

Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity

An action plan 2004-06



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The European Union is home to 450 million people from scores of different cultural and linguistic communities. The Union and each of its Member States are multilingual and multicultural societies.

Encouraging the learning of languages not only forges links between the citizens of Europe, but also helps to build up the feeling of being European. A knowledge of languages is one of the basic skills which all European citizens require. It is a prerequisite for full participation in the new professional and personal opportunities which are opening up to Europe's citizens.



If we are to benefit more from free movement within the single market, become more competitive in the knowledge economy and understand and be more aware of each other within an enlarged EU, we Europeans must redouble our efforts to learn languages. The 2001 European Year of Languages showed that this is what people want, and the Barcelona European Council of March 2002 recognised, as had the European Parliament previously, the need to act. Although it is up to the Member States to improve the underlying systems and structures for language teaching and learning, the EU has already made significant contributions through its annual multi-million euro investment in projects for language learners and teachers, or its European label for innovation in language learning, for example.

But still more is needed.

Following a wide consultation, the Commission has concluded that major efforts are now required to:

- ▶ make sure that everyone can speak two languages as well as their mother tongue;
- ▶ improve the quality of language teaching, from kindergarten through to adult education; and
- ▶ create a more language-friendly environment in Europe, a Europe which really makes the most of its wealth of languages.

This action plan shows the Commission's commitment to make real progress in this vital field, and I hope that national, regional and local authorities will follow suit.

This publication gives a comprehensive overview of the consultation exercise carried out by the European Commission with respect to European action on languages.

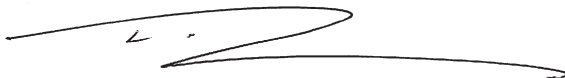
It is divided into three parts.

The main section contains the text of the European Commission's action plan for languages 2004-06, which sets out the policy objectives and lists the actions to be taken in order to achieve them.

The second section contains the Commission staff working paper which was used as the basis for the wide-ranging public consultation exercise launched by the European Commission at the end of 2002. This discussion document complements the action plan in that it sets out in greater detail the European Commission's ideas on the subject of linguistic diversity and language learning and the context for the actions proposed.

The third section contains an analysis of the public's responses to the seven questions raised in this discussion document.

Finally, the annex provides a number of useful links for readers interested in finding out more about the European Commission's activities in the language field.



Viviane Reding
Member of the European Commission
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PART 1	7
COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS	7
INTRODUCTION	9
The context	9
A shared responsibility	11
I. LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING	15
1. 'Mother tongue plus two other languages': making an early start	16
2. Language learning in secondary education and training	18
3. Language learning in higher education	20
4. Adult language learning	21
5. Language learners with special needs	21
6. Range of languages	22
II. BETTER LANGUAGE TEACHING	23
1. The language-friendly school	24
2. The languages' classroom	24
3. Language teacher training	25
4. Supply of language teachers	26
5. Training teachers of other subjects	27
6. Testing language skills	27
III. BUILDING A LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT	29
1. An inclusive approach to linguistic diversity	30
2. Building language-friendly communities	32
3. Improving supply and take-up of language learning	33
IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS	35
PART 2	39
COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER SEC(2002) 1234	39
PART 3	61
PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY	61
The public's response to the consultation	63
Key issues	67
ANNEX — EU WEBSITES: LANGUAGES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING	77

Part 1

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 2004-06

INTRODUCTION

*At long last, Europe is on its way to becoming
one big family, without bloodshed,
a real transformation ...
a continent of humane values ... of liberty,
solidarity and above all diversity,
meaning respect for others' languages,
cultures and traditions.*

(Laeken Declaration)

The context

The peoples of Europe are building a single Union out of many diverse nations, communities, cultures and language groups; it is a Union built around the equal interchange of ideas and traditions and founded upon the mutual acceptance of peoples with different histories but a common future.

Within a very short time, the European Union will undergo its most significant enlargement to date. The new Union will be home to 450 million Europeans from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It will be more important than ever that citizens have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with their neighbours.

Building a common home in which to live, work and trade together means acquiring the skills to communicate with one another effectively and to understand one another better. Learning and speaking other languages encourages us to become more open to others, their cultures and outlooks.

The European Union is built around the free movement of its citizens, capital and services. The citizen with good language skills is better able to take advantage of the freedom to work or study in another Member State.

In the context of the Lisbon strategy of economic, social and environmental renewal launched in March 2000, the Union is developing a society based upon knowledge as a key element in moving towards its objective of becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by the end of the decade. Learning other languages contributes to this goal by improving cognitive skills and strengthening learners' mother tongue skills, including reading and writing.

Also in this context, the Commission is working to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and skills of EU citizens (for example, through the European Charter for Small Enterprises ⁽¹⁾ as well as the Green Paper on entrepreneurship). Such goals will be easier to achieve if language learning is effectively promoted in the European Union, making sure that European citizens, and companies, have the intercultural and language skills necessary to be effective in the global marketplace.

Many other policies being pursued at European level would benefit from an improvement in citizens' language skills.

In short, the ability to understand and communicate in other languages is a basic skill for all European citizens.

Language skills are unevenly spread across countries and social groups ⁽²⁾. The range of foreign languages spoken by Europeans is narrow, being limited mainly to English, French, German, and Spanish. Learning one *lingua franca* alone is not enough. Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. This is an ambitious goal, but the progress already made by several Member States shows that it is perfectly attainable.

The European Year of Languages 2001 highlighted the many ways of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. The Heads of State or Government in Barcelona in March 2002 recognised the need for European Union and Member State action to improve language learning; they called for further action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages to all from a very early age.

A European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2001 called for measures to promote language learning and linguistic diversity. On 14 February 2002 the Education Council invited Member States to take concrete steps to promote linguistic diversity and language learning, and invited the European Commission to draw up proposals in these fields.

This action plan is the European Commission's response to that request. It should be read in conjunction with the consultation document 'Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity' (SEC 2002 1234 ⁽³⁾) which sets out the European Commission's philosophy and the context for the actions proposed.

(1)

Endorsed by the European Council in Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal, on 18-19 June 2000.

(2)

More detailed information about differences between Member States was contained in the background documents that accompanied the consultation process; these are still available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/consult_en.html#background

(3)

Available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/consult_en.html#consult

A shared responsibility

By their very nature, language learning and linguistic diversity are issues that can be addressed in different ways at different levels.

The role of national, regional and local authorities

It is the authorities in Member States who bear the primary responsibility for implementing the new push for language learning in the light of local circumstances and policies, within overall European objectives.

The Council of Europe encourages its member states to reflect upon these responsibilities through a 'language audit' with a view to formulating language education policies that are coherent with the promotion of social inclusion and the development of democratic citizenship in Europe.

In their work on 'The concrete future objectives of education and training systems' ⁽⁴⁾, Member States have agreed common objectives towards which they work by setting indicators and benchmarks, sharing good practice and undertaking peer reviews. They have identified the improvement of language skills as a priority. This programme of work, by which Member States agree to move forward together in developing key aspects of language policy and practice, will therefore provide the framework for many of the actions required at Member State level to promote language learning and linguistic diversity.

The role of the European Union

The European Union's role in this field is not to replace action by Member States, but to support and supplement it. Its mission is to help them develop quality education and vocational training through cooperation and exchange, and to promote developments in those issues that can best be tackled at a Union-wide level. This is why the key question in the consultation process was: 'in what ways could the European Commission stimulate and complement action at other levels?'

⁽⁴⁾
For more information, please see the detailed work programme for this process: Council document 5980/01, 14 February 2001: <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/01/st05/05980en1.pdf>

The main tools available to the Union in this field are its funding programmes, and especially those in the fields of education, training and culture ⁽⁵⁾. The Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes together invest over EUR 30 million a year in actions with a specific language learning objective. In the years 2000-02, the Socrates programme has funded:

- ▶ 1 601 joint language projects involving 58 500 pupils and 6 500 teachers;
- ▶ 2 440 language assistantships;
- ▶ 16 563 in-service training grants for teachers of a foreign language;
- ▶ 18 projects developing training tools and courses for language teachers;
- ▶ intensive linguistic preparation courses in a less widely used and less taught language for 3 632 higher education students;
- ▶ 38 learning partnerships, and 12 cooperation projects to promote languages in adult education;
- ▶ 33 projects developing new language learning or testing tools; and
- ▶ 15 projects promoting awareness about the benefits of language learning and bringing language learning opportunities closer to citizens.

In the same period, the Leonardo da Vinci programme has funded:

- ▶ 750 periods of in-service training abroad for teachers of a foreign language;
- ▶ 56 projects developing language learning tools for vocational training purposes and in the workplace;
- ▶ five projects developing methods of validating language skills;
- ▶ four language audits in companies;
- ▶ 120 000 transnational placements, exchanges and study visits for people in training.

(5)
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/
dgs/education_culture/
index_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm)

The programmes, which have helped many hundreds of thousands of pupils, trainees, teachers and trainers to improve their language skills or acquire new ones, and have funded the development of innovative approaches, methods and materials for language teaching, are currently being reviewed. In-depth general evaluations of these programmes are currently under way, and a specific analysis of their impact upon the promotion of language learning will be completed by the end of 2003.

The European Commission will ensure that promoting language learning and linguistic diversity retains its place in subsequent programmes.

Member States are also encouraged to make use of other European programmes and the European Social Fund and the European Investment Bank to fund developments in language learning.

However, it would be illusory to believe that European programmes could bear the main burden of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity; nor should they: the funding allocated to them can never take the place of direct investment at national, regional and local level in educational infrastructure, in appropriate class sizes, in the training of teachers, or in international exchanges, for example.

The action plan

The action plan sets out the context and the main policy objectives to be pursued. The consultation document identified three broad areas in which action should be taken: extending the benefits of lifelong language learning to all citizens, improving language teaching, and creating a more language-friendly environment. The action plan is structured around these same themes, and for ease of reference uses the same headings. Clearly, not all of the broad objectives set out in the action plan can be achieved in all Member States within the timeframe of this plan.

Under each of the objectives, concrete proposals are made for tangible improvements in the short term. The plan proposes a series of actions to be taken at European level in 2004–06 with the aim of supporting actions taken by local, regional and national authorities. **The actions use resources available in existing Community programmes and activities; none of them requires additional budgetary resources to be allocated to the Commission.** Taken together, the actions proposed, and those taken by Member States, can secure a major step towards promoting language learning and linguistic diversity.

In 2007 the Commission will review the action taken at all levels and report to the European Parliament and Council.

ACTIONS PROPOSED FOR 2004-06

The point has already been made that the major share of action to extend the benefits of lifelong language learning to every citizen, to improve the quality of language teaching, and to create a more language-friendly environment will need to be borne by Member States.

