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from: Secretary-General of the European Commission,  
signed by Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, Director

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to: Mr Javier SOLANA, Secretary-General/High Representative

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Subject: **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Accompanying  
document to the Communication from the Commission to the European  
Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee  
and the Committee of the Regions - Multilingualism: an asset for Europe  
and a shared commitment**

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Delegations will find attached Commission document SEC(2008) 2444.

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COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 18.9.2008  
SEC(2008) 2444

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Accompanying document to the**

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and  
a shared commitment**

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

{COM(2008) 566 final}  
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{SEC(2008) 2445}

**This report commits only the Commission's services involved in its preparation and does  
not prejudice the final form of any decision to be taken by the Commission**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Impact Assessment Report presents the state of play in relation to multilingualism policy and proposes to reinforce action in this field. It accompanies the proposal for the Commission Communication “Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment” (n°2008/EAC/004 in the Agenda Planning).

Linguistic diversity is a key long-term feature of the European Union, whose 500 million citizens speak 23 different official languages along with 60 other languages spoken only in specific regions or by specific groups, not to mention the over 300 different languages that our immigrants bring with them. It is estimated that currently citizens from at least 175 nationalities are living within the boundaries of the European Union. Migration flows added to the already existing patchwork of national minorities and cultural. In such a context, interaction between speakers of different languages has increased steadily over recent years, because of increasing intra-European mobility; migration flows from third countries and globalisation. This trend is likely to continue and to further increase in the years to come. Against this background, the two problems highlighted in this Impact Assessment are:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) Knowledge of foreign languages remains insufficient. Europeans have not yet acquired skills in two additional languages to their mother tongue, as called for by the Barcelona Council;
- (2) European citizens, companies and service providers are not fully aware of assets as well as of challenges of linguistic diversity in Europe.

The problem definition is supported by data and feedback received during the follow-up of two previous Communications on multilingualism<sup>2</sup> (2007) and the 9 month-long consultation process (2007-2008).

Previous Communications on multilingualism and language diversity set out an agenda of actions up to 2006-2007, and called for a review and possible further action. The assessment of progress and implementation carried out in 2007 shows that while there is evidence of progress (particularly in language learning in primary and secondary education), implementation needs to continue and should be reinforced in a lifelong learning perspective, with much attention given to informal language learning and linguistic diversity in the local environment.

As for the **consultation process**, Member States, European institutions and stakeholders shared the following views:

*On the scope of multilingualism policy:*

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<sup>1</sup> Institutional multilingualism (i.e. languages used by the European Commission to communicate internally and with the citizen: publications / translation / interpretation) is out of the scope of this Impact Assessment and related policy initiatives. Although institutional multilingualism deals with languages, it has different problems, objectives and options and decision was taken not to tackle them together

<sup>2</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, COM(2005) 596 final, COM(2007) 554 final/2

- Linguistic and cultural diversity is perceived as a long-term feature of European society: most people value it while acknowledging the need to manage it in an effective and prudent way. Shifting to a single language is not an option for the majority of respondents.
- A language policy promoting only the learning of EU official languages is too limited for present-day society, where citizens (and residents) speaking many different languages are in daily contact.
- Language learning should be placed in a lifelong perspective.
- Multilingualism is a transversal issue that has an impact on competitiveness and European citizenship and which should be mainstreamed in a range of policies going beyond the field of education.
- Promoting linguistic diversity should not aim at preserving languages as an end in itself, on the contrary, it should emphasise dialogue between languages and communities.
- Every citizen needs a different set of language skills, which depend on individual interests and where one lives, as well as family and professional background.

*On Methods:*

- Member States and the Commission should develop a language policy which favours linguistic diversity and promotes a language friendly environment, through widening the range of languages taught, valuing and maintaining the language skills of their citizens, and motivating them to learn more.
- Lifelong language learning is key to acquiring language skills: start early, sustain motivation through schooling and initial training, and go on learning languages throughout adult life.
- Informal language learning should be better exploited, by increasing access to multimedia, virtual or physical mobility and cultural exchanges. Learning languages in this way is effective allowing people to learn when, where and how they like and enabling people from different backgrounds to communicate, to discover and compare different mindsets.
- Local communities, service providers and companies should take into account that they often serve citizens and customers who speak different languages and they should develop strategies to cater for their language needs.

The added value of the new Communication will be:

- to sustain the efforts towards mother tongue plus two by giving clearer indications on areas and target groups lagging behind (students in vocational trainings, low-skilled adults and migrants) and less tackled by the previous Communications
- to anchor multilingualism in the wider context of “Growth and Jobs process” by raising awareness on the assets of linguistic diversity and on their effects on intercultural dialogue.

In this context multilingualism is also emerging as a component of EU external policies, as recently highlighted by the Euromed Culture Summit.<sup>3</sup>

- to mainstream multilingualism in relevant policies at European level and work in partnership with Member States and stakeholders to ensure that objectives are shared and met at the most appropriate level

Consequently the **two general objectives** of multilingualism policy are:

- (1) to enable citizens to be fluent in two languages in addition to their mother tongue (in short: "mother tongue-plus-two")
- (2) to raise awareness of the linguistic diversity of European society and turn it into an asset for intercultural dialogue and competitiveness.

Coming to **implementation**, the first operational objective will be to ensure that multilingualism is consistently promoted across the above-mentioned European policies, using a **mainstreaming approach** and making the best use of financial support available under existing European programmes. According to the subsidiarity principle, Member States are key decision-makers on these matters, while several stakeholders (educational providers, social partners, the media, local authorities, etc.) are essential to implementation. Therefore the second operational objective will be **to work in partnership with Member States and stakeholders** and support them in achieving the common objectives and adopting a mainstreaming approach at their level.

Different options have been taken into consideration to achieve the objectives:

- (1) No further action with Member States and no strategic use of EU programmes (mainstreaming)
- (2) Use of regulatory instruments (a Recommendation)
- (3) Use of the Open Method of Coordination: issuing a Commission Communication paving the way for cooperation with Member States and having it endorsed by the other European Institutions. Mainstreaming multilingualism in current EU programmes and initiatives.

DG Education and Culture, in comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the above options, has elected to propose option 3, which would enable the Commission – with the co-operation of the Member States and the stakeholders – to address the identified challenges to multilingualism and find appropriate solutions. This option, which also corresponds most closely to Member States' and stakeholders' expectations, complies with the subsidiarity principle, and would provide the best basis for raising awareness of the challenges and problems and achieving real progress towards their solution.

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<sup>3</sup> *Agreed Conclusions of the third Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Culture Athens, 29 – 30 May 2008, ; Presidency Declaration at the Conference New Paradigms, New Models — Culture in the EU External Relations, Ljubljana, 13 -14 May*  
[http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja\\_politika/kulturno\\_sodelovanje/nove\\_paradigme\\_novi\\_modeli\\_kultur\\_a\\_v\\_zunanjih\\_odnosih\\_eu/](http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja_politika/kulturno_sodelovanje/nove_paradigme_novi_modeli_kultur_a_v_zunanjih_odnosih_eu/).

As for the way multilingualism should be promoted by Commission policies and programmes, the option of an expenditure programme for multilingualism was discarded because multilingualism is a transversal objective of very different policies (education, culture, media, employment, social inclusion, research...) and supporting them outside their natural contexts does not seem to be either appropriate or effective. Therefore the approach of mainstreaming multilingualism in relevant Commission policies and programmes seemed a viable answer. Chief among these programmes are: all strands of the Lifelong Learning Programme, language training support given through structural funds, language integration courses for immigrants supported by JLS, Youth in Action, Citizens for Europe, Literary translations supported by the Culture programme, Media programme, Research Programme and Information technology.

In the light of observations made and considering the limited scope for direct action of the Commission, these are the economic and social impacts the chosen option is likely to have, depending on the determination with which Member States and stakeholders will implement the recommended strategy:

- Economic impacts: through the impact of language skills on citizens' employability and competitiveness, the new strategy defined in the Communication is likely to have a positive impact on international trade and cross-border investments; technological development and innovation; the number and quality of jobs; third country and overseas relations.
- Social impacts: the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on social inclusion, as well as governance and participation since language skills are a prerequisite for intercultural dialogue.

