian and other languages and make them comparable to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The certification system for Slovenian as a foreign language currently in force, which is internationally recognised, must be provided for by law. (3) Provisions on Slovenian as the language of tuition in Slovenia's public higher education institutions: the legal framework must provide for the further strengthening of Slovenian as the language of tuition for higher education in Slovenia and as Slovenia's language of science; at the same time it must provide for a language system that will be flexible enough to enable the further enhancing of high-quality international cooperation at higher education and scientific levels.

Objective 1: Provision of research and empirically supported bases for the formal legal framework of the Slovenian language policy

Measures:

- studies of language situations, uses, attitudes, etc., related to the formal and legal framework of the language regulation of the Republic of Slovenia (already established framework and a possible new one);
- systematic evaluation and review of the effects of the formal legal framework of the language regulation of the Republic of Slovenia (coordinated by the Slovenian Language Service);
- drafting a comprehensive review and making an assessment of Slovenia's language situation to be used as the basis for the preparation of the next national language policy programme.

Indicators:

- number of targeted studies on aspects of Slovenia's language situation carried out;
- number of evaluations carried out and proposals prepared for revision of the current legal framework;
- review and assessment of Slovenia's language situation prepared.

Approximate funds required: EUR 150,000.

Expected effects: more effective legal framework for Slovenia's language policy; a comprehensive assessment of the language situation in terms of various parameters (vitality of the public domains of language, needs of different categories of speakers: minority communities, expatriates, emigrants) that will be used as the basis for the preparation of the new national programme of language policy.

Institutions responsible: MK and other competent ministries.

## Objective 2: Analysis of system rules on language rights

### Measures:

- analysis of the regulations governing the rights relating to the use of language (in particular the ZJRS, ZIMI, ZUSZJ, ZPP, ZKP, ZNP and ZS) with a view to formulating and filing possible amendments to regulations that would ensure increased systemic compliance and/or simplify the procedure for exercising rights;
- analysis and adaptation of related groups of language users (e.g. the sensory disabled, people with mental health disorders).

### Indicators:

- number of analyses carried out or the scope of material analysed,
- number of vulnerable groups involved.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: substantive optimisation of language rights, clearer legal and factual relations, easier exercise of the rights of beneficiaries, easier provision of rights to beneficiaries, greater equality and inclusiveness of society.

Institutions responsible: MK, MJU, MDDSZ, MP.

## Objective 3: Increasing the level of implementation of the normatively regulated language rights of different specific groups of users

### Measures:

- awareness-raising and training of officials carrying out administrative procedures and services related to the language rights of specific groups;
- raising awareness among language users from different vulnerable groups and specific user groups;
- promoting the review and inspection of the implementation of the language rights of vulnerable groups and specific user groups.

### Indicators:

- number of seminars, workshops, training events held,
- number of inspections carried out.

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: a higher level of exercise of the envisaged rights and the implementation of the applicable regulations; a more democratic, equitable and inclusive society.

Institutions responsible: MK, MJU, MDDSZ.

Objective 4: Increasing the level of inspection of the language aspect of products and services on the market, business with clients, legal acts and the internal operation of legal and natural persons

Measures:

- raising awareness of the rights and possibilities of action in case of suspected violations of language aspects of products and services on the market, business with clients (including patients), legal acts and the internal operation of legal and natural persons;
- raising awareness about the use of Slovenian on websites;
- more consistent verification of the language aspect by the market inspectorate and other competent institutions.

Indicators:

- number of awareness-raising campaigns,
- number of inspections carried out.

Approximate funds required: EUR 10,000 and regular activities.

Expected effects: adequate information of consumers about products and services, enabling legally guaranteed rights, promotion of Slovenian.

Institutions responsible: MK, MGRT, MZ, MKGP.

Objective 5: Ensuring clearer and more harmonised legislation on the naming of various institutions, shops, catering establishments and public signage, and its enforcement

Measures:

- study of possible inconsistencies in the legislation governing the issue of naming various institutions, shops, catering establishments and public signage in Slovenian;
- increased efficiency of inspection services
- language awareness and education of general language users, language users who register business subjects and officials who regulate registration.

Indicators:

- necessary amendments to legislation,
- number of inspection measures imposed,
- number of training events and awareness campaigns.

Approximate funds required: EUR 10,000.

Expected effects: uniformity of language regulations, linguistic landscape consistent with legal regulations, promotion of the Slovenian language.

Institution responsible: MK.

## 2.5 Slovenian as an official language of the European Union

By becoming one of the official languages of the European Union, Slovenian has gained greater symbolic relevance at the international level and, moreover, numerous operative opportunities to participate in research and use of language within a community of 24 official languages.