Each Member State starts from a different position in terms, for example, of:

- the spread of language skills amongst its population and their degree of openness to the idea of lifelong language learning;
- the quantity and quality of the physical and virtual structures available for language learning in formal and informal settings;
- the numbers and qualifications of specialist language teachers for primary, secondary, vocational, higher and adult education;
- the degree of autonomy of educational institutions;
- the flexibility of school curricula;
- the regulations governing the employment of teachers from abroad;
- the annual per capita investment in promoting and teaching foreign language learning and linguistic diversity, and in training teachers of a foreign language; and
- the structures available for the regular training and mentoring of teachers of a foreign language.

It is for each Member State to consider these and other relevant issues and to establish its own programme of actions. This can include work to be undertaken in the context of the 'Objectives of systems of education and training' process.

Member States will be invited to report in 2007 on the actions they have undertaken.



I.

Lifelong language learning

I. LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING

This section focuses on the key objective of extending the benefits of language learning to all citizens. Language competencies are part of the core of skills that every citizen needs for training, employment, cultural exchange and personal fulfilment; language learning is a lifelong activity.

LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING

I.O.1 Persons receiving a mobility grant under the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes are able to receive funding for training in the language of the host country before they travel.

A greater degree of take-up of this possibility will be encouraged, and the option will be considered of making it compulsory in future in all cases where the beneficiary does not speak the language of the host country.

2005 onwards

1. 'MOTHER TONGUE PLUS TWO OTHER LANGUAGES': MAKING AN EARLY START

It is a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning are laid. The European Council in Barcelona called for 'further action ... to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age'.

In implementing this commitment, most Member States will be called upon to make significant additional investments.

The advantages of the early learning of languages – which include better skills in one's mother tongue – only accrue where teachers are trained specifically to teach languages to very young children, where class sizes are small enough for language learning to be effective, where appropriate training materials are available, and where enough curriculum time is devoted to languages. Initiatives to make language learning available to an ever-younger group of pupils must be supported by appropriate resources, including resources for teacher training.

Early learners become aware of their own cultural values and influences and appreciate other cultures, becoming more open towards and interested in others. This benefit is limited if all pupils learn the same language: a range of languages should be available to early learners. Parents and teaching staff need better information about the benefits of this early start, and about the criteria that should inform the choice of children's first foreign language.

'MOTHER TONGUE PLUS TWO OTHER LANGUAGES': MAKING AN EARLY START

In implementing their commitment to teach at least two foreign languages from a very early age, Member States should consider whether adjustments are necessary to primary school curricula, and whether provision for the training and deployment of additional specialist teaching staff and other teaching and learning resources in primary and pre-primary schools is adequate.

I.1.1 A study on the main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of foreign languages and cultures to very young learners will be funded.

2005 (call for tenders 2004)

I.1.2. Information about the benefits of early foreign language learning and linguistic diversity will be disseminated to as wide an audience as possible, including parents.

2005

I.1.3. A European conference will disseminate to education decision-makers the latest findings on early foreign language learning, with the aim of establishing a network of practitioners in this field.

2006

I.1.4. The Socrates programme's Lingua action 2 will fund a series of transnational projects to develop materials for teaching language awareness and foreign languages other than *lingua francas* to primary and pre-primary learners. The Commission will propose that the general Socrates call for proposals in 2004 be amended accordingly.

2006

I.1.5. The Commission services and national agencies will work to increase take-up of the language assistantship action, in particular to support language teaching at primary level.

2005 and 2006

2. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In secondary education or training young people complete the acquisition of the essential core of skills that will serve them throughout a lifetime of language learning.

Member States agree that pupils should master at least two foreign languages, with the emphasis on effective communicative ability: active skills rather than passive knowledge. 'Native speaker' fluency is not the objective, but appropriate levels of skill in reading, listening, writing and speaking in two foreign languages are required, together with intercultural competencies and the ability to learn languages whether with a teacher or alone.

Language assistantships, of the kind funded by Socrates/Comenius, can improve the skills of young language teachers whilst at the same time helping to revitalise language lessons and have an impact upon the whole school, in particular by introducing schools to the value of teaching less widely used and less taught languages. For this reason, all secondary schools should be encouraged to host staff from other language communities, such as language assistants or guest teachers. In linguistic border areas there are many additional opportunities for contact between pupils and teachers from neighbouring language communities.

Socrates/Comenius school language projects, in which a class works together on a project with a class abroad, and which culminate in class exchanges, provide young learners with genuine opportunities to use language skills through contact with learners of the same age. All pupils should have the experience of taking part in such a project and in a related language exchange visit.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I.2.1. Comenius 1.2 school language projects allow classes to work on a joint project with a class in another country; they culminate in class exchanges in which pupils' foreign language skills are further improved.

The indicative proportion of Comenius 1 funding allocated to such projects will be raised to 25 % and the Commission services and national agencies will work to improve take-up of these resources.

2005 and 2006

I.2.2. A study of the linguistic and intercultural skills relevant to each stage of compulsory education or training will be undertaken.

2006 (call for tenders 2005)

I.2.3. The Commission services and national agencies will encourage a greater take-up of the resources currently available in Socrates/Comenius action 2 to develop training materials and modules to promote multilingual comprehension approaches in mother tongue and foreign language lessons.

2005

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), in which pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language, has a major contribution to make to the Union's language learning goals. It can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their new language skills now, rather than learn them now for use later. It opens doors on languages for a broader range of learners, nurturing self-confidence in young learners and those who have not responded well to formal language instruction in general education. It provides exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum, which can be of particular interest in vocational settings. The introduction of CLIL approaches into an institution can be facilitated by the presence of trained teachers who are native speakers of the vehicular language.

PROMOTING CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING (CLIL)

I.2.4. The Socrates programme's Lingua action 2 will fund a series of transnational projects for the development and dissemination of new, specific methodologies for teaching subjects through languages other than *lingua francas*. The Commission will propose that the general Socrates call for proposals in 2004 be amended accordingly.
2005

I.2.5. The Commission will propose that the general Socrates call for proposals published in 2004 (Socrates/Comenius action 1: school projects) be amended so as to increase support to schools wishing to introduce a content and language integrated learning approach. In particular, extended exchanges of teachers between partner schools will be encouraged.
2005 and 2006

I.2.6. A European conference will be held for decision-makers and inspectors to launch a major new study on the benefits of content and language integrated learning.
2004

I.2.7. The European Eurydice Unit will gather and disseminate information on the availability of content and language integrated learning in European education and training systems, based on the collection of available data by its network.
2005

3. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education institutions play a key role in promoting societal and individual multilingualism. Proposals that each university implement a coherent language policy clarifying its role in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity, both amongst its learning community and in the wider locality, are to be welcomed.

In non-anglophone countries, recent trends to provide teaching in English may have unforeseen consequences on the vitality of the national language. University language policies should therefore include explicit actions to promote the national or regional language.

All students should study abroad, preferably in a foreign language, for at least one term, and should gain an accepted language qualification as part of their degree course.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

II.3.1. The Socrates programme's intensive language preparation courses are specialised courses in the less widely used and less taught languages (LWULT) of the countries participating in Socrates. They enable Erasmus students to study the language of their host country, before starting the Erasmus period.

The Commission services and national agencies will work closely with universities to find ways of encouraging more Erasmus students to take advantage of these courses, with a target of 10 % of incoming Erasmus students to the LWULT countries attending these courses by 2006.

2005 and 2006

4. ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING

Every adult should be encouraged to carry on learning foreign languages, and facilities should be made readily available to make this possible. Workers should have the opportunity to improve the language skills relevant to their working life. Cultural activities involving foreign music, literature or films, holidays abroad, town-twinning activities, and voluntary service abroad can be promoted as opportunities for learning about other cultures and languages.

ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING

I.4.1. A web portal will be established on the Europa server giving easy access to information for:

(1) the general public (e.g. about language learning and linguistic diversity, about the languages spoken in Europe, reasons for learning languages), and

(2) language professionals (e.g. online teaching resources and teacher-training modules).

The portal will be widely marketed.

2006 (call for tenders 2005)

5. LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Language learning is for everybody. Only a very small minority of people has physical, mental or other characteristics that make language learning impossible. Provision for learners with special needs of one kind or another is increasingly being made within mainstream schools and training institutions; however, such learners are still excluded from language lessons in some cases. Good practice in teaching languages to learners with special needs can be further developed and new methods and approaches need to be developed for the teaching of foreign languages to such learners.

LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

I.5.1. The Commission services will collect and disseminate information about good practice in the teaching of foreign languages to learners with special needs, with particular reference to the organisation of curricula and teaching systems.

2006

6. RANGE OF LANGUAGES

Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises. Taken as a whole, the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world. The imminent enlargement of the European Union will bring with it a wealth of languages from several language families; it requires a special effort to ensure that the languages of the new Member States become more widely learned in other countries. Member States have considerable scope to take a lead in promoting the teaching and learning of a wider range of languages than at present.

RANGE OF LANGUAGES

Member States should provide adequate information to parents about the choice of their child's first foreign language, and the flexibility of school curricula to permit the teaching of a wider range of languages.



II.

Better language teaching

II. BETTER LANGUAGE TEACHING

1. THE LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

It is important that schools and training institutions adopt a holistic approach to the teaching of language, which makes appropriate connections between the teaching of 'mother tongue', 'foreign' languages, the language of instruction, and the languages of migrant communities; such policies will help children to develop the full range of their communicative abilities. In this context, multilingual comprehension approaches can be of particular value because they encourage learners to become aware of similarities between languages, which is the basis for developing receptive multilingualism.

THE LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

II.1.1. The Commission services and national agencies will work to increase take-up of school development projects (Socrates/Comenius action 1) whose objective is to develop and implement holistic school language policies in primary, secondary or vocational schools.

2005 and 2006

2. THE LANGUAGES' CLASSROOM

There is general agreement that the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes have stimulated the development of many useful tools for teaching and learning foreign languages ⁽⁶⁾. Information about these products needs to become more widespread, especially amongst key multipliers such as teachers, trainers, heads and inspectors.

Considerable scope for contact between pupils in other language communities is offered by e-learning approaches based on Internet-facilitated school twinnings and on the pedagogical use of ICT for learning (e-learning). Care needs to be taken that they favour the learning of a wide variety of languages.

⁽⁶⁾

See the following online catalogues of resources:

Lingua products catalogue:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/lingua/catalogue/home_en.htm

Leonardo da Vinci products catalogue:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/compacc_en.html

II.2.1. The Commission services and national agencies will work to increase the use by teachers, trainers, and learners of the language products developed under the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes.

2005 and 2006

II.2.2. The e-twinning action of the new eLearning programme will make it possible for all European schools to build pedagogical partnerships with a school elsewhere in Europe, fostering language learning and intercultural dialogue, and promoting awareness of the multilingual and multicultural European model of society.

3. LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

Language teachers have a crucial role to play in building a multilingual Europe. They, more than teachers of other subjects, are called upon to exemplify the European values of openness to others, tolerance of differences, and willingness to communicate.

It is important that they have all had adequate experience of using the target language and understanding its associated culture. All teachers of a foreign language should have spent an extended period in a country where that language is spoken and have regular opportunities to update their training.

There is a significant disparity in modes of training, however, and not all teachers have lived or studied in a country whose language they teach. Whilst the initial and in-service training of teachers of a foreign language is the responsibility of Member States, there is a role for the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes to complement their actions, where there is a European added value.

The skills and personal resources required to teach languages well are considerable. Initial training should equip language teachers with a basic 'toolkit' of practical skills and techniques, through training in the classroom; language teachers need the advice of trained mentors as well as regular opportunities to keep their language and teaching skills up to date, *inter alia* via e-learning and distance learning.

Language teachers may often feel isolated, unaware of developments elsewhere with the potential to improve their work; they may not have access to adequate professional support networks; it is therefore important to facilitate contacts and effective networks between them at a regional, national and European level.

More work is required to make sure that the results of research into language pedagogy, and the evidence of good practice and successful innovation, are disseminated to the people who can make use of them. To date, the key role played by language teacher trainers, inspectors of foreign language teaching and other professionals in promoting good practice has not received the attention it merits.

LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

In this field, Member States have a crucial role to play in ensuring that all teachers of a foreign language have:

- appropriate initial training including practical training in the pedagogy of foreign languages, and experience of living in a country whose language they teach, and
- regular paid access to in-service training.

Member States will recall that the Council resolution of 14 February 2002 invited them to encourage future language teachers to take advantage of relevant European

programmes to carry out part of their studies in a country or region of a country where the language which they will teach later is the official language.

II.3.1. The Commission services and national agencies will undertake targeted campaigns to disseminate information about the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes' mobility schemes for language teachers and their trainers, with a view to increasing take-up of these actions in 2005 and 2006.

The proportion of Socrates/Comenius 2 funding allocated to such projects will be raised to 25 % of the total Socrates/Comenius 2 budget.
2004

II.3.2. A study will be funded to identify the core pedagogical and linguistic skills necessary for today's language teachers, and propose a framework for their assessment.
2005

4. SUPPLY OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Some Member States face shortages of adequately qualified language teachers; these may be general shortages or may relate to certain languages or certain types of education or training; these shortages need to be addressed and sustainable solutions found. More can be done to exchange teachers between Member States; such teachers may work as teachers of their mother tongue, teachers of another language or as teachers of another subject through their mother tongue. In linguistic border areas there is particular scope for initiatives targeting neighbouring languages in this field.

Member States have been recommended ⁽⁷⁾ to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of teachers and their progress needs to be monitored.

SUPPLY OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

In this field, Member States have a particular responsibility to remove any remaining administrative or legal barriers to the employment of teachers of a foreign language from other Member States.

II.4.1. Following its recent study on obstacles to teacher mobility in the Union, the Commission will fund a more detailed analysis specifically of the obstacles to the mobility of language teachers, including a survey of their own perceptions and attitudes and recommendations for Member States.

2005 (call for tenders 2004)

II.4.2. A symposium on the supply of qualified language teachers in Europe will be organised.

2006

⁽⁷⁾
By the recommendation of
the European Parliament
and of the Council on
'Mobility ... for students,
persons undergoing
training, volunteers,
teachers and trainers'
(2001/613/EC).

5. TRAINING TEACHERS OF OTHER SUBJECTS

Most pupils and trainees could study at least some of their curriculum through the medium of a foreign language. Many more members of the teaching profession should in future be able to teach their subject(s) through at least one foreign language; to this end, trainee teachers should study language(s) alongside their area of specialisation and undertake a part of their teaching studies abroad.

(See section on CLIL.)

6. TESTING LANGUAGE SKILLS

The Heads of State or Government in Barcelona in March 2002 noted the lack of data on citizens' actual language skills, and called for the establishment of a European indicator of language competence. Such an indicator will provide valuable information for decision-makers in the education and training systems. The Commission will shortly bring forward proposals for the design and administration of a periodic test of language skills, which will gather data for a new European indicator of language competence.

It is also important, however, to tackle the information requirements of language learners themselves, their employers, their teachers, and education and training institutions. There is a great diversity of tests and certificates of language skills in Europe, both within and outside formal education and training systems. Not all tests are devised for the same purpose, or constructed to the same degree of rigour. These differences make the comparison of language skills between individuals difficult; it is not easy for employers or education institutions to know what real, practical language skills the holder of any language certificate really has. This reduces the portability of language examination results, and may hinder the free movement of workers and students between Member States.

The common reference scales of the Council of Europe's 'Common European framework of reference for language' ⁽⁸⁾ provide a good basis for schemes to describe individuals' language skills in an objective, practical, transparent and portable manner. Effective mechanisms are needed to regulate the use of these scales by examining bodies. Teachers and others involved in testing language skills need adequate training in the practical application of the framework. European networks of relevant professionals could do much to help share good practice in this field.

The European Language Portfolio ⁽⁹⁾ can help people to value, and make the most of, all their language skills, howsoever acquired, and to carry on learning languages by themselves.

⁽⁸⁾
http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/Common_Framework_of_Reference/default.asp

⁽⁹⁾
[http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/welcome.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/welcome.html)

TESTING LANGUAGE SKILLS

In this respect, Member States were invited by the Council resolution of 14 February 2002 to set up systems of validation of competence in language knowledge based on the 'Common European framework of reference for languages' developed by the Council of Europe, and to stimulate European cooperation in order to promote transparency of qualifications and quality assurance of language learning.

II.6.1. A test of language skills will be designed and administered across the European Union to samples of pupils at the end of compulsory education, in order to gather data for the new European indicator of language competence.

2005 and 2006 (call for tenders 2003/04)

II.6.2. The Commission services will take stock of the benefits of including the assessment of language skills in the Copenhagen Declaration. In particular, the single framework for the transparency of competencies and qualifications (Europass), which should enter into force in 2005, will envisage links to language assessment tools.

2006

II.6.3. An inventory of language certification systems in Europe will be undertaken.

2004 (call for tenders 2004)

II.6.4. A working conference will be organised at which Member States, testing organisations, education institutions, professional associations, social partners and others can devise mechanisms to support the effective and transparent use of the scales of the common European framework in language testing and certification.

2005

III.

Building a language-friendly environment

III. BUILDING A LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Language learning is for all citizens, throughout their lives. Being aware of other languages, hearing other languages, teaching and learning other languages: these things need to happen in every home and every street, every library and cultural centre, as well as in every education or training institution and every business.

The regions, towns and villages of Europe are called upon to become more language-friendly environments, in which the needs of speakers of all languages are fully respected, in which the existing diversity of languages and cultures is used to good effect, and in which there is a healthy demand for and a rich supply of language learning opportunities.

The European Commission believes that the key areas for action at European level here are: fostering an inclusive approach to languages, building more language-friendly communities, and improving the supply and take-up of language learning.

1. AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Linguistic diversity is one of the European Union's defining features. Respect for the diversity of the Union's languages is a founding principle of the European Union.

The mainstream European education, training and culture programmes are already accessible to speakers of all languages, whether 'official' languages or regional languages, minority languages, languages spoken by migrant communities, or sign languages ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, and their successors, can play a greater part in promoting linguistic diversity by funding projects to: raise awareness about and encourage the learning of so-called 'regional', 'minority' and migrant languages; improve the quality of the teaching of these languages; improve access to learning opportunities in them; encourage the production, adaptation and exchange of learning materials in them; and encourage the exchange of information and best practice in this field. European Union actions in other fields also have more to contribute.

In the longer term, all relevant Community programmes and the Structural Funds should include more support for linguistic diversity, *inter alia* for regional and minority languages, if specific action is appropriate.

National and regional authorities are encouraged to give special attention to measures to assist those language communities whose number of native speakers is in decline from generation to generation, in line with the principles of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages.

⁽¹⁰⁾
There is an exception in the case of some Socrates actions which are targeted at learning languages as foreign languages; in these cases, the list of eligible languages is defined by the decision as the official languages of the European Union plus Luxembourgish and Irish. In general, however, regional and minority language communities do not seek support for the teaching of their languages as foreign languages.

AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

III.1.1. A conference will be organised to promote cooperation in issues affecting 'regional' and 'minority' languages in education systems.

2005

III.1.2. A revised and extended edition of the Euromosaic report on regional and minority languages will be published to take account of the enlargement of the European Union.

2004

III.1.3. Under the new approach to the funding of projects relating to regional and minority languages, support will be made available from mainstream programmes rather than specific programmes for these languages. The Commission's annual monitoring report on culture will monitor the implementation of this new approach.

2004 onwards

Member States are encouraged to give special attention to measures to assist language communities whose number of native speakers is in decline from generation to generation, in line with the principles of the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages.

2. BUILDING LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Every community in Europe can become more language friendly by making better use of opportunities to hear and see other languages and cultures, thereby helping to improve language awareness and learning. It is in the interest of the Union to capitalise on the skills and experiences of its many bi- and tri-lingual citizens, and temporary residents such as Erasmus students; monolingual citizens have much to learn from them; public authorities can make better use of their skills in schools, adult education centres, cultural establishments and workplaces.

Research shows that the use of subtitles in film and television can encourage and facilitate language learning. The power of the media – including new media such as DVDs – could be harnessed in the creation of a more language-friendly environment by regularly exposing citizens to other languages and cultures. The potential for the greater use of subtitles to promote language learning could be exploited.

As access to the Internet becomes more widespread, its unique potential for delivering language learning is being recognised. Language learning modules on the Web can complement the work of a language teacher, or be used for independent study. The Internet has the further advantage of facilitating contact between speakers – and learners – of a very wide range of languages.

Tourism projects, cross-border projects and town-twinning schemes can form the nuclei of local language learning schemes, enabling citizens to learn the language(s) of their neighbours or twin town(s), and offering an incentive to do so.

BUILDING LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

III.2.1. The 2004, 2005 and 2006 calls for proposals for town-twinning projects will be amended so that multilingualism in the European Union is an eligible topic for meetings of citizens and for thematic conferences.

2004 onwards

III.2.2. The Commission will launch an open study to analyse the potential for greater use of subtitles in film and television programmes to promote language learning and to examine ways and means of encouraging greater use of subtitled audiovisual material for language learning purposes.

2005

3. IMPROVING SUPPLY AND TAKE-UP OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

It is essential to improve the take-up of language learning opportunities by continuous activities to raise awareness of the benefits of language learning, and by bringing language resources closer to the people who need them. The Council of Europe's initiative, the European Day of Languages ⁽¹¹⁾, can be valuable in motivating people to learn foreign languages.

