

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (98) 6

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES CONCERNING MODERN LANGUAGES

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 March 1998
at the 623rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity among its members and that this aim can be pursued in particular by the adoption of common action in the cultural field;

Bearing in mind the European Cultural Convention signed in Paris on 19 December 1954;

Recognising the progress which member states have made since its Recommendation No. R (82) 18 concerning modern languages, whose principles are today more important and more relevant than ever;

Having noted the final report drawn up by the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council for Cultural Co-operation on its project "Learning for European Citizenship" and the results of the conference entitled "Language learning for a new Europe", which was organised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 15 to 18 April 1997;

Bearing in mind the benefits to member states of the achievements of the Council of Europe in the field of language learning (such as the "Threshold Level" type specifications, communicative methodology, and improved teacher training);

Stressing the political importance at the present time and in the future of developing specific fields of action, such as strategies for diversifying and intensifying language learning in order to promote plurilingualism in a pan-European context, further developing links and exchanges, and exploiting new communication and information technologies;

Aware of the growing need to equip all Europeans for the challenges of intensified international mobility and closer co-operation not only in education, culture and science but also in trade and industry;

Anxious to promote mutual understanding and tolerance and to respect identities and cultural diversity through more effective international communication;

Wishing to maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely used;

Considering that the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe can be met only by appreciably developing Europeans' ability to communicate with one other across linguistic and cultural boundaries and that this requires a sustained, lifelong effort which must be encouraged, put on an organised footing and financed at all levels of education by the competent bodies;

Aware of the dangers that might result from marginalisation of those who lack the skills necessary to communicate in an interactive Europe;

Considering that the formulation and implementation of education and culture policies in the language field may be facilitated through arrangements at European level for closer co-operation among member states and among their education authorities and institutions,

Recommends that governments of member states :

– in accordance with their constitutional set-up, national or local circumstances and their education system, use every available means to implement the measures set out in the appendix hereto in their education policies and systems and their cultural development policies ;

– bring this recommendation and the reference documents which form its basis¹ to the attention of the relevant public and private bodies in their countries through the appropriate national channels ;

Asks the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring this recommendation to the attention of States Parties to the European Cultural Convention which are not members of the Council of Europe.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (98) 6

Measures to be implemented concerning the learning and teaching of modern languages

A. General measures and principles

1. Pursue education policies which :

1.1. enable all Europeans to communicate with speakers of other mother tongues, thereby developing open-mindedness, facilitating free movement of people and exchange of information and improving international co-operation ;

1.2. develop learners' respect for other ways of life and equip them for an intercultural world, in particular through direct links and exchanges and through personal experience ;

1.3. ensure that appropriate resources – both human and material – are made available for increased teaching of modern languages throughout the education system so as to meet the growing demands of international communication and understanding.

2. Promote widespread plurilingualism :

2.1. by encouraging all Europeans to achieve a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages ;

2.2. by diversifying the languages on offer and setting objectives appropriate to each language ;

2.3. by encouraging teaching programmes at all levels that use a flexible approach – including modular courses and those which aim to develop partial competences – and giving them appropriate recognition in national qualification systems, in particular public examinations ;

2.4. by encouraging the use of foreign languages in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects (for example history, geography, mathematics) and create favourable conditions for such teaching ;

2.5. by supporting the application of communication and information technologies to disseminate teaching and learning materials for all European national or regional languages ;

2.6. by supporting the development of links and exchanges with institutions and persons at all levels of education in other countries so as to offer to all the possibility of authentic experience of the language and culture of others ;

2.7. by facilitating lifelong language learning through the provision of appropriate resources.

B. Early language learning (up to age 11)

3. Ensure that, from the very start of schooling, or as early as possible, every pupil is made aware of Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity.

1. Final report of the project group (Doc. CC-LANG (96) 21) and report of the final conference (Doc. CC-LANG (97) 7).

4. For all children, encourage and promote the early learning of modern languages in ways appropriate to national and local situations and wherever circumstances permit.
5. Ensure that pupils have systematic continuity of language learning from one educational cycle to another.
6. Develop appropriate forms of evaluation and recognition of early language learning.
7. Devise appropriate policies and methods, based on analysis and comparison of results achieved by modern language programmes for young learners.

C. Secondary education

8. Continue to raise the standard of communication which pupils are expected to achieve so that they can use the language studied to communicate effectively with other speakers of that language in everyday transactions, build social and personal relations and learn to understand and respect other people's cultures and practices.
9. Ensure that pupils have the opportunity to study more than one European or other language.
10. Incorporate a wider range of languages and learning levels into the curriculum.
11. Make sure that all upper secondary school pupils are able to continue learning modern languages, to improve the quality of their use of the language(s) learnt in lower secondary education and to enrich their intercultural understanding.
12. Assist the learning of further European or other languages in upper secondary school through the development, where appropriate, of partial competences, which should then be assessed and officially recognised.
13. Encourage authorities and institutions to enter international networks to promote co-operation between administrators, teacher trainers, teachers and pupils, particularly with a view to setting up joint projects or exchanging experience, ideas and teaching materials.
14. Encourage teaching institutions at all levels to foster the development of student autonomy, that is the capacity to learn more efficiently and independently as a basis for the life-long maintenance, development and diversification of language skills in accordