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**Report on the implementation of the Action Plan “Promoting language learning and  
linguistic diversity”**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Languages are at the heart of the European project: they reflect our different cultures and, at the same time, provide a key to understanding them. There is a clear role for the European Commission to support and complement the Member States in their promotion of multilingualism: citizens who speak more languages can reap the full benefits of free movement in the European Union and can integrate more easily in another country for study or work. Linguistic competence is highly sought after in companies and good language skills make people more employable. Languages are the prime tools of communication: knowing more languages opens doors to other cultures, and improves intercultural understanding both within Europe and with the rest of the world.

Multilingualism as a portfolio in its own right at European level is the acknowledgement that languages matter to citizens and that there is a need to take action at the highest political level to bring together resources to promote multilingualism.

Promoting multilingualism is a responsibility shared between the Commission and Member States, which have already taken significant steps to adapt their educational policies to equip students at all levels with better language skills. This is a major result, which shows that the Commission and Member States are working together towards common objectives.

This report outlines the main results of the implementation of the Action Plan “Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity 2004-2006”, both at European and national level. It highlights current trends in the reform of educational systems to better promote language learning, takes stock of what has been achieved in the past three years and provides a basis for further action in the field of multilingualism policy.

## 2. PROMOTING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

The European Commission has a long-standing commitment to promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. The first comprehensive programme promoting language teaching and learning, Lingua, came into force in 1989 and since then languages have been at the heart of European programmes in the field of education and training.

At the end of the European Year of Languages in 2001, both the European Parliament and the Council adopted resolutions inviting the European Commission to take further action to promote languages. In 2002 the Heads of State and Government meeting in Barcelona made a political commitment to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching two foreign languages to all from a very early age. In 2003 the European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report inviting the Commission to better cater for regional and lesser-used languages in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A5-0271/2003 final of 14.07.2003: *Report from the European Parliament with recommendations to the Commission on European regional and lesser-used languages — the languages of minorities in the EU — in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity.*

The Action Plan “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity”<sup>2</sup> was the Commission’s answer to the Council and Parliament and took into account the feedback from a wide-ranging consultation held between 2002 and 2003. At that time, what is now called “The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs” was in its first phase. Improving foreign language learning was included as a specific objective of “Education and Training 2010”, the education and training component of the Lisbon Strategy.<sup>3</sup> Its long-term agenda to gear European policies towards common objectives and its open method of coordination, enabling close partnership with Member States, have spurred cooperation in language policies.

In the first place, communication in foreign languages is listed as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, fruitful cooperation has been developed with the Member States through the Working Group on Languages, which gathers together senior officials responsible for language policies in Member States. The Group meets regularly to exchange information and good practices. Its commitment has been instrumental in the follow-up of the Action Plan at national level.

At Commission level, the increasing importance of language policies was reflected by the explicit mention of multilingualism in the portfolio of Commissioner Figel’ in 2005. This led to the definition of a strategy for multilingualism, encompassing both internal and external action, set out in the Commission Communication “*A new Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*”<sup>5</sup>. In parallel, the Commission started developing an indicator for language competence as called for by the Barcelona Council in order to benchmark the competences of students in two foreign languages at the end of their initial education.<sup>6</sup> Multilingualism is a key area where Europe can get closer to citizens’ needs. Accordingly, when Commissioner Orban took up office in January 2007, it became a portfolio in its own right. It is currently expanding its scope beyond lifelong learning, notably to the areas of languages and business and by contributing to the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

### **3. RESULTS OF THE ACTION PLAN — INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE POLICIES AT EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL**

The Action Plan set out the main objectives to be pursued in three strategic areas: 1. Lifelong language learning, 2. Better language teaching, 3. Building a language-friendly environment. A fourth chapter, “A Framework for Progress”, targets the overall development of language policy at both European and national level.

The Action Plan put forward 47 concrete proposals for action by the Commission within a given time frame (2004-2006) calling for a review in 2007. It also invited Member States to

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<sup>2</sup> COM(2003) 449 final of 24.07.2003: Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 142, 14.6.2002 p. 1. *Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> 2006/962/EC.

<sup>5</sup> COM(2005) 596 final of 22.11.2005.

<sup>6</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, *The European Indicator of Language Competence*. Brussels, 1.8.2005. COM(2005) 356 final.

Communication from the Commission to the Council, *Framework for the European survey on language competences*. Brussels, 13.4.2007. COM(2007) 184 final.

take action towards the objectives, while recognising that they would be difficult to achieve in three years.

In general, **the Commission and the Member States have made substantial progress in implementing the actions announced in the Action Plan.** As a consequence of all these initiatives, **the promotion of language learning, linguistic diversity and multilingualism as a whole have gained significantly in political importance.**

At Commission level, the implementation of the Action Plan kept the spotlight on multilingualism issues and drove a sustained effort to promote languages in the education and training programmes.

In the policy field, it offered a framework of strategic issues for discussion and cooperation with Member States, allowing a focused exchange of good practice and gearing work towards the delivery of concrete results. The studies, conferences, seminars and information initiatives proposed by the Action Plan and carried out by the Commission fed the discussion among policy makers and practitioners and helped raise awareness of key language issues and support policy making and quality language teaching.

At programme level, the Action Plan called for the strategic use of the education and training programmes so as to make the most of their support for promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. Establishing priorities and calling for specific information actions led to remarkable results: the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes invested nearly 150 million euros in actions with a specific language-learning objective in 2004-2006, an increase of 66% compared to 2000-2002.