European Union initiatives such as the European Languages Label ⁽¹²⁾ also have a key role in this by highlighting local, regional or national projects that have found creative ways to improve the quality of language teaching.

The provision of language learning facilities and courses is the responsibility of local, regional and national authorities. Both within and outside formal systems there is still considerable unmet demand not only for language lessons but also for information and advice on language learning.

Appropriate structures are required to motivate people of all ages to learn languages, to offer guidance about how to start, and to provide easy access to a variety of different language learning activities. This is likely to require some investment in new provision, although there is also much to gain by making better use of existing language learning resources and staff in schools and universities, libraries, local learning networks and adult education centres.

(11)
Takes place on 26 September each year; see http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/European_Day_of_Languages/default.asp

(12)
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/language/label/index.cfm>

IMPROVING SUPPLY AND TAKE-UP OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

III.3.1. The Commission will propose that the general Socrates call for proposals in 2004 be amended so that the Grundtvig action attaches a higher priority to projects in the field of foreign language teaching and learning, and in particular the languages of migrant communities.

2005 and 2006

III.3.2. The successful European Language Label will be refocused:

(a) by introducing in each country or region an annual prize for the individual having made the most progress in foreign language learning, and the best language teacher;

(b) by using targeted annual European priorities to focus on good practice; and

(c) by more extensive annual publicity campaigns at national and regional level, particularly concentrating on initiatives such as the European Day of Languages.

2005 and 2006

III.3.3. The Commission services will publish a five-yearly monitoring report on the state of diversity in the supply of language teaching in the Union.

2005 (call for tenders 2004)

IV.

A framework for progress

IV. A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

The promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity involves a real investment and commitment by public authorities at local, regional and national as well as European level. None of these authorities needs act in isolation; each can learn from experience elsewhere. The objectives of this action plan will be facilitated by structures that work for better-informed decisions on language learning and linguistic diversity, a more efficient and effective sharing of information and ideas amongst practitioners, and clear procedures for the follow-up of the action plan itself.

A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

1. Better-informed decisions

IV.1.1. A permanent high-level group of representatives of Member States, social partners, and the world of education, training and culture will be established to assist in the monitoring of this action plan, stimulate public debate with stakeholders about language learning and linguistic diversity, and monitor change in language learning and linguistic diversity in the Union.

2004

IV.1.2. A detailed study of the requirements for language skills in the European Union, and the personal benefits of foreign language learning, recommending ways of motivating more citizens to learn languages, will be funded.

2004 (*call for tenders 2003*)

IV.1.3. Studies will be undertaken into:

- the costs of non-multilingualism, and
- the effects on the European economy of business lost due to a lack of foreign language skills.

2005 (*call for tenders 2004*)

IV.1.4. Research will be undertaken, under priority 7 of the sixth framework research programme, into such issues as the links between multilingualism and the multicultural society, European identity, and the knowledge-based society, the basis of language learning, and implications for language teaching methodologies.

2006

IV.1.5. The European Eurydice network will publish a separate volume, to supplement the *Key data* report, containing a representative set of indicators and a detailed analytical overview on foreign language teaching in schools in Europe. This will appear at the end of 2004 and will be updated every two years.

2004

IV.1.6. The Commission will collect and publish information on the extent to which its programmes in the field of education, training, youth, media and culture promote language learning and linguistic diversity.

A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

2. More effective information sharing between practitioners

IV.2.1. The establishment of a European network of inspectors of foreign language education and training (and similar policy-makers) will be supported.

2004–05

IV.2.2. The Socrates programme's Arion mobility scheme will support study visits by language inspectors.

2005–06

A FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRESS

3. Clear procedures for the follow-up of the action plan

IV.3.1. The Commission will propose a series of concrete measures by means of which the new programmes may take forward the objectives set out in this action plan from 2007 onwards.

IV.3.2. Member States should report to the Commission in 2007 on:

- the extent to which they have implemented Council Resolution 2002 C 50/01 of 14 February 2002;
- the extent to which they have made use of the additional opportunities for supporting languages within the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes under actions I.0.1, I.1.4, I.1.5, I.2.1, I.2.3, I.2.4, I.2.5, I.3.1, II.1.1, II.2.1, II.2.2, II.3.1, III.3.1, III.3.2 and IV.2.2;
- the actions they have undertaken under each of the 15 subheadings of this communication; and
- the most successful practices they have identified in this period, with a view to disseminating them more widely, for example through the objectives' process.

IV.3.3. The Commission will present a communication to the Parliament and the Council on these matters in 2007, and propose adjustments or further action where necessary.

Part 2

Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2002) 1234

Promoting language learning
and linguistic diversity

Consultation

PREAMBLE

1. The Policy context

In 2001, Europe celebrated the European Year of Languages, which was a resounding success and stimulated many thousands of activities involving hundreds of thousands of citizens across Europe in the task of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. It generated widespread enthusiasm for language learning and increased the motivation of many to get personally involved in learning about other languages and cultures.

The European Commission has presented a report on the implementation of the European Year to the other European institutions and is now preparing its proposals for continuing the work of the Year. It is too soon to say what the lasting impact of the Year will be, but it is clear that it was the beginning, rather than the end, of a process.

The Year was an opportunity for national, regional and local organisations to launch debates on language learning and linguistic diversity. A new and urgent need to improve the language skills of all European citizens has been understood. Local and regional networks have developed. New policies have been devised. New commitments have been undertaken. Three key areas for action have been defined: improving and extending lifelong language learning, making foreign language teaching better, and creating a more language-friendly environment.

At a European level too, the Year provided a stimulus for new developments. The need for European Union and Member State action to improve language learning was recognised by the Heads of State or Government in Barcelona in March 2002. They called for further action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age. This conviction was also behind the Education Council's invitation to Member States on 14 February 2002 to take concrete steps to promote linguistic diversity and language learning, and its invitation to the Commission to draw up proposals in these fields by early 2003. The European Parliament on 13 December 2001 called for measures to promote language learning and linguistic diversity.

2. This consultation

Now is the time for wide and concerted action that is rooted in the experience gained during the European Year and takes full account of the progress that has been made in the last decade.

The European Union's role is to support and supplement the action of Member States to develop quality education and implement a vocational training policy; it is to encourage cooperation and promote developments in those issues that can best be tackled at a Union-wide level ⁽¹³⁾. The Union has a long history of work on language learning and linguistic diversity. Its cooperation programmes and other activities have helped many hundreds of thousands of pupils, trainees, teachers and trainers. They have funded the development of innovative approaches, methods and materials for language teaching. European Union action to promote language learning through the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes alone is worth around EUR 35 million every year. *(A list of websites on the language activities undertaken in the field of education and culture is attached in the Annex.)*

The Member States working together in the European Council have on many occasions over the past three decades declared their desire to improve the teaching and learning of languages. The following sections draw heavily upon the key Council resolutions, notably those of 31 March 1995 (on improving and diversifying language learning and teaching), 16 December 1997 (on the early teaching of European Union languages) and 14 February 2002 (on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The time has come to take stock of the Commission's investment and to consider further ways and means of promoting language learning whilst respecting linguistic diversity at a European level.

In line with the Commission's general approach to involving interested parties in decision-making and ensuring greater accountability ⁽¹⁵⁾, this document invites stakeholders to give their views on what shape that concerted action should take. The Commission will also consult the other European institutions, interested organisations, social partners and representatives of civil society and other key players. By its very nature, this is an issue that needs to be addressed in different ways at different levels: local, regional, national and European. What specific initiatives should be taken at a European level? In what ways could the Commission complement action at other levels? A number of key questions are posed in Section V of this document.

⁽¹³⁾
Articles 149 and 150 of the Treaty establishing the European Community.

⁽¹⁴⁾
Resolutions 98/C 1/02, 95/C 207/01 and 2002 C 50/01

⁽¹⁵⁾
See 'Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue', COM(2002) 277 final.

Based upon the responses it receives, the Commission will publish an action plan in 2003 based on actions using resources available in existing Community programmes and activities.

In their work on the 'Concrete objectives of education and training ⁽¹⁶⁾ systems' Member States have agreed common objectives that they work towards by setting indicators and benchmarks, sharing good practice and undertaking peer reviews. They have already identified improving foreign language skills as a priority. This programme of work will provide the framework for many of the actions required at Member State level.

For its part, the Commission has already begun the process of making its programmes in the field of education and culture more effective in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. It is committed to adopting a coherent and proactive approach across all of its actions and programmes. At the same time, the Commission has begun a process of reflection on the future of the new co-operation programmes for education, training and youth; it has published the communication 'Making lifelong learning a reality' ⁽¹⁷⁾ and the *Report on skills and mobility* ⁽¹⁸⁾. These will form the framework of further action by the Commission to promote language learning and linguistic diversity.

(16)

Council Document 5980/01,
14 February 2001:
<http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/01/st05/05980en1.pdf>

(17)

TCOM(2001) 678 (final):
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/communication/com_en.pdf

(18)

Final report of the High-Level
Task Force on Skills and
Mobility, 14 December 2001:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2001/dec/taskforce2001_en.pdf

I. A EUROPE OF LANGUAGES – TIME FOR ACTION

The Union has ... a new strategic goal... to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

(Lisbon European Council, March 2000)

The European Council sets the objective of making its education and training systems a world quality reference by 2010. It calls for further action ... to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age.

(Barcelona European Council, March 2002)

At long last, Europe is on its way to becoming one big family, without bloodshed, a real transformation ... What is Europe's role in (the) world? ... Europe as the continent of humane values ... of liberty, solidarity and above all diversity, meaning respect for others' languages, cultures and traditions.

(Laeken Declaration)

One of the keys to the European Union's success as a knowledge-based economy is how well it tackles the issue of language learning. How well it deals with wider issues of language, culture and diversity over the coming decade will shape its cohesion and its role in the world. This document considers both of these questions ⁽¹⁹⁾.

1. Why action on language learning is necessary

The peoples of Europe are building a single Union out of many diverse nations, communities, cultures and language groups; it is a Union built around the equal interchange of ideas and traditions and founded upon mutual acceptance of peoples with different histories but a common future. Building a common home in which to live together in harmony whilst maintaining the individuality and diversity of each means acquiring the skills to communicate with one another effectively and to understand one another better.

The act of learning and speaking other languages encourages the learner to open him or herself up to other people and to begin to understand other cultures and outlooks: essential skills in a world menaced by racism and xenophobia. Within a very short time, the European Union will undergo its most significant enlargement to date. The new Union will be home to almost 500 million Europeans from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It will be more important than ever that citizens have the skills necessary to understand and communicate with their neighbours.

⁽¹⁹⁾
The question of which languages are used in the internal workings of the European institutions is not addressed here; nor is the issue of the languages in which the institutions of the Union communicate with European citizens.