As for costs: at Commission level the implementation of the actions recommended in the Communication will not entail a budget increase. It is aimed at making more effective use of existing programmes to promote multilingualism, notably by ensuring:

- a more consistent approach (i.e. pass on a consistent message in support of linguistic diversity, give attention to language issues in projects and initiatives)
- more synergy between Member States (i.e. support them to achieve shared objectives, through Commission initiatives and the exchange of good practices).

As for Member States, the Communication, in line with the already agreed EU objectives such as the Barcelona target of "mother tongue plus two" will recommend general and operational objectives and suggest ways of achieving them, while the implementation will remain the competence of the Member States. A general principle to be conveyed by the Commission Communication will be to recommend that action is taken close to citizens, taking into account local language needs and pooling the resources of business, civil society and local authorities so as to use them in the most effective way.

Concerning monitoring, the already existing Inter-service Group on Multilingualism could be used to ensure a coordinated approach with the Commission and to mainstream multilingualism in relevant European programmes and initiatives, through interventions at programme level (thematic priorities, budget for linguistic preparation and linguistic activities, adequate monitoring, etc.). Follow-up with Member States will be ensured through a Working Group of High Representatives of Member States, based on the existing Working



Group on Languages. To maintain focus on multilingualism policy and to ensure a periodic review of its progress, the Commission will recommend that the European institutions devote an annual slot in their agenda to its discussion. In the case of the Council, it will suggest the inclusion of multilingualism in the rolling agenda of the Education Council.

The Commission will regularly update available indicators and consider the possibility of funding surveys of less charted areas (like business and service providers). As far as mainstreaming is concerned, the Commission should ensure that language issues are adequately taken into account while evaluating relevant EU programmes and policies. The Commission will encourage Member States and stakeholders to include language as an issue in the evaluation of policies and strategies at their level. The Commission will carry out a global review of progress in 2012 and report to the European Parliament and the Council on the experience gained. To this end, Member States will be invited to report on their progress by end 2011.

## **MODIFICATIONS FOLLOWING THE OPINION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT BOARD**

Following the opinion of the impact assessment board some changes have been made to the impact assessment.

In particular the analysis of **the root causes behind the problem drivers** has been expanded. Insufficient awareness of the importance of language skills seems to be the main driver behind the patchy implementation of Mother-tongue-plus-two in a number of Member States. Political pressure and close monitoring, as suggested in chap.7 (Monitoring and evaluation) should help them progress. The root causes linked to the demand side remain instead more difficult to pinpoint, as they concern mainly perceptions. On the basis of the 2006 Eurobarometer survey quoted in the text, most citizens are persuaded of the importance of being fluent in more languages, but they still think the task is too difficult for them or that it is too late. Awareness-raising campaigns with the involvement of media, national and regional stakeholders are envisaged to change people perceptions on linguistic diversity and on the need of language skills for all. As a complement, increased support to informal language learning and E-learning is called for, so to give more chances to those out of school.

The text now makes it clearer that linguistic diversity can be a source of benefit and richness, but also that in the absence of adequate policies, increasing diversity entails several risks, namely: 1) widening the communication gap between people with different linguistic backgrounds 2) hindering mobility and increasing the divide between the multilingual who has access to better living and working opportunities and the monolingual who are excluded from them; 3) making it difficult for European companies to fully exploit the opportunities of the internal market and possibly losing their competitive edge abroad. Examples now substantiate these three risks, in particular in the case of the low-skilled.

The analysis of the options has also been expanded; in particular the reasons why option 2 (a "soft law" instrument) has been discarded are now presented more in detail. Option 3 – the preferred one – is now analysed also in terms of the different levels of ambition that can be envisaged.

On the **value added of the new Communication**, the text now points out more clearly that previous Communications on multilingualism and language diversity set out an agenda of actions up to 2006-2007, and called for a review and possible further action. The assessment

of progress and implementation carried out in 2007 showed that while there is evidence of progress (particularly in language learning in primary and secondary education), implementation needs to continue and should be reinforced in a lifelong learning perspective. At the same time the consultation process sent clear feedback on the need of raising awareness of linguistic diversity, to make it an asset for intercultural dialogue and prosperity.

Therefore the added value of the new Communication will be:

- (1) to sustain the efforts towards mother tongue plus two by giving clearer indications on areas and target groups lagging behind (students in vocational trainings, low-skilled adults and migrants) and less tackled by the previous Communications
- (2) to anchor multilingualism in the wider context of “Growth and Jobs” by raising awareness on the assets of linguistic diversity and on their effects on intercultural dialogue thereby also allowing for an external dimension of multilingualism, as recently highlighted by the Euromed Culture Summit<sup>4</sup>
- (3) to mainstream multilingualism in relevant policies at European level and work in partnership with Member States and stakeholders to ensure that objectives are shared and met at the most appropriate level.

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<sup>4</sup> *Agreed Conclusions of the third Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers of Culture Athens, 29 – 30 May 2008, ; Presidency Declaration at the Conference New Paradigms, New Models — Culture in the EU External Relations, Ljubljana, 13 -14 May*  
[http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja\\_politika/kulturno\\_sodelovanje/nove\\_paradigme\\_novi\\_modeli\\_kultur\\_a\\_v\\_zunanjih\\_odnosih\\_eu/](http://www.mzz.gov.si/si/zunanja_politika/kulturno_sodelovanje/nove_paradigme_novi_modeli_kultur_a_v_zunanjih_odnosih_eu/).

## 1. PROCEDURAL ISSUES AND CONSULTATION OF INTERESTED PARTIES

### 1.1. Organisation and timing

This report accompanies the proposal for the Commission Communication “Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment”. The Communication is n°2008/EAC/004 in the Agenda Planning and is listed among the Priority Initiatives in the Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2008.

Previous Communications on multilingualism and language diversity set out an agenda of actions up to 2006-2007, and called for a review and possible further action. Preparation of the new Communication and assessment of its potential impact started in September 2007 with the release of two substantial documents providing information on the past three years and highlighting gaps to be tackled:

- The **Report on the implementation of the Action Plan “Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. 2004-2006”**<sup>5</sup>. The Action Plan<sup>6</sup> was the first policy document in the field of languages: it set strategic areas and concrete actions mainly for the Commission, with recommendations to Member States to work along the same lines. The report on its implementation gathers information from various European programmes and from national reports to show progress made and trends in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity in 2004-2006.
- The **Final Report of the High Level Group for Multilingualism**<sup>7</sup> set up as a follow-up to the Communication “A new Framework Strategy for Multilingualism” of 2005<sup>8</sup> to tackle several aspects related to multilingualism, in education, media, research, motivation, translations.

In a nutshell, these are their findings which have implications for future action:

- *On policy context:* Firstly, promoting the teaching of official languages of the European Union is not enough in today's society, where many languages are spoken and needed in the local environment. The multilingualism policy needs to address all languages, including national languages taught as second language to immigrants and minorities, regional, minority and migrants' languages, and languages of non European trading partners. Secondly, linguistic and intercultural skills are of paramount importance for competitiveness and to foster social inclusions and dialogue between different cultures. Furthermore languages are learnt in a variety of informal settings: in the family, by spending time abroad, through new technologies, media and leisure activities. Therefore citizens' linguistic skills cannot be tackled from an educational angle only: it requires a comprehensive policy, where lifelong learning is the main driver and a wider range of stakeholders and options are involved.

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<sup>5</sup> COM(2007) 554 final/2

<sup>6</sup> COM(2003) 449 final of 24.07.2003 "Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006"

<sup>7</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/multireport\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/multireport_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> COM(2005) 596 final of 22.11.2005

- *On trends*: Member States have made some progress on promoting early language learning and on encouraging students to speak two foreign languages, although this trend is uneven across Member States. Often as a consequence of such reforms, many Member States are confronted with the challenge of upgrading language teaching skills, through initial and in-service teacher training. Progress is noted mainly in primary and secondary level education. Vocational education and training and adult education systems have not been mobilised, although they cater for that part of population most in need of language skills, nor are countries offering an adequately wide range of languages.
- *On methods*: the effort of the European Commission to set strategic areas and concrete actions to promote languages has been appreciated: most Member States have worked along the agreed lines at national level and exchanged information and good practices at European level. The European Commission has complemented their work by gearing EU educational programmes towards the same priorities, and enabling relevant groups to meet and work together. The Open method of coordination and strategic use of EU programmes are appreciated by Member States and there is scope for further improving their effectiveness in this context.