At national level, the Action Plan was taken as a framework for action. A trend towards the reform of educational systems to comply with the “mother tongue-plus-two” principle enunciated in Barcelona was already noticeable in a number of Member States, although some reported that the Action Plan influenced their decision to launch reforms. The main impact of the Action Plan at national level was to orient and support national policies to take action in the strategic areas set out by the Action Plan and along the lines drawn there. After three years, the overview of national language policies looks more consistent overall: there is a general consensus on basic issues like the importance of languages as a key competence in a lifelong learning perspective, the need for teaching students two languages in their initial education, and the necessity of quality language teaching and transparent assessment. Although countries did not start from the same baseline, nor have they taken action at the same speed, reforms have focused mainly on the following areas:

- Review of the whole educational system in the light of a lifelong language learning approach;
- Introduction of early language learning in primary and sometimes in pre-primary education;
- Introduction of some CLIL<sup>7</sup> (content and language integrated learning) in curricula;
- Increased offer of languages at secondary level;

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<sup>7</sup> CLIL involves teaching a subject through the medium of a different language, attaching equal importance to developing proficiency in both the language and the subject concerned.

- Increased investment in language teacher training;
- Review of curricula, examinations and certificates to align them to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages developed by the Council of Europe;
- The use of European programmes and tools developed by the Commission and by the Council of Europe to review national education systems, develop suitable language materials and tests, and to promote language teacher training abroad and European cooperation in schools.

#### 4. MAIN OUTPUTS

The Action Plan called for 47 actions to be carried out to implement the policy objectives at Commission level, taking into account the Commission's competences and the available budget. The Commission delivered in nearly all of them. **Of the 47 actions, 41 will be completed by the end of 2007** (33 have already been completed and 8 more will be finalised by the end of 2007) **and 5 will be implemented through the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) (2007-2013). One was cancelled but partially taken up in another action.**

The implementation of the Action Plan led in concrete terms to:

- **The rebuilding of the languages pages on the Europa website** (I.4.18), as a gateway to information and language resources specifically geared towards adult learners and language teachers, along with information initiatives carried out at national level to promote language learning and mobility abroad (II.3.1 and III.3.2). The widely recognised need to raise awareness of the advantages of language learning among the wider public led to the creation of **an annual budget for information campaigns on languages within the Lifelong Learning Programme** (IV.3.1).
- **13 Europe-wide studies** (10 completed and 3 nearing completion) to set the context, identify precedents and chart good practices and innovative methodologies on specific language features. They include the ground-breaking “European Profile for Language Teacher Education in Europe” (II.3.2), “Special Educational Needs in Europe — the teaching and learning of languages” (I.5.1), “Lingo: 50 ways to motivate language learners” (IV.1.2) and “Effect on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise” (IV.1.3). The latter study is the first step towards extending multilingualism policy to business needs. On 21 September 2007, a Conference on Business, Languages and Intercultural Skills will discuss the issue of languages as a competitive strength for Europe.
- **6 European conferences and seminars on languages.** These include the European Conference on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in 2005 (I.2.6), during Luxembourg's presidency, where for the first time CLIL was brought to the attention of European policy makers, and the European Conference on Regional and Minority Languages in Education Systems (III.1.1), gathering stakeholders from all over Europe to

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<sup>8</sup> This reference and others relate to the original numbering of the actions in the Action Plan. They identify all the actions in both the text and the annexes.

exchange practice on the way regional and minority languages could be successfully taught to new generations.

- **17 actions at programme level to improve the promotion of language learning through European programmes.** The Socrates and Leonardo Programmes were the main ones involved, but the Town-Twinning, E-Learning, Culture, Youth and the Framework Research Programmes also contributed, where priorities for activities targeting languages were included along with increased support for language preparation prior to mobility. 13 of these actions have been successfully completed, two are nearing completion and two are well under way. Furthermore, **these actions will have a lasting effect as the new generation of programmes for 2007-2013** (Lifelong Learning Programme, Culture, Youth in Action, Europe for Citizens, and Seventh Framework Programme for Research) **will contribute to promoting language learning and linguistic diversity.**
- Last but not least, the widely recognised need to raise awareness of the advantages of language learning among the wider public led to the creation of an **annual budget for information campaigns on languages within the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)** (IV.3.1).

Compared to the years 2000-2002, the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes invested 66% more in actions with a specific language learning objective: their budget increased from €30 million to nearly €50 million a year in the period 2004-2006.

In 2004-2006, the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes supported:

- 2951 school language projects (with an increase of 84% compared to the period 2000-2002);
- 3957 language assistantships (increase of 62%);
- 9434 Erasmus students attending intensive linguistic preparation courses (increase of 160%);
- 300 adult education learning partnerships (increase of 689%);
- 765 in-service training grants for foreign-language teachers in adult education (new action);
- 1820 in-service training grants for language teachers in vocational education (increase of 143%);
- 41 Lingua projects to develop new language learning or testing tools (increase of 24%);
- 39 Lingua projects to promote awareness of the benefits of language learning and to bring language learning opportunities closer to citizens (increase of 160%).

These results are encouraging. However, some parts of the programmes could perform better: for instance, the number of language projects to develop teacher training material for language teachers in Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo did not increase consistently across the board, nor did the number of pupils involved in school language projects and the number

of language teachers receiving a training grant. A recent study has pointed out that participants in Comenius projects did improve their language skills, but mainly in English at the expense of other languages. The same goes for Comenius in-service training grants, which were mostly for training in English, thus not reflecting the policy to promote linguistic diversity and increase the range of languages on offer.