The European Union is developing a society based upon knowledge. Learning other languages improves general cognitive and metacognitive skills, reinforces understanding of one's mother tongue, strengthens reading and writing, and develops general communication skills ⁽²⁰⁾. The ability to understand and communicate in other languages is now one of the basic skills that citizens need if they are to participate fully in European society ⁽²¹⁾.

Europe is developing a highly competitive economy trading with countries around the globe. Intercultural communication skills are assuming an ever-larger role in global marketing and sales strategies. European companies continue to lose business because they cannot speak their customers' languages; they need to improve their skills in languages, including those of non-European trading partners.

The Union needs a mobile workforce. The worker with language skills enjoys a wider choice of job or training opportunities than a monolingual colleague and is better able to take advantage of his or her freedom to work or study in another Member State.

In short, all European citizens need skills in other languages as well as their mother tongue.

2. Europeans are multilingual

According to a Eurobarometer survey, over half of the population of the Union is able to speak another language in addition to their mother tongue, and in some Member States this figure is as high as 98 %; a full quarter of citizens speak two other languages ⁽²²⁾. To set this in a world context, between a half and two thirds of the world's population is bilingual to some degree, and a significant number of people are multilingual.

What is more, the public is largely in favour of being multilingual: some 93 % of parents believe it important that their children learn other languages; 71 % of Europeans consider that everyone in the Union should be able to speak another European language, and 56 % would be willing to spend some time every week in language learning.

On the other hand, language skills are not at all evenly spread amongst ages and social groups: many more people in the 15-24 age group have foreign language skills than in the 25-39 age group, who in turn are better at foreign languages than those in the 40-54 age group and so on; 67 % of managers have foreign language skills compared to 17 % of retired people and 27 % of housewives. As regards geographical differences, for example, only 13 % of Danes, Swedes and Dutch people are monolingual, compared to 66 % of people in the United Kingdom.

(20)

e.g. Bruck, Lambert and Tucker, 1974; Hakuta, 1986; Weatherford, 1986 (people competent in more than one language outscore speakers of only one language on tests of verbal and non-verbal intelligence); Bamford and Mizokawa, 1991 (students learning another language are better at problem solving); Rosenbusch, 1995 (length of time students study a foreign language relates directly and positively to higher levels of cognitive and metacognitive processing).

(21)

See conclusions of Lisbon European Council, March 2000.

(22)

Eurobarometer 54, 'Europeans and languages', 2001: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/lang/eurobarometer54_en.html

Furthermore, Europeans' range of foreign languages is very limited: 41 % speak English as a foreign language, 19 % speak French, 10 % speak German, 7 % speak Spanish and 3 % speak Italian. No other language achieves even 1 % ⁽²³⁾. This narrow range of foreign languages could make it difficult for European businesses to achieve their full potential in a multilingual marketplace.

What, then, of English? It has become a world *lingua franca*. Within Europe, it is rapidly gaining ground as the first foreign language chosen by parents for their children ⁽²⁴⁾. It is displacing the languages traditionally taught in European schools such as German, French, Spanish and Italian, even in areas in which the most 'logical' first foreign language would be the language of a neighbouring state. The signs are that the teaching of English would continue to grow without specific support.

These developments have potential advantages; if any language were to become spoken by a majority of Europeans it would mean that for the first time ever the whole of Europe would have a shared medium for basic communication; commerce and travel between Member States would be easier.

3. Mother tongue plus two other languages

But *lingua francas* have their limitations. If European citizens were only able to speak their mother tongue plus a *lingua franca*, companies, individuals and society would lose out. Businesses have more opportunities to sell their products if they speak the language of the customer; a *lingua franca* will not meet this need. Citizens who move to live in another Member State find that a *lingua franca* alone is insufficient for them to integrate into the local community. And whilst a *lingua franca* may help with basic transactions, real mutual understanding and a rich appreciation of other cultures comes through direct contact with people in other countries – by attempting to speak their own language.

Learning one *lingua franca* alone is not enough. The construction of a Union in which citizens are able and willing to communicate with their European neighbours and the development of a workforce with adequate mastery of basic skills mean that **every citizen needs to be able to communicate in a minimum of two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue**. The goal is for every European to have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages, not necessarily native-speaker fluency; this goal can be interpreted in different ways according to individual circumstances: the languages chosen can be learned to different levels of proficiency, and in different combinations of the four skills (speaking, writing, listening comprehension, reading comprehension); skills can be augmented over time as different needs arise or as different interests are awakened. Everyone can define his or her own repertoire of language skills over a lifetime of learning, but the overall goal must be attained.

⁽²³⁾
With the exception of Swedish
(an official language in Finland)
and Dutch (an official language
in Belgium).

⁽²⁴⁾
Foreign language teaching in
schools in Europe, Eurydice and
Eurostat, 2001.

II. EXTENDING THE BENEFITS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language competencies are part of the core of skills that every citizen needs for employment, education and personal fulfilment, they are skills to be continuously updated and added to; gone are the days when language learning began and ended at school; it is a lifelong activity. This means that coherent and user-friendly systems and structures for lifelong language learning need to be in place. The provision of language learning needs to be organised and coordinated so that, as each learner progresses from pre-primary to adult education, what he or she learns at each step builds upon the language skills acquired at the previous one.

1. Early language learning

It is in the school system that the foundations are laid for a lifetime of language learning, as children gain their first insights into the variety of languages and cultures around them and their own unique capacities for communicating with others.

Language learning in primary education is becoming more widespread; following the Council resolution of 16 December 1997 on the early learning of languages, which invited Member States to encourage early foreign language learning and to diversify the supply of languages in early learning, many Member States have brought forward the age at which foreign languages are introduced into the curriculum; overall, 43 % of primary pupils already learn another language, although this varies greatly between countries ⁽²⁵⁾. The European Council in Barcelona called on Member States to take steps to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age.

Early foreign language learning ⁽²⁶⁾ gives pupils a head start with languages, may lead to greater proficiency and accuracy in speaking, reading, writing and understanding, and develops meta-linguistic skills which are the foundations for easier language learning in later life. Children also benefit from non-language-specific courses that make them aware of the variety of sounds and structures of other languages, and similarities with their own tongue.

But these advantages only accrue where there is a sufficiently high level of investment in teacher training, where class sizes are small enough for language learning to be effective, and where enough curriculum time is devoted to languages. Adequate provision and resourcing for early foreign language learning is vital.

⁽²⁵⁾
See Foreign language teaching
in schools in Europe,
Eurydice, 2001.

⁽²⁶⁾
Foreign languages in primary
and pre-school education,
Blondin (ed.), CILT,
London, 1998,
ISBN 1 902031 22 9.

Those who teach languages to very young children bear a significant responsibility; negative early experiences of language learning can put people off for life. It is crucial that pre-primary and primary school language teachers possess not only the appropriate level of fluency in the target language, but also the full range of pedagogical skills necessary to teach languages to very young children. Initiatives to make language learning available to an ever-younger group of pupils must be supported by appropriate resources for teacher training.

Early learners become aware of their own cultural values and influences and appreciate other cultures, becoming more open and interested towards others. This benefit will be limited if all pupils learn the same language: a range of languages should be available to early learners.

2. Language learning in secondary education/vocational training

It is in secondary education or training that young people complete the essential core of language skills that will serve them throughout life. However, in some Member States, foreign language learning is not compulsory for certain groups of pupils, and others propose to make foreign language learning optional. It is difficult to see how this approach will meet the Union's objective that every citizen should speak two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue.

Everyone in compulsory education or training should be required to learn at least two other languages ⁽²⁷⁾. The Barcelona Council reminds us that the emphasis is not upon the act of learning, but upon the outcomes of the language learning process: making sure that all pupils' acquire *mastery* of basic skills. More work is required to define such linguistic outcomes. This could define appropriate minimum levels on the scales in the common European framework of reference for foreign language 1 and foreign language 2; it could also include consideration of the extent to which school-leavers in the Union might be expected to have:

- ▶ a knowledge of the value of language skills;
- ▶ a sound awareness of language and languages;
- ▶ intercultural competence;
- ▶ the ability to learn further languages autonomously in later life; and
- ▶ the ability to communicate effectively in at least two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.

A key challenge is to provide teaching or training in a wide diversity of languages, consistent with learners' future employment, study and personal development needs and with the needs of industry and commerce; the range could include major 'world' languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Russian, as well as those of neighbouring countries, trading partners and other European languages. Schools can make more use of autonomous learning possibilities to extend the range of languages they offer.

(27)

See: Education Council, 4 June 1984: Member States agreed to promote opportunities for pupils to acquire skills of communication in two foreign languages before the end of compulsory education and to maintain these skills in vocational training, higher education and adult education; and Milan European Council, 1985: a maximum number of pupils should learn two foreign languages and should have the possibility of taking part in exchanges.

3. Language learning in higher education

Higher education institutions play a key role in promoting societal and individual multilingualism. These linguistically rich environments employ specialists in foreign languages and literatures and in applied language studies, they have extensive facilities for language learning as well as international links, and they host students and teachers from abroad.

Proposals that each university devise and implement a coherent language policy clarifying its particular role in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity both amongst its learning community and in the wider locality are particularly welcome.

Multilingual competence and communication skills in several languages are essential to every graduate's employability. All university students and staff need opportunities and incentives for improving their language skills, in a range of languages much wider than is available in secondary education; all students should study abroad, preferably through a foreign language, for at least one term, following the necessary linguistic and intercultural preparation and should be able to gain an accepted language qualification at the end of their degree course.

Undergraduates in language courses can be expected to take a significant proportion of their courses in the target language and spend at least one year abroad. It is likely that specialised language courses will differentiate between those focusing on foreign literature, applied foreign languages (for business, translation or interpretation), and linguistics.

Universities also have a responsibility to promote their own language(s) by enabling incoming students to learn them to a high standard. Recent trends for universities in non-anglophone countries to provide teaching in English are understandable, but can have negative consequences for the viability of less spoken languages.

4. Adult language learning

Workers should have the opportunity to improve the language skills relevant to their working life. It is essential to promote more actively the development of language learning in the workplace. It is important for businesses to become multilingual organisations, with flexible, high quality provision; learning providers should offer courses tailored to companies' specific needs. SMEs need to explore fully how to facilitate their employees' access to learning (e.g. in partnership with other enterprises, through learning networks and skills sharing, and in cooperation with guidance services). Periodic language audits enable employers to ensure that they have the full range of language skills necessary for the success of their business in competitive markets, both as regards the languages used within the company and those used with the outside world.

But the benefits of language learning are not only about employability, nor is the workplace the only place to learn foreign languages; every adult should be encouraged to carry on learning foreign languages for pleasure, for personal development, for travel abroad, as a way of making new friends, or simply as a way of keeping the brain active.

