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## INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

# *QUALITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION: THE UNIQUE ROLE OF LANGUAGES*

Strasbourg, 18-19 September 2013

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## Intergovernmental Conference

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#### 1. The issues addressed by the Conference

The Intergovernmental Conference<sup>2</sup> on 18 and 19 September 2013, organised by the *Language Policy Unit*, was held at a unique juncture in the process of Council of Europe proceedings and appraisals regarding languages.

These proceedings, whose high points have featured several intergovernmental conferences in succession, have sought to bring greater coherence to the conception of the development of language competences, and have done so in two directions. Firstly they have demonstrated that the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) was utilised only in part, often being confined to applying the scales for proficiency levels language by language. Secondly, these proceedings have broadened reflection to take in the questions linked with languages of schooling and learners' aptitudes and needs as a whole.

Developments in the work conducted in the languages field have been regularly actuated by the Council of Europe member states' shared values as expressed in a specific context. At a certain moment of Europe's common history, it was indispensable to promote foreign language learning and discovery of the culture of others, so as to foster understanding among peoples. Thereafter, thinking was progressively enriched and expanded to meet the challenges of our ever more multicultural societies in which intercultural education represents a major societal concern. By developing the cardinal idea of each person's plurilingual repertoire, the examination conducted by the *Language Policy Unit* naturally embraced the questions associated with regional and minority languages as well as languages of migration, not overlooking the contribution of the classical languages to each individual's training.

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<sup>1</sup> The [presentations](#) made during the Conference can be consulted and/or downloaded at the following address: [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang).

<sup>2</sup> This intergovernmental conference brought together 83 participants (representatives of 31 member states, including the State Secretary of Norway, and of the European Commission, together with members of various Council of Europe bodies, among them the Steering Committee for Educational Policies and Practice and the European Centre for Modern Languages).

Collective realisation of the need to give the success of all learners better attention is becoming a political priority. In that perspective, linkage between the individual repertoire of linguistic and cultural proficiencies and the concept of “languages in the school” has made it possible for reflection on education to integrate the contribution of all the languages present in the school and the educational community, whether or not taught there. And quite obviously, the role of the language(s) of schooling then very quickly became apparent, as did the indispensable distinction between language of schooling as subject and the linguistic dimensions in the teaching and learning of the various subjects.

As these reflections have matured, the political context has undergone an appreciable change. Indeed, the Conference comes a few months after the adoption by the *Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe* of a Recommendation to member states to put in hand the necessary actions for pursuing quality in education<sup>3</sup>. This text shows that quality in education is inseparable from the goals of inclusion and equity. Inclusive education of this kind presupposes effective combating of school failure and respect for each person’s needs and aptitudes. There should be an effort to bring about, in the different educational contexts, the conditions for all pupils irrespective of social, linguistic or cultural background to have opportunities for academic and vocational learning suited to their needs and conducive to their success in the training sequence, their personal fulfilment and their ability to perform their roles as citizens in the democratic functioning of our societies, in particular by the development of critical sense.

The statements, presentations and exchanges during the Conference bore essentially on how this drive for quality in education should resolutely address language questions. They showed that each member state could usefully rely on the tools, approaches and experience made available to all by the *Language Policy Unit* and on the experience built up by various countries or regions in Europe. The pooling of these resources, their presentation and the discussions which they raised allowed a better understanding of what is at stake for each education system. Above all they made for realisation by the officials in charge of these education systems, via the various state representatives present, of the need and possibilities for rational but resolute implementation of measures in favour of proper recognition for the unique role of languages in education.

To organise the rendering of the debates in this report, two different avenues can be explored in a complementary fashion:

- explicit presentation, based on an analysis of all the linguistic aspects associated with the cognitive skills necessary in learning processes, of learners’ needs and potential difficulties, usually not realised, thereby denying the more vulnerable learners the support indispensable for their success;
- systematic utilisation of the resources in the learners’ possession, building on the instruction received, on the whole of the knowledge and competencies acquired in and out of school.

The most significant outcomes of this Conference may be summed up in a few words:

- the importance of the subjects dealt with over the two days of proceedings was very widely recognised by the participants, as was the need to act accordingly in the member states and at European level;
- realisation of the importance of each of the two avenues of reflection set out above is unequal, the first already being addressed by initiatives at local or national/regional level in

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<sup>3</sup> [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2012\)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on ensuring quality education](#) (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 December 2012).

many countries whereas the second is still sparsely explored and encounters many obstructions;

- there are tools and experiences which should make it possible as of now to take concerted initiatives for implementing the necessary measures in the language field to improve quality in education;

- differences of approach may be observed in the actions carried out. They are at the same time a source of enrichment, offer alternatives for action, and should be thought over at European level;

- the success of the desired developments along the two paths dealt with during the Conference will depend on proper regard for the diversity of the initiatives, whether taken at the national/regional level or locally, even individually. These two vectors, “top-down” or “bottom-up” of the organisational chart of the education systems can match the diversity of their modes of operation; they may also reflect the awareness of the players at all levels of responsibility. The concern is to lend them coherence to make them mutually supportive.

The aforementioned Recommendation on ensuring quality in education emphasises the responsibility of each player at every level of responsibility in the education system. This links up with one of the requirements stated throughout the Conference proceedings: the importance of taking into account, in initiatives at European as also at national/regional or local level, the diversity of those involved in devising and implementing the curriculum. On that score, the need to meet teachers’ needs and expectations through training and methodological documents formed a recurrent theme during the proceedings.

## **2. Accommodating the linguistic dimension in the teaching of the various subjects and disciplines**

The role of the languages and language competences acquired by pupils for success at school is widely recognised. In particular, the relationship between mastering the language of schooling and combating school failure has been demonstrated by numerous studies, for example in the PISA surveys. The contributions of European Commission representatives also showed us that the questions relating to languages are the subject of work and initiatives by various bodies at the international level.

School is a language-based institution in which language education performs a strategic role. Alas, not all players are always aware of these curricular implications. Insufficient consideration of the linguistic dimensions in teaching represents a verbal violence as well as a form of symbolic violence against many learners. It is certainly a symbolic violence done to them when the demands to master specific linguistic forms are present in the teaching or the assessment, without having been the subject of elucidation, preparation or rational teaching. This violence is in many cases the source of rejection, de-motivation and dropping out.

So that these inadequacies may be effectively combated, it is important to identify very precisely the nature of the linguistic dimension in the cognitive operations linked with instruction in the respective disciplines. While the role of language for the success of all is self-evident, what is encompassed by the term “language of schooling” may nevertheless give rise to misunderstanding. To dispel this ambiguity, the first part of the Conference was devoted to examining “The role of languages in learning school subjects and their specific contributions to quality education”.

Several essential ideas already debated at previous conferences were reiterated. The community surrounding each discipline has developed its own language usage. It is of course composed of terminological specificities usually reflecting the particular contents and concepts which the learners have to acquire in the subject or discipline under consideration. But analysis shows that over and above this aspect which usually commands attention, the

language register peculiar to a discipline or group of disciplines is typified by discursive genres and recourse to textual types markedly differing from the language's ordinary usage; use of these special linguistic forms notably has a pronounced socio-cultural dimension and also has to do with the assertion of that specialist community's identity. One may justifiably speak of subject-specific "literacy".

