



# Employment Opportunities through Minority Languages and Cultures



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*Employment opportunities through minority languages and cultures*

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## INTRODUCTION

In some communities, jobs that are related to regional or minority languages already exist. For example, in the tourist industry and arts and education. However, this is still a marginal phenomenon and, therefore, the knowledge about regional and minority languages and their impact on employability and economics has to be developed and spread.

Some of the communities that participate in this project could benefit, for example, from expanding the knowledge about regional and minority languages and their communities to the tourist industry. This industry becomes more and more important in some of these communities and it offers an opportunity to increase employment opportunities through the language.

In the first chapter of this document, we mention existing job opportunities, divided between public and private sectors. In the second chapter, we treat the development of employment possibilities, we continue with the possibilities for each participating country, also divided between public and private sectors.

## EXISTING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The job opportunities that are related to the use of minority languages vary from country to country but also have similarities regarding the nature of these jobs. Let's see the cases in each country.

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### A. PUBLIC SECTOR

In Portugal, there are just a few employment opportunities in the public sector that already exist for someone who speaks Minderico like in the local museum as a guide or a historian.

In Peru, existing work that promotes self-identification as an Afro-descendant, as well as the re-evaluation of cultural markers such as clothing, ethnolect, hair and cultural displays are very limited. For the most part, these actions strengthen the stereotypes rooted in the historical slavery process.

The office of Afro-Peruvian Affairs in the Ministry of Culture is the only existing workspace in state institutions. Its staff consists of people who self-identify as Afro-Peruvian and have a background in and awareness of the Afro-Peruvian issue.

Recently, academic job opportunities have been created in which Afro-Peruvian professionals are requested to contribute with their research on the same community.

For the Netherlands and the Frisian language, the already existing job opportunities are with the provincial and municipal governments, and in institutions working with and promoting the Frisian language (for instance the Fryske Akademy and Afûk),

Besides that, people speaking Frisian are working at designated Frisian preschools or nurseries, and as teachers for Frisian as a subject in primary and secondary education, Frisian speakers for Frisian as a language of instruction in certain primary and secondary schools and professors of Frisian at the Multilingualism Bachelor and Master of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (Groningen University).

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### B. PRIVATE SECTOR

In Portugal, the present opportunities of employment related to Minderico are in local commerce in shops and tourist services such as hotels, cafes, restaurants, and shops.

In Peru, there are job opportunities for people who are familiar minority languages in the arts, culture and sport sectors. They seek, beyond cultural identity, the Afro-Peruvian phenotype for commercial purposes. In this sense, there is a tendency to stereotype the job opportunities in which the Afro-Peruvian population is recognized and "respected". These sectors are television programs, commercials, gastronomy, dance, music and sports.

In Greece, there are some similarities to the Peruvian case. Musicians, actors and generally artists who present artistic products on a local level are examples of people with job opportunities when their audience are people who speak a minority language. Another opportunity is one of informal teachers. In Greece, there are informal language teachers and facilitators who teach the language to people from the local community who are interested in learning the language.

Another specific example comes from Argentina. In the city of Rosario, there are some opportunities for the people that speak Guaraní. As is the case in Greece, there are informal teachers. In addition to that, people are finding job opportunities as tourist guides and translators, since Guaraní is an official language for MERCOSUR, the South American common market.

In the Netherlands, Frisian speakers also find opportunities in local restaurants and services, in health care in the province and, although rarely, in the arts, theatre and music. It is important to mention that in certain public spaces and in health care, Frisian is considered a plus but not mandatory.

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## CONCLUSION

Concluding, it seems that there are similarities in the sectors where employability already exists. The service sector, the educational sector and the tourist sector seem to be the leading sectors. There are differences from country to country which depend on the popularity of the minority language and the different social opportunities.

## DEVELOPMENT OF EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES

Although there are some possibilities for people speaking minority languages, there is still much room for development. There are actions that can be applied to many sectors (i.e. education, tourism, health, art) in order to create more job opportunities. Below are the specific examples of what can be done in different countries.

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### A. PUBLIC SECTOR

In Portugal, in the sector of education, local public kindergartens cannot employ Minderico teachers because the teachers are selected according to a national selection system. However, semi-private and private kindergartens have the freedom to select their own teachers and this could be an employment possibility for Minderico speakers. Also, the municipalities are responsible for the organisation of extracurricular activities and the teacher selection. If the municipality opens up a Minderico extracurricular activity for Minde, this would allow schools to have a teacher being paid for teaching Minderico and to have regular Minderico classes. Municipal cultural services and parish services are also an opportunity of employment for Minderico speakers once Minderico is recognised as a local language.

In Peru, in the areas of health and education, Afro-descendant professionals could be trained with tools that allow them to spread and generate respect for Afro-Peruvian cultural expressions and identities. These tools should be provided by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. Professionals should be assigned to Afro-Peruvian communities in rural areas, adapting the tools to the specific needs of the communities.

In municipalities, it is necessary to implement "Afro-Peruvian Promoters" who are trained to work in rural Afro-Peruvian communities. They would have to promote and create protocols to improve the needs of the Afro-Peruvian communities, according to the cultural identity of the population.

Finally, a project worth mentioning is the AFRO-TOUR. This project, created by the municipality of Lima (initially by the Ministry of Tourism and International Relations), promotes and commemorates the Afro-Peruvian presence in Lima. It would be an interesting idea to extend this project to other Afro-Peruvian communities outside of Lima. This could generate important employment opportunities for the Afro-Peruvian community in Lima, since it is directed at professionals of history, scenic arts, young students, and women with microenterprises.