## 1.2. Consultation process

The above-mentioned findings have underpinned the policy shaping process leading to a new policy step, i.e. the proposed Communication. The definition and implementation of a multilingualism policy rely on several actors at European, national and local level. For these reasons, a wide-ranging consultation process was launched, involving Member States, other European Institutions and stakeholders. In order to receive comprehensive and transparent feedback, the same set of topics has been submitted for deliberation to the different target groups consulted. They concerned:

- improving language teaching and learning and diversification of languages at all levels of education
- the extent to which linguistic diversity matters to the local environment (access to services, health, law, etc.)
- languages in a business context, including vocational education and training
- the extent to which immigrants should maintain and pass on their heritage languages, while learning the language of the host country
- the extent to which linguistic diversity is reflected in the media
- multilingual communication between EU institutions and the citizen<sup>9</sup>

### 1.2.1. Consultation of Member States

The Commission strongly associated the **Council** to the policy shaping process, as Member States hold the responsibility in the field of languages. Firstly, Commissioner Orban presented

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<sup>9</sup> More details can be found in the question paper released for the online consultation, which served as a basis for consulting the other target groups  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/news/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/news/index_en.html)

the findings of the Report on Implementing the Action Plan to the **Education Council** (November 2007), where Member States held an exploratory discussion on which challenges they see ahead and how they plan to tackle them.

Secondly, 29 national delegations (Member States, Norway and Iceland) gathered on 15 February 2008 in Brussels for a **Ministerial Conference** on Multilingualism, organised and chaired jointly by the Commission and by the Slovenian Presidency. Member States discussed and gave further indications on priority in the field of multilingualism. The Education Council of May adopted **Council Conclusions** conveying the main messages of the Ministerial Conference and inviting the Commission to go ahead with concrete proposals. The French Presidency is currently planning political initiatives (Council Conclusions) to endorse the Commission Communication and to commit Member States to its implementation.

### *1.2.2. Expert Group*

A number of technical working groups of Member States representatives were invited to discuss how to implement multilingualism:

- The **Working Group on Languages** composed of officials in charge of language teaching and learning policies in Member States<sup>10</sup>
- The **European Network of Inspectors of Foreign Language Education and Training**, in which language inspectors exchange good practices.
- Furthermore, a **Hearing of high level national officials working with multilingualism policies** took place on 17 January 2008. Its aim was to discuss new developments in multilingualism policy and practice, including the teaching of national languages as second languages to immigrants and minorities, as well as promoting the use and learning of heritage languages and third country languages.

### *1.2.3. Consultation of other European Institutions*

The **European Parliament** followed up closely the policy shaping process through a structured dialogue between Commissioner Orban and the Culture and Education Committee. Its Chairperson, Ms Batzeli, participated in the Ministerial Conference and Commissioner Orban presented the results of the Ministerial Conference and of the online consultation to the Committee on 31 March 2008. The Parliament shared his views that more action was needed to promote multilingualism. It drew attention especially to the need for an inclusive policy encompassing languages spoken in Europe (including regional, minority and migrant languages), for quality language teaching, and the languages and educational needs of mobile Europeans and their families.

The **Committee of the Regions** and the **European Economic and Social Committee** are in the process of adopting Outlook Opinions. In a nutshell, their draft texts highlight respectively the importance of answering to linguistic needs of citizens and encourage companies to invest in language skills. Both recommend to promote informal language learning through the media and through new technologies and to work in partnership with local stakeholders and social partners.

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<sup>10</sup> This Group was set up in the framework of the "Education and Training 2010 work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe" (2002/C 142/01)

#### 1.2.4. Consultation of stakeholders and European Citizens

From 14 September to 15 November 2007 an online consultation gathered comments and proposals from citizens and stakeholders. It was based upon a questionnaire available in 22 languages and received 2,419 complete answers, coming from all Member States as well as from third countries. The analysis of the online consultation results (annexed) was presented to the Ministerial Conference of 15 February 2008.

The results of the online consultation were further discussed in the framework of a public hearing (Brussels, 15 April 2007). It assembled around 200 stakeholders from associations of teachers and students, local and regional authorities, language organisations and social partners.

As the new direction of multilingualism policy envisages a closer link with competitiveness and citizenship, two temporary advisory groups were set up in these areas:

- the **Business Forum**, chaired by Mr E. Davignon and composed by CEOs and prominent business representatives. Its mandate was to put forward recommendations and concrete measures on how to fill language skill gaps to foster competitiveness and employability.<sup>11</sup>
- the **Group of intellectuals for intercultural dialogue** was chaired by Mr A. Maalouf and composed of European writers and journalists. Its mandate was to come up with recommendations to highlight the role of languages in the dialogue between cultures and propose concrete actions.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.2.5. Consultation within the Commission

The Inter-service Group on Multilingualism chaired by DGEAC and comprising one Commission official per DG, meets regularly to discuss coordination issues linked to multilingualism. The Group discussed in various meetings the multilingualism policy approach, included the drafting of the Impact Assessment Report. It has also provided information on other DGs actions promoting multilingualism, as a basis for mainstreaming multilingualism across relevant Commission actions.

#### 1.2.6. External expertise

Although most of the work has been conducted in house and through the consultation fora already described, some specific findings are based on the results of the following studies:

- *Report on the diversity of language teaching offered in the EU*
- *LACE - Intercultural competences taught during foreign language teaching in compulsory level education and training*
- *ELAN- Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Final report expected by June 2008

<sup>12</sup> Final report available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/maalouf/report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/maalouf/report_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> The three studies are available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html)

- *Study on the needs and practice of the European audiovisual industry in respect of dubbing and subtitling*<sup>14</sup>

### 1.2.7. Main conclusions of the consultation process

There was a striking convergence of views reflected in the feedback throughout the various strands of the consultation process.<sup>15</sup> Member States and stakeholders shared the following views:

#### *On the scope of multilingualism policy:*

- Linguistic and cultural diversity is perceived as a long-term feature of European society: most people value it while acknowledging the need to manage it in an effective and prudent way. Shifting to a single language is not an option for the majority of respondents. English is perceived as a useful *lingua franca*, but people are aware of its limitations: if they wish to go beyond a first contact, in order to do business or to live in another country, they need to use the language of their interlocutors.
- A language policy focussed on the learning of EU official languages is too limited for present-day society, where citizens (and residents) speaking many more different languages are in daily contact. Multilingualism policy should eliminate barriers between languages and encompass all languages present in the community, including the official language of the country taught as a second language to foreigners and immigrants, regional, minority and migrant languages.
- Language learning should be placed in a lifelong perspective: firstly, more effort is needed to deliver quality language teaching in primary and secondary education and to better value different mother tongues; secondly, language learning for adults should be reinforced - more languages should be taught through initial and continuing vocational training and informal ways of learning (through the media, new technologies, leisure and cultural activities, etc) should be made available.
- Multilingualism is a transversal issue that has an impact on competitiveness and European citizenship: it should be mainstreamed in a range of policies wider than

<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/media/overview/evaluation/studies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/media/overview/evaluation/studies/index_en.htm)

<sup>15</sup> More detailed feedback can be found in our webpages:

Outcomes of the European Commission's public consultation on multilingualism: full report published in February 2008 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news1466\\_en.htm#](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news1466_en.htm#)

Report of the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue and the Recommendations of the High Level Group on Multilingualism: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages\\_en.html#](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/languages_en.html#)

Public Hearing of 15 April [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news1466\\_en.htm#](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news1466_en.htm#)

Ministerial Conference of 15 February: SEC(2008) 252: Commissioner Orban's Note to the College on the outcomes of the Ministerial Conference on Multilingualism and Council Conclusions on Multilingualism of 22 May 2008 [http://www.eu2008.si/en/News\\_and\\_Documents/Council\\_Conclusions/May/0521\\_EYC-MULTILIN.pdf](http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0521_EYC-MULTILIN.pdf)

Outlook Opinions of the Committee of the Regions (<http://www.toad.cor.europa.eu/CORBRrowse.aspx>) and of the European Economic and Social Committee: <http://www.toad.eesc.europa.eu/EESCBrowse.aspx>

education (lifelong learning, social inclusion, employment, competitiveness, media, research).

- Promoting linguistic diversity should not aim at preserving languages as an end in itself. On the contrary it should emphasise dialogue between language communities and their different visions of the world.
- Every citizen needs a different set of language skills, according to his/her interests, location where he/she lives, as well as family and professional background.