Now, this linguistic dimension most commonly remains implicit in the syllabus of the discipline. Yet it does indeed represent a requirement for pupils' comprehension of the messages and texts as well as for oral or written production in keeping with the expectations of the discipline. Language must not be considered in a strictly "functional" way. The cognitive dimension is closely associated with the use of the appropriate discursive forms. Furthermore, the linguistic dimension functions as "a filter through which learners' achievements in a discipline are evaluated". If learners do not master the "literacy" specific to the discipline, they will not be able to meet the usually implicit expectations of the teacher specialising in the subject who aims to concentrate essentially on content. Lack of support to pupils in mastering this "academic language" is a source of failure and raises an obstacle to development of their competences in the subject area concerned.

It is indispensable to help learners not only in removing the psycho-social obstacles, ie possible reluctance to adopt verbal forms and communication strategies unfamiliar to them and in mingling discursive forms that belong to different registers, but just as much in progressively building for themselves a command of these linguistic forms, in acquiring techniques and strategies to get at the meaning of documents and texts produced by the community of this discipline.

One of the concerns emphasised at the Conference is indeed to devise the procedures that will permit effective support to learners, an "integrated backing", in this gradual access to the "academic" forms of the language of schooling, equip the teachers with the techniques which help accommodate this linguistic dimension while making progress with the contents specific to the discipline, and ensure that the curriculum serves the learners' success.

Quite plainly, language practice in teaching situations is a blend of "academic" forms and more ordinary forms of the language of schooling. The educational challenge nevertheless consists in gradually giving the learners access to the discursive forms of the discipline in its scholastic usage as in the corresponding scientific community's acts at the level of society, for example in societal debates on subjects on which it can cast light. Thus, with this accommodation of the linguistic dimension in the various disciplines, school failure is indeed combated and training for citizenship furthered.

The ill-effects of a requirement, not made explicit, for command of the language of schooling used in the various disciplines have been observed in particular where children from a migrant background are concerned. But it is equally plain that the groups of pupils called "vulnerable or disadvantaged" form a much wider circle than migrant children alone. Numerous pupils from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds can master the ordinary language of communication without exposure, in their family or personal environment, to the more specific forms that typify the language of schooling. Far more still, concern to build these linguistic competences rationally and consistently can only be of service to all pupils attending school. The effort towards equity characteristic of inclusive education benefits all learners in the end.

The exchanges among the various countries' representatives at the Conference, the experiences described and the assessments made in different contexts revealed gains made in certain European countries by the realisation that it is important to accommodate the linguistic

dimension in the teaching of the various disciplines, but with few exceptions showed great remoteness of the present reality of teaching practices from the requirements.

The set of issues addressed during the Conference was frequently echoed in the findings reported by the participants. Tests carried out in one country have proved that a large proportion of learners do not command the required discursive genres, particularly in writing. The multilingualism of certain regions or countries patently raises the question of all pupils' proficiency in the language of schooling, with greater immediacy than in more monolingual contexts. Teaching situations where certain disciplines are taught to the same pupils in different languages compel and encourage advanced reflection on this question.

Significant initiatives are admittedly taken in some places: research-action in primary education in an Italian region, use of the *European Language Portfolio* by teachers of non-language disciplines in Spain, publication of teaching handbooks or guides in Finland, rewriting of syllabi for language of schooling in Montenegro giving pride of place to the diversity of textual types and to discursive genres, etc. Nonetheless, overall the marked advances towards rational consideration of the linguistic dimension of every learning / teaching process still do not rise to the educational and societal challenges.

Many of the initiatives mentioned during the debates concern the needs of children who stem from migration or from linguistic minorities. The responses most often made chiefly consist in enabling them to gain access to knowledge in a language more familiar to them, or in assisting their acquisition of the language of schooling. Few initiatives are taken to tackle head-on the question of the relationship between subject contents and the linguistic dimension of the cognitive operations which are expected of learners.

There is nevertheless a notable wealth of work dedicated to the acquisition of second languages by children from migrant backgrounds, sometimes with strong support at European level. For instance, the *European Commission* has supported a project entitled "[Common European curriculum for integration of second languages – teacher training](#)", an instrument intended for use in the initial and in-service and training of teachers in order to help them cope with the linguistic diversity of their learners. Likewise, several projects conducted by the *European Centre for Modern Languages*<sup>4</sup> in Graz have been hailed as most useful.

Other worthwhile initiatives concern recalling the role of instruction in the language of schooling as a subject in preparing pupils to meet the linguistic demands of the other disciplines, and in giving them support.

Finally, there is quite a widespread form of discipline-specific learning which has long been faced with this question: bilingual teaching, offered sometimes from the start of schooling, or the CLIL/EMILE (Content and Language Integrated Learning) arrangements. The approaches applied in this context seem to have very positive effects on both language proficiencies and discipline-related skills. An assessment made in France has shown that pupils receiving bilingual education in French and in a regional language achieved overall better results in their command of the national language and in mathematics than their schoolmates following a single-language course, the results being all the more appreciable given that the amount of teaching devoted to French is half that given to the other pupils and that the whole of the maths teaching is conducted in the regional language.

With these forms of teaching, the European countries seem to possess valuable experience which might usefully be exploited and pooled. Several participants even felt that such an approach would be apt to convince teachers of the target disciplines more easily.

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<sup>4</sup> Particularly the projects MARILLE (<http://marille.ecml.at/>), MALEDIVE (<http://maledive.ecml.at/>) and CONBAT (<http://conbat.ecml.at/>).

### **3. Indispensable recognition in the curriculum of the different levels of intervention, and the specific role of teacher training**

Whatever the initiative taken at the national or regional level, nothing really effective can be hoped for if teachers and educational teams are not involved and assisted in this process. Should the emphasis be on training (initial and in-service) of the teams or on explicit presentation in the curricula of the linguistic components in the learning of disciplines? The answer is at once simple and more complex to put into practice.

All curriculum levels are to be incorporated into the thought process concerning methods for effectively addressing pupils' needs as regards command of the language of schooling. The importance of consistency between the actions taken at all levels was repeatedly emphasised during the Conference, for only this kind of consistency can make it possible to stimulate innovations, activate the players concerned, and consolidate the schemes undertaken locally. The role of the national or regional officials, and especially the players working to define teaching contents, should be to make sure that the linguistic standards that may be required of learners in the discipline concerned are explicitly set out in its actual syllabus, that the responsibility of each player in this process is recalled, and that all learners are offered the widest spectrum of learning situations. Indeed, their influence may be decisive in encouraging teaching material producers' attention to the linguistic dimension, over and above single-minded preoccupation with the contents to be instilled.

The level of the actual school is also very important. Implementation of an overall school policy on the language of schooling is possible, thus aiding coherence between the various actions and courses of teaching.

Teachers themselves must be able to diagnose and assess the aptitudes and needs of the learners entrusted to them, to arrange the forms of support that may be needed. They must be capable of planning and adapting the sequence of instruction, also having regard to its linguistic components which they impart, and of anticipating the linguistic demands that will be made in assessments, so as to prepare the learners properly for these. They must be precise about the type of writing they require of the learners: pattern (letter, report, essay, brochure...) or nature of the expected productions (narration, description/presentation, argumentation, instruction, ...) and adapt the support which they must offer the learners. For that purpose, it is imperative to incorporate into the measures to be adopted those concerning initial and in-service training in the approaches that make such provision possible, and to place suitable tools, examples of practice and instructional material at the disposal of teachers.

The presentation during the Conference of a segment of Luxembourg teachers' initial training provided insight into what might make up the content of such training. The socio-linguistic situation in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg certainly goes far to explain the acknowledgement of the urgency of such training for new secondary teachers and the initiatives taken in that direction. The presence of a very high proportion of pupils with another L1 than the language of instruction in the disciplines taught clearly raises the question of the linguistic and cultural dimension of each subject course for all educational operatives and officials. The aim is to make all these young teachers realise the importance of this linguistic dimension, to instil the essential concepts of the process of acquiring a language together with knowledge about the discursive functions and the typology of texts. Finally, they are to be taught skills for effective instructional interaction, for a learning theory of multilingualism and for adapted assessment procedures. Besides, the option of having several of the training modules studied in common by future teachers of different disciplines is a way of prioritising the emergence in schools of a shared approach to linguistic questions.



