



European Policies for Promoting Plurilingualism

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Chorley 19.6.2011

European Plurilingualism

Two organisations: one flag

- The Council of Europe
- The European Union

European Plurilingualism



Council of Europe

- Founded in 1948 (
- 47 member states at present

European Union

- Coal and Steel Treaty (6) in 1951
- Treaty of Rome (6) in 1957
- 6 become 9 in 1973
- 9 become 12 in the 1980s
- 12 become 15 in the 1990s
- 27 member states at present (all of which previously CoE members)

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Council of Europe

- Intergovernmental
- Parliamentary Assembly (delegates)
- European Court of Human Rights

Set up to promote democracy and protect human rights and the rule of law

European Union

- Intergovernmental but also supragovernmental
- European Parliament (directly elected)
- European Commission
- European Council
- Council of the European Union (aka EU Council)

Set up to promote peace and stability in post-war Europe through economic and political cooperation

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Council of Europe

Original aims (1954)

a) encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other contracting parties and provide the facilities for this

b) endeavour to promote the study of its languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other contracting parties and provide facilities for this

(paraphrase of) Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention of 1954

> mutual understanding and peaceful and democratic cooperation

European Union

1st Strategy for Multilingualism (2005)

This set out three basic strands to the EU's multilingualism policy:

a) ensuring that citizens have access to EU legislation, procedures and information in their own language

b) underlining the major role that languages and multilingualism play in the European economy, and finding ways to develop this further

c) encouraging all citizens to learn and speak more languages, in order to improve mutual understanding and communication

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Current **Council of Europe** language policy has evolved in response to social, economic and political changes:

- open markets and social mobility (migration)
- concerns with educational standards (global comparisons and global competition)
- voluntary and enforced exclusion from the political process
- the growth of English
- increasing difficulties in distinguishing in a simple binary way between the mother tongue and foreign languages, especially when the mother tongue is not, for example, the language of schooling

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The European Social Charter (1961) revised in 1996:

...

11. To promote and facilitate the teaching of the national language of the receiving state or, if there are several, one of these languages, to migrant workers and members of their families

12. To promote and facilitate, as far as practicable, the teaching of the migrant worker's mother tongue to the children of the migrant worker

...

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The **Council of Europe** defines **multilingualism** as the presence in a geographical area of more than one “variety of language” (whether recognised as a language or not). **Plurilingualism** refers to the repertoire of “varieties of language” that individuals use. The repertoire can include varying levels of proficiency and different types of competences. Plurilingualism is dynamic and changes in its composition throughout an individual’s lifetime. Different languages are not learnt in isolation: each can influence the learning process and use of others.

The **European Union** uses multilingualism to cover everything.

European Plurilingualism



The Council's current language education policies therefore aim to promote:

- **plurilingualism:** all are entitled to develop a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime in accordance with their needs
- **linguistic diversity:** Europe is multilingual and all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity; the right to use and to learn one's language(s) is protected in Council of Europe Conventions
- **mutual understanding:** the opportunity to learn other languages is an essential condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences
- **democratic citizenship:** participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals
- **social cohesion:** equality of opportunity for personal development, education, employment, mobility, access to information and cultural enrichment depends on access to language learning throughout life

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1. The multilingualism of societies and the plurilingualism of individuals – an ordinary situation in Europe
 - 1.1 Every society is multilingual
 - 1.2 Every language is plural
 - 1.3 Every school is a space open to the plurality of languages and cultures
 - 1.4 All education is plurilingual in varying degrees
 - 1.5 Every identity is plural

from

Plurilingual and intercultural education as project, CoE (Cavalli, Coste, Crisan, van de Hen), 2009

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The EU response to this multilingual reality is:

1. Promote multilingualism with a view to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and European construction

(a) increase awareness of the benefits of language diversity and language learning among members of the public and in particular young people undergoing initial training in both general and vocational education;

(b) provide teaching of the language of the host country for migrants, especially young people, as an essential element for successful integration and employability, while respecting the languages of their countries of origin.

Resolution 2008/C 320/01

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A decorative pattern of yellow stars is scattered across the slide, primarily in the background behind the text.

The benefits of multilingualism and plurilingualism:

a) to society:

- economic
- political (access to the democratic system)
- cultural (access to and safeguarding of cultural heritage)

b) to the individual

- cognitive (Bialystok: problem-solving, content vs. form, averting dementia)
- linguistic (language learning)
- social and family identity
- educational (see next slide)

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Key factors for educational success

- the superiority of long-term education using community languages as well as the language of the host country (Thomas and Collier, 2001)
- the importance of literacy skills and “academic” of “school” English (see Cummins and BICS or conversational vs CALP or academic language skills)
- the “language” of each school subject
- etc.

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The LE project: the languages **in and for education**

- the home language(s)
- the language(s) of schooling
- the language(s) of the school environment
- the language(s) taught in school

Plurilingualism is about the whole linguistic repertoire of the individual. It starts with the mother tongue / the language(s) of home.

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Given the importance and value of the languages that migrants bring with them and the value of the Showmi project,

- What should the project be saying to migrants about how they should maintain and extend their plurilingualism (their repertoire)? What is the project saying to parents about educational success?
- What should the project be saying to teachers about goals, contents and methods, for example with respect to literacy? Are there significant differences between teaching contexts: teaching the community language to migrants or to others, teaching the official language to migrants?
- What should the project be saying to other stakeholders (state officials, employers, parents, fellow parents, etc.) about recognising, developing and using (migrants') plurilingualism?