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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010  
WORK PROGRAMME**

**WORKING GROUP  
“LANGUAGES”**

**DRAFT**

**PROGRESS REPORT**

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## **Annexes**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

This second progress report describes the activities undertaken and the results achieved in the period August 2003-November 2004 by the European Commission expert group on languages established in the context of the “Education and training 2010” work programme.

It follows the report published in the Autumn of 2003<sup>1</sup>, which contributed, together with the reports of the other working groups, to the preparation of the Joint interim report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

“Improving foreign language learning” is one of the specific objectives of the Detailed work programme<sup>3</sup> and part of the broader strategic objective of “opening up education and training systems to the wider world”. The ability of all European citizens to understand and use a wide range of foreign languages is central to the Union’s effort to develop a more dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy and to increase the number and improve the quality of jobs available. In addition, language learning promotes mutual understanding and greater tolerance of other cultures.

The recent enlargement of the European Union and the European Commission Action Plan 2004-2006 for language learning and linguistic diversity have highlighted the importance of languages in a wider and more diversified area of continental development and progress, where the growing internal mobility and the ever more intense exchanges within the region and with the outside world have made foreign languages a key competence for every citizen.

The Joint interim report approved in the Spring of 2004 recognised the social and economic value of linguistic skills, underlining that Member States should, in particular, “develop coherent language policies, including relevant teacher training. Young people, their families, as well as private and public bodies, should also be made more aware of the advantages of learning several languages and preserving linguistic diversity.”

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives\\_en.html#language](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/objectives_en.html#language).

<sup>2</sup> See "Education and Training 2010" - The success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms, [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/jir\\_council\\_final.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/doc/official/keydoc/2002/progobj\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/doc/official/keydoc/2002/progobj_en.pdf).

## 1.2. Organisation of activities

In spite of repeated cancellations of meetings due to scarcity of interpreters and meeting rooms, which seriously hampered the organisation of the group's activities, the rate of attendance at the five meetings organised in this second phase of work<sup>4</sup> remained very satisfactory (83%).

The coordinators of Group A, "Education of teachers and trainers", and Group B, "Key Competences", were invited to take part in meetings of the languages working group, which was also systematically updated on the progress of the "Education and training 2010" work programme.

The working group continued to perform well, and the new members were rapidly integrated. Approximately one third of the participants in 2004 were new, having been recently designated (Poland, Slovakia) or being temporary or definitive replacements (Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany – Federal Government, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Spain). The gender balance remained good.

The participation of representatives of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe allowed the positive co-operation already established in the first phase of work to continue.

Several participating countries (Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Slovakia) have recently asked for the Council of Europe's assistance in preparing country profiles, which will enable them to develop more consistent language policies, as recommended by the group in its first report.

The Council of Europe's Common European Frame of Reference for Languages is also rapidly gaining acceptance all over the European Union, thus, hopefully, contributing to a convergence of curricular approaches and to more transparent evaluation and assessment systems, as suggested in another policy recommendation of the group.

The participation of representatives of the European Unit of Eurydice also proved useful, allowing the experts to benefit from Eurydice's experience in the collection of data in this field.

Most of the experts attended the conference on "Improving language education – Common concerns, sharing solutions" organised by the Dutch presidency in The Hague on 14-16 October 2004 along with other practitioners and policy makers. Three main themes were discussed:

- Reviewing national language education policies,
- Stimulating and maintaining the professionalism of language teachers and
- Assessing and certifying foreign language skills.

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<sup>4</sup> 12 September and 4-5 December 2003; 17-18 February, 21-22 June and 8 November 2004.

### **1.3. Problems in the implementation of policy recommendations**

In this phase of the group's activity, centred on the implementation of their policy recommendations, some intrinsic limitations of the open method of co-ordination began to show.

The mandate of the working group – and as a consequence the profiles of designated experts – had ensured an accurate analysis of the current situation and of the possible solutions in the first year of activity, culminating in the formulation of policy recommendations.

Translating these recommendations into practice and monitoring the progress made in their implementation imply, however, a much more active involvement of policymakers, in a field where responsibilities are shared at national, regional and local level.

Several experts therefore suggested that more compelling ways should be found for disseminating the conclusions of the working group and promoting their implementation by national authorities, in particular taking into account the inevitably synthetic nature of the Joint interim report.

## **2. PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE OBJECTIVE OF “IMPROVING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING”**

As in the first phase of work, there was a continued effort to integrate the initiatives taken at European level and the exchange of experiences and examples of good practice from the participating countries around which the “Education and training 2010” process is organised.

### **2.1. The Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity**

The Action plan on language learning and linguistic diversity was presented to the group in September 2003, in its first formal presentation, and the experts were regularly updated on its implementation, to ensure appropriate orientation and dissemination at national level. In particular, the experts were consulted about the possible content of studies commissioned from external specialists and invited to disseminate information about the calls for tender to possible interested parties.

In this second phase of activity, the group was involved in the preparation of the study on the development of a common European profile for language teacher education (finalised November 2004), the study on language learning for learners with special education needs (finalised December 2004), the feasibility study on the creation of a European agency for linguistic diversity and language learning (expected to be delivered in February 2005), the study on effective ways for promoting language learning<sup>5</sup> (expected to be finished

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.eurointeractions.com>.

end August 2005) and the inventory of the European language certification systems.<sup>6</sup>

Most of these studies involve a collection of examples of good practice, which will complement the substantial database already established by the expert group.

The group was also informed about the development of other projects and activities, such as the European Network for the Promotion of the Language Learning among all Undergraduates – ENLU (see <http://www.fu-berlin.de/enlu/>), the external evaluation of the impact of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes on their linguistic objectives and the congress organised by the recently established European Association for Language Testing and Assessment – EALTA on May 14-16 in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia (see <http://www.ealta.eu.org/>).

## **2.2. The implementation of the detailed work programme**

### *2.2.1. Exchange of good practice*

The collection of examples of good practice concerned in this period the use of information and communication technologies in language learning (7 examples), language learning in adult education (15 examples), in vocational training (11 examples) and for learners with special education needs (11 examples).

The examples collected on ICT and adult education, however, were not judged sufficient to formulate policy recommendations, while the field of special education needs was also covered by the study undertaken by David Marsh (University of Jyväskylä, Finland).

It was strongly recommended that the database of examples of good practice collected be standardised and access to it opened to other users.

### *2.2.2. The European indicator of linguistic competence*

The group was consulted on the development of the European indicator of linguistic competence. Experts emphasised the importance of ideally testing at least two foreign languages per learner, and of testing productive as well as receptive skills, to avoid giving the impression that only receptive skills, or skills in only one language are sufficient. The optimal age/ ISCED level for administering the tests continued to be the subject of debate. The importance of recording the exposure of testees to the languages tested outside formal education through an additional background questionnaire was also underlined.

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/key/studies\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html).

### 2.2.3. *Other indicators*

In its first year of activity, the working group on languages considered three possible indicators in addition to the European indicator of linguistic competence. However, it was decided for the time being to concentrate on this indicator, which was explicitly requested by the Barcelona European Council in 2002.

The first issue of the bi-annual study “Key data on teaching languages at School in Europe”, published in January 2005 by the Eurydice European Unit, includes 37 sets of data concerning the context, organisation, participation, teachers and pedagogical processes of language learning in Member States. The data collected refer to the academic years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. They are based on the measures included in the official study programmes of the participating countries and therefore describe the intentions of the competent authorities, rather than the reality of foreign language teaching. Some salient data are as follows:

#### **Eurydice’s key data 2005**

- The teaching of one or more foreign languages is now compulsory in the primary schools of almost all countries covered by the survey, involving approximately 50% of primary school pupils.
- The curricula of the great majority of countries give all pupils the possibility to learn two or more foreign languages in the course of their compulsory education
- In addition, schools of many Member States can autonomously decide to offer more foreign languages as compulsory or optional subjects. In most countries, however, less than 50% of pupils of lower secondary education avail themselves of this possibility (with great variations between countries).
- In mainstream secondary education, between 10% and 15% of total teaching time is devoted to foreign languages as a compulsory subject in most countries
- Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) exists in most countries, but only a minority of pupils currently benefit from this promising methodology
- In spite of the wide choice of foreign languages theoretically on offer in some countries, only five languages (English, French, German, Spanish and Russian) account for 95% of the languages taught in the majority of countries in secondary education
- The dominant role of English as the most widely taught foreign language is further increasing, in particular in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe

- In thirteen countries the study of English is now compulsory, but even where it is not the percentage of pupils learning English is close to 90%
- German (especially in Northern and Central Europe) and French (mainly in Southern Europe) vie for second place
- Foreign languages are mainly taught by generalist teachers at primary level and by specialist teachers in secondary schools
- Only Luxembourg and Scotland explicitly recommend that a stay in a country where the language they study is spoken be included in the curriculum of future language teachers
- 8% of 15 year old pupils declare that they speak at home a language which is not the language of instruction used at school.
- Almost all countries have adopted measures of linguistic support for pupils coming from migrant families

### 2.3. Main developments in participating countries in the field of languages

Progress towards improved language learning was reported in most countries. In some cases this was achieved through a continuation of the efforts already in place; in others, new measures were introduced. Here is a non exhaustive summary of these developments.