Training is founded on a series of modules each dedicated to a particular aspect of the subject area and pursuing a well-defined goal in terms of knowledge and skills. In these modules, young teachers are placed in varied positions and carry out different activities<sup>5</sup>.

A strong point of the training approach adopted is to proceed from experiences of classroom situations followed by periods of peer discussion and exchange, during which the necessary knowledge is passed on to them. The aim is for young teachers to be placed in a position of being able to think about their own practice afterwards and adapt accordingly their language-related behaviour to the aptitudes and needs of the learners in their classes. To achieve this, it is important that future teachers closely associate teaching and learning in their own experience and in their thought; thus they are asked, for example, to conduct brief lessons in front of their colleagues specialising in different disciplines, and to do so by switching from one language to the other according to activity.

A pilot experiment conducted in Georgia is worthy of mention. In order to draw teachers' attention to the specific role of language in the disciplines, tests on pupils in the bilingual course have been arranged, with the results of the first tests only covering mastery of the subject-matter of the disciplines and the second ones incorporating the linguistic dimension. Teachers are then mentored in comparison of results for the two types of tests.

The very high expectation towards teachers resulting from realisation of the importance of the questions discussed here cannot be fully met unless receptiveness to the linguistic dimension of their discipline is incorporated in their training.

Another example presented during the Conference demonstrates the possibilities for an extensive action taking realistic, coherent account of the complexity of the situations in the same education system.

The *Austrian Centre for Language Competences* has been instructed by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to conduct a project allowing the importance of the linguistic dimension to be realised by all teachers of the various disciplines, particularly those working in lower secondary education. This involved drawing on the work done at the European level, notably by the Council of Europe *Language Policy Unit*, at the same time as combating an unduly high failure rate for international evaluations among pupils in Austrian schools. This project, entitled CHAWID<sup>6</sup>, was conducted by associating research and teaching material design for different disciplines (mathematics, biology, chemistry, history and fine arts). These materials illustrate the way in which the specialised linguistic forms and vocabulary can be acquired in conjunction with the objectives of each discipline and an effective differentiation can be applied according to learners' needs, in particular by including specific support methods ("backing"), based on a valid diagnosis of the needs. A live wire of the project is also promotion of collaboration between teachers of the different disciplines and "language as subject" teachers.

What is more, a grid of competences is being developed. It is to describe the most important linguistic resources necessary for learners' success in the courses in the disciplines. It should be useful to teachers for programming their sequence of instruction and adapting their language-related behaviour.

To make the largest possible number of players appreciate the importance of this question and make known the resources devised under this project, a manageable document (in index file form) is widely distributed.

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<sup>5</sup> Information on this training programme can be consulted at the following address:

[http://www.fr.uni.lu/studies/flshase/formation\\_pedagogique\\_des\\_enseignants\\_du\\_secondaire](http://www.fr.uni.lu/studies/flshase/formation_pedagogique_des_enseignants_du_secondaire)

<sup>6</sup> CHAWID: Chancengerechte Wissensvermittlung in Deutsch als Unterrichtssprache.

The materials produced in this context can be downloaded at the following address:

[www.oesz.at](http://www.oesz.at) (section „Sprachsensibler Fachunterricht“).

The success of this project rests on the coherence of action by the different players concerned: engagement of the responsible ministry for promoting and distributing the documents, utilisation by numerous institutions (universities, higher teaching colleges, ...), creation of a network, information campaigns and so on.

In this combination of ancillary measures, emphasis can be placed on the role performed by the specific in-service training modules offered and capable of being readily fitted into other training actions.

#### 4. Different approaches to curriculum reform

As has been reiterated at several points in the preceding pages, the favourable outcome of the moves made to take up the challenge raised by the linguistic dimension of subject teaching for all learners' success depends of the coherence of the action carried out at the various curriculum levels.

A heavy responsibility falls, in this process, to those in charge of drawing up curricula and preparing teaching materials. Two further examples during the Conference, of very different configuration, showed the paths which this assumption of responsibility may take.

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has been engaged for several years in a curriculum reform taking in the explicit objectives of discipline-related literacy. Since 2006, all curricula for all disciplines have comprised linguistic components combined with the subject-matter of the discipline strictly speaking. In 2010, the ministry decided to go further still in asserting the importance of acquiring such language proficiencies. For that purpose a "Framework for basic skills" has been devised, defining the basic skills in five fields: oral skills, written comprehension, written expression, command of information and communication technologies and ability to use mathematical language in different situations<sup>7</sup>. This Framework later served as a basis between 2012 and 2013 for rewriting the curricula of disciplines such as mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, English and Norwegian. Each of these curricula thus specifies the attainments expected of learners in the five aforementioned fields. The table below illustrates, for a given skill and level, the form which this correspondence may have taken in a specific discipline.

Except from the "Framework"	Except from the natural sciences curriculum
Level 2 in the basic skill "written expression":	The objectives of the discipline are to render pupils capable of
Able to use notes and sources as the basis for written production, quoting the sources.	- observing and taking note of the changes in a tree or perennial plant over time; - collecting and processing information from various sources on natural science subjects.
Able to express one's opinion, adopt different viewpoints and formulate questions.	- discussing the life cycle of plant and animal species and putting questions about it in order to obtain information or raise queries.
Able to narrate, describe and construct different types of texts in relation to the content of a discipline.	- using natural science concepts to describe and present their own observations in various ways.

<sup>7</sup> This [Framework](#) can be consulted in English from the Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education

Here we rediscover an approach akin to the one adopted for modern languages: the drafting and adoption of the [\*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages\*](#) by the Council of Europe *Language Policy Unit*, then itemisation of the levels of proficiency for each of the foreign languages taught in order to specify the corresponding linguistic, pragmatic and cultural components ([\*CEFR Reference Level Descriptions per language\*](#)).

The experience of the persons in charge of writing curricula has shown that this approach has allowed, inter alia, closer compliance with the necessary balance of basic skills, better detailed explanation of what was expected of learners, and securing a common understanding of what the requirement of proficiency in these basic skills involves.

The approach does not stop at this stage, however. There is provision for teachers' methodological guides, in which they will find examples of learning sequences whereby the competences listed in the curricula can be acquired, avenues for adapting their teaching approaches to the goals pursued, and considerations regarding the recurrent questions about such an approach. Moreover, actions are also planned in the direction of publishers of teaching materials, as well as to inform local school directors.

An appreciably different approach has been adopted in one of the German Länder, North Rhine-Westphalia. This Land is confronted with the need to combat failure in part of the school population, particularly in the type of school comprising the lowest-performing learners in relation to the expectations of the institution (Hauptschule). The language education policy pursued in this Land is typified by a large number of initiatives for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations: large-scale assessment of second language skills at pre-school level; compulsory supporting language courses at that level; optional courses for maintaining skills in languages of origin among primary and secondary learners from a migrant background; compulsory training modules for new teachers in strategies of support to the acquisition of a second language via disciplines; training of counsellors under institutional programmes in aid of language learning. All these measures have helped to create a context making for collective awareness of the importance of the linguistic dimension for success at school.