The information on initiatives undertaken at national level is based upon the national reports sent to the Commission by the Member States on the follow-up of the Action Plan at the end of 2006 (IV.1.1). 20 States (Austria, Belgium — Dutch-speaking Community, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) drafted a comprehensive report on their national implementation of the Action Plan and a few more transmitted partial information (Cyprus, Germany, Luxembourg and Romania). These sources were analysed for the Commission by an external consultant, who produced a report outlining the main policy trends in Member States along with a selection of good practices. His independent report was discussed by the Working Group on Languages, which contributed complementary information. The selection of good practices presented in this document is based upon this work. It is illustrative and not exhaustive: it gives an indication of the extent and type of actions undertaken at national level.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN IN THE STRATEGIC AREAS**

The next four sections, which follow the structure of the Action Plan (three strategic areas plus the framework for progress), give a detailed description of the results of each of the 47 actions, which are cited in brackets in the text. A complementary Commission Staff Working Paper presents tables showing the status of the actions and listing the deliverables, sources of information and relevant websites.

### **5.1. Strategic Area 1: Lifelong-Language Learning**

The Action Plan placed language learning within a lifelong learning perspective and called for appropriate action to implement such an approach. At national level, some countries have reformed their systems along these lines by establishing a continuum between the different levels of education and by devising assessment systems to evaluate partial competences and to enable re-entry into education at a later stage.

#### **Austria: The Language Committee**

*Austria is currently using the Council of Europe Country Profile to assess its language teaching and learning policy before embarking on reforms. A Language Committee, composed of educational stakeholders and including social partners, looks at all matters related to multilingualism and coordinates the implementation of the Lisbon objectives and other European initiatives in the field of languages, such as the Action Plan.*

#### **Bulgaria: The National Reform**

*Language learning is an integral part of the latest national education reform adopted by parliament in 2006. The aim is to change the structure of the education system by teaching two foreign languages in all schools and introducing a year of intensive language learning for all students in grade 8.*



## **Finland: Finnish Language Education Policies**

*The government has been supporting a project to examine the basic principles and goals of language education policies from the viewpoint of multilingualism, lifelong learning and European integration. The final recommendations are currently being considered with a view to improving the education system.<sup>9</sup>*

## **Hungary: the World Language Programme**

*A comprehensive strategy for developing foreign language teaching and learning was launched by the government under the name "World Language Programme". Measures include: extra funding for school projects tackling various aspects of language teaching and learning; the introduction of a year of intensive language learning at the end of compulsory education, where at least 40% of the curriculum is devoted to foreign languages; a new school-leaving examination; and several guidelines and recommendations.*

## **Luxembourg: Readjustment of language teaching**

*In 2005-2006, Luxembourg assessed its language policy using the Council of Europe Country Profile. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training then drew up a national action plan for 2007-2009 "Plan de réajustement de l'enseignement des langues" with 66 action points covering all aspects of language teaching and assessment from infant school to the end of secondary school, while also taking into consideration the languages of the migrant communities.*

## **United Kingdom: language learning at all ages**

*A National Strategy for Languages has been operating in England since 2003. The Strategy embraces language learning at all ages and stages from early years to adults and universities. It has three overarching objectives: to improve the teaching and learning of languages; to introduce a recognition system; and to increase the numbers of people studying languages in further and higher education and work-based learning.*

At Community level, the programmes in the field of education and training have increased their support for the linguistic preparation of persons participating in mobility activities (I.0.1): the take-up of linguistic preparation doubled in Comenius (teacher training); in Erasmus, the number of students participating in Intensive Language Courses increased by nearly 40%; and the Leonardo Programme spent €15.6 million to support linguistic and cultural preparation for 175 000 trainees, students and young workers going on a placement abroad, an increase of 77% compared to 2000-2002. In the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), support for linguistic preparation has been extended to all types of mobility.

### *5.1.1. "Mother tongue plus two other languages": making an early start*

Over the last four years, most Member States have reformed their primary (and in some cases pre-primary) education in order to start teaching a foreign language earlier. The trend is to start a second language (whether a foreign or minority language or a language with co-official status) earlier, generally in the first three years of primary education.

The key problem encountered in implementing these reforms is the lack of adequately trained language teachers, both generalist teachers and specialists. In some countries, the earlier start is complemented by earlier take-up of a second foreign language (in the last years of primary

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/solki/tutkimus/projektit/kielo/>.

education or at the beginning of secondary education). Such arrangements should be encouraged and more widely implemented.

To foster the introduction of early language learning, the Commission financed a study on “Main pedagogical principles underlying teaching languages to very young learners” (I.1.1). The study acknowledged the central role of teachers in early language learning and recommended the dissemination of research findings to practitioners, the development of methodologies and instruments to assess and evaluate children’s competences and support for starting a second foreign language at primary school.

As regards information and networking activities, the Commission produced a brochure for parents about the benefits of language learning, and will target parents as a matter of priority in the information campaign supported by the LLP (I.1.2). It also supported a seminar for practitioners to present the results of the above-mentioned study. In order to encourage networking between organisations working in the field, early language learning will be a priority for the Comenius and Key Activity Languages networks in 2007 (I.1.3).

The Socrates Programmes supported early language learning and related teacher training by financing 11 Lingua projects (I.1.4) and by granting nearly 4000 language assistantships (increase of 13%), with a number for primary and pre-primary schools as well (I.1.5). Primary and pre-primary schools will be further encouraged to host a language assistant under the LLP.

