

Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe

POLICY GOALS

Europe is multilingual and culturally diverse; it seeks to consolidate its position as a major player in the global economy. It needs effective communication both to secure its economic competitiveness in the world and to assure mutual understanding within Europe. Language education policy makes a distinctive contribution to social policy and in particular to policies which aim to develop a sense of inclusion and of shared democratic citizenship.

The Council of Europe has taken the position that the maintenance of linguistic diversity should be pursued, because, as well as promoting social cohesion, mobility, intercomprehension and economic development, it is important to maintain the cultural diversity of Europe for which linguistic diversity provides the vital conditions.

A GLOBAL APPROACH TO PLURILINGUALISM

Policies for language education should promote the acquisition of several languages to different levels at different times for each individual in the course of his/her lifetime, so that more Europeans become plurilingual citizens able to interact with each other.

Plurilingualism develops throughout life: individuals may acquire new languages and lose others at different points in their lives. Consequently, the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* is concerned with policy both in schools and formal education and in lifelong learning.

It describes how language education policy can provide an inclusive and coherent view of education for plurilingualism. The *Guide* is concerned with the whole of language education, including education in the 'mother tongue/first language' when it is the official and/or national language of the area in question. It is not concerned only with 'foreign', 'second' or 'minority' languages.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The *Guide* considers:

- the need to formulate language education policies which are coherent with the promotion of social inclusion and the development of democratic citizenship in Europe;
- how policies of language education can be developed whose outcomes will be in accord with the maintenance of linguistic diversity in societies and plurilingualism for citizens of Europe.

The *Guide* suggests how, in the context of lifelong learning, language education policies can be developed which enable Europeans to become plurilingual in ways which are appropriate to the area where they live. The *Guide* has three parts:

- the first analyses the weaknesses of current language education policy common in European countries (Chapter 1) and explains the principles and recommendations of the Council of Europe (Chapter 2);
- the second presents ways of identifying and analysing the factors in a given geographical area as a necessary preliminary to developing an appropriate policy for diversity; it deals with both non-linguistic factors (Chapter 3) and linguistic factors (Chapter 4);

- the third describes the range of technical forms of organisation of language education upon which those developing policies can draw in their implementation (Chapters 5 and 6).

This *Guide* can be used by Ministries of Education in reviewing their national policies. In addition, member states may take up the offer from the Council of Europe (Language Policy Division) to provide expert assistance for their self-evaluation of policy.

USING THE GUIDE

The *Guide* exists in two versions:

- the “*Main Version*” is the reference version, written for those who decide language education policy; it provides the scientific and professional argument and evidence in detail. A revised edition of the *Main Version* was published in 2007 after a process of consultation. It includes cross-references to related studies, as well as a glossary.
- an abridged “*Executive Version*” is also available, written for policy deciders involved in language education policies but who may have no specific specialist knowledge of technical matters in language education.

The *Guide* is accompanied by a series of Reference Studies published separately which provide in-depth analysis on a number of key issues covered in the *Main Version*.

The new edition of the *Main version* together with the *Executive version* and the series of *Reference Studies* are available online on the website of the Language Policy website: www.coe.int/lang.

Language Education Policy Profiles

The Language Policy Division offers expert assistance to member States who so wish in reflecting upon their language education policy. The aim is to provide member States (also regions and cities) with the opportunity to undertake a self-evaluation of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts, and with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country.

The Profile process concerns all languages in education – languages of instruction in school, modern languages and languages of minorities.

Developing a Language Education Policy Profile does not mean external evaluation. It is a process of reflection by the authorities and involving civil society, together with the Council of Europe experts who have the function of acting as catalysts in this process. The activity may be linked to planned policy reforms.

This activity involves several related steps:

- preparation of a Country Report by the authorities describing and evaluating current policy and outlining new or planned initiatives
- study visit of a Council of Europe Expert Group and elaboration of an Experts' Report in dialogue with the authorities
- Round Table or other forum to take the reflection further and
- production of a forward looking Language Education Policy Profile jointly by the Council of Europe Expert Group and the authorities.

Interested authorities – at national, regional or local level – are invited to contact the Language Policy Division (Strasbourg).

www.coe.int/lang

Policy Development Activities:

- From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: *Guide for the elaboration of language education policies in Europe*
- Reference Studies on language policy
- Language Education Policy Profiles



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Language Policy Division
Division des Politiques linguistiques

Developing Language Education Policies in Europe

- ❖ *Guide for the development of Language Education Policies in Europe*
- ❖ *Language Education Policy Profiles*



Palais de l'Europe

Language Policy Division

Strasbourg