This is the context in which the educational officials of the Land have implemented a reform to the curriculum of the schools concerned. To give substance to the conception which has taken hold that the whole educational team of each school bears collective responsibility in the learners' linguistic education, an effort has been undertaken to draw up an inventory of linguistic resources in "academic" German (consisting of language, know-how, strategies, linguistic competences, ...) which must be acquired at the end of compulsory schooling (at 15/16 years of age) to allow continuation in academic or vocational training. The inventory was compiled on the basis of analysis of curricular documents, textbooks and teaching materials in use, documents setting out the linguistic expectations for access to professional qualifications, and expert publications.

The inventory is arranged in five parts:

- general classroom interaction: negotiation of meaning and participation;
- collection and processing of information;
- cognitive-communicative strategies and basic discursive functions;
- summing up, presenting and sharing learning acquisitions;
- availability of linguistic means and elements for applying the above-mentioned proficiencies.

This arrangement makes it plain that the content of this "Framework" is not built around operative language competences but essentially on the basis of skills linked with learning and teaching or cognitive operations with their linguistic implications. Thus, to take but one example, the field of "cognitive-communicative strategies and basic discursive functions" is explained in these terms: "Pupils are capable, helped by appropriate linguistic strategies and resources, of putting information, experiences, observations and reflections to use by availing

themselves of essential language-related functions. This presupposes inter alia a command of the following cognitive and linguistic capacities: naming, defining; describing; explaining, specifying; evaluating, assessing; reporting, narrating; reasoning ...”

Unlike the Framework developed and used in Norway, this one sets out to reflect the linguistic substrate common to all disciplines. It is not designed to be systematically given a different breakdown for each discipline. Rather, it aims to allow the transfer of language-related expertise from one discipline to another.

Nonetheless, the validation of this tool necessitated its critical examination in the ambit of each discipline. This examination prompted highly positive opinions of its ability to register language practices in the different courses. It has even been partly adopted in the syllabus for some subjects. Other disciplines saw the need to make it more directly comprehensible for specialists in those disciplines by translating some of its specifications into terms linked with the content of the discipline, sometimes leading to a limited number of minor changes.

The relationship between these three curriculum components is of very real concern for each subject: contents specific to the discipline; linguistic requirements associated with those contents; command of the “academic” register of the language. It must be possible for their interconnection to be accommodated in the curriculum of each country or of each education system. During the Conference, various possible approaches were described and illustrated for including this Framework in the curriculum and possibly adapting it to the syllabus of different disciplines such as history, biology, mathematics, sciences and religious instruction.

It was possible to present three options:

- a) specification concerning each of these three components in the same curricular document per discipline;
- b) specification of the content pertaining to the discipline and of the linguistic requirements connected with that content in a single document for each subject, supplemented by a more general document relating to the necessary command of the “academic” register of the language concerning all disciplines;
- c) on the one hand, specification of the discipline-related content and of the linguistic requirements connected with it in a single document per subject and, on the other hand, incorporation of these requirements as to command of the language’s academic dimension into the syllabus of instruction in the “language as subject”, one of whose functions is therefore explicitly to prepare pupils for the linguistic demands which are peculiar to the course of training.

This Framework forms a guiding document for revision of subject syllabi. One of the gains made by this initiative, and not the least significant, is to have prompted a major change in the perception of the issues raised by the linguistic dimension of disciplines: this question is no longer considered strictly in relation to the difficulties of vulnerable target groups but is approached in the perspective of each learner’s right to quality education.

One of the merits of the Conference was precisely that it enabled each representative of the member states to discover the diversity of the approaches applied in several countries. It must straightway be acknowledged that the examples presented above differ mainly in the way of accommodating the specificity of the discourses inherent in the disciplines. The tool developed in Austria avoids presenting a frame of reference and emphasises assistance to teachers in gaining awareness of the challenges and implementing approaches to take up those challenges. The Framework used in Norway defines in a general perspective the linguistic skills which all should be taught, and has the same skills subsumed in the language practices of the disciplines. The approach applied in North Rhine-Westphalia is a holistic one which, at a meta-level, identifies the cognitive skills and operations common to all disciplines and highlights the need for the action of the disciplines as a whole to give learners the linguistic resources required for these language-related acts and cognitive operations. In this action common to the whole teaching team, sharing of roles among teachers of the different

disciplines is moreover conceivable, the teachers responsible for the language of schooling as subject being able to take charge of the part of this inventory more specifically dedicated to the linguistic resources whose acquisition is to be ensured.

Other far-reaching actions were mentioned during the Conference, such as the work done on the mathematics syllabus in Germany and the science syllabus in Switzerland. Others are also in hand, as in Cyprus. The examples presented during the proceedings were chosen for illustrating different approaches. As the various speakers pointed out, these moves made in different countries owe their inspiration largely to the work conducted in this field by the Council of Europe *Language Policy Unit*. Reflections in the context of its work have led to a number of conclusions and to the production of tools.

The preparation and the very wide use of the *European Framework of Reference for Languages* were aided by the fact that despite their peculiarities, modern languages have comparable acquisition processes, belong to one and the same subject area and share a single professional culture. The same does not apply to the other school disciplines which pertain to different sciences and technologies, do not share the same teaching theory and are associated with separate educational traditions. Thus, devising a common European framework can only be envisaged at a very abstract and insufficiently operational level.

The approach adopted by the *Language Policy Unit* consists in analysing the linguistic dimension of the ambit of each discipline. On the basis of a linguistic study of the patterns of discourse used in putting across the knowledge pertaining to the discipline, various documents and tools<sup>8</sup> have been made available to member states to enable them to enhance the syllabus of the discipline concerned by clarification of expectations as regards the discursive forms and textual styles in use in the classroom interactions, in the documents of the scientific community and in the social discourses where the discipline is in evidence.

Thus the approach concerning the syllabus for the history discipline “starts out” from the educational values then documents the social situations of communication in which history is present. These communication situations afford access to the types of social discourse in which historical knowledge is summoned up. Next to be identified are the skills specific to the discipline (components of epistemological proficiency in history, components of pure historical knowledge). One thus “arrives at” the level of the education system proper, where it becomes indispensable to identify the scholastic situations of communication relating to history teaching and the corresponding scholastic genres. On these foundations, it is then possible to pinpoint the linguistic and semiotic proficiencies specifically necessary for this teaching. These can be broken down into strategic competence, discursive competence and formal competences.

This approach has actually been implemented first of all for the discipline of history, then for the other school subjects such as sciences, literature and mathematics<sup>9</sup>.

These tools posted on line identify the categories allowing descriptors of competences to be linked with inventories of forms of a given language. Three concepts perform an essential role here, and are on the whole missing from the approaches described above. The idea of *text* is fundamental; indeed, learners are expected to produce texts. These texts come under different *discursive genres* (statement, report, record of experimentation...) which it is expedient to break down into *cognitive/linguistic functions* or *operations* such as describing, explaining, reasoning...

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<sup>8</sup> Especially the study “[Language and school subjects: Linguistic dimensions of knowledge building in school curricula](#)”, prepared on the basis of prior analyses dedicated to four disciplines

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010\\_ForumGeneva/1\\_LIS-History2010\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010_ForumGeneva/1_LIS-History2010_en.pdf)

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010\\_ForumGeneva/1-LIS-sciences2010\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010_ForumGeneva/1-LIS-sciences2010_EN.pdf)

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010\\_ForumGeneva/1\\_LIS-Literature2011\\_EN.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010_ForumGeneva/1_LIS-Literature2011_EN.doc)

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010\\_ForumGeneva/4\\_LIS-Mathematics2012\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Source2010_ForumGeneva/4_LIS-Mathematics2012_EN.pdf)

The presentation within these documents is not organised according to a chronology of acquisition but describes in a systematic form the possible specifications of the objectives peculiar to the school subjects, at different levels of the curriculum (values, goals, classroom activities...), without prejudging the use to which these specifications will be put.