*On Methods:*

- Member States and the Commission should develop a language policy which favours linguistic diversity, through widening the range of languages taught, valuing and maintaining language skills of their citizens, motivating them to learn and promoting a language friendly environment.
- The lifelong language learning perspective is key to acquiring language skills: start early, keep motivation through initial education, go on learning languages throughout adult life.
- Informal language learning should be better exploited, by increasing access to multimedia, virtual or physical mobility and cultural exchanges. Learning languages in this way is effective and enable people from different backgrounds to communicate, to discover and compare different mindsets.
- Local communities, service providers and companies should take into account that they often address citizens and customers who speak different languages and they should develop strategies to cater for their language needs.

*On main actors:*

- Multilingualism needs to be promoted by actors at all level (European, national, local and sectoral) to become a transversal feature of a wide range of policies.
- As citizens have different language needs, the local level has a significant role to play to:
  - meet specific language needs (cater for people speaking different languages, develop language skills used across the border and by local companies);
  - value language resources in the immediate environment (minorities, expatriates, immigrants);
  - promote intercultural dialogue among citizens of different backgrounds.

We consider that the above mentioned consultation process has met the Commission's standards for consultation of stakeholders as far as it concerns the clear content of publication,



consultation of relevant target groups, publication and dissemination of information, time limits for participation; acknowledgement and feedback.<sup>16</sup>

## **2. DEFINING THE PROBLEM – WHAT ISSUE/PROBLEM IS THE PROPOSAL SUPPOSED TO TACKLE?**

### **2.1. What is the issue or problem that may require action?**

Linguistic diversity is a key feature of the European Union, whose 500 million citizens speak 23 different official languages along with 60 other languages confined to specific regions or groups, not to mention the over 300 different languages that our immigrants bring with them. It is estimated that currently citizens from at least 175 nationalities are living within the boundaries of the European Union. Migration flows added to the already existing patchwork of national minorities and cultural. In such a context, interaction between speakers of different languages has increased steadily over recent years, because of increasing intra-European mobility; migration flows from third countries and globalisation. This trend is likely to continue and to further increase in the years to come.<sup>17</sup> From 2010 natural population will decline in Europe, but immigration flow is expected to keep the balance, at least until 2025.<sup>18</sup>

Against this background, the two problems addressed in this Impact Assessment are:

- (4) Europeans have not yet acquired skills in two additional languages to their mother tongue, as called for by the Barcelona Council;
- (5) European citizens, companies and service providers are not fully aware of the assets as well as of the challenges of linguistic diversity in Europe.

Institutional multilingualism (i.e. languages used by the European Commission to communicate internally and with the citizen: publications / translation / interpretation) is out of the scope of this Impact Assessment and related policy initiatives. Institutional multilingualism has specific challenges, objectives and options, thus reducing the added value of tackling these issues together. Therefore the Commission has decided not to tackle together institutional multilingualism and multilingualism of the European society.

#### *2.1.1. Europeans have not yet acquired skills in mother tongue plus two other languages*

The fact that citizens possess insufficient language skills has been considered as a problem to be tackled since the setting of the Lisbon strategy: "improving language skills" was one of the objectives of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. In 2002 the European Council of Barcelona (2002) called for teaching two foreign languages from an early age and for developing an indicator of language competence. This Indicator is under development and

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<sup>16</sup> An overview of the consultation process is available at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/news/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/news/index_en.html)

<sup>17</sup> Eurostat, "Europe in Figures: Eurostat Yearbook 2006-2007" Luxembourg 2007

<sup>18</sup> NIDI, "Demographic Trends, Socio-Economic Impacts and Policy Implications in the European Union", 2007 (Report to the European Commission, DG EMPL)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/spsi/docs/social\\_situation/2007\\_mon\\_rep\\_demo.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_situation/2007_mon_rep_demo.pdf)

is expected to be tested in 2010<sup>19</sup>: it will test competence of students in two foreign languages at the end of compulsory education.

As for the general population, a 2006 Eurobarometer survey shows quite mixed results: the countries where a significant majority of the population speak at least two languages, in addition to the mother tongue, are: Luxembourg (92%); the Netherlands (75%); Slovenia (71%); Malta (68%); Belgium (67%); Denmark (66%). In the Baltic countries about half of the population speak two foreign languages, and this is also the case of Finland. On the other hand, in the following countries a wide majority of respondents declared having no competences in any foreign language: in Ireland (66%), the UK (62%); Italy (59%); in Hungary and Portugal (58%).

Indeed, while more severe in some Member States, lack of linguistic skills is an issue in most Member States: there already exist a “multilingual” European that is likely to be young, well-educated or still studying, and use foreign languages for professional reasons, and be motivated to continue to learn. In this respect it can also be mentioned that participants in the Erasmus exchange programme ranked improved knowledge of foreign languages as the most important outcome of their period abroad in terms of future employability. But this picture excludes a big part of the population – and goes a long way towards explaining the lack of professional cross-country mobility in Europe.

The following issues, tackling the supply side, show in what respects the targets have been only partially met.

**1. The range of languages offered in primary and secondary education has not increased** in line with the Barcelona commitment. Between 1999 and 2005 language learning increased in 21 Member States in primary education and in 8 Member States in secondary education. This concerned mainly English. Little progress has been made in the number and variety of languages taught. In 2006 the target of teaching two additional languages to virtually all pupils in lower secondary education was reached only by 9 Member States. In upper-secondary education two languages were taught to two thirds of students in 11 Member States. During the same period the number of languages taught remained stable or even decreased at lower-secondary level in 17 Member States and at upper secondary level in 7 Member States.<sup>20</sup>

**2. Very limited language provision, if any, is offered in initial vocational education and training.** According to CEDEFOP country reports, the teaching of at least a foreign language as a core subject is mentioned by 3 countries (LT, LV and Wales) in lower secondary vocational education and by 8 countries (A, CZ, DE, FI, EL, LT, PL and SV) in upper secondary vocational education.<sup>21</sup>

**3. There is no evidence indicating an increase in language provisions for adults.** On the contrary, lack of language skills is reported as the first reason for not

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<sup>19</sup> COM(2005) 356 final; COM(2007) 184 final

<sup>20</sup> M. Strubell et alii, "The diversity of language teaching in the European Union" 2007 (Report to the European Commission, DG EAC) [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html)

<sup>21</sup> Cedefop Thematic Overviews,  
[http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information\\_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/Thematic/)

working abroad.<sup>22</sup> A special Eurobarometer<sup>23</sup> carried out in 2005 reported that 44% of EU-citizens are not able to hold a conversation in any language but their mother tongue.

*2.1.2. European citizens, companies and service providers are not fully aware of linguistic diversity in Europe, its challenges and its advantages.*

This second problem deals with the demand side. Member States, stakeholders and citizens responding to the consultation converged in affirming that there is widespread lack of awareness of the linguistic diversity of our society. This entails an underestimation of the challenges and skills required to interact with people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds:

**4. Individuals lack motivation to learn languages.** According to the above-mentioned Eurobarometer, only about 1 in 5 Europeans intended to improve or learn a new foreign language in the following year.

**5. Companies lose business opportunities because of lack of language skills.** It is estimated that 11% of exporting European SMEs (945,000 companies) may be losing business because of lack of language skills. A sample survey on 2000 exporting SMEs from 29 EU countries showed that 46% of businesses plan to enter new export markets in the next three years, which will only magnify the demand for language skills.. **6. Service providers** (i.e. private and public services interacting with citizens: school, health services, local authorities, police, media, infrastructures) **are confronted with the challenge of communicating effectively with people speaking different languages.** Feedback received during the consultation reported that in our increasing multicultural society service providers are often not aware of communication pitfalls while addressing people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This seems due to lack of intercultural skills along with shortage of language skills among staff.

**2.2. What are the underlying drivers of the Problems?**

The underlying drivers relate respectively to each of the six points mentioned in paragraph 2.1:

**1.-2.** Member States appear not to be fully consistent with the commitment taken in Barcelona and slow in reforming their educational and vocational systems. Insufficient awareness of the importance of language skills seems to be the main driver (see also points 4-6)

**3.** Although Member States play a role in adult learning provisions (for instance through awareness raising campaigns, voucher and incentives to take up languages...), this sector is more directly driven by demand. In addition to the Member States' role, drivers quoted under points 4, 5 and 6 should be taken into consideration.