A Committee was established in **Austria** with representatives of parents, universities, employers and other stakeholders to promote language learning. An umbrella organisation of language centres has also been created and a conference was held in October 2004 on the place of languages in the national curriculum.

In **Belgium (Dutch-speaking community)** a group was established to define all aspects of a global foreign language policy, with a subgroup dealing with the issue of continuity in foreign language teaching.

**Estonia** has developed a new strategy for languages, incorporating both Estonian and foreign languages, which will be implemented starting from the end of 2005.

A Language resource centre for teaching French was set up in 2003/2004 in **Finland**. The teaching of two foreign languages being already common practice, there are plans for the introduction of a third and fourth foreign language.

**France** and **Germany** have stepped up their cooperation in the field of foreign languages, setting the target of increasing by 50% the number of people learning German in France and French in Germany in ten years time. A number of common structural measures were decided by the German and French authorities in November 2004.

Awareness-raising activities will be launched in January 2005, and starting from the academic year 2005-2006 pupils will receive a jointly developed certification of language competences.

Linguistic stays of up to two months in the partner country will be offered to all students interested, while tenth and eleventh year students will be able to spend a year in a school of the partner country and have it validated on their return. A common secondary school diploma recognised in both countries, AbiBac, will be introduced by 2007-2008.

The Action plan was the object of a dissemination effort at Länder level in **Germany**.

The diversity of languages taught in **Greece** was increased, with pilot projects for the introduction of German in selected primary schools and Italian in secondary schools.

The study of a second foreign language, which traditionally started at the beginning of the secondary education, has been brought forward to the end of primary school. A new system for the certification of foreign language competences for adults was introduced.

A conference was organised in **Hungary** to inform the public about the Education and training 2010 work programme and the work done in the expert groups.

A review of the language policy of **Ireland** was launched in 2003.

A collection of examples of good practice, resulting from a study launched in 2002, was published in 2004 in **Italy**. Language Portfolios were developed for pupils in primary, lower and upper secondary education through pilot projects in several regions.

The study of a second Community language has been made compulsory for all pupils in secondary school (in addition to English which is compulsory from primary school), even if some problems persist concerning the hours available for language teaching.

A study assessing the language situation was launched in 2003 in **Lithuania**.

Preparations are ongoing for a conference on Content and language integrated learning (CLIL), to be organised by the **Luxembourg** presidency on 10-11 March 2005.

In **Malta** a national audit of the language learning situation was launched in 2003. The policy recommendations of the languages working group were discussed with teachers during in-service training courses. A new language policy statement is being developed.

**The Netherlands** launched several projects in the field of languages: a) a study assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the national language policy (ready early 2005); b) studies on policy and practice of language teaching and on the theoretical framework behind the Council of Europe's Common

European Frame of Reference for languages; c) a Lingua 2 project to develop an item bank for testing linguistic competencies on the basis of the scales of the CEFR.

**Norway** will introduce new curricula for primary and secondary education in 2006. The Parliament approved the proposal to make two foreign languages compulsory for all pupils, with the second foreign language to be taught in a practical way. An Action Plan for the period 2005-2009 was adopted and a permanent centre for the promotion of language learning will be set up in the Spring of 2005.

In **Poland** it was decided that all future teachers of non-linguistic subjects should have level B2 in a foreign language, in view of the possible adoption of content and language integrated learning methodologies.

In **Slovenia** the preparation of the Country Profile, with the help of the Council of Europe, has enabled a general picture of the linguistic panorama and of the measures needed to improve foreign language learning to be developed.

The scales and the theoretical framework of the CEFR were used in the development of new curricula in **Malta**, **Finland** (upper secondary education), **Slovakia** and **Slovenia**, of the joint certification to be released in the framework of the **Franco-German** co-operation and of new language teaching materials in **Greece**.

### 3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The experts discussed the implementation of their policy recommendations in the participating countries in three subgroups in the meeting of 17-18 February 2004. A questionnaire was also distributed in April to map the implementation of recommendations, the progress made, any obstacles identified and the possible solutions.

Here is a synthesis of the trends observed:

The increased efforts to promote the awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity and the take up of diversified language courses on offer should in particular aim at explaining the reasons why diversity is important, focusing on concrete needs and benefits in relation to specific geographic areas, target populations or age groups.

Several countries reported significant improvements concerning the mainstreaming of provisions for regional, minority, migrant and neighbouring languages. Some education and training systems had difficulties, however, in responding to the rapid demographic changes linked to migration movements.

The growing popularity of early language learning is certainly beneficial, but also raises concerns, drawing attention to the need to properly train teachers of this age group and to adequately promote linguistic diversity. Portfolios and “ladders” of language competences, as well as joint teams of teachers and assessments of the

pupils' skills at the start of each new cycle, proved useful instruments for facilitating a seamless passage from primary to secondary schools.