High expectations are placed in the *Language Policy Unit*. The tools and information put on line are plentiful, but reflection must be carried on and the exchanges during the Conference will certainly have an influence on the work to be undertaken and the tools to devise.

Over and above the continuation of this work, expectations concern the need for strong political assertion to demonstrate that initiatives are needed in the member states.

The participants also expressed the importance which recommendations or examples of good practice intended for teachers' initial and in-service training would have in their eyes.

The value of the available guides for accommodating the linguistic dimension of the curriculum in the ambit of each discipline was confirmed by the wish expressed for extending the list of disciplines concerned, particularly to the central disciplines in vocational training.

The need to pool experiences and practices was reaffirmed on several occasions, and this should give fresh impetus to the use of the [\*Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education\*](#) available on the *Language Policy Unit* website.

Finally, several representatives of member states emphasised the importance of Council of Europe support to the education systems undertaking curriculum changes.

The focus in this part of the report on the need to facilitate all learners' command of the language of schooling used in teaching the disciplines ought not to suppress an aspect also amply stressed during the Conference proceedings: the role that can and must be performed by use of learners' language of origin where, for example, they have gained access in that language to knowledge in a discipline at an earlier stage of their schooling, or where they benefit, in some education systems, from the possibility of receiving such instruction in their language of origin.

The frequent finding that pupils have more difficulties in penetrating the curriculum because they use a language other than their first language in this connection does not always result in recognition of the first language. It still sometimes leads to the mistaken conclusion that exclusive attention should be paid to the language of schooling, at the expense of the pupil's first language, for the sake of "bringing up to standard".

Learners have resources in their possession, and should be helped so that they may derive all possible benefits from them for success at school. These resources may be of different kinds but are definitely present in each person's linguistic repertoire. The second challenge regarding the role of languages in the pursuit of quality in education lies precisely in putting a premium on linkage of learners' competences and knowledge in different languages, on making these resources converge thanks to the educational action.

## **5. Convergences between languages (as subjects) for quality education**

The role of convergences between the different language learning processes has long been emphasised by the *Language Policy Unit*. It was markedly present in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and in the [\*Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe\*](#). It was extensively explored in the [\*Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education\*](#), published in 2010 and subjected to critical scrutiny at three intergovernmental seminars in 2011 and 2012. In the latter *curriculum guide*, two conditions for quality of language education were highlighted:

- need to conceive the curriculum in its entirety and no longer as fragmented between disciplines;
- need to provide pupils with a variety of learning situations.

The concern is to achieve progress in practices of reasoned, systematic development of transversal competences that may be metalinguistic or linguistic or again concern learning or communication strategies. This cross-disciplinary learning depends on teaching of the different languages and should deliberately draw on the proficiencies and knowledge already acquired by learners.

At stake here is the efficiency of language teaching arrangements, and so are the values and principles that underpin plurilingual and intercultural education: respect for diversity and development of individuals' self-reliance. Recognition of the reality and the wealth of the learner's language repertoire, including knowledge and competences which s/he may have in other languages than those taught, encourages the development in her/him of positive behaviour and attitudes towards diversity as well as awareness of the resources that such knowledge and proficiencies represent by virtue of their complementary relationship.

Seeking convergences between languages known and learnt as subjects can have very diverse gradations depending on the languages concerned and their respective status. Three possible instances were explored in presentations during the Conference:

- the instructional potential of knowledge in the languages of origin as a prop for learning the language of schooling in a multilingual context. The research and observation reported in this connection relate to teaching methods for giving newcomers to France access to the dominant language of schooling. The avenue followed is systematically inviting the children concerned to compare their respective languages to make them realise, in their own words, that each tongue uses the universal categories of language in a specific way. This realisation, verbally expressed for purposes of comparison, of the functioning of the language best mastered by them acts as an effective fulcrum for comprehension of and familiarisation with the regular mechanisms of the language which they are to acquire. Whereas knowledge of these languages is often regarded collectively as a handicap to success at school, the experiments reported show that on the contrary they may constitute a resource;
- the mutual inputs of a regional language and a national language as languages of schooling in a bilingual context. Observation of the linguistic and cultural reality of our societies in Europe reveals that languages are very much in contact, including within each state; zones of "bilingual context" are many. Inside these areas, regional languages can quite obviously act as a bridge between languages and cultures. The success of experiments in learning mutual comprehension between languages in the same family, particularly relying on regional languages, testified to this<sup>10</sup>. The presentation of France's experience in this respect showed that regional languages can also perform a "crossover role" towards the national language (they are indeed present in the national language through accent, syntax and vocabulary) or between generations. They also provide keys for understanding pupils' immediate cultural environment (for example place names). Intergenerational link, social and integrative link, a patch of variety and diversity in a sometimes unduly monolithic representation of the national identity, teaching of regional languages (as well as of minority languages or languages of origin) plainly has an emotional dimension that provides a useful source of motivation for developing their plurilingual proficiency;

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<sup>10</sup> The example presented during the Conference is taken from the Euromania textbook "J'apprends par les langues , 8-11 ans".

- an experiment in basing the learning of a foreign language on the language of schooling. The Swiss study plans now existing or being prepared favour coherence between teaching of the territorial language and foreign languages – generally English and a second national language, which are learned from primary school onwards. For example, under the curricular project “Passepartout”<sup>11</sup> for six German Swiss and bilingual cantons located at the French/German language boundary, a systematic approach tapping the convergences between the language of schooling and the two foreign languages studied at primary school has been adopted. This is made possible by organising the study plan for languages around three essential dimensions: arrangement of the curriculum in fields of competences which are alike for all languages taught (language of schooling and foreign languages); definition of transversal and transferrable competences (linked with knowledge of the workings of the language and with communication and learning strategies) to be acquired in an organised sequence; tying the sequences to textual styles, whereby coherence between the different language learning processes is possible. These three fields of competence were defined in relation to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* as regards the first of them, on the *CARAP*<sup>12</sup> pattern for the two others. More specifically, the “Passepartout” curricular project mentioned above has given rise to the drafting of a handbook (“Millefeuilles”) equipping teachers with tools that enable them to apply this approach and helping pupils to understand its dynamics through clarification of the link between the learning activities proposed and the fields of competence set out in the study plan.

Other experiments conducted in different countries were mentioned, such as interdisciplinary projects in Andorra with joint presence of teachers of two different languages, or recognition of an effort towards synergy in some teaching materials. Finally, it should be reported that several participants stress that the most favourable moment for deploying such a convergence-seeking approach seems to be the stage of primary education.

It is important to adopt a broad understanding of convergence and a whole range of possible objectives. There is not just one way of implementing the convergences between languages. The main thing is to take the appropriate measures in a given context even if they are very modest at first. Different levels of intervention are possible at the level of the class and the school and at the national, regional and local levels. Co-ordination and planning at the level of the school are especially important. The risk of misunderstandings exists: it is not a matter of “blending” together different types of languages and depriving them of their role or their centrality; the convergences between languages must not give rise to a “folkloric” tendency.

In spite of all this, the three aforementioned examples of instructional use of the convergences between languages learned and/or known display obvious common features:

All record **positive effects on competences** in the pupils. Connection between linguistic codes fosters awareness of the workings of language in learners. Access to language skill is indeed gained via languages, but its development is greatly assisted by reflective activities concerning them. The reflective activities relate to the categories of language in the first instance, concern linguistic and cognitive transfers to be assisted in the second situation, and are coupled with textual competence in the last case mentioned above. Fostering cognitive and metalinguistic activities helps learners enter into the complexity of language and equips them with the corresponding tools.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.1000feuilles.ch/> and <http://www.passepartout-sprachen.ch/de.html>.