Multilingualism is a principle enshrined in the legal foundations of the European Union. Its basic traits are defined in the founding treaties, Regulation No. 1 of 1958 and the accession acts of each new EU Member State that decided to establish its national language as an official language of the European supra-national community. It is based on the need for democracy, transparency and legal security for all citizens of the European Union. For this reason, all legal acts of the European Union are available in all official languages, interpretation is provided at all sessions of the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council of the European Union and at sessions of certain working groups; most websites of the EU are in multiple languages, and citizens and legal entities may communicate with EU institutions in their own language. This arrangement does not seem to be under threat, as it has enough supporters within the EU – it is actually difficult to imagine that the community would renounce it, as by doing so it would cease to be the community of which 27 countries are part. Multilingual communication of European Union bodies with citizens and institutions means ensuring daily translation and interpretation in all EU official languages by means of an organised institutional system, with well-organised units for each language. At the political level, Slovenia must strive to prevent the shrinking of language departments as a consequence of institutional changes in the European Union to the detriment of the principle of multilingualism in general and languages with a smaller number of speakers in particular. In addition, with the increasing use of machine translation and a diminishing trend in the number of full-time linguists, as well as an increasing trend in contractual translation, care must be taken to ensure that adequate quality control continues to be ensured.

The state authorities of the Republic of Slovenia can also do more to promote multilingualism and Slovenian as the official language of the European Union by consistently using Slovenian at all meetings, sessions, conferences and similar events in the European Union and in Slovenia whenever interpretation is available, as well as in written communication with the institutions and bodies of the European Union.

Furthermore, in relation to EU institutions we continue to advocate the principle that the free movement of people, goods, services and capital must never undermine the domicile status of the official language of an EU Member State, and that an EU Member State has the right to legal safeguards and other mechanisms to neutralise any negative impact of free movement in terms of language use and policy.

Terminology is essential for enabling Slovenian to be active on various levels. Consequently, it is imperative that activities under the national language policy be aimed at expanding the language infrastructure and promoting the linguistic training of experts in all fields. The role of the state and public administration is to ensure systematic and harmonised actions among key ministries and actors in terms of the care for language development.

In the period since Slovenia's accession to the European Union and the application period of the previous two resolutions, we have witnessed the development of cooperation between Slovenian departments of EU institutions and bodies and institutions of the Republic of Slovenia, which enables regular consultations, thus increasing the active role of the Slovenian departments of the European Union and encouraging the Slovenian side to respond to concretely expressed needs.

Objective 1: Support of the government for the use of Slovenian as an official language of the European Union

Just as in the previous resolution's period, in the period covered by the current resolution it is necessary to provide Slovenian translators and interpreters in EU institutions, as well as translators and interpreters in Slovenia who represent us in the international community in terms of language, with adequate expert, linguistic and terminological assistance to enable them to produce a reliable Slovenian version of EU legislation. It will be especially important to intensify cooperation in the period when Slovenia will once again hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Measure:

- regular support to Slovenian departments in the institutions of the European Union and state bodies of the Republic of Slovenia on language issues in the context of Slovenian as the official language of the European Union; connecting translators, lawyers and interpreters from the institutions of the European Union with the linguistic, legal and professional spheres in the Republic of Slovenia.

Indicators:

- updated directories for terminological consultation,
- response assistance to line bodies and Slovenian departments of the institutions of the European Union,
- coordinated request from the competent authorities for interpretation "on request" in the working groups of the Council of the European Union (twice a year).

Approximate funds required: regular activities.

Expected effects: harmonised translation and interpretation in the European Union institutions and verifying terminology at the EU level.

Institutions responsible: MZZ, all ministries and government offices.

Objective 2: Support of the state in the use of Slovenian in the context of Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2021

Measure:

- provision of additional targeted language training courses in state administration, offered by the Administration Academy of the Ministry of Public Administration for the needs of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Indicator:

- number of training events carried out.

Approximate funds required: funded under the Presidency budget.

Expected effects: provided effective language support to the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Institution responsible: MJU.

## List of abbreviations

ARRS	– Slovenian Research Agency
JAK	– Slovenian Book Agency
MDDSZ	– Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MGRT	– Ministry of Economic Development and Technology
MIZŠ	– Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport
MJU	– Ministry of Public Administration
MK	– Ministry of Culture
MKGP	– Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
MNZ	– Ministry of the Interior
MP	– Ministry of Justice
MZ	– Ministry of Health
MZI	– Ministry of Infrastructure
MZZ	– Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAKVIS	– Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
SAZU	– Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
UN	– Government Office for National Minorities
UOIM	– Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants
USZS	– Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Slovenians Abroad
VŠZ	– higher education institutions
ZRC SAZU	– Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts

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Igor Zorčič  
President