After all, language learning can be fun; for people at this stage of life, there are as many informal as formal ways to learn languages: evening classes, cultural activities involving foreign music, literature or films, holidays abroad, town-twinning activities, voluntary service abroad: all of these can be ideal opportunities for learning about other cultures and languages.

5. Language learners with special needs

As regards pupils and trainees with special needs, the challenge for education authorities is to provide language teaching that responds to learners' individual needs; it requires adequately trained teachers, suitable learning environments, and appropriate motivation. Language learning goals may need to be modified for certain learner groups. Only a very small minority of people have physical or mental characteristics that make foreign language learning impossible, and they are unlikely to find themselves in mainstream educational or training institutions.

Another group of pupils – those whose mother tongue is not the same as the language of their school – have particular needs; some may face difficulties in learning the language of the school and may need extra help with the additional challenge of learning a third or fourth language, whilst maintaining skills in their mother tongues; however, their bilingualism should help them pick up other languages more quickly.

Some socioeconomic groups may experience difficulties with language learning; these need to be correctly diagnosed and treated appropriately. Teachers of this group of pupils need to be fully trained in teaching the school language as a foreign language, not as a mother tongue. At the same time the presence of these families in the school community brings many opportunities for pupils – and parents – to learn about other languages and cultures.

6. Range of languages

Our learning institutions should be places that celebrate linguistic and cultural diversity; yet in many parts of the Union, a learner's choice of languages is restricted, in practice, to only a handful of major languages. Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises.

Taken as a whole, the range of languages on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world. Whilst not all of these can be included in the taught curriculum of every institution, it is possible for most institutions to offer a wider range than at present; ways of doing this include providing self-teaching modules for languages where no teacher is available, encouraging learners to take part in joint language projects with institutions abroad or hosting language assistants whose mother tongue is a less taught language.

Many schools could make more of the benefits of multilingual comprehension approaches. Lessons in the mother tongue or first foreign language provide rich opportunities to teach about lexical or grammatical similarities between other languages in the same family. They can effectively convey the message to learners that many words of a 'foreign' language can be easily guessed and understood, and can encourage learners to develop receptive multilingualism.

III. BETTER LANGUAGE TEACHING

Language teachers have a crucial role to play in building a multilingual Europe. If they have the right combination of language and pedagogical skills they can awaken in the learner an enthusiasm for languages that will last a lifetime and can be effective role models for multicultural awareness and multilingualism.

1. The language-friendly school

The role of the school in language learning is more than simply teaching languages, and involves more than just language teachers. Schools nowadays need to prepare children to take part in a society that is open to other cultures and in which they can come into contact with people from many different countries and traditions.

Schools also have a wide remit to help children to develop the full range of their communicative abilities, including their mother tongue, the language of instruction (where different) and languages other than their mother tongue, together with intercultural skills.

Every school therefore needs a coherent, unified policy, which takes as its starting point the linguistic and cultural mix of the local community and in which knowledge about language(s), practical skills in using languages and skills in how to learn languages are given due weight.

2. In the languages' classroom

No teacher can achieve optimal results without adequate and appropriate materials and equipment, or if class sizes are so big that some pupils do not get a real opportunity in each lesson to speak the target language.

Joint projects with schools in other countries, culminating in language exchanges, can greatly assist pupils' motivation to learn other languages. These projects can target a language not normally on the curriculum, involve direct contact with young people who speak it as mother tongue and give pupils the chance to do real tasks in it. Even if it proves necessary to use a vehicular language (rather than the partners' language), most pupils can still learn survival skills in the partners' language (thereby increasing the range of foreign languages spoken). Every pupil would benefit from taking part in at least one linguistic exchange before leaving compulsory education.

Content and language integrated learning, in which pupils learn another subject through the medium of a foreign language, can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their second language skills and can reduce the time needed in the school curriculum for lessons in that language.

3. Language teacher training

The task of teaching languages is not an easy one. Teachers need to use a 'toolkit' of practical skills and techniques to meet the needs of the different age groups they work with and the different learning styles of each individual; in particular, they need to be comfortable using pupil-centred or 'differentiated' approaches to language teaching as well as more traditional teacher-centred approaches.

Initial language teacher-training curricula need to ensure that teachers of a foreign language have a thorough grounding in general teaching methodologies, methodologies specific to language teaching (such as language awareness, bilingual education, the use of ICT, and the teaching of language learning skills) and advanced language skills, as well as some general understanding of current language policy issues.

As learning becomes more and more an autonomous process, so teaching becomes more a question of motivating people to want to learn, of supporting learning, of coaching learners, of mentoring and of managing learning resources. Teachers need training to take on these new roles.

A period of supervised practical training in the classroom before appointment is necessary for all new teachers of a foreign language; this should follow an extended period living in the country or countries whose language(s) they teach ⁽²⁸⁾.

Schools will have more flexibility in meeting demand for a wider range of language courses if all language teachers teach at least two languages; training institutions should train new teachers in a wider range of languages, including those less widely used and less taught. In addition, teachers could be given the opportunity to develop receptive skills in extra languages, to maximise their language repertoire.

The profession of teaching requires a deep commitment to one's own personal and professional development. Teachers of languages need ready opportunities to keep their language and teaching skills up to date. They need the advice of trained mentors or other guidance as they learn and test out new approaches in the classroom.

More can be done to use distance learning methods in such a continuous development programme; regular planned training in a country where the target language is spoken is also necessary for all teachers of a foreign language.

⁽²⁸⁾
*See the resolution of the
Education Council,
9 February 1976
(need for intending teachers
to spend a period in a country
of the target language);
conclusions of the Milan
European Council, 1985
(initial/in-service training
opportunities should be made
available to teachers in the
country of the target
language);
and Council resolution, 1995.*

4. Supply of language teachers

Achieving the Union's objectives will require there to be in each Member State sufficient training places for new teachers of a foreign language and enough language teaching posts to enable authorities to offer teaching in a wide choice of languages from primary to adult education. Some Member States face shortages of suitably skilled and qualified language teachers. There is a need to promote language teaching as an attractive career, in order to improve the quality and quantity of recruitment ⁽²⁹⁾.

Schools could make better use of native speakers of other languages living in their locality; given appropriate training, they can provide back-up to foreign language teachers in the classroom, thereby increasing pupil contact time with the target language.

Members of the teaching profession relatively seldom go to work in other countries, often because of rules about social security, pensions, or for family reasons; more can be done to exchange teachers between Member States, either as teachers of their mother tongue, or as teachers of another subject through the medium of their mother tongue. It should be recalled that Member States have been recommended ⁽³⁰⁾ to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of teachers.

There is a need for Europe-wide associations grouping together teachers of languages in order to improve the exchange of ideas, the promotion of good practice and the setting of professional standards.

5. Training teachers of other subjects

Most pupils and trainees could study at least some of their curriculum through the medium of a foreign language, both to get a practical opportunity to practise their first foreign language and to ease pressure on school curricula. It follows that many more members of the teaching profession should in future be able to teach their subject(s) through at least one foreign language; trainee teachers should study language(s) alongside their area of specialisation and undertake a part of their teaching studies abroad ⁽³¹⁾.

⁽²⁹⁾
Report on skills and mobility

⁽³⁰⁾
By the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on mobility within the Community for students, persons undergoing training, volunteers, teachers and trainers (2001/613/EC).

⁽³¹⁾
See Council resolution, 1995.

6. Testing language skills

The regular testing of language skills is a key aspect of the learning process. It includes low-stakes tests such as those teachers use to assess their pupils' progress or diagnostic tests which provide learners with feedback about the skills they have acquired and areas for improvement, and high-stakes tests leading to certification such as end-of-course examinations organised by schools, ministries or examining bodies.

It is important that tests are properly constructed, by personnel trained in testing methodologies; they should be valid (test the skill they are designed to test) and reliable (without significant variations over time, between different examiners or between different test centres, for example). Above all, tests should measure the testees' ability to use their language skills in real situations.

To further encourage the mobility of workers and students between Member States, the many different kinds of language certificate need to be accepted and understood throughout Europe. At present, certificates issued by one authority or in one Member State are not easily comparable with those issued elsewhere. Member States have been invited (by the Council resolution of 14 February 2002) to put in place systems for the description and recognition of individuals' attainment in other languages. Greater transparency of certification could be achieved if all certificates were expressed in terms of the scales of the common European framework of reference for language ⁽³²⁾. This could need to be accompanied by mechanisms to regulate the implementation of the framework by examining bodies, and to train language testers in using it.

(32)
[http://culture2.coe.int/
portfolio/documents/
0521803136txt.pdf](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/0521803136txt.pdf)

IV. BUILDING A LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Encouraging citizens to learn other languages and ensuring that they have access to teaching of the highest standards: these are the major concerns of European Union policy, but not the only ones. Language learning is something for all citizens, throughout their lives; it follows that action to promote it need not take place only in the classroom or lecture hall. Language teaching and learning needs to find a place in every home and every high street. The regions and towns of Europe need to become more language-friendly environments, in which the needs of speakers of all languages are fully respected, in which the existing diversity of languages and cultures is not only audible but also used to good effect, and in which there is a strong demand for language learning opportunities and a rich supply of them.

1. An inclusive approach

Linguistic diversity is one of the European Union's defining features. Over 50 languages are spoken traditionally in the area of the enlarged Union⁽³³⁾; of these, 21 are official national languages of a Member State; others are often classed as 'regional' or 'minority' languages. Deaf communities in Europe use as many as 23 different sign languages. People living in Europe also use hundreds of other languages from all over the world, as a result of migration over the centuries.

A key element in building a language-friendly environment is the creation of a truly inclusive view of languages. Respect for the diversity of the Union's languages is a founding principle of the European Union⁽³⁴⁾. European languages are equal in value and dignity and form an integral part of European culture and civilisation. Just as all European communities should ensure respect for ethnic and cultural diversity, so too should they respect the diversity of languages spoken.

The formation of a language is a collective act of creation in which thousands of people take part over hundreds of years. Each language shelters a subtly distinct view of the world and is fundamental to the personal, social and spiritual identity of its speakers: without their language they would be less than they are. When a language disappears, this cultural creation is irretrievably lost. Yet some European languages have died out in the past century and others are on the brink of extinction; other languages may be in no immediate danger of falling out of use, but find their position eroded by the encroachment of more dominant languages in many domains, particularly science and technology.

(33)

Source: *Unesco Red book on endangered languages*
(http://www.helsinki.fi/~tasalmin/europe_index.html).

(34)

EEC Council Regulation
No1, 6 October 1958.

National, regional and local communities need to bear in mind, therefore, that some languages require special attention, especially those which are seriously endangered because the number of native speakers continues to decline from generation to generation. The principles behind the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages provide sound indications of the action that is needed in promoting the use of regional and minority languages in education, the media, culture, economic and social life and, where appropriate, government, public services and judicial proceedings.