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<sup>22</sup> "Action Plan on workers mobility" COM(2007) 773 final

<sup>23</sup> "Europeans and their languages", [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_243\\_sum\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_243_sum_en.pdf)

As we come to the demand side, individual representations (i.e. beliefs and perceptions) and a variety of environmental factors (like the role of the media) seem to be the main drivers:<sup>24</sup>

4. The perception that there is no need to be skilled in more languages: getting by in English is enough. The belief that skills in more languages are only for gifted students and elites. The perception that certain languages have no practical value, leading for instance to neglecting family bilingualism and to considering that a different mother tongue is more a burden than an asset.

5. The perception that conducting business in English is enough, in Europe and abroad, the scant attention paid to linguistic diversity in the workplace. This leads, for instance, to neglecting communication problems for lack of intercultural skills and to undervaluing language skills of the workforce.

6. The perception that people living in the local community share the same mother tongue and cultural background. As a result, tourists, minority groups and newcomers from other Member States and third countries may experience difficulties in interacting within the local community and in accessing basic services (health, school, social provisions, justice and infrastructure). In the case of tourists this entails an economic loss. In the case of minority groups and newcomers it may be a source of discrimination and an obstacle to long term integration.

We conclude by outlining an additional difficulty encountered in promoting language skills and linguistic diversity: there is no straightforward answer to the question: *Which languages should EU citizens learn?* Given Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity, nearly every citizen needs a different set of languages. There is agreement on the fact that being fluent in three languages is a key skill, but individuals should decide on their own which languages to take up, also valuing existing skills in heritage / family languages.

### 2.3. Who is affected, in what ways, and to what extent

The above-mentioned Eurobarometer showed that: 56% of citizens in the EU Member States believe that they can hold a conversation in one language apart from their mother tongue and 28% of the respondents state that they speak two foreign languages well enough to have a conversation. From the socio-economic point of view, the Eurobarometer found that a “multilingual” European is likely to be young, well-educated or still studying, born in a country other than the country of residence, who uses foreign languages for professional reasons and is motivated to learn. Relating affected target groups to the issues mentioned in chapter 2.1:

1. Students in primary and secondary general education where the teaching of two languages is not available. This concern 8 countries: IRL, IT, UK plus 5 other countries (CZ,DE,MT,AT, PL) where the opportunity to learn two languages is only available in upper secondary education (post-compulsory).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> OECD, "Globalisation and Linguistic Competencies" EDU/CERI/CD(2007)14  
<sup>25</sup> Eurydice, "Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe" 2005 Edition.  
<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=049EN>

2. Students in vocational training. Affected to a large extent as language teaching is available only on a limited number of paths mainly concerning tourism. Lack of language skills may reduce employability in the increasing number of companies dealing with foreign customers and by hindering mobility to another European country.

3. Adults, especially those with low qualifications, the unemployed, those from different ethnical backgrounds. Language skills are an indispensable complement to vocational qualifications and basic skills, as advocated in the Recommendations of the Council and the Parliament on key skills. According to the Progress Report towards the Lisbon Objectives<sup>26</sup>, adults with a high educational attainment level are more than six times as likely to participate in lifelong learning than low skilled; in non-formal education it is even ten times more. At the same time, low skilled people are the most at risk to lose their jobs according to CEDEFOP's Medium-term Forecast on the Future Skills Needs in Europe<sup>27</sup>. Some Member States are in demand of low skilled workers, who could find more and better jobs if they had better language skills. The need for language skills will increase in future, although not in a homogeneous way. In 13 of the 29 countries surveyed, at least 50% of respondents believed they would need additional language skills in the next three years. Intercultural skills were also widely predicted to be required in future, although not at the same level of response.<sup>28</sup> In areas where more than one language is spoken the consequences of being monolingual can already be dramatic: a report highlights how up to 80% of CVs can be discarded in the Brussels region because the applicant is monolingual.<sup>29</sup>

4. Immigrant communities need to be fluent in the language of the host country, but not all countries provide for effective second language teaching, neither to adults nor to children. Language is often the first barrier to integration encountered by immigrants and by pupils with a immigration background. In 2004 on average 5% of the EU population has foreign citizenship, while some 7% is foreign born. In 2006, the proportion of pupils in the total school population, whose first language was not the language of instruction represented around one-fifth of all pupils in Luxembourg and Liechtenstein and 6-8% in Denmark, Germany, Austria and Sweden.<sup>30</sup> OECD PIRL Survey showed that students with a migrant background score systematically less well than domestic students, notably because of insufficient command of the language of instruction. At the same time immigrants see skills in their mother tongues undervalued while their languages are of strategic importance for external business relations.

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<sup>26</sup> SEC(2006) 639, p. 39

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Upload/Information\\_resources/Bookshop/485/4078\\_en.pdf](http://www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Upload/Information_resources/Bookshop/485/4078_en.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> CILT, "ELAN: Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise", 2007 (Report to the European Commission, DG EAC)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/key/studies_en.html)

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.tibem.be/images\\_user/File/rapportTIBEM.pdf](http://www.tibem.be/images_user/File/rapportTIBEM.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Eurydice Survey: "Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe" 2004  
<http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=044EN>

5. Specific target groups affected by referred beliefs are adults in general and in particular those influencing others' choices: parents, teachers, headmasters, counsellors, career advisors, and, last but not least, media influencers.<sup>31</sup>

6. Although big companies are also in need of language skills, they are more aware of the importance of languages and better able to recruit adequately trained workforce. SMEs appear to be mostly affected by shortage of language skills. The above-mentioned ELAN study found that, within their sample of exporting SMEs more Spanish companies (19%) claim to have lost business than French (13%) or German (10%), while the percentage of companies facing language barriers varies between 21% (England and Wales) and 8% (Portugal). The region most likely to cause cultural barriers for companies in England/Wales, Portugal, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Netherlands is East Asia; Japan and China are most often cited. Trade with the Middle East poses also cultural barriers. Within Europe cultural problems are also posed in trading with France, particularly for English, Welsh, Polish, Irish and Dutch companies, while Germany poses obstacles for the Polish, Irish and Dutch.

7. Feedback from the consultation process indicates that providers of basic services (health, school, local authorities and courts) are increasingly in need of communicating with people speaking other languages while their staff is not trained to work in languages other than their mother tongue and do not possess intercultural skills. This affects particularly countries of recent immigration (IT,ES,PT,EL, IRL), and new Member States facing increasing flows of foreigners because of tourism, business contact, cross-border cooperation.

#### **2.4. How would the problem evolve, all things being equal**

In case no action is taken, in the long term this will:

- (1) increase the divide between the multilingual who can avail of better living and working opportunities in Europe and on the world stage, and the monolingual who are excluded from such opportunities;
- (2) make it difficult for European companies to fully exploit the opportunities of the internal market and possibly losing competitive edge abroad, especially in the most promising economic drivers of next decades: Brazil, Russia, India and China.<sup>32</sup> Companies might also face productivity decline due to lack of intercultural skills. As an indirect result, the related market of translation, interpretation and multilingual technology facilities will not be developed as it could because of lack of demand. The link between language skills and competitiveness is visible in smaller European countries with high volumes of trade, such as Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. They are at the top places in the Competitiveness Index of the World Economic Forum and they also score very – or extremely - well in terms of linguistic

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<sup>31</sup> Ref. Above mentioned OECD study on Globalisation and Language skills

<sup>32</sup> "The Future of European Education and Training Systems: Key Challenges and Their Implications" Analytical Report for the European Commission prepared by the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE)  
[http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEContent/\\_IMPORT\\_TELECENTRUM/DOCS/Webpage-Version.pdf](http://www.eenee.de/portal/page/portal/EENEEContent/_IMPORT_TELECENTRUM/DOCS/Webpage-Version.pdf)

skills. Their economic dynamism and openness to trade is helped by widespread knowledge of foreign languages.

- (3) widen the communication gap and the lack of mutual understanding between people speaking different languages. This would affect firstly those not mastering adequately the dominant language of the country they live (immigrants, minorities, European mobile citizens), who would find more difficult to integrate. Secondly it would result in an impoverishment of the local community life, cut off from the interaction of the different cultural backgrounds of its inhabitants.

## 2.5. Subsidiarity and proportionality

Art. 149 of the Treaty gives to the European Commission the role of supporting and supplementing Member States' activities, which bear primary responsibility for the content and the organisation of education systems, of which language teaching is an integral part.