<sup>12</sup> *Across Languages and Cultures*, CARAP, European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz, Council of Europe, 2010 (<http://carap.ecml.at>).



Comparisons, transfers from one language to another, development of mutual comprehension, awareness of points in common and differences between linguistic varieties, are all paths for supplanting a practice of accumulation or juxtaposition of competences in different languages with a strategy of continuum between languages and complementarity between the components of the individual linguistic repertoire. By helping learners build bridges between languages, their ability to make use of all the resources of language is developed. The use of languages must be interconnected to encourage transfer; languages should not be separated but reinforce each other to build up a communicative competence that works.

The starting point for building this must naturally be the learners' linguistic reality: work on kin languages of one territory, accommodating the languages of origin of the learners present in the group, experience in using the language of schooling, etc.

Moreover, revelation of convergences between languages can, as is distinctly apparent in the example of inclusion of regional languages in language learning processes, help make it understood that every language is a varied entity, that each language observes a standard but also has variations.

Finally it should be emphasised that foreign language teaching does not have functional objectives alone but also an intercultural dimension. Making the convergences between courses explicit has plainly propitious effects on the development of learners' intercultural competence. Among other things, it integrates capacity for de-centration, that is the ability to think differently and to see things in different perspectives.

The interest taken in teaching at the points of convergence between languages makes it possible to weave horizontal relations between them, both on the basis of the linguistic similarities or dissimilarities and from the standpoint of the representations carried by these languages. In this process, the learners are induced to transfer their knowledge and skills from language to language, for the greater benefit of global linguistic competence and better school integration. With school becoming a setting where contact of languages is put to "didactic" use, pupils are better prepared to cope with these contacts which are the reality of our societies and to keep at bay any form of isolationism or conflict.

The fabric metaphor borrowed from one of the speakers illustrates this key idea: "The "warp" represents the verticality of the thread, the identity of each language. It exists; it is defining. But if we have nothing but vertical warps, however many or however strong or repeated, they will not hold. It is therefore necessary to have the "weft", the horizontal thread, as a notion of continuum, discreet and not opposing but reinforcing the warp."

The positive effects of such approaches are not confined to the competences acquired by learners but also concern **teaching and learning behaviour**.

Convergence in language learning usually goes hand in hand with enhanced collaboration of teachers. When synergy between language learning processes is exploited in educational practice and theory, teachers are also prompted to analyse their styles of intervention to orient it when necessary towards allowing for the fact that the pupils possess knowledge which they should be made fully aware of and on which it is important to induce them to build.

Educational resources are shared; they are not solely supplied by the teacher. They are sometimes in the learners' hands and in their individual repertoires; they may be available in the immediate environment (for example through field surveys for the use of the resources afforded by regional languages). Moreover, it is observed that the reality of exposure to language tends to shift from the language lesson towards the learners' experience outside the lesson and that the importance of this social practice may be decisive for access to the level of competence aimed at, as shown for example by the [SurveyLang](#) conducted for the European Commission. It seems important, in this new configuration, for the exact role of the language lesson to be reconsidered. It should help learners organise this exposure in order to derive maximum benefit from it. It should ensure that pupils can construct competences on the basis

of this encounter with languages, particularly by developing the transversal dimension of skills.

Lastly, notice should be taken of the fact that in the media and in the learners' environment, convergences and borrowings from different languages are actually used; this provides openings which can be exploited in the context of the courses taught.

The alteration of the role of language as subject teachers is plain, but not straightforward. A teacher may agree with the policies and the ideas of plurilingualism if induced to consider them rationally, but behave quite otherwise in class, for example by disregarding the fact that for many pupils the classroom language is not their first language. Likewise, aligning the curricula of different languages in several countries (common objectives, identical descriptors of skills, shared teaching syllabi, etc.) does not necessarily result in instructional practices conducive to convergences. Indeed, behaviours do not stem purely from logical thought but also from representations nurtured by habits and traditions. When teachers integrate convergences into their teaching, this is very often marginal and by way of a "plus" in relation to the essential thrust of the teaching.

As was amply emphasised above concerning accommodation of the linguistic dimension in the teaching of the other subjects, a curriculum reform in that direction presupposes that every facility is provided to ensure that the various players understand the meaning and value of it and are helped with implementation. It is also necessary for all teachers concerned to have sufficient knowledge of the acquisition processes for several languages, and multiple literacy. These expectations of teachers are substantial. They have to progress from a representation of isolated teaching and learning of one language to representations of what it is to develop plurilingual competence, with its implications for aims, methodology, assessment, their own role in the teaching team and involvement of the families.

It is also necessary for all teachers to have at their disposal useful information on the characteristics of the different languages represented in their classes. Besides, they should all gain experience of the use of plurilingual competence. Avenues are being explored in that direction here and there: obligation imposed in Georgia for bivalency in two different languages; in the training of language teachers, stipulation of experience in learning another language than the one in which they specialise.

To meet this need, the above-mentioned Swiss curricular project "Passepartout" couples the provisions made to reform the language teaching curriculum with compulsory training courses for all foreign language teachers and with dissemination of teaching materials. The experience described above relating to the link between regional languages and another language is sustained in particular by a handbook made available to teachers. The *European Centre for Modern Languages* places resources at teachers' disposal to help them exploit the linguistic and cultural diversity in their classes for teaching the language of schooling.

Such an approach plainly has a **direct relationship with the values and principles on which the work of the Council of Europe is founded.**

It is indeed essential that the inquiry into the convergences to bring into operation between the different languages should not be approached from a purely technical angle but be addressed within a broader outlook incorporating the four dimensions below:

- **objectives and values:** the values of plurilingual and intercultural education provide a core for unifying the objectives of language teaching in the entire curriculum and highlight the importance of all languages present at school. These values lay firm foundations for pupils' active participation in modern society as democratic citizens.

The respect due to linguistic and cultural diversity is also secured by acknowledging that the same language cannot be at the same time the national language and a regional language, and that speaking this language is "neither a failing, nor an error, nor a disorder". The same applies to understanding of the diversity of languages and of the cultures in which regional or

minority languages are vectors for inter-regional solidarity and for cohesive inclusion of the languages of Europe.

Explicit reliance on these languages known to pupils, including languages of migration, signifies recognition of their importance, their full status in the learners' repertoire of competences. To have experience through school of one's language enjoying equal dignity with any other language which has stronger social recognition is to intensify one's interest in the educational project, to give new meaning to one's learning processes and to the goal of success at school. Undergoing, in the context of one's learning, the experience of appreciation for other languages and cultures lends credibility to the educational concept of tolerance and respect for otherness. The *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* is very explicit on that score: "nothing substantial can be done in the field of plurilingual and intercultural education unless children's home languages are in some way recognised, accepted and taken seriously by schools."<sup>13</sup>

- **dispositions and attitudes:** it is necessary to think not only in terms of cognitive development and rational apprehension but to include more emotional dimensions of learning as well. To nurture an appropriate attitude to languages, their workings and their uses have to be better understood. It is important that all teachers should have the same positive attitude to diversity in all its forms, particularly to different languages and cultures, and try to instil the same positive attitude in learners.

- **teaching approaches or methods:** quality education emanates from the process as much as from the content. It is therefore expedient to examine teaching methods not with a view to imposing a uniform approach, but so as to have interpretations shared and determine where and when it is proper to adopt either common or different methods.