#### *5.1.2. Language learning in secondary education and training*

The Action Plan invited Member States to pursue their commitment to give pupils the opportunity to study at least two foreign languages, with the emphasis on effective communicative ability, the ability to learn languages and intercultural competences.

#### **Estonia, France, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain: European sections/bilingual instruction**

*Some countries have introduced “European sections”, where more languages are taught, also through CLIL, and special attention is given to European cooperation and intercultural education. Such initiatives are often pilot schemes with a view to making them part of mainstream education.*

#### **Greece: a cross-thematic approach to languages**

*As a result of the reform of primary and secondary school curricula, language teaching has a horizontal dimension involving more cooperation with teaching of the mother tongue and other subjects. Particular attention is given to raising awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and developing intercultural skills.*

#### **Germany, Netherlands, France, Finland and Austria: CertiLingua, the “European excellence label of plurilingual, European and international competences”**

*Certilingua is intended as a supplement to school-leaving certificates to indicate the level of excellence in multilingual, European and international competences reached by a student in at least two foreign languages. Schools delivering the Certilingua offer at least one subject through CLIL and aim to develop the student’s intercultural competences through European and international project work. The Certilingua initiative stems from cross-border cooperation between German and Dutch schools and is gradually extending to other countries. It aims to increase the transparency of linguistic and*

*intercultural skills acquired by students by providing a quality label of excellence recognised in different countries.*<sup>10</sup>

The Commission supported Member State efforts by increasing the possibilities for schools from different countries to learn languages together and to further develop intercultural competences and multilingual comprehension.

The number of Comenius school language projects increased, accounting for 19% of the budget allocated to Comenius school projects (although the Action Plan recommended a target of 25%). Further, 2 951 joint language projects involving 53 118 pupils and 8 853 staff participating in class exchanges were also supported in 2004-2006 (I.2.1). The LLP is currently aiming to achieve the target recommended by the Action Plan.

A study of the linguistic and intercultural skills relevant to each stage of education or training (I.2.2) will be completed by the end of 2007. It will offer suggestions on how to improve the current teaching of languages to develop intercultural skills and on how to specify appropriate target objectives for intercultural competences for pupils in primary and secondary education. 14 projects and 2 networks for developing training materials and modules to promote multilingual comprehension approaches were funded by Comenius (I.2.3).

#### *5.1.3. Promoting content and language integrated learning (CLIL)*

CLIL is increasingly being used in European classrooms as it is regarded as an effective way of strengthening communication skills and motivating students.

Further development of CLIL teaching materials was supported through 4 Lingua projects (I.2.4), and Comenius school projects working on CLIL approaches received priority (I.2.5). The LLP continues to give priority to school partnerships that promote early language learning, multilingual comprehension and CLIL.

A European Symposium on “The Changing European Classroom — the Potential of Plurilingual Education” (I.2.6) was held in Luxembourg in March 2005, in cooperation with the Luxembourg presidency, which reported on its conclusions to the Education Council of May 2005. The Symposium recalled the need to ensure that pupils and students receive CLIL provision at different levels of school education. It was also emphasised that teachers should receive special training in CLIL.

In 2006, the Eurydice network published a survey on “Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in schools in Europe” (I.2.7), setting out the main features of CLIL teaching in European countries. While interest in CLIL provision is growing, only a minority of pupils and students are currently involved, with the situation varying greatly from country to country. The survey showed that if CLIL provision is to be generalised, it has to be supported in most countries by a significant effort in teacher training. Another area demanding further work is evaluation: because CLIL is still in its early stages in most countries, evaluation of CLIL practices is not widespread.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/angebote/certilingua/>.

#### 5.1.4. Language learning in higher education

The Action Plan called for a coherent language policy to be established by each university, to foster language learning for all students and offer them the possibility of studying abroad.

#### **Belgium, Czech Republic and Romania: Multidisciplinary university education**

*In Belgium (Dutch-speaking Community), the Czech Republic and Romania some universities offer a graduate programme in natural sciences, history or geography with a minor in foreign languages, in some cases leading to a double degree. This combination of different disciplines enhances language competences and should also prepare future CLIL teachers.*

The Commission increased the number of Erasmus Intensive Language Courses (EILC) available to cover 6.4% of students going abroad (although the target set by the Action Plan was 10%) (I.3.1). This percentage varies greatly from country to country: Slovenian and Turkish universities attracted considerable interest in their Erasmus Intensive Language Courses, involving more than 35% of incoming students, while Czech, Estonian, Finnish, German, Hungarian and Norwegian universities had a participation rate of above 10%. All in all, nearly 10 000 students benefited from Erasmus Intensive Language Courses in 2004-2006. EILC provision has been further strengthened in the LLP, although more action is needed at university level to promote the language of the host country as a second language for incoming students.

Regarding international cooperation among higher education institutions, the Erasmus Mundus programme supports joint master's programmes in different Member States where non-EU students can learn at least two different European languages. In the years 2004-2006, 2325 students from outside the EU received support to study for 57 different master's degrees, including 3 in linguistics and language-related subjects. The Tempus programme supports cooperation among EU universities and 26 partner countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, in order to facilitate university modernisation, mutual learning between regions and peoples, and understanding between cultures. Linguistic training is usually part of such projects, and in 2004-2006 two targeted cooperation in the field of language teaching. Cooperation programmes with the USA, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand also supported 6 projects for the development of language curricula.

#### 5.1.5. Adult language learning

The Action Plan called for affordable language provision for adults, e.g. in-company training, adult education courses or informal learning linked to cultural activities.

