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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

NORTH MACEDONIA

LAW (*)

ON THE USE OF LANGUAGES

AND

**ALTERNATIVE TO ARTICLE 8
PROVIDED BY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

() Translation provided by the authorities of North Macedonia.*

LAW ON THE USE OF LANGUAGES

Article 1

(1) Throughout the Republic of Macedonia and in its international relations the official language shall be the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet.

(2) Other language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens (Albanian language) and its alphabet is also the official language, in accordance with this Law.

(3) In all organs of the central government in the Republic of Macedonia, central institutions, public enterprises, agencies, directorates, institutions and organizations, commissions, legal entities that discharge public authorities in accordance with the law and other institutions, official language in addition to Macedonian and its alphabet is also the language spoken by 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet, in a manner established by this Law.

(4) In the units of local self-government the language and the alphabet used by at least 20% of the citizens is the official language, in addition to the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet. The use of languages and the alphabets spoken by less than 20% of the citizens in the units of local self-government shall be decided by the organs of the units of local self-government.

Article 2

(1) The citizens have the right to use any of the official languages and their alphabets specified in Article 1, paragraph (1) and (2) of this Law, and the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) of this Law and the other institutions have the responsibility to enable the use, usage, and application of those official languages and their alphabets by the citizens in any proceedings as well as to conduct those proceedings in that language and alphabet.

(2) In accordance with the right of the citizens to use any of the official languages specified in Article 1, paragraph (1) and (2) of this Law, in the judicial, administrative, and enforcement proceedings, pre-investigative and investigative proceedings, criminal and misdemeanor proceedings, litigation and non-litigation proceedings, proceedings for enforcement of sanctions as well as other proceedings prescribed in other laws, the courts, the public prosecution as well as all other organs, bodies and institutions are required to enable the use, usage and application of any of the official languages of Article 1, paragraph (1) and (2) and their alphabets in those and other proceedings.

(3) In the institutions of the central government in the Republic of Macedonia, specified in Article 1, paragraph (3) of this Law, the official language in addition to the Macedonian language and its alphabet is also the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of

Macedonia and its alphabet in the: communication, usage and application in all proceedings where the citizens participate before all organs comprising the central government (Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, President of the Republic of Macedonia, Government of the Republic of Macedonia, judiciary, public prosecution), Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, in the electoral process, education, science, healthcare, culture, in the discharge of police authorizations, broadcasting activity, notary work, enforcement, infrastructure objects, civil registry, personal documentation, finances, economy, as well as in other areas.

Article 3

(1) Elected or appointed officials of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as other institutions based in Skopje or in municipalities in which at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, shall use in their official communication the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet, if at least one of the elected or appointed officials speaks an official language other than Macedonian.

Article 4

(1) The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia shall use as an official language the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet

(2) Member of Parliament, elected or appointed official speaking a language other than Macedonian, which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, at a session of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia and sessions of working bodies shall also speak in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia.

(3) Member of Parliament speaking a language other than Macedonian, which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, when chairing a session of the Parliament or sessions of working bodies, shall chair the session/s in that language.

(4) Member of Parliament, an elected or appointed official speaking a language other than Macedonian, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, shall receive the materials in due time i.e. shall submit the materials also in that language and alphabet, to be used at parliamentary sessions and sessions of the working bodies.

(5) Transcripts of a session of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia and of sessions of the working bodies as well as other materials and documents shall be issued and archived in Macedonian language and its alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

(6) All laws and other acts enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia are promulgated in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Article 5

(1) The Government of the Republic of Macedonia shall use as an official language the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

(2) The sessions of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia shall be conducted in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet.

(3) When the sessions of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the commissions, and the General Collegium of State Secretaries are chaired by an elected or appointed official speaking a language other than Macedonian, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, these will be chaired in that language and alphabet.

(4) An elected or appointed official speaking a language other than Macedonian, which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, at a session of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the commissions, and the General Collegium of State Secretaries shall also speak in that language.

(5) An elected or appointed official speaking a language other than Macedonian, which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, shall receive the materials in due time i.e. shall also circulate them in that language and alphabet, to be used at a session of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, commission or the General Collegium of State Secretaries.

(6) Transcripts from the session of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, sessions of commissions and the General Collegium of State Secretaries as well as other materials and documents shall be issued and archived in Macedonian language and its alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

(7) All other acts enacted by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia shall be issued and promulgated in Macedonian language and its alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Article 6

(1) The institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law and all other institutions are *ex officio* mandated to ensure that the use, the communication and the proceedings are conducted in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet, if the person i.e. the participant [in the proceedings] speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

(2) All decisions and other acts, and the authorizations which derive from the jurisdiction of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions shall be in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet, if the person i.e. the participant speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

(3) An elected or appointed person speaking a language other than Macedonian, which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, shall write their personal name in the decisions and other acts within the jurisdiction of the institutions of Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as of all other institutions, in the native language and alphabet.