While complying with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the Commission and Member States have already worked together through the open method of coordination to fulfil the commitment of mother tongue plus two, as recalled by the Recommendations of Parliament and Council on key competences for lifelong learning, where language competence is included<sup>33</sup>. Such cooperation should continue in the same framework, supported by the Education Council Conclusions of May 2008, which defined a broader context for multilingualism and invited the Commission to come up with proposals supporting Member States action.

## 3. OBJECTIVES

### 3.1. What are the general policy objectives?

**The first objective of multilingualism policy is to enable citizens to be fluent in two languages in addition to their mother tongue (in short: "mother tongue-plus-two").** This objective is shared and supported by Member States which, since 2002, have committed themselves to teach two foreign languages to all from a very early age, as a way of reinforcing basic skills. Furthermore, in 2006, Council and Parliament included competence in two languages plus mother tongue among the key competences for lifelong learning.

Consequently to the argumentation of chapter 2.3, most affected people by lack of language skills should be a priority target (students in general education and in vocational training, adults, especially those at disadvantage). While promoting language skills in a lifelong learning perspective is the main solution, it should be complemented by raising awareness of the linguistic diversity of our society, in which language and intercultural skills are required to interact successfully.

Therefore, **a second objective is to raise awareness of the linguistic diversity of our society and to turn it into an asset for intercultural dialogue and competitiveness.** Again, according to the argumentation of chapter 2.3 priority target groups should be: parents and educational stakeholders; companies and service providers.

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<sup>33</sup> 2006/962/EC

### 3.2. What are the more specific/Operational objectives?

The achievement of the above-mentioned objectives goes beyond education and involves nearly all “Growth and Jobs” policies linked to citizens and companies: lifelong learning, employment, social inclusion, competitiveness, culture, youth and civil society, research, the media and external policies. Consequently, the **first operational objective will be to ensure that multilingualism aspects are consistently taken into account across these European policies, using a mainstreaming approach and making the best use of financial support available under existing European programmes.**

According to the subsidiarity principle, Member States are key decision-makers on these matters, while several stakeholders (educational providers, social partners, media, local authorities) are essential to implementation. Therefore the **second operational objective will be to work in partnership with Member States and stakeholders to support them to achieve the same objectives and adopt a mainstreaming approach at their level.**

The Commission may act as a catalyst, fixing common priorities and coordinating policy efforts through a structured dialogue with three strands:

- The Commission will work together with Member States through the Education and Training 2010 process and will reinforce multilingualism in the policy framework for cooperation after 2010. It will transform the Working Group on Languages into a flexible configuration in order to promote policy dialogue in the broader field of multilingualism, while addressing technical issues at the appropriate level (peer learning activities, exchange of good practice, evidence-based policies, and language indicator).
- The Commission will create a Forum with the media, cultural organisations and other stakeholders from civil society to discuss and exchange practices to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity to promote active citizenship and intercultural dialogue.
- The Commission will establish a permanent framework for cooperation with the business sector, built on the existing Business Forum.

These objectives are consistent with the Education & Training 2010 process. They reinforce the various Community initiatives in the field of intercultural dialogue and key competences for lifelong learning and contribute to achieving the objectives defined in the Strategy for Growth and Jobs. They are particularly interrelated to the following programmes: Lifelong Learning Programme, Culture, Erasmus Mundus, Youth for Europe, Citizens for Europe, Media, Research and Information society, and Structural Funds.

## 4. WHAT ARE THE MAIN OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES?

### 4.1. Option 1: no action with Member States, no strategic use of EU programmes (mainstreaming)

The added value of the Commission's coordination can be demonstrated by comparing national language policies before and after Barcelona and the open method of coordination: Barcelona provided an overall political commitment, which the Commission refined, setting



out strategic areas and a calendar of action.<sup>34</sup> After four years (2004 – 2007), national language policies in primary and secondary education look more robust: Member States have worked along the same lines, notably by introducing early language learning provisions and, to a limited extent by widening the range of languages taught. The Commission has supported Member States by making a strategic use of its programmes on education and training. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the previous chapters, progress has achieved only partial results. Both the Action Plan and the 2005 Communication called for a review by 2007, in order to examine whether further action was needed, and the latter committed the Commission to present, in consequence, a further communication to Parliament and the Council, proposing a comprehensive approach to multilingualism in the European Union.

The previous communications set actions until 2006-07 and called for a review and possible further action. Against this background, no action would mean stepping back from the coordination role undertaken within the scope of the previous Communications. In the light of the above a Commission decision to step back from steering and coordinating the process would not appear consistent with its policy line. It might not fulfil the call made by Member States in Lisbon (2001) and in Barcelona (2002) to the Commission to help them to reach their commitment, by ensuring a coordinated approach and by enabling good practices circulate.

#### **4.2. Option 2: Use regulatory instruments**

Soft regulatory instruments, such as a recommendation could be a suitable option to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. It could recommend initiatives to be undertaken by Member States and stakeholders in all the sub-options examined under Option 3. It could support these initiatives by committing the Commission to mainstreaming multilingualism in relevant EU policies.

#### **4.3. Option 3: Use of the Open Method of Coordination: issuing a Commission Communication setting the ground for cooperation with Member States and have it endorsed by the other European Institutions. Mainstream multilingualism in current EU programmes and initiatives**

Art.149 of the Treaty gives the Commission mandate to complement action taken by Member States. Member States called in Lisbon and in Barcelona for the Commission to help them to reach their commitment of improving the citizen's basic skills, where languages are included, using the open method of coordination. The Commission should, among other things, ensure a coordinated approach and make good practices circulate.

Education Council Conclusions of May 2008 defined a broader context for multilingualism and invited the Commission to come up with proposals supporting Member States action, through European programmes and, when needed, through exchange of practices within the open method of coordination.

A Commission Communication setting out a coordination framework and areas for intervention at European and national level seems to be an adequate instrument. Furthermore, the Communication takes into account the feedback of a wide consultation process, thus securing a broad endorsement of the actions proposed.

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<sup>34</sup> The already mentioned Language Action Plan and the 2005 Communication: A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism COM(2005) 596

In the framework of the Open Method of Coordination, already in use for language policy as part of the Education & Training 2010 Process, the Communication could be endorsed by the Council and the Parliament through autonomous or joint statements.

Content wise, within the scope of objectives 1 and 2 the Communication could include or discard the following sub-options, brought forward by the consultation process:

1. national languages taught as second languages and languages of the immigrants and minorities (→ Objectives 1 and 2)
2. a stronger link of linguistic diversity with citizenship and prosperity (→ Objectives 1 and 2)
3. the external dimension of multilingualism (→ Objective 2).

As for the way multilingualism should be promoted by Commission policies and programmes, once the option of an expenditure programme for multilingualism was discarded (see further 4.4) the approach of mainstreaming multilingualism in relevant Commission policies and programmes seemed a viable answer.

Hereafter a non exhaustive list of programmes related to objectives 1 and 2 and to the 6 points detailed in chapter 2:

- all strands of the Lifelong Learning Programme (→all points)
- language training support given through structural funds such the European Social Fund (→especially points 2,3,5 and 6)
- language integration courses for immigrants supported by JLS (→points 3 and 6)
- Youth in Action, Citizens for Europe (informal adult learning and raising awareness of linguistic diversity → points: 3,4 and 6 )
- Literary translations supported by the Culture programme (→ objective 2)
- Media programme (subtitling→ informal language learning→ point 3, raising awareness of linguistic diversity → objective 2)
- Research Programme (research aspects connected to language learning and linguistic diversity in society → objectives 1 and 2)
- Information technology (E-learning → lifelong learning →objective 1; Multilingual platforms and translation facilities → linguistic diversity → objective 2)
- Erasmus Mundus (→ intercultural dialogue

The already existing Interservice Group on Multilingualism could be used to ensure a coordinated approach and mainstream multilingualism in relevant European programmes and initiatives, through interventions at programme level (thematic priorities, budget for linguistic preparation and linguistic activities, adequate monitoring, etc.).

#### **4.4. Which options have been discarded at an early stage and why?**

A regulatory approach would be out of place since Commission action should only complement Member States policies, as stated in Art.149 of the EU Treaty "The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity. Community action shall be aimed at: developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States". Art 150 and 151, concerning vocational training and culture and also relevant to languages take the same line.