#### **Belgium and Czech Republic: Language vouchers and language resources in the Internet**

*To attend language courses is not solely a question of sufficient motivation and time, but also of economic resources. To encourage lifelong language learning, Belgium and the Czech Republic are introducing "voucher" systems, which are co-financed by the state, employers and users and are reported to have significantly increased the demand for language courses among adults.*

*Internet sites are one way of promoting language learning among adults. In Belgium, “Word wat je wil”<sup>11</sup> is a database containing, among other things, all official and private language courses. In the Czech Republic, a “National Language Gateway” is currently being developed. This site will offer on-line language courses, free of charge, conforming to the CEFR.*

### **Ireland, Slovenia and Spain: language learning opportunities for adults**

*In Ireland and Slovenia there has been a healthy level of demand among adult learners for language learning opportunities, and there have been many local initiatives to meet that demand through the network of libraries, cultural associations, language clubs and adult education.*

*Language schools for adults have been a characteristic of the Spanish educational system for many years, both regionally and nationally. They offer, on a network basis, 20 different languages at basic and intermediate level conforming to the CEFR and have proven to be financially viable.*

In order to encourage more adults to learn languages, the Commission is developing a web portal (I.4.1) providing easy access to information resources and guidance for the general public and for language professionals.

#### *5.1.6. Language learners with special needs*

Language teaching is now starting earlier and is included in the core curriculum of compulsory education in most Member States, but it also needs to consider students with special needs. The Commission financed a study on “Special educational needs in Europe, the teaching and learning of languages” (I.5.1), which concluded that there was no evidence for excluding special needs students from learning languages and pointed out that learning languages went beyond communicative performance and enhanced personal and educational development, also encompassing European citizenship values. The study looked at teaching practices and recommended catering for students with special needs through individual educational plans and team-teaching (language teacher and special needs teacher) and providing appropriate teacher training as part of mainstream training for prospective teachers.

### **Austria and Estonia: Sign Language Recognised as Minority Language**

*In these two countries, sign language has recently been recognised as a minority/official language. Official recognition has been followed by research programmes, support for a centre for professional qualifications and the launching of courses for the education of sign language teachers.*

#### *5.1.7. Range of languages*

Member States were invited to teach the widest possible range of languages, at all educational levels. The range of languages on offer is unevenly distributed. On the one hand, some Member States offer a very limited range of languages (mainly English, with a few other languages in specific curricula in border areas or for migrant communities). On the other, Member States that offer a free choice of languages report difficulties in implementing this policy in schools. Families are often not aware of the benefits of learning more than one language. Curricular reforms aimed at widening the range of languages on offer should be backed up by adequate information.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.wordwatjewil.be>.

## **Austria, France, Germany and Greece: teaching the languages of the neighbours**

*In 2003, the province of Lower Austria (Austria) launched a plan called “Sprachoffensive”, aimed at teaching Czech, Slovak and Hungarian to 13 000 students. A regional “Centre of Competence” was also created to offer language expertise and guidance to schools and companies working across borders.*

*France has succeeded in raising by 10% the number of students choosing German by running information campaigns and establishing bilingual classes. This example indicates the potential for changing attitudes if the right measures are put in place.*

*In Thrace, in 2006-2007 a pilot programme to teach Turkish as a foreign language was introduced in five state secondary schools in the area.*

## **5.2. Strategic Area 2: Better Language Teaching**

### *5.2.1. The language-friendly school*

Schools and educational institutions were invited to adopt a holistic approach to the teaching of languages, making connections between teaching of the mother tongue, the language of instruction where different, foreign languages and the languages of migrant communities. The Commission promoted this approach by supporting Comenius school projects in this field (II.1.1).

## **Finland: The languages of newcomers as teaching languages**

*The Finnish education system supports the maintenance and development of the mother tongues of immigrants to ensure functional bilingualism. In 2003, instruction in 52 languages was offered. Russian, Somali and Albanian were the most widely taught languages as immigrant mother tongues.*

## **Italy: the “Talking the World” initiative**

*This initiative aims to promote the concept of the language-friendly school through a series of grassroots activities involving teachers and networking schools. The Action Plan has been used as a basis for discussion and inspiration.*

### *5.2.2. The Languages Classroom*

In order to support innovative methods for teaching and learning languages, pedagogical products developed under the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes (II.2.2) have been disseminated through a variety of initiatives, and this dissemination will continue in the LLP. The eTwinning initiative, enabling schools to work together through the Internet, has strengthened language abilities and promoted, to some extent, multilingual comprehension and the use of the language of the partner school (II.2.3).

### *5.2.3. Language teacher training*

Member States are paying increased attention to teacher training, especially as a means of ensuring effective language teaching at primary level and through CLIL. Although in many Member States language teachers are not obliged to spend a period abroad in the country whose language they teach, the need is widely recognised among practitioners and teacher trainers, who make use of the mobility schemes offered by European educational programmes (Erasmus, Comenius, Leonardo) to improve their language skills.