(4) The web pages of the institutions of Article 1 of this Law and the content of the web pages except in Macedonian language and its alphabet shall also be mandatorily published in a language other than Macedonian spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Article 7

(1) The names of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions and their regional offices in the units of local self-government in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, and in Skopje, shall be written in Macedonian and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet as well as in English language. The names shall be in the identical size and font, in that the name in Macedonian language and alphabet shall be written first.

(2) In the regional offices of the organs of the state administration which cover at least one local unit of self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, the names of the offices shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(3) The stamps of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law and all other institutions based in Skopje or in the units of local self-government where at

least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(4) The institutions of paragraph (1) of this Article shall enable and facilitate in their work the effective use, usage and application of the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 8

(1) Banknotes, coins, and postal stamps shall contain symbols representing the cultural heritage of the citizens speaking Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(2) Postal stamps, payment forms, fiscal reports issued by the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, the invoices of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, [and] banderoles shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(3) Uniforms of the police, firefighters, and healthcare workers in Skopje and in the municipalities where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as in the language spoken by 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Article 9

(1) The Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet shall be applied in judicial, administrative, and enforcement proceedings, proceedings for enforcement of sanctions, pre-investigative and investigative proceedings, criminal and misdemeanor proceedings, litigation and non-litigation proceedings, as well as in other proceedings in the courts, the public prosecution and in all other organs, bodies and institutions.

(2) All proceedings of paragraph (1) of this Article shall be conducted in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet if a judge, public prosecutor, party or other participant in the proceedings speaks the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

(3) All decisions, written submissions and other acts deriving from the proceedings in paragraph (1) of this Article shall be reached and issued in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet

and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet if a judge, public prosecutor, party or other participant in the proceedings speaks the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.

(4) The institutions specified in paragraph (1) of this Article are required to ensure translation of all necessary documents and materials, as well as simultaneous interpretation during presentations, statements and hearings pertaining to the ongoing work or proceedings.

(5) Failure to ensure translation of all necessary documents and materials, i.e. failure to ensure simultaneous interpretation throughout the proceedings shall be considered a substantive violation of the proceedings.

(6) The names of the institutions specified in paragraph (1) of this Article, in Skopje and the units of local self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(7) In the institutions specified in paragraph (1) of this Article, based in an area which encompasses several basic courts of which at least one is located in a unit of local self-government where the official language is a language other than Macedonian, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, the names shall also be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(8) The expenses incurred by the translation provided to the parties and the participants in the proceedings, as well as the expenses for the provision of a court translator incurred by the application of the provisions of this Law, shall be borne by the institutions specified in paragraph (1) of this Article.

Article 10

(1) In notary proceedings, the notary documents and notarizations may be issued in Macedonian language and alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

(2) In the proceedings in front of an Enforcement Agent, when a party speaks the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia, the writs, conclusions, protocols minutes, official notes and other acts of the Enforcement Agents shall be issued in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Article 11

- (1) Institutions in charge of managing the institutions for enforcement of sanctions, as well as the institutions in charge of enforcement of sanctions are required to apply the Macedonian language and its alphabet, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet in their communication and proceedings when the concerned individual speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia.
- (2) Institutions in charge of managing the institutions for enforcement of sanctions, as well as the institutions in charge of enforcement of sanctions are required to enable the individuals in these institutions to address these institutions in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 12

- (1) Civil registries in Skopje and in the units of local self-government in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian shall also be kept in the official language spoken by the citizen.
- (2) Decisions, certificates, letters of attestation as well as other acts shall also be issued in the official language spoken by the citizen.
- (3) Personal documents and travel documents of citizens who speak a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet, shall be issued *ex officio in* Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 13

- (1) Forms for ID cards for the citizens speaking a language other than Macedonian, spoken by less than 20% of the citizen of the Republic of Macedonia, shall also be printed in the language and the alphabet used by the citizen.
- (2) The citizens speaking a language other than Macedonian, spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, may require that the personal name in the ID card be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language and the alphabet used by the citizen.

Article 14

- (1) Citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian, spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, upon their request, may have the form for the passport and the travel document printed in the language and the alphabet used by the citizen.

(2) Citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian, spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, upon their request, may have the data entered in the passport and the travel document written in that language and alphabet.