The Union has for many years supported small-scale projects to promote regional and minority languages. This help was mainly made available outside the mainstream cooperation programmes in education, training, youth, culture and media. However, policies aimed at such languages cannot be viewed in isolation; in the longer term, all relevant Community funding programmes could include more support for linguistic diversity (including regional and minority languages). Whilst some support is available from the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes, it should be investigated whether they could play a greater part in promoting linguistic diversity by the funding of projects to improve the quality of the teaching of these languages, to improve access to learning opportunities in them; to encourage the production, adaptation and exchange of learning materials in them and to encourage the exchange of information and best practice in this field. European Union actions in the fields of employment and social policy, regional and rural development, research and development, and the information society may also have more to contribute. Wider cooperation and the sharing of good practice and innovation between Member States and language communities on issues affecting language policy and language planning are to be encouraged.

2. Language-friendly communities

Europe's linguistic environment is often managed in such a way that its natural diversity is unexpressed and unheard. In every Member State and most cities and towns there are people who speak other languages than the national tongue. These include languages of migrant communities and regional or minority languages; some of these languages may be seldom heard in public; the unique linguistic diversity they bring to their local community is seldom celebrated. The speakers of these languages constitute a priceless resource of cross-cultural and linguistic skills; they are the models from whom monolingual citizens have much to learn. Nor should we ignore the fact that more and more people are taking advantage of a frontier-free Europe and moving to study, train or work in another Member State; these people too bring invaluable language and cross-cultural skills to the communities in which they reside. It is in the interest of the Union to capitalise on the skills and experiences of its many bi- and tri-lingual citizens. Public authorities can do more to value these kinds of people and to make use of their skills in schools, adult education centres, cultural establishments and workplaces.

We are more likely to learn languages if we are regularly exposed to them. In some Member States, TV programmes and films in foreign languages seldom get onto our screens, or if they do they are often dubbed rather than subtitled because the local market prefers dubbing; yet research shows that films and TV can encourage and facilitate language learning if they are made available in their original language, with subtitles instead of dubbing ⁽³⁵⁾; subtitling provides an economical and effective way of making our environment more language friendly. Town-twinning schemes can form the nuclei of local language learning schemes: enabling citizens to learn the language(s) of their twin town(s), and offering a real incentive to do so. The European Year has shown what impact local language festivals and other events can make.

In short, language-friendly communities can make better use of the many opportunities that exist for other languages and cultures to be more visible and audible in their citizens' lives, thereby helping to improve language awareness and learning.

(35)
See, for example, Children's vocabulary acquisition in a foreign language through watching subtitled TV programmes at home, C. M. Koolstra, Leiden University, J. W. J. Beentjes, University of Nijmegen.

3. Improving take-up of language learning

The next step is to improve the take-up of language learning opportunities. Amongst people who do not speak another language, over half did not think they would benefit from learning an additional language. A quarter of Europeans fear that language learning is too expensive or believe that they are 'not good at languages'. For many who have left the education system, language learning has a bad name: they cannot see its relevance to their lives or understand the possibilities it may open for them. Lack of information and misunderstanding need to be tackled.

Yet the European Year has shown that citizens do respond positively to targeted encouragement and better information about language learning. It is essential that all actors build on the work of the Year and take further permanent measures to raise citizens' awareness of the benefits of language learning, and to give people a chance to try language learning for themselves.

4. Improving supply and variety of language learning

After enlargement, there will be almost 500 million European citizens. Each one has different language learning needs. Eurobarometer showed considerable unmet demand for language learning provision outside formal systems; only 40 % of citizens say the availability of language courses in their area is good; 30 % would use a language centre if one were available close by; and 58 % are willing to spend some time each week learning another language; information and advice on language learning is often hard to find.

Once people have been motivated to learn a language, they must be able to find, close to their homes (or through open or distance learning), guidance about how to start, information about what is available, and a variety of different activities to choose from (varying in timing, location, pace, affordability, etc.). Language learners of all ages need to be enabled to attain the degree of proficiency that is appropriate for them, in the skills they wish, in a wide variety of languages, small and large. Whilst this is likely to require some new provision, in many communities potential language learning resources are underused. Schools and universities have teaching staff, libraries and equipment that could be made available to a wider group of users. Public libraries could increase the numbers of their customers who borrow language learning courses on video, cassette, CD or Internet. Youth, neighbourhood and cultural centres, local learning networks such as the University of the Third Age, workplace language learning schemes and adult education centres all have a potential role to play.

These different possibilities need to be marshalled so that synergy is ensured. Every community needs to find a way of coordinating its language learning provision, and making information and resources available, according to a local language learning plan.

V. THE QUESTIONS

1. In what concrete ways should the European Commission help Member States to ensure that all citizens are able to communicate in at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue(s) and meet the objective set by the Barcelona Council of teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age? How should provisions at European level be adapted? How could best use be made of existing instruments?
2. What scope is there at European level for practical steps to increase the range of languages taught, in order to better represent the linguistic diversity of the Union?
3. Language teaching is crucial to the success of any endeavour to promote languages. In what further ways could the European Commission help Member States to improve the quality and quantity of teacher training and monitor the effectiveness of language teachers?
4. Greater transparency in the assessment of language skills is a key priority. In what ways should the European Commission help Member States to develop a transparent system of validating or certifying language skills?
5. A common thread throughout this document is the importance of linguistic diversity for the European Union. In what ways could the Union best integrate support for 'regional', 'minority', 'migrant' and sign languages into its transnational cooperation programmes in the fields of education, training and culture?
6. In what ways could the European Commission help Member States to create a more 'language-friendly' environment?
7. Finally, Member States hold the key to the success of any move to promote language learning and linguistic diversity. What steps should Member States themselves take in each of the areas highlighted by this document?

Part 3

Public consultation on language learning and linguistic diversity

In preparing the action plan, the European Commission undertook a public consultation exercise involving the other European institutions, national ministries, a wide range of organisations representing civil society, and the general public. The consultation was in line with the Commission's general approach to involving interested parties in decision-making and ensuring greater accountability.

The basis of this consultation was the Staff Working Paper 'Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity – Consultation' (SEC(2002) 1234), which was published in November 2002 and is reproduced in full on pages 41 to 79. It was designed to encourage both stakeholder organisations and individuals to express their views on a number of key issues identified in the document, and in particular on seven salient questions (see page 69).

The consultation document was made available online in all European Union languages for the duration of the consultation process, which lasted from the beginning of December 2002 until the end of February 2003.

Over 300 substantive responses to the consultation were received. The European Commission would like to record its gratitude to all those organisations and individuals who took the time to make comments and suggestions. These responses were analysed by an independent consultant (the European Language Council) whose conclusions can be found on pages 68 to 75.

The consultation process was rounded off by a conference held in Brussels on 10 April 2002. A report on the conference can be found on the Europa server: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/conference_en.html

THE PUBLIC'S RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

Generally speaking, it can be said that the responses showed very clear support for the view that the benefits of multilingualism should be spread to all European citizens through lifelong language learning, starting at a very early age. The argument that English alone is not enough was widely supported. The utility of national and European programmes that promote the mobility of language learners and teachers, and other forms of contact between citizens, was largely confirmed. There was also support for the need to improve the quality of language teaching. Some of the responses called for more effective mechanisms for ensuring the transparency of language certification. Others agreed on the necessity for each country to undertake a study of its language needs and define its own languages policy.

An in-depth analysis of the responses was undertaken by the European Language Council, an independent association whose main aim is the quantitative and qualitative improvement of knowledge of the languages and cultures of the European Union and beyond. Membership is open to all institutions of higher education and all national and international associations with a special interest in languages. The association's permanent secretariat is at the Freie Universität Berlin (Germany).

The analysis was guided by three principal aims:

- ▶ to analyse, classify and synthesise the responses to each of the seven questions asked in the consultation document;
- ▶ to synthesise the main conclusions by type of respondent;
- ▶ to make general comments on the nature and relevance of the responses received and on the consultation process itself.

The findings are set out in the following pages according to the main headings of the action plan. Where relevant, the responses of individuals and of organisations are presented separately.

*Lifelong
language
learning* **Mother tongue plus two other languages**

In response to the question how to ensure that all citizens are able to communicate in at least two other languages, both individuals and organisations claimed that language learning from an early age is important. The development of new curricula for language learning in schools is a central recommendation.

There were no concrete recommendations on how to adapt provisions at European level. Individual respondents expressed the concern that Member States will not be able to implement language policies needed for improved language teaching in schools.

The consultation document also asked how best use could be made of existing instruments in order to ensure the ability to communicate in the mother tongue plus two other languages. Individual respondents asked for new mobility programmes and described in detail how language learning could be included in these programmes. There was a lack of understanding in the responses that these programmes already exist at European level.

Practical steps to increase the range of languages taught

In their responses, individuals and organisations were unanimous in stressing the importance of lifelong language learning as a measure to increase the range of languages taught. A substantial number of individuals also called for a new role for immigrant languages. The range of languages on offer should not only include the larger European languages, but also regional and minority languages.

Improve the quality and quantity of teacher training

The consultation document asked in what ways the European Commission could help Member States to improve the quality and quantity of teacher training. In their responses, individuals and organisations called for the development of a European language teacher profile. They also suggested an assessment system for language teacher education to be installed at EU level. Improvements in initial and in-service language teacher education were an overriding concern.

*Better
language
teaching*

System of validating or certifying language skills

Individual respondents expressed the view that national certification systems for language skills were not useful. They called for a European validation structure for language skills. The dissemination of information about the European Language Portfolio (ELP) was a central recommendation in the responses submitted by organisations. They also called for even closer cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

Building a General

language-friendly environment

A majority of respondents are strongly in favour of the principle of linguistic diversity. Individual respondents expressed the view that national language education policies need to place greater emphasis on the European dimension. The European Union should fund more innovative projects on language learning.

According to organisations, language learning should be incorporated as a generic aim in all EU education programmes. The establishment of Language Councils in Member States was also a key issue for them.

Integrate regional, minority, migrant and sign languages

Individuals and organisations were unanimous in calling for an enhanced status for lesser used, regional and minority languages in language teaching. Individual respondents stressed the importance of immigrant languages, arguing that these languages are relevant to the aim of multilingual communicative competence and should be included in school curricula.

The organisations urged that the study and research of regional and minority languages should be incorporated in all relevant European action programmes. Four organisations also called for the creation of a special EU programme action line for regional and minority languages.