### **Austria, Czech Republic, Germany and Poland: dual training for language teachers**

*In these countries, initial teacher training provides graduates with qualifications in two different subject areas, for instance languages plus another subject. This system enhances the language skills of teachers and helps to prepare future CLIL teachers.*

### **Luxembourg: training multilingual teachers**

*Primary school teachers are trained to be able to teach in the 3 national languages (Luxembourgish, German and French) as well as to teach non-linguistic subjects in one of these languages. Secondary school language teachers must study for at least two years in a country of their target language. Secondary school subject teachers must be able to teach in German and French.*

In order to widen access to language teaching schemes in the Socrates and Leonardo Programmes, the Commission invited National Agencies to launch information campaigns on mobility for language teachers and their trainers (II.3.1). One dissemination project in particular was dedicated to promoting language assistantships. As a result, the share of the budget devoted to language assistantships rose to 26% in 2006, exceeding the target of 25% set in the Action Plan. In the LLP, assistantships are not limited to languages but are open to all subjects, with a special emphasis on CLIL. Where Comenius in-service training was concerned, 65% of the total number of applications related to languages. Between 2004 and 2006, more than 15 000 language teachers received training abroad through Comenius, 765 adult education language teachers through Grundtvig and 1820 vocational education teachers through Leonardo.

The Commission also financed a study to define a Frame of Reference for a European Profile for Language Teacher Education (II.3.2). The study laid down basic requirements to create a common profile, calling in particular for specific language teacher training at higher education level, with a compulsory period of training in another country and adequate training in methodology and intercultural skills. The study is currently being examined by the European Language Inspectors Network (IV.2.1) and its conclusions will be debated and disseminated at a symposium (II.4.2).

#### *5.2.4. Supply of language teachers*

Language teachers and indeed all teachers still face significant barriers to teaching abroad. However, some degree of flexibility exists. Very promising experiments have been undertaken in border regions, sharing teachers across borders or through exchange programmes. The Commission financed a study on “Detecting and Removing Obstacles to the Mobility of Foreign Language Teachers” (II.4.1), which reported on tools facilitating language teacher mobility and on the main obstacles encountered. It recommended that a mobility strategy be established at European level for language teachers to encourage bilateral and multilateral exchanges, support exchanges of prospective teachers and young teachers in particular, encourage the recognition of qualifications acquired through mobility, organise workshops and on-site working visits abroad as a form of teacher training, and set up a clearing system to match supply and demand across countries and institutions.

### **Estonia, Poland and other central and eastern European countries: Re-qualification of language teachers**

*During the past ten years Poland and Estonia, along with other central and eastern European countries, have established teacher training schemes to convert/retrain surplus language teachers, in*

*particular from Russian to English. Additional measures have been taken to re-qualify language teachers who do not hold the appropriate degrees. These actions prove that it is technically possible to widen the range of languages in the curriculum if the political decisions are taken and they match the demand.*

### **Romania: post-graduate distance training for teachers in rural areas**

*A project supported by the Romanian government and the World Bank aims to enhance teacher training for those living in rural areas. Four universities have implemented distance-learning post-graduate qualification courses in French and English, developed by a multidisciplinary team and open to all teachers who wish to teach languages. Courses lead to official certification and are integrated with other distance-learning teacher training schemes. In 2007 two hundred teachers of English and French will obtain their professional conversion diplomas.*

#### *5.2.5. Testing language skills*

There has been a clear trend to reform national curricula in order to bring them into line with the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR), notably at secondary level, and final examinations have been revised accordingly. Teachers at all levels of education are making increasing use of the European Language Portfolio as a teaching aid, although educational materials are often not suitable for this approach. The extent of the changes brought into the language classroom by use of the CEFR was discussed at a Policy Forum organised by the Council of Europe in February 2007, with the participation of the Commission (II.6.4).

### **Several countries: use of CEFR levels to define language attainment**

*Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom will start, have started or plan to develop the process of reshaping curricula and relating the school-leaving examinations in foreign languages to the CEFR levels. This allows objective tests of language ability, as the CEFR covers communicative competences in all languages.*

### **The Netherlands: the linguistic competence profile**

*In the Dutch education system, the CEFR is increasingly setting the standards for defining language skills. Higher professional degree programmes and vocational education (MBO) have also adopted it to define competence profiles. European Language Portfolios (ELP) have been developed and validated for nearly all types of schools. An electronic ELP is currently being developed for the broad target audience of everyone learning languages.*

### **France, Italy and Luxembourg: external language certification**

*In order to make more transparent the level of language competences acquired by students at the end of secondary education, the French education system is developing language certification in cooperation with the institutions that promote the languages of partner countries. A similar project in Italy, "Lingue 2000", now allows students to obtain external certification provided by accredited foreign institutions.*

*In Luxembourg, students in their two last years of secondary school can have their linguistic skills assessed by accredited foreign institutions. This encompasses languages taught at school as well as those that are not part of the curriculum. This certification will form part of the students' end-of-term reports.*

As requested by the Barcelona European Council, the Commission is working on the development of a European survey of language competences (II.6.1), to be held for the first



time in 2010 in order to obtain comparable information on the level of competences acquired in two languages at the end of compulsory schooling in Europe.

The European Commission also used CEFR to improve transparency, information and guidance on vocational training policies. A European Language Passport, based on the CEFR and forming part of the European Language Portfolio, has been included in the Europass, a single framework for qualifications (II.6.2). Since February 2005, almost 50 000 language passports have been generated online, with more than 181 806 blank templates downloaded to be completed off-line. The Europass CV, including a language section, is even more popular: so far, more than one million CVs have been generated on-line and about 1.7 million have been downloaded.

In order to gather and make available information on the use of language certificates and their nature and quality, the Commission financed a study on an “Inventory of Language Certification in Europe” (II.6.3). On the basis of the findings, the authors recommended that the Commission should work with the relevant stakeholders to improve the quality of the development and validation of tests by providers, to set quality standards and a code of practice for language certificates in Europe, and to support collaboration between certificate providers in different countries and with general education institutions.