(3) Citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian, spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, upon their request, may have the personal name in the passport and the travel document also written in the language and the alphabet used by the citizen.

Article 15

The sessions of the State Election Commission and municipal election commissions in Skopje and the units of local self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, during the conduct of elections in the work and the actions of all commissions and other bodies and institutions shall equally use and apply the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 16

(1) Names of streets, squares, bridges and other infrastructure objects in all units of local self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, including Skopje, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet, including the languages generally recognized by the international community.

(2) At border crossings of the Republic of Macedonia and airports located in areas where at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, the names of the institutions, other inscriptions and road signs shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 17

(1) All laws, bylaws, decisions and adverts of the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, shall be published in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

Article 18

(1) For the purposes of accomplishing the objectives of this law, promotion, protection and harmonization of the application of the official language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet, an Agency shall be established on the application of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia (hereinafter: Agency) as a legal entity in charge of standardization and uniformed use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet, with auxiliary bodies for support to the institutions of Article 1, paragraph (3) and Article 2, paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions.

(2) The Director of the Agency shall be elected by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia upon a public call with a mandate of 4 years and a right to be reelected.

(3) In addition to authorized court translators, the Agency shall employ linguists and graduated philologists of Albanian language, as well as licensed proofreaders.

(4) The Director represents the Agency, manages its work, carries out the duties prescribed by this law and adopts an annual program on the work of the Agency. The Director shall submit an annual report on the work of the Agency to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia at least once a year by 31 March in the current year for the previous year.

(5) The funds for the work and functioning of the Agency shall be provided by the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia.

Article 19

The Agency shall be in charge of:

- providing support to the institutions to meet the obligations deriving from this Law, including translation and proofreading of documents;
- proofreading of all acts to be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia;
- promoting and undertaking measures for advancement of the use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia;
- drafting reports to inform the Government of the Republic of Macedonia on the implementation of its competencies;
- preparing expert and analytical materials within its line of duty for the needs of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia;
- providing expert opinions on the materials aimed at implementation and advancement of the use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia;
- other matters relating to the implementation of the objectives established by this Law.

Article 20

- (1) To ensure oversight and full and consistent implementation of the provisions of this Law relating to the use of languages, an Inspectorate on the Use of Languages (hereinafter: Inspectorate) shall be established as a legal entity within the Ministry of Justice.
- (2) The principles, the jurisdiction, the organization of oversight and the oversight activities of the Inspectorate on the Use of Languages shall be governed by a separate law.

Article 21

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia and all institutions in charge of implementing the provisions of this Law shall enact measures to promote the application of all official languages, as well as to guarantee the protection of the languages of other communities, whose native language is not an official language.

Article 22

- (1) Bodies specified in Article 1, paragraph (3), Article 2, paragraph (3), as well as all other institutions shall be issued a fine of 4.000 to 5.000 euros in denar counter value for any violation of the provisions of this Law.
- (2) A fine in the amount of 30% of the prescribed fine shall be issued to the official and the person in charge in the organs specified in paragraph (1) of this Article.

Article 23

- (1) Within a year of the day this Law takes effect all competent institutions shall be required to enact the bylaws for the implementation of this Law.

(2) Within six months of the day this Law takes effect the institutions shall be required to implement the obligations specified in Article 7 of this Law.

(3) The Government of the Republic of Macedonia, immediately after this Law takes effect, shall develop a program to raise public awareness on the implementation of this Law.

(4) Within a year the provisions of other laws shall be harmonized with the provisions of this Law.

(5) In case the provisions of this Law are not harmonized with the language provisions of another law, the bodies are required to apply the provisions of this Law.

Article 24

On the day this Law takes effect, the Law on the Use of Languages spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and in the units of local self-government (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no.101/08 and 100/11) shall cease to apply.

Article 25

This Law shall take effect on the day of its publication in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia.

Alternative of Article 8 of the Law on the use of languages

Article 8

(1) Banknotes and coins, securities, postal stamps, payment forms, fiscal reports issued by the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, invoices from the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, banderoles, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(2) Banknotes, coins, as well as postal stamps shall contain symbols representing the cultural heritage of the citizens speaking Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(3) Uniforms of the police; defense; firefighters; healthcare workers; in Skopje and in the municipalities where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.

Parts from Article 8 which are not integral part of the Law on the use of languages

Article 8

(1) Banknotes and coins, securities, postal stamps, payment forms, fiscal reports issued by the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, invoices from the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, banderoles, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its alphabet.

(2) Uniforms of the defense in Skopje in the municipalities where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and its alphabet.