Nonetheless an expenditure programme could have been proposed within the scope of Commission action. This option has been currently discarded because multilingualism is a transversal objective of very different policies (education, culture, media, employment, social inclusion, research...) and supporting them out of their natural contexts does not seem to be either appropriate or effective:

- Inappropriate as it goes against the logic of raising awareness of linguistic diversity and language needs as an essential feature of our society, not as something one can keep separate;
- Ineffective, as it should receive a very high budget in order to have some impact and there still is no guarantee that it would not overlap with existing provisions at national and European level.

The proposed approach of mainstreaming multilingualism in the relevant policies and ensuring coordination among them should guarantee best results in the short term and provide a concrete basis for reviewing the situation in a few years.

### **5. ANALYSIS OF THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF THE OPTIONS**

#### **5.1. Advantages and disadvantages of Option 1: no action**

One of the main drivers behind the patchy implementation of "Mother tongue plus two" in the education systems is insufficient awareness of the importance of language skills. This is likely to worsen if the Commission discontinues its coordination role in promoting multilingualism. National policies might revert to being fragmented: some countries might continue to give importance to languages, other less so, hence widening their economic divide and not reaping the benefits of European integration and cross-border cooperation. This will be unfortunate especially in the current situation where shifting from products to services economy increases the needs of language skills.

Furthermore, the EU is facing the global challenges of immigration and globalisation, with their underline linguistic issues. If a coordinated response is not given, national initiatives out of a common framework would have less impact and might even be in conflict with each other.

It is worth mentioning that the unanimous result of the consultation process was that Europe should be more active in promoting multilingualism, therefore, in a situation where no action is taken we will cause the disappointment and de-motivation of the stakeholders consulted.

Concerning the strategic use of EU programmes, the Action Plan Report showed that this was an effective way of complementing Member States' action by focussing on the same priorities. This was done on a limited range of programmes, mainly concerning education and vocational training. In light of its results and of the current objectives it would be consistent to enlarge it to a wider range of programmes. The opposite could weaken European action and credibility vis-à-vis Member States who might feel that the Commission is not committed to the same objectives.

## **5.2. Advantages and disadvantages of Option 2: Use regulatory instruments**

A soft regulatory instrument, such as a recommendation has the advantage of being a stronger policy instrument compared to a Commission communication. Nevertheless, in order to be effective it needs to highlight concrete actions, based on a comprehensive policy framework agreed with Member States and stakeholders. We believe that such a comprehensive policy framework still needs to be laid down and consolidated with Member States and stakeholders before coming to a recommendation. Consequently the Commission is not yet in the position to indicate concrete actions for specific target groups.

As already stated, this policy initiative is not meant not address the inter-institutional aspects of multilingualism; however, it might prove difficult to maintain the preferred focus on "external" multilingualism during the complex negotiations that could be expected during the adoption process of a legislative instrument.

Furthermore, a recommendation would interfere with the functioning of an established instrument such as the open method of cooperation in education and training that is appreciated by Member States for its flexibility in a policy area characterised by strong subsidiarity and wide differences in the way Member States organise their educational systems.

As for mainstreaming multilingualism in relevant EU policies, a recommendation would have the same impact as a Communication, since the Commission masters its own agenda. Recommending better dissemination of good practices would also have little impact, since this is already the role of the Commission within the open method of coordination.

In the current situation recourse to a "soft" legislative instrument appears premature and could be even counterproductive, hindering cooperation with Member States and stakeholders, who might fear that the Commission is "jumping to conclusions", intruding into national policies without first reaching the necessary consensus.

## **5.3. Advantages and disadvantages of Option 3: Use the Open Method of Coordination: issuing a Commission Communication to lay the ground for cooperation with Member States and have it endorsed by the other European Institutions**

The advantages of choosing a Commission Communication as an instrument are:

- To set out a comprehensive policy framework and areas for intervention at European and national level;
- to build on the existing fruitful cooperation with Member States to consolidate progress and reach common objectives;
- to keep up the momentum created by the Education Council conclusions on multilingualism which invited the Commission to draw up proposals to strengthen multilingualism.

Its disadvantages are:

- It is a rather lengthy process with many stages between strategic orientations and concrete implementation, especially as far as Member States are concerned.
- The Commission can kick off the process but other actors, namely Member States and stakeholders are critical for the achievement of the objectives.

Content wise the advantages and disadvantages of the sub-options listed under Chapter 4.3 are:

#### 5.3.1. *Sub-option 1 (national languages / migrant, minority languages)*

The consultation process gave strong indication that the distinction between the teaching and learning of foreign languages, second language and mother tongue has become blurred. The advantages of including the teaching and learning of national languages as second languages and languages of immigrants and minorities would be:

- (1) to be consistent with today's challenges in language teaching and learning and give comprehensive responses (→ objective 1);
- (2) to make different languages benefit from the most advanced methodologies. For instance foreign language teaching methods could be usefully applied to teach national languages as second language to pupils and students with a different mother tongue. Bilingual education applied in minority areas could inspire effective early language learning methods elsewhere (→ objective 1);
- (3) to encourage schools and companies to value and take into account language skills acquired in the family regardless of whether they relate to other EU official languages, regional and minority languages or migrant languages (→ objectives 1 and 2).

The disadvantage would be that this is a rather sensitive area for cooperation: Member States have welcomed the widening of multilingualism to encompass all languages, including national languages taught to non-native speakers. They were more cautious though on the implementation of teaching migrant languages. Two levels of ambition can be foreseen:

- (1) Promoting the teaching and learning of national languages of host countries for immigrants. This is widely accepted and could benefit of advantages 1 and 2.
- (2) Further examine the possibility of valuing migrant languages and possibly give them some space in education. This would fully benefit of the three advantages, but carries

the risk of hindering integration by reinforcing ethnical identities. On the basis of civil society feedback (see in particular the online consultation and the Report of the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue, quoted earlier in the text), and in close cooperation with the Member States the Commission could further discuss ways of valuing multilingual skills of the immigrant population, both for intercultural dialogue and competitiveness.

- The Commission could give clear indication about the benefits of this approach while leaving Member States totally free to implement it to the extent and by the means they wish.

### 5.3.2. *Sub-option 2 (linguistic diversity and its link to active citizenship and prosperity)*

Stakeholders and Member States strongly advocated for this option to be taken as it gives adequate visibility to a core issue of European society - linguistic diversity – and its consequences for active citizenship and prosperity. It has also the key advantage to respond to the current problems of our society (ref chapter 2) and match both objectives 1 and 2.

The disadvantages of taking such sub-option are that:

- it is a broad concept, which should be carefully detailed to avoid vagueness and loss of impact
- it is a sensitive area for cooperation where the Commission should make clear its limits of action vis-à-vis Member States and stakeholders
- it needs a strong coordination effort to ensure that a broad range of policies take up the challenge of promoting multilingualism.

Nevertheless, even considering the above-mentioned disadvantages, it still appears to carry enough weight to justify alone a new communication, as the changes in our society called for multilingualism policy to go beyond education and raise awareness of linguistic diversity in the local environment and business. The two levels of ambition here are:

- (1) Ensure that multilingualism is consistently promoted by relevant policies
- (2) Promote the exchange of good practices among different policies and actors at European and national level so to improve synergies on the promotion of multilingualism

### 5.3.3. *Sub-option 3 (the external dimension of multilingualism)*

Multilingualism is a way of making EU public diplomacy consistent with the objective of valuing linguistic diversity. It will promote European languages abroad and propose the way Europe manages its linguistic diversity as a model to other multilingual countries in the world. Its advantage is to strengthen the image of Europe abroad and emphasise its linguistic and cultural richness, while proposing peaceful ways of dealing with sensitive matters. Therefore the external dimension will contribute to intercultural dialogue and increased competitiveness. EU actions in this field will encourage third countries to promote the teaching of European languages in their countries, and the teaching of non-European languages in the EU. This will lead to new social, economic and cultural opportunities for Europe. In some cases (China, India) joint declarations on multilingualism aimed at mutually promoting each other's

languages will be signed. The challenge here is to increase the coordination effort with other policies and carefully target actions to avoid vagueness and duplication – hence the need for a framework strategy. The two levels of ambition here are:

- (1) Better gear existing programmes and initiatives to promote third country languages and the teaching of European languages to foreign students
- (2) Include multilingualism in the sectoral policy dialogue with third countries (for instance by signing joint declarations on multilingualism aimed at mutually promoting each other's languages with prominent countries like China, India)

## **6. COMPARING THE OPTIONS**

Option 1 is likely to have a negative impact: in the short term we will face the disappointment and criticism of the wide range of stakeholders consulted, who wanted more European action in promoting multilingualism. In the long term, the absence of a European framework and guidelines is likely to increase the gap between countries investing on strong language skills and countries and sectors lagging behind. This might entail a negative economic impact on individual employability and European competitiveness more generally. As for the social impact it might increase the lack of communication between the different people living in Europe and put in danger the foundations of the European model, based on inclusion and active citizenship.