### **5.3. Strategic Area 3: Building a Language-Friendly Environment**

#### *5.3.1. An inclusive approach to linguistic diversity*

For the first time at Commission level, the Action Plan has set out a vision for language policies going beyond foreign language teaching and encompassing all languages spoken in Europe, whether official, regional or minority languages or languages spoken by immigrant communities. In order to bring together educational stakeholders from regional and minority languages and help them exchange good practices, a European Conference on “Regional and Minority Languages in Education Systems” was organised in 2006 (III.1.1). The situation of regional and minority languages in the countries that joined the European Union in 2004 was surveyed by the Euromosaic Report (III.1.2). An update for Romania and Bulgaria is under way.

This new approach to languages and linguistic diversity is fully reflected in the LLP, where all languages are eligible for funding, including regional and minority languages (III.1.3). The Commission has made a special effort, through European conferences, local seminars and network meetings, to ensure that regional and minority language stakeholders are well informed on how to access mainstream programmes, especially the LLP.

In 2004-2006, the Culture 2000 Programme supported 150 translation projects to promote cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe. Promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity is also the cornerstone of the new Culture Programme for 2007-2013.

This inclusive vision is in line with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which has been ratified by 22 Council of Europe members, among them 14 EU Member States. As a general rule, Member States provide partial or total instruction in recognised minority languages. Promising practices have been reported in the promotion of exposure or immersion in different local languages, especially for children.

### **Finland/Norway/Sweden: Bilingual schools in border areas**

*A network of twinned towns supports language learning through cooperation between Finnish-, Norwegian- and Swedish-speaking schools across the borders. Some schools have developed a common curriculum and also promote the teaching of neighbouring languages through CLIL and the exchange of teachers.*

### **Italy/Austria/Slovenia: the Cromo project**

*Cromo is a cross-border project (2005-07) financed by the national authorities of Austria, Italy and Slovenia. It helps build bridges between border communities in Friuli-Venezia-Giulia (Italy), Carinthia (Austria) and Slovenia by developing common tools in the form of a European Language Portfolio supplement to help secondary school learners develop linguistic, meta-cognitive and intercultural competences to foster intercultural dialogue.*

### **Slovakia/Danube countries: promoting the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries**

*The international association “The Danube” brings together tourism offices from the countries along the Danube. Every year, it devises a common theme for action to promote the culture and language of each country.*

### **Sweden: Multicultural education in pre-school establishments**

*In March 2005, a new objective was introduced in the curriculum for pre-school education, to support children with a mother tongue other than Swedish in order to strengthen their language and identity development. The government bill proposing the change also emphasised the need for bilingual and cultural support staff as well as increased support for producing educational material in languages other than Swedish.*

### **United Kingdom: Educating parents to pass on family bilingualism**

*In Wales, a programme called Twk (Growth) has been launched to revitalise the use of Welsh. Its information campaign on the advantages of bilingualism targets the health sector, maternity hospitals, parents and future parents and encourages the use of Welsh at home with children. Another strand of the information campaign encourages the use of Welsh at the workplace: Saint Dwynen cards and “Working Welsh” badges are meant to identify Welsh speakers at the workplace and encourage the use of Welsh when approaching them.*

#### *5.3.2. Building language-friendly communities*

In line with the Action Plan recommendations, town twinning projects have supported informal language learning and linguistic diversity to a considerable extent (III.2.1). Three of the eleven best practices selected in the Golden Stars Awards 2006 included activities to promote linguistic and cultural diversity. In the Programme “Europe for Citizens 2007-2013”, cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the horizontal features of all actions over the entire duration of the programme.

On the media side, a study on the needs and practices of the audiovisual industry in dubbing and sub-titling was launched by the Commission (Directorate-General for Information Society — Media Programme) early in 2007 (III.2.2). By the end of 2007 the study will have surveyed the European market and come up with recommendations to promote linguistic diversity and facilitate the movement of audiovisual productions among European countries.

### 5.3.3. *Improving the supply and take-up of language learning*

The Action Plan called for those actions of the Socrates Programme targeting adults to promote language learning and linguistic diversity. In response, the Grundtvig action (III.3.1) supported 14 projects and 2 networks to develop training tools and courses for language teachers. Six focused on migrant and ethnic communities. In all, 300 learning partnerships promoted languages in adult education, with 105 focusing on migrant and ethnic communities (33% of the total number of partnerships).

In the LLP, one of the priorities for Grundtvig multilateral projects is “Developing adult learning opportunities for migrants in relation to linguistic, social and cultural integration.”

The European Language Label (III.3.2) has been reinforced with new activities aimed at motivating adults to learn languages (a prize for the European Language Teacher/Student of the Year and information campaigns on language learning, especially the European Day of Languages). These activities were piloted in 2005 and 2006 and are now regular activities in the LLP.

A survey of the diversity in the supply of language teaching (III.3.3) in the EU over the years 1999-2005 will be completed by the end of 2007. It will determine whether there have been changes in the number of languages taught and in the number of pupils studying languages and will identify trends.

## **5.4. A Framework for Progress**

### 5.4.1. *Better-informed decisions*

This section looks at actions to ensure the sharing of information and good practices between the Commission and Member States and to chart new policy areas.

With a view to sharing good practices and discussing language issues for joint actions, a Working Group on Languages has been created to follow up the Action Plan and to help the Commission achieve the objectives of Education & Training 2010, the educational strand of the Lisbon Strategy (IV.1.1).