Steps to promote language learning

Individual respondents called for the development of new language policies and for a review of existing language policies at Member State level. The organisations asked the European Commission to encourage Member States to record their language needs; the European Commission should also help the Member States to develop language policies according to their specific needs. Three organisations explicitly called for the appointment of national language promoters to advise public authorities on achieving a high level of acceptance for the promotion of multilingualism

KEY ISSUES

The following key issues emerged from the responses received:

- a high level of acceptance of the principles of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe;
- enhanced status for lesser used and regional and minority languages;
- development of new language policies and revision of existing language policies at Member State level;
- foreign language learning from an early age;
- more exchange and mobility programmes;
- improvements in language teacher education;
- Europe-wide quality criteria for language teaching.

GENERAL

Individuals

1. Language learning from an early age is important
2. Improvement of language teacher training through the application of European quality standards
3. (Further) development of language education policies at Member State level in order to promote language learning
4. Awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe could be raised by more pilot programmes on language teaching and learning
5. Enhanced status for lesser used and regional and minority languages in language teaching

Organisations

1. Language learning from an early age is important
2. Linguistic diversity as one of the main principles of European integration
3. Development of a European language teacher profile and of common European teacher-training programmes
4. European Commission should support Member States in developing strategies for the training of language teachers
5. Need for a European multiannual language action plan

QUESTION 1

- ▶ In what concrete ways should the European Commission help Member States to ensure that all citizens are able to communicate in at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue(s) and meet the objective set by the Barcelona Council of teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age? How should provisions at European level be adapted? How could best use be made of existing instruments?

Individuals

1. Language learning from an early age is important
2. Raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity by supporting European programmes in the field of language learning
3. New curricula for language learning in schools
4. Promotion of exchange programmes
5. New mobility programmes for students
6. More emphasis on language research projects
7. Linguistic diversity crucial for European integration
8. Need for one *lingua franca* in Europe

Organisations

1. Language learning from an early age is important
2. Multilingual literacy is a key skill for employment
3. Linguistic diversity is important for the process of European integration
4. European Commission should provide information on the linguistic demands resulting from enlargement
5. Development of new curricula for language learning at schools

QUESTION 2

- What scope is there at European level for practical steps to increase the range of languages taught, in order to better represent the linguistic diversity of the Union?

Individuals

1. Lifelong language learning is important
2. New role of immigrant languages should be recognised
3. More information on minority and lesser used languages should be provided
4. Development of new language policies at national level
5. Increase language teaching in higher education

Organisations

1. Lifelong language learning is important
2. Teaching of at least two foreign languages from a very early age
3. Call for specific EU programmes which support the development of schools' foreign language profiles

QUESTION 3

- Language teaching is crucial to the success of any endeavour to promote languages. In what further ways could the European Commission help Member States to improve the quality and quantity of teacher training and monitor the effectiveness of language teachers?

Individuals

1. Need for EU assessment system of language teacher education
2. Development of a European language teacher profile
3. More language assistants needed
4. National quality assurance systems for higher education should evaluate language education at tertiary level
5. Overriding importance of initial and in-service language teacher education
6. Concern about the low status of language teachers

Organisations

1. Enhance the quality and quantity of language teacher education
2. Development of a European language teacher profile and of common European teacher-training programmes
3. European Commission should support Member States in developing strategies for language teacher training

QUESTION 4

- Greater transparency in the assessment of language skills is a key priority. In what ways should the European Commission help Member States to develop a transparent system of validating or certifying language skills?

Individuals

1. Awareness that national certification systems are not useful
2. Call for a European validation structure
3. More transparent assessment criteria required for certification of language skills
4. New web-based language tests needed

Organisations

1. Dissemination of information about the European Language Portfolio (ELP)
2. Increased cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Commission

QUESTION 5

- ▶ A common thread throughout this document is the importance of linguistic diversity for the European Union. In what ways could the Union best integrate support for 'regional', 'minority', 'migrant' and sign languages into its transnational cooperation programmes in the fields of education, training and culture?

Individuals

1. Enhanced status for lesser used, regional and minority languages in language teaching
2. 'Democratic need' to include minority languages
3. Immigrant languages should be seen as a benefit for language teaching and should be included in language teaching in schools
4. More interpreters and translators for minority languages
5. Need of one international language, e.g. Esperanto

Organisations

1. Enhanced status for lesser used, regional and minority languages in language teaching
2. Study and research of regional and minority languages should be incorporated in all relevant European action programmes
3. Change of European and national regulations regarding the status of regional and minority languages
4. Creation of a special EU programme action line for regional and minority languages

QUESTION 6

- In what ways could the European Commission help Member States to create a more 'language-friendly' environment?

Individuals

1. Funding of innovative projects on language learning
2. Multilingual TV channels
3. Cultural diversity is important
4. Subtitles for movies
5. Investment in cultural action programmes
6. Assessment of the training of interpreters and translators
7. Language learning as an important task for lifelong learning

Organisations

1. Promotion of language learning should be incorporated as a generic aim in all EU education programmes
2. Establishment of Language Councils in Member States
3. Development of a European multiannual language action plan
4. Creation of an electronic platform – a languages portal – for the dissemination of pertinent information and practice

QUESTION 7

- ▶ Finally, Member States hold the key to the success of any move to promote language learning and linguistic diversity. What steps should Member States themselves take in each of the areas highlighted by this document?

Individuals

1. Awareness of Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity
2. Evaluation of existing language certification systems
3. Promotion of mobility
4. Development of new language policies at Member State level
5. New programmes for teacher training
6. Research on language learning is needed
7. Development of new language learning materials

Organisations

1. European Commission should encourage Member States to record their language needs
2. European Commission should help the Member States to develop language policies according to their specific needs
3. European Commission and the Member States should appoint national language promoters to advise public authorities with a view to achieving a high level of acceptance for the promotion of multilingualism.

Annex

EU websites:
languages in education and training

The following list of websites may be useful for further reading.

Directorate-General for Education and Culture

- > http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html

Information about all the Commission's activities in the fields of education, training, youth, media and culture.

- > <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html>

Regional and minority languages.

Socrates/Comenius and Socrates/Lingua actions

- > http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/index_en.html

Introduces all the actions in the field of school education (Comenius) including schools' language projects, Comenius language assistantships and grants for teachers of a foreign language.

- > <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/actions/lingua2.html>

Lingua actions 1 and 2: the promotion of language learning and the creation of language teaching tools.

- > http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/actions/comenius_en.html#action %202

List of key projects on the training of foreign language teachers, supported by the Socrates/Comenius action.

- > <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/download.html>

Socrates programme guidelines for applicants, call for proposals and application forms.

Learning languages

- > <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/index.html>

A site in the 11 official languages of the European Union giving:

- basic information about the languages spoken in the European Union,
- tips on language learning and reasons for doing so,
- details of all the EU actions to promote language teaching and learning in all sectors of education and training.

- > <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/language/label/index.cfm>

The European Languages Label.

- > http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/innov/index_en.html

Innovative language learning.

- > <http://www.linguanet-europa.org/y2/>

Lingu@net Europa is a multilingual, virtual resources centre to support the teaching of foreign languages. It provides information about, and links to, quality-assured online resources from Europe and around the world relating to the teaching and learning of any modern foreign language.

CLIL

- > <http://www.clilcompendium.com>

- > <http://www.euroclilic.net>

<hr/> A Adult education, 3, 12, 14, 22, 32, 33, 46, 50, 53, 57, 58	Erasmus, 20, 32 Eurobarometer, 44, 58
<hr/> B Barcelona European Council, 3, 43 Bilingual education, 52	European Charter for Small Enterprises, 10 European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, 30, 31, 56
<hr/> C Comenius, 18 Concrete objectives of education and training systems, 11 Consultation document, 11, 13 Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), 18 Cooperation projects, 8 Council of Europe, 11, 27, 28, 33, 65 Council resolution, 37, 41, 47, 48	European Commission, 4, 10, 11, 13, 30, 40, 59, 62, 65, 66, 68, 69 European Day of Languages, 33 European indicator of language competence, 27 European Investment Bank, 13 European Language Portfolio, 27, 65, 72 European language teacher profile, 65, 68, 71 European Languages Label, 34
<hr/> E Early learning of languages, 16, 46 Education Council, 10, 40, 47, 52 eLearning, 24	European Parliament, 3, 7, 10, 13, 26, 40, 53 European Social Fund, 13 European teacher-training programmes, 68, 71

European Union,
3, 9, 10, 11, 22, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36,
40, 41, 43, 44, 55, 56, 59, 62, 63, 66,
73, 79

European Year of Languages,
3, 10, 40

European Year of Languages 2001,
10

Eurydice,
19, 36, 45, 46

G
Green Paper on entrepreneurship,
10

H
Heads of State or Government
in Barcelona,
10

Higher education,
12, 20, 47, 48, 63, 70, 71

I
ICT,
24, 52

Inclusive approach,
5, 30, 31, 32, 55

In-service training,
12, 25, 52

Intensive linguistic preparation
courses,
12

Internet,
24, 32, 58

J
Joint language projects,
12, 50

L
Laeken Declaration,
9, 43

Language assistantships,
17

Language audits,
12, 49

Language certification systems,
28, 75

Language education policies,
11, 37, 66, 68

Language learning,
7, 12, 19, 20, 40, 46, 47, 48, 50, 58,
63

Language learning in the workplace,
49

Language teacher education,
65, 67, 71

Language teacher training,
25, 52, 68, 71

Language teachers,
12, 14, 18, 25, 26, 47, 51, 52, 53, 59,
68, 71, 78

Language-friendly environment,
5, 13, 14, 29, 32, 40, 55, 66

Learning partnerships,
12

Leonardo da Vinci programmes,
12, 16, 24, 25, 26, 30, 37, 41, 56

Lesser used languages,
70

Lingua franca,
10, 45, 69

Linguistic diversity,
7, 11, 40, 59, 62, 67

Lisbon European Council,
43, 44

Lisbon strategy,
9

M

Migrant communities,
24, 30, 34, 57

Mobility of teachers,
26, 53

Mobility programmes,
64, 67, 69

Multicultural awareness,
51

Multilingual comprehension,
18, 24, 50

Multilingualism,
20, 24, 32, 36, 48, 50, 51, 63, 66, 67,
75

O

Official national languages,
55

P

Public consultation,
4, 5, 61, 62

R

Range of languages,
5, 16, 22, 32, 47, 48, 50, 52, 59, 64,
70

Receptive multilingualism,
24, 50

Receptive skills,
52

Regional and minority languages,
30, 31, 56, 64, 66, 67, 68, 73, 78

S

Secondary education,
5, 18, 47, 48

Sign languages,
30, 55, 59, 66, 73

Special needs,
5, 21, 50

Subtitles,
32, 57, 74

T

Testing of language skills,
54

Town twinning,
20, 49

Training,
5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 25, 26, 27,
28, 34, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 50, 52, 53,
56, 59, 65, 68, 71, 73, 74, 75, 78, 79

Training tools,
12

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