The rigidity of systems and curricula, the scarcity of appropriate materials and of trained teachers, and concerns about the possible effects on learning of the first language of instruction were identified as limiting factors for a widespread adoption of Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) or “theme based language education” – a methodology that should be extended to all categories of students and, again, not be limited to the main *lingua franca*.

The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is increasingly adopted as the standard for curricular reforms and for national certification systems. At the same time, there is a growing awareness in Member States of the difficulty of effectively linking curricula and examinations to the CEFR scales.

Industrial relations issues, remuneration and training were among the obstacles mentioned to the adoption of mentoring for teachers of foreign languages.

More flexibility in the administrative systems was identified as a key requirement for implementing the recommendation concerning dual or multiple recognition of language teaching qualifications.

The group also discussed the definition of “communication in foreign languages” proposed for inclusion in the framework of key competences developed by working group B. The debate centred on the opportunity of proposing a European benchmark for this basic skill, given the great differences existing in the linguistic situations of participating countries. A new formulation was proposed to take into account the complex nature of the process of acquiring foreign language skills, its inherent intercultural dimension, the possibility of developing partial competences and the importance of metalinguistic skills; the communicative approach was stressed and a reference to the instruments developed in this field by the Council of Europe was added.

#### **4. PERSPECTIVES FOR FURTHER WORK**

If there is a growing awareness amongst the general public of the importance of language learning, the perceived value of linguistic diversity in Europe is perhaps less well established. The scene is clearly dominated by the steady increase of English as a second language at European and international level, while pupils, students, their families and even policy makers and authorities responsible for the educational systems do not always seem to fully appreciate the importance of teaching and learning additional foreign languages.

The dimension of linguistic diversity should therefore always accompany all efforts aimed at stepping up language teaching and learning.

Common concerns expressed by the experts were the training of teachers (of non-linguistic subjects) for content and language integrated learning, the training of primary school teachers, the development of appropriate materials for early language learning and for content and language integrated learning.

A frame of reference for a European profile for language teacher education has recently been developed as part of a study carried out on behalf of the Commission by a multinational team led by Southampton University. It contains useful recommendations and deserves wide discussion and debate; it could be applied also for the education of CLIL and primary teachers. The dissemination of the results of this study will also prove useful for the promotion of exchanges of prospective and in service teachers of languages and for the increase of dual recognition of language teaching qualifications.

The participants emphasised several priority themes for the next phase of work.

Austria and several other countries underlined once again the importance of awareness raising. Emphasis was put on the need to raise the awareness of the benefits of foreign languages (Ireland), to raise the awareness of families on the importance of languages other than English (Dutch-speaking Belgium), and to raise the awareness of the public at large, better exploiting results of work done (Czech Republic).

France suggested that a campaign should promote awareness of the “mother tongue plus two” principle, showing also its economic value, while the United Kingdom felt that a clear statement of the importance of this principle, understandable to non specialists, would prove useful.

Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom proposed CLIL as a priority area for further work. France underlined the importance of teacher training in this connection, while the Netherlands proposed that efforts be aimed at promoting CLIL in languages other than English. Romania and Hungary pointed out the issue of the lack of materials for CLIL and wondered if the European Union could provide support.

To make sure that language learning really concerns all citizens, French-speaking Belgium drew attention on the need to promote language learning in vocational training. Austria and the United Kingdom emphasised the importance of promoting language teaching for learners with special education needs, also through the collection of examples of good practice.

France, Romania and the United Kingdom considered continuity of methodology and language choice in the transition from primary to secondary school a key issue. Mobility measures for secondary school pupils were suggested as a possible theme by Hungary.

The United Kingdom proposed that the group discuss learning of non-European languages to improve competitiveness and promote solidarity.

Malta and Portugal proposed organising a peer review, based on the presentation and discussion of the national language policies of participating countries.

The group underlined the need to give more visibility and a higher profile to the policy recommendations. As a first step, it was proposed at least to translate them and to publish them on the Internet in several languages.

Study visits will be organised in 2005 to examine these priority themes more in depth. Proposals were received from Hungary and France, while other countries are considering the opportunity of organising other visits.

It was decided to carry on the collection of examples of good practice. The themes chosen for the next phase of work are mobility of language teachers and the development of materials for language teaching – in particular in connection with less widely taught languages, CLIL, learners with special education needs or other target groups which are not catered for by commercial producers of such materials.

The analysis and evaluation of the examples of good practice should be made more rigorous, and the database should be opened to other users.

The possibility of continuing these activities will of course depend on the availability of resources. If the current difficulty to obtain interpreters and meeting space should persist, other arrangements will have to be found.