In Argentina, what could be done to promote the development and increase of employment possibilities linked to the minority language would be to hire teachers who have a presence in the communities.

In the Netherlands, in the educational sector, Frisian has been a mandatory subject in schools for many years. Despite that, a big part of pupils leave school without being able to write Frisian. Improving education in Frisian would work both ways in improving job opportunities: more opportunities for teachers of Frisian, and more opportunities for learners of Frisian. Emphasizing the career opportunities that come with being able to at least understand and/or speak Frisian could begin at schools. However, future employers also carry the responsibility of listing Frisian as a pre in their vacancy listings.

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## B. PRIVATE SECTOR

In Portugal, there has been an increase in local tourist housing availability as a result of the diversity of local events: music (jazz festival, performative arts festival), nature related sports events (geocaching, hiking and trail running, paragliding, mountain biking) and religious events (Santiago and Fátima routes).

In local commerce and supermarkets, a job requirement included in the employment contract that the applicant needs to have a basic knowledge of Minderico would be useful, because these places are public and the customers can interact with the employees in Minderico during their shopping.

There are several local artists in Minde working in different artistic areas like music, theatre, sculpture, writing and painting. Based on the idea that knowing/talking Minderico is something special and unique, and should be considered a cultural advantage and a strength, local artists can use that skill to make the difference and to base their artistic careers on Minderico.

The areas that can be developed in Greece that would benefit minority language speakers include youth organisations, service, education, art, social enterprises and tourism. Young people could have the opportunity to work on a local level through different areas. One area is the servicing department. The minority language knowledge can be an employability skill for jobs in restaurants, local shops etc. because this is the spoken language in various places.

Moreover, regional language speakers working at community centers and cultural centers could also be beneficial because language is part of the identity and culture of the citizens and are better represented from people that have that same identity.

Another aim should be more inclusion of the minority language in the media and art production. The use of minority languages should be encouraged as the result will be more unique. Also, there should be social enterprises for the promotion of minority languages together with cultural activities. Part of the culture and the history of each country is the language. So, the state should prioritize social enterprises that work for the preservation of the language in order to keep the country's identity strong.

A language café should be created as a social space that could offer a community space and at the same time organise language courses in an informal way. This can be combined with other social and cultural events that can be organised at the same spot, such as small performances, language related contests etc. This will support the socialisation as well as the language promotion.

Finally, cultural tourism is a growing field. People coming from other countries want to experience local activities and interact with local people. By creating alternative tourist activities with the participation of minority language speakers, tourism can grow, which is beneficial for all sectors involved.

In Argentina, Guaraní speakers could find employment in shops and social clubs, to promote the visibility of the language. These shops and clubs could use something like a sticker that identifies the place and indicates the possibility of using the Guaraní language. The people who enter the shop or club can in this way know about the possibility to interact with people who know the language.



Moreover, another opportunity could be through interpreters. Guarani speakers working in different public places, such as schools, health centers, justice (for mediation) and various public offices, such as for example migrations, social development or culture. That can strengthen ties of cooperation and solidarity, to generate employment opportunities and be able to sustain actions and projects in the future.

Furthermore, artistic and/or sports activities can be promoted with young people who can then become role-models in the community, and others follow their example. Using social networks to create more awareness about the existence and presence of the language. Another idea is geocaching where "the treasure" could be some phrase in Guarani.

In the Netherlands, it seems that there are employment opportunities when it comes to the Frisian language, but that the Frisian people, from the perspective of the employee, may not be aware of. From the perspective of the employer, Frisian is often not seen as a benefit, but not necessarily as a setback either. Thus, what needs to be done is to make employees and future employees aware of the opportunities that already lie in the Frisian career field, but on the other hand also convince employers of the benefits of Frisian-speaking employees.

Then, employers and companies in Frisian should be made aware of the benefits of a Frisian speakers in their employment. For example, a Frisian speaker offers better customer relations due to the local customers being able to speak their own language. In health care, customers can better explain in their own language what their medical issue is, especially in emotional or sensitive situations. General practitioners started a campaign to recruit general practitioners and doctors in Fryslân, offering help with the Frisian language, and to demonstrate the experiences of doctors and carers that the Frisian language is very important in the health care sector. Also, elderly people often fall back on their mother language as they age, so in elderly homes being able to understand and speak Frisian is a big plus.

Another sector that could be a job development opportunity is research and professorship. As a continuation of education, higher-prestige job opportunities in research and (endowed) professorship could be improved. Professors should enthuse students and prospective researchers about Frisian research, be it Frisian language and linguistics, literature, Old Frisian, or other Frisian related fields. Positions in this area can now be found at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen and the Fryske Akademy, but they are few and for a part depend on governmental project or research grants.

2018 was the year that Leeuwarden, capital of the province of Fryslân, was the European Capital of Culture. This garnered a lot of international and touristic interest for the city, but also for the Frisian people and their language. Promotion and use of the language obviously interests tourists coming to the province, so job opportunities here could lie in both the creation of promotional materials and marketing campaigns, as well as in the tourist service industry.

## CLOSING REMARKS

It is important for organisations working in the field of youth and regional and minority languages to continue exchanging practices and ideas that could be profitable and can be used as an inspiration for other organisations and communities.

In this way, young people cannot only preserve their cultural identity, but also make a living out of it and have improved perspectives for their future.

Due to the importance of this subject, this is not a goal that can be achieved during the lifetime of this project. Therefore, the participating partners will continue their efforts on this.