A study into ways of motivating citizens to learn languages (IV.1.2) has led to the “Lingo!” publication, which presents good practices in the area of motivation. The study outlined key motivation issues, such as supporting language promotion networks at all levels, giving more attention to adult learning, especially in non-formal and informal settings, and using media and marketing techniques to draw attention to languages.

Another study into the costs of non-multilingualism (IV.1.3a) was abandoned as such, but was partially taken up again by a more extended study on the “Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise” (IV.1.3.b), which found that a lack of language skills caused a significant loss of business and recommended support for businesses to improve their management of language skills, by developing language skills available within their company, providing training for employees and work experience opportunities for foreign students or employees and participating in international business-to-business exchanges. Business-education links should also be improved, and the existing language skills of children of migrant workers should be better valued and developed, alongside the national language of the host country.

Multilingualism issues in research were taken up by two projects funded by the Sixth Framework Research Programme (IV.1.4). The Seventh Framework Research Programme also supports linguistic diversity in the area devoted to socio-economic sciences and the humanities.

In 2005 the European Eurydice network published a volume on “*Key Data on Teaching Languages at Schools in Europe*” (IV.1.5), which provided a baseline for the state of language provision in 2003. A second issue covering the period 2004-2006 will be released towards the middle of 2008 to permit statistical comparisons and trend analysis.

Details of how programmes in the field of education, training, youth, media and culture promoted languages in 2004-2006 (IV.1.6) are given in the relevant sections of this document. In addition, it should be noted that the Youth Programme involved roughly 1 000 000 young people and supported the exchange of around 6 000 voluntary workers. Linguistic preparation was supported and even compulsory for the European Voluntary Service strand. Moreover, one of the general objectives of the new Youth in Action Programme (2007-2013) is the recognition of cultural, multicultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and the promotion of the informal learning of languages.

#### *5.4.2. More effective information sharing between practitioners*

In order to promote the exchange of good practice to improve the quality of language teaching, a European Network of Inspectors of foreign language education and training (ELIN) was established in 2006 (IV.2.1). The network has so far focused on three aspects: support of school leadership for foreign language teaching, initial and in-service training of teachers and the impact of inspection systems and practices. The Arion scheme, which supports study visits by educational stakeholders, organised 36 study visits on language teaching, involving nearly 400 participants, including language teachers, headmasters, policy makers and a significant number of language inspectors (II.3.3). The Arion scheme is continuing under the LLP and particular attention will be given to language-oriented activities.

#### *5.4.3. Clear procedures for the follow-up of the Action Plan*

To ensure a durable impact, the Action Plan objectives have been taken forward by the Lifelong Learning Programme for 2007-2013 (LLP) (IV.3.1). The promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity is a general objective of the LLP, which is reflected in the priorities of the specific programmes addressing schools (Comenius), universities (Erasmus), vocational training (Leonardo) and adult education (Grundtvig). Specific programmes are complemented by a cross-cutting activity for languages (Key Activity 2: Languages). All languages are eligible: official languages, regional, minority and migrant languages, and the languages of major trading partners.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The results of the Action Plan are encouraging. The Commission — by and large — has completed its assigned tasks on time. The Member States have made efforts towards a considerable number of goals set out in the Action Plan. Other tasks set by the Action Plan call for a long-term commitment, to which no deadline can be put. Although the general trends are positive, the situation varies from country to country, since the point of departure

and the initial policy approach were different in each Member State. Additional efforts by all stakeholders concerned will help sustain these trends and consolidate the reforms launched in the Member States.

Whereas many of the Action Plan's recommendations have been taken up at national level, a limited number will need additional efforts in order to achieve the intended impact — in particular to extend language teaching to all educational paths (including vocational education), to increase the variety of languages taught, to promote language-friendly schools, to exploit the potential of adult education and informal learning, and to raise the motivation to learn languages.

The Commission will continue to support Member States in their efforts to improve the quality of language teaching, to widen the range of languages taught and to promote language-friendly schools. On the learning side, further action is needed to raise awareness of the importance of learning more languages, alongside initiatives to motivate students and adults to take up languages, also through informal learning. Most of the actions recommended by the Action Plan targeted initial education and related teacher training. Emphasis could now be put on adult language learning, widening the range of stakeholders to include the business sector, continuous vocational training, and informal language learning through the media and cultural activities.

The European programmes in the field of education, culture, youth and civil society, in particular the Lifelong Learning Programme, are powerful tools that complement national policies by adding a European dimension to learning activities. Their support for multilingualism has been strengthened in the new programme generation for 2007-2013, both by setting language learning and linguistic diversity as a general objective and by increasing the budget devoted to linguistic actions. The Commission will follow up their implementation so as to ensure their strategic use in those areas where further work is needed. At the same time, the Commission will support the development of an Indicator of Linguistic Competence to provide Member States with a comparative basis for their policy choices. New possibilities will be explored to promote multilingualism through other policies such as social and regional policies. Future action should increasingly involve all stakeholders concerned and lead to a long-term partnership for multilingualism.

The Commission is currently reviewing its approach to multilingualism in order to support Member States under the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and in line with the suggestions made by the European Parliament during the hearings of Commissioner Orban. The policy-shaping process will involve a broad range of stakeholders through an on-line consultation. It will be carried out in close partnership with the other European institutions and with Member States, which will discuss new developments in multilingualism policy at a ministerial conference in February 2008. The findings of this document, along with other feedback such as the recommendations of the High Level Group for Multilingualism, will feed into this debate. This consultation process will lead to a new Commission Communication — planned for September 2008 — setting out a broader approach for multilingualism policy.