- **content:** exchange is possible regarding terminological aspects and approaches in relation to textual types and styles in order to decide on their common or contrasting points in the different subjects. For example, the experiment conducted in the Swiss cantons and described above shows that some facets of the drafting of types of text which are analogous in all subjects can be taught in a coherent and unified manner.

There remains a recurrent question concerning assessment which, to be coherent, given the developments described here, cannot be confined to assessing the level of operational command of a particular language. The cognitive progression, the information handling process and the ability to activate one's various resources should also undergo formative assessment.

In the same perspective, it would certainly be expedient to consider the possible scope in assessment for mediation activity in a linguistic register, based essentially on the ability to interconnect different linguistic and cultural systems.

It is also likely that the approach explored by the *European Language Portfolio* would benefit from more distinct consideration of these convergences.

Indeed, the holistic conception of the learning of all languages in a learner's career should prompt overall forecasting as part of devising a curriculum scenario, a procedure described in the [\*Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education\*](#)<sup>14</sup>, interconnecting the place of the various language courses in the career, their specific objectives, the particular methods and the contents of each of the languages concerned, together with the links between them. In this framework, one might raise the question of the essential objectives of language learning at school: mastering these

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<sup>13</sup> Page 59.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 2.

languages at a set standard of functional proficiency and/or developing transversal learning skills transferrable from one language to another.

## 6. Plurilingual and intercultural education and quality in education

The programme of Conference proceedings shows a division into three parts, the first dedicated to language of schooling in the teaching of the various school subjects, the second to utilisation of the convergences between languages taught as subjects. However, these topics are not to be regarded as elements separate or isolated from each other. Quite the contrary, one of the aims of the Conference is in fact to advocate a unified vision establishing links between aspects, still insufficiently recognised, of teaching languages as such and teaching in a language or languages. This holistic vision moreover has a name, *plurilingual and intercultural education*. That is why the third part of the Conference dealt with the question to what extent and under what conditions plurilingual and intercultural education is a response to the challenges set out in the [Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on ensuring quality in education](#).

The actual text of the Recommendation contains immediate links with the topics raised during the Conference.

In it, the fact that language proficiency is the foundation of all learning is reiterated. “Quality education should seek to be inclusive. Public authorities have the responsibility for ensuring quality education also for those who are unable to make successful use of mainstream education programmes for very diverse reasons, which range from lack of proficiency in the language(s) of instruction or substantial differences in previous educational curricula to severe mental or physical disability (para. 26)”

It is asserted, as in the clause recalled above, that education systems should ensure mastery of the language of schooling by all pupils as it constitutes one of the crucial keys to the inclusion of all and moreover that the same pupils’ home languages should be taken into account. “Public authorities should ensure that cultural or linguistic factors are acknowledged as a student’s heritage and are not interpreted as a permanent inability to follow regular education programmes. (para. 28)”

In both these areas, the work carried out by the *Language Policy Unit*, whose ground-breaking character was emphasised, is obviously placed in the perspective established by the Recommendation and open new avenues which have been discussed in the preceding pages.

This link between the inputs of plurilingual and intercultural education and the pursuit of quality in education can also be examined in the light of some notions put forward in the Recommendation.

“For the purposes of this recommendation, “quality education” is understood as education which [...] enables pupils and students to develop appropriate competences, self-confidence and critical thinking to help them become responsible citizens and improve their employability. (para. 6.e)”

The training owed to learners in order for them to become responsible citizens in our democratic societies and acquire knowledge, competences and attitudes aiding their employability in a more and more globalised labour market depends inter alia, says the Recommendation, on **developing their critical sense**.

This demand placed on education systems is addressed firstly by reflection on the conditions of access to discipline-related knowledge and competences, particularly by way of the attention paid to mastery of discursive genres and of the linguistic forms specific to the teaching of different subjects and to the actions of the communities surrounding the

disciplines in the life of society. Critical sense must be nourished by ability to gain knowledge.

The importance attached in the Recommendation to the development of critical sense also echoes the role performed by this ability in intercultural competence. The *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* defines intercultural competence as follows: “knowledge (of the ways in which people interact in a multilingual context), comprehension (the ability to identify/compare/juxtapose similar phenomena in the life of two (or more) social groups and their cultures), existential competences (curiosity regarding others and recognition of the relativity of one’s own cultural references) and commitment (the determination and ability to “read” others’ and one’s own values and behaviour critically and lucidly)”<sup>15</sup>. As is plainly apparent in this tentative definition, the idea is definitely to place an operational complexion on this competence, the ability to take a critical, benign, informed and committed attitude to any form of otherness. This attitude is of course developed by way of the different opportunities for encounter with otherness when they are used, via verbalisation of reactions and attitudes, in an educative perspective like this. Just as plurilingual competence develops through exploration of the convergences between languages and their complementary features, intercultural education is transversal in that it must find a form and devices specific to each discipline and become a particular aspect of the teaching of each subject. Each discourse associated with a discipline is a cultural one for which learners’ appreciation can usefully be ensured.

The teaching of foreign languages by nature encourages access to knowledge about the cultures concerned, and highlights exchanges about the differences present in the documents studied. This teaching is indeed a prime setting for such education, even though it would definitely be expedient to reappraise the linkage between language proficiencies and intercultural competence. Likewise, the use at and by the school of the various languages and of the varieties intrinsic to these languages can provide matter for the critical sense which all concur in recognising as one of the central objectives of any education system, if only by considering the relationship between language and power.

Intercultural education must naturally make use of the very special opportunity offered by the reality of the groups in classrooms, particularly in multilingual contexts. By taking account of all languages and cultures present in the group, by recognising their value and potential for the development of personal identities, by permitting all learners to experience this kind of active stance in favour of inclusion, the ability developed in them is indeed intercultural competence. Intercultural education uses all the opportunities offered in the types of experience permitted by the curriculum; the intercultural competence developed in this way can be exercised in respect of all forms of otherness encountered in democratic life, as for example those actuated by social or cultural differences.

**The objective of employability** is also closely connected with the foregoing. In that perspective there should of course be emphasis on the need for substantial competences in the various subjects on the curriculum, including those in the languages taught. Just as plainly, however, intercultural competence, that is ability to enter into energetic, committed, benign and critical interaction with otherness in all its forms is a requirement for employability in a globalised economy. The attitudes and knowhow expected in this context are not a matter of techniques to be acquired, but far more of an education on the basis of experiences organised or guided in the framework of the training received.

The same goes for plurilingual competence, that is ability to manage the linguistic and cultural resources in one’s individual repertoire, to build and amplify these resources through systematic, controlled transfers between the languages, to learn new languages or enhance

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<sup>15</sup> *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*, page 18 (underlining by the author of this report).

one's proficiency in known languages together with a positive attitude to languages in aggregate.

The convergences between the experiences undergone by learners and between the languages learnt and/or known thus play a considerable part in relation to development of the critical sense and employability propounded in the Committee of Ministers Recommendation.

There of course remains the principal concern, impressing on decision-makers at national or regional level, as well as on the players in schools, the importance and feasibility of the orientations and arrangements proposed in the languages field for applying the principles of the Recommendation.