Option 2 is likely to have a negative impact on the partnership between the Commission and Member States who might feel that Commission is going to fast and does not take their advice into account enough. This might endanger the open method of coordination and lead to no cooperation and no results on Member States side.

The most appropriate course of actions appears to be option 3, a Commission Communication to the other European institutions, including the already mentioned sub-options (1,2,3). The different levels of ambition will be fine tuned in dialogue with the Member States and stakeholders.

Modalities of implementation will be:

- strategic use of relevant Commission policies and programmes (mainstreaming) (→objectives 1 and 2)
- Open Method of Coordination with Member States to exchange good practices and keep political dialogue (→objectives 1 and 2)
- Structured dialogue with stakeholders:
  - setting up a permanent business forum (→related in particular to points 2,3,4 and 5)
  - setting up a civil society forum with media, cultural organisations and other stakeholders from civil society to discuss and exchange practices to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity for active citizenship and intercultural dialogue (→related in particular to points 3,4 and 6)

In the light of observations made in the previous chapters and considering the limited scope for direct action of the Commission, which relies mostly on Member States' and stakeholders' good will, these are the economic and social impacts the chosen option is likely to contribute to:

- Economic impacts: through the impact of language skills on citizens' employability and competitiveness, the new strategy defined in the Communication is likely to have a positive impact on international trade and cross-border investments; technological development and innovation; the number and quality of jobs; third country and overseas relations.
- Social impacts: the strategy is likely to have a positive impact on social inclusion, as well as governance and participation since language skills are a prerequisite to intercultural dialogue.

As for costs: at Commission level the implementation of the actions recommended in the Communication will not entail a budget increase. It is aimed at making more effective use of existing programmes to promote multilingualism, notably by ensuring:

- a more consistent approach (i.e. pass on a consistent message in support of linguistic diversity, give attention to language issues in projects and initiatives)
- more complementarities with Member States (i.e. support them to achieve shared objectives, through Commission initiatives and the exchange of good practices).

As for Member States, the Communication will recommend general and operational objectives in line with already agreed EU common objectives and suggest ways of achieving them, leaving the implementation to the Member States themselves. Depending on Member States points of departure and on their willingness to go farther, some of them may not need to increase the budgets allocated to multilingualism but use them more effectively, according to the Commission strategy. In other cases Member States may decide to introduce new actions entailing either a budget increase or a re-orientation of expenditure. This step would of course be taken primarily to comply with political commitments needed in order to reach the objectives agreed at EU level, in particular in order to improve educational and lifelong learning outcomes.

As a general principle conveyed by the Commission Communication, it will be recommended to take action close to citizens, taking into account local language needs and pooling resources of business, civil society and local authorities so as to use them in the most effective way.

As things stand, and given the fact that the Commission does not suggest the creation of any concrete new structure / activity, it is impossible to foresee the budgetary impact at national level, especially since it depends primarily on Member States choices.

As for business and service providers, in case they decide to invest more on language provisions and increase their expenditure, they will do so as part of their business plan and it will pay off in terms of increased competitiveness: the above-mentioned ELAN study calculated that SMEs applying successful language strategies achieved an export sales proportion 44.5% higher than one without these investments. Alternatively, in case of public and non-profit making organisations this will result in more effective communication, leading to increased intercultural dialogue and better social integration.



## **7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **7.1. Monitoring**

The Commission Communication will define areas for common action to be implemented through internal coordination (mainstreaming) and structured dialogue with Member States and stakeholders. The Commission will ensure the overall coordination and follow-up of the implementation through:

- The Inter-service Group on Multilingualism (mainstreaming of multilingualism in relevant EU policies and programmes)
- A Working Group of High Representatives of Member States (open method of coordination, built upon the existing working group on Languages in the Education & Training 2010 Process)

To maintain focus on multilingualism policy and to ensure a periodic review of its progress, the Commission will recommend that the European institutions devote an annual slot in their agenda to its discussion. In the case of the Council, it will suggest to include multilingualism in the rolling agenda of the Education Council.

The following indicators and surveys will be used to monitor results:

- The Indicator of language competence (first test in 2010 plus periodic tests thereafter), on language skills of students at the end of compulsory schooling
- Regular reports on implementing the Education and Training 2010 work programme
- Eurydice key data on education, (regularly updated), on the range of languages offered in general and vocational education
- Eurydice report on the integration of migrant children in school (regularly updated)

Other surveys might be considered, such as:

- Special Eurobarometer on Europeans and their languages (to compare with 2006 issue)
- A survey on language strategies adopted by companies
- A survey on language strategies adopted by service providers and local communities
- A survey on the way linguistic and cultural diversity is taken into account by media.

The Commission will carry out a global review in 2012. To this effect Member States will be invited to report on their progress by end 2011.

## **7.2. Evaluation**

As far as mainstreaming is concerned, the Commission should ensure that language issues are adequately taken into account while evaluating relevant EU programmes and policies. The Commission will encourage Member States and stakeholders to include language aspects in the evaluation of policies and strategies at their level. This information should feed into the regular reviews mentioned in chap.7.1 as well as in the global review foreseen by 2012.

## ANNEX

### **INTERSERVICE GROUP ON MULTILINGUALISM**

The members of the Interservice Group were designated at Director-General's level in March 2007. The Group met four times in 2007 on 24 April, 13 June, 12 October and 5 December, to discuss a common approach on the implementation of a multilingualism policy in a coherent way. A mapping exercise of current practices across the Commission in the field of multilingualism was carried on by group members.

In the meeting on 5 December 2007 the group discussed the rationale of the new Communication on Multilingualism and was requested to contribute to the Inventory of Community actions in the field of multilingualism, annexed to the Communication as a Staff Working Paper. Both documents were discussed in the meetings on 25 April and 18 June 2008 and Group members sent in written contributions.

#### List of Members

<b>Forename</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>DG</b>
Beata	Adamczyk	TAXUD
Agnes	Ajour	SANCO
Michael	Alfons	JRC
Xabier	Atutxa Sarria	SG
Alexander	Bartovic	AGRI
Albrecht	Berger	OPOCE
Eleni	Borg-Tsantekidou	ADMIN
Ingrid	Brandner	IAS
Claire	Brunotti	ECFIN
Luca	Dalpozzo	BUDG
Ann	D'haen-Bertier	SCIC
Pascal	Dissard	RDT
Valérie	Drezet-Humez	DGT
Karin	Fuessl	ENTR
Lorena	Garcia Ferrer	TREN
Gisela	Gauggel-Robinson	ELARG
Viola	Groebner	ENV
Kathy	Haas	EMPL
Florian	Horner	ELARG
Patricia	Isenborghs	DEV - alt
Richard	Joels	COMM
Boris	Kandziora	JRC
Dorota	Lyszkowska	MARKT

Daniel	Mann	SANCO
Anna	Melich	BEPA
Vendulka	Mulacova	OLAF
Miguel Angel	Navarrete	DGT
Francois	Nizery	AIDCO
Jens	Nymand-Christensen	SG
Eric	Poudelet	SANCO
David	Ringrose	RELEX
Szilvia	Rogovszky	REGIO
Kimmo	Rossi	INFSO
Gerard	Rozet	SJ
Danielle	Saffar	OPOCE
Michaela	Salmasova	JLS
Michaela	Salmasova	JLS
Peter	Sandler	TRADE
Gunter	Schaefer	ESTAT
Luc	Schaerlaekens	OLAF
Joan	Scott	ECHO
Neil	Shooter	DIGIT
Christof	Stock	ELARG
Amira	Szonyi	OLAF
Ylva	Tiveus	COMM
Marie	Tzirani	PMO
Guy	Van Biesen	EPSO
Chris	Van Den Brande	COMP
Jean-Louis	Vergnolle	TAXUD
Gie	Werkers	SANCO
Wolter	Witteveen	SCIC