The opposition and tension liable to be prompted by these approaches are real. They are due primarily to the traditions in education systems where the disciplines which come into the curriculum are usually thought of in juxtaposition and as if isolated from each other. This opposition may be stiffened by understandable anxiety about an overhaul of the representations concerning the role of each teacher and each discipline in the efforts for the learners' success. They can also stem from not understanding the implications to be inferred from this objective of employability of each learner, in a period of recession in which prevention of dropping out represents a major challenge to our societies. The challenge is of course one of persuasion that the proper response is not to concentrate efforts on a few disciplines or languages. Far more, it involves relying on the whole of the resources in the learners' possession, which cannot play their full part unless they are recognised as such. It is also a matter of aiding the inclusion of all learners by taking account of their difficulties and by the school's acceptance, in forms suited to the context and to the discipline concerned, of their linguistic and cultural identities, thus building a bridge between the school culture and the family culture.

It is admittedly difficult, as research now stands, to adduce quantifiable evidence of the positive effects of these approaches on the results obtained by learners. Nor is an intent to measure everything feasible or indeed desirable. However, the need to provide proof of the qualitative improvements attained by these methods should be complied with and served by specific work, given that the existence of quantitative data may sometimes play a part in decision-making.

## **7. What now?**

But reflection on these subjects should be guided essentially by respect for the values and principles central to the action of the Council of Europe, which were clearly seen during the entire Conference proceedings to be in perfect synergy with the curriculum changes and the instructional approaches proposed by way of contributing to the quality of education.

The importance of the *Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on ensuring quality education* should be estimated at its correct value. It proposes, for the first time, a definition of what "quality in education" is. It thereby aims not at an improvement in specific mechanisms in the learners' training, but embraces the entire education system and curriculum and proposes radical changes in the very nature of the education and training delivered, so as to respond more satisfactorily both to the need for fostering everyone's personal fulfilment and to the demands of societies regarding learners' ability to perform an active role in democratic life, presupposing inter alia social inclusion, self-confidence and critical sense. This Recommendation also takes into account the needs of our societies for economic competitiveness and the labour market.

This text should be widely distributed at all levels.

The Recommendation also requires adaptive implementation. That is precisely what is going on in the languages field. The Conference proceedings and follow-up form an important step in actuating the principles and objectives of this inspirational text. This implementation should quite obviously take the fullest account of the reality and the dynamics peculiar to each educational context. Likewise, in most cases it is not a matter of wanting to reform the entire curriculum. Any step in the directions mapped over the two days is a step forward.

On the side of the *Language Policy Unit*, initiatives are already foreseen to help member states make such steps towards improvement in the quality of the education delivered.

Among those that could be foreshadowed at the end of the Conference, some concern the language of schooling aspects debated during the Conference:

- preparation, accompanied by organising seminars, of a Handbook for helping member states overhaul their curriculum to accommodate the linguistic dimension of the disciplines and for training teachers to do this;
- guidance for states wishing to embark on the revision of syllabi for subjects other than languages;
- release to all, via the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education* on the Council of Europe website, of examples of reformed curricular frameworks or teaching materials.

Other initiatives concern foreign language teaching and assessment:

- amplifying the banks of descriptors illustrating the proficiency levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). Needs exist in particular for language activities with a mediating function and for written interaction as well as for taking academic skills into account as regards proficiency levels below the C levels (particularly for learners benefiting from CLIL/EMILE arrangements or from forms of bilingual teaching);
- preparing and distributing texts and documents allowing the role and the use of this *Framework* to be repositioned in all of the documents on which the action of the *Language Policy Unit* is based;
- assistance offered to member states wishing to link their language examinations to the CEFR levels more reliably and explicitly;
- thoughts on assessment of plurilingual and intercultural competence;
- revising the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* on the basis of its piloting and of the three seminars devoted to it. This will essentially involve clarifying some concepts and their implications, reinforcing the link with the *European Language Portfolio* and the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* and furnishing examples of practical implementation in the *Guide*.

Lastly, a questionnaire should soon reach the member states to take stock with them of the moves made in each country and region in the various fields of action of the *Language Policy Unit*.



Languages in/for Education  
 Langues dans/pour l'Éducation  
 Language Policy Division  
 Division des Politiques linguistiques

## Intergovernmental Conference

### *Quality and inclusion in education : the unique role of languages*

Strasbourg, 18-19 September 2013

Palais de l'Europe, Room 9



COUNCIL OF EUROPE    CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE  
 Language Policy  
 Politiques linguistiques

## DRAFT PROGRAMME

Wednesday 18 septembre 2013	
08.30 - 09.00	Registration
Chair : Johanna Panthier Language Policy Unit 09.00 - 9.45	OFFICIAL OPENING - Council of Europe <i>Policy priorities of the Council of Europe and the role of education</i> - Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director general of DG II <i>Education policies and social inclusion</i> - Elisabet Dahle, State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research of Norway
9.45 - 10.45	EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES : <i>The specific role of the Council of Europe in the education field</i> - Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, Director of Democratic citizenship and Participation <i>The European Commission's language policy in the 2020 agenda</i> - Pierre Mairesse, Director, <b>EAC.A</b> , Europe 2020: Development of policy and analysis by country Introduction to the conference : objectives, main themes and working methods - General Rapporteur - Francis Goullier
10.45-11.15	<i>Coffee break</i>
Chair : Eike Thürmann 11.15 - 11.45	<b>THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN LEARNING SCHOOL SUBJECTS AND THEIR SPECIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO QUALITY EDUCATION</b> Introduction : Eike Thürmann
11.45 - 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Tools made available by the Language Policy Unit for defining the language dimension in curricula</i> - Jean-Claude Beacco</li> <li>- <i>A framework of language competences across the curriculum for North Rhine-Westphalia</i> - Helmut Vollmer</li> <li>- <i>Norwegian framework for general competences</i> - Ragnhild Falch</li> <li>- <i>Work in Austria on language-sensitive content teaching for equal opportunities</i> - Gunther Abuja and Alexandra Wojnesitz</li> </ul> Introduction to group work
13.00 - 14.30	<i>Lunch</i>
14.30 - 16.00	GROUP WORK: Short presentations on the use of procedures for defining the language aspects in specific subjects, and exchanges on national initiatives and projects concerning the language dimension in subject teaching
16.00 - 16.30	<i>Coffee break</i>



16.30 - 17.10	Pooling the results of the group work
17.10 - 17.30	Initial teacher training in Luxembourg: Sensitising subject student teachers for language issues and cultural perspectives - Marie-Anne Hansen

Thursday 19 September 2013	
Chair : Mike Fleming 09.00 - 09.30	CONVERGENCES BETWEEN LANGUAGES (AS SUBJECTS) AS A CONTRIBUTION TO QUALITY EDUCATION Introduction- Mike Fleming
09.30 - 10.30	- <i>Using languages of origin as a basis for learning the language of schooling in a multilingual context</i> - Nathalie Auger - <i>The mutual contributions of regional and national languages as languages of schooling in bilingual educational contexts</i> - Pierre Escudé - <i>Using the language of schooling as a basis for learning a foreign language</i> - Mirjam Egli
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 - 12.30	GROUP WORK: Exchanges on national initiatives and projects concerning convergences between different categories of languages
12.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00 - 14.40	Pooling the results of the group work
Chair : Joseph Sheils 14.40 - 15.00	<i>Quality and inclusion in education in the ECML programme</i> - Waldemar Martyniuk, Executive Director, ECML
15.00 - 17.00	TOWARDS INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education - Etienne Gilliard, member of the Bureau of the Steering Committee for educational policies and practice (CDPPE)  ROUND TABLE : <i>Language education as a contribution to quality education.</i>  <i>With the participation of</i> Jean-Claude Beacco, Mike Byram, Marisa Cavalli and Eike Thürmann  The conclusions of the conference - Francis Goullier, General Rapporteur Perspectives - Johanna Panthier, Language Policy Unit
17.00 - 18.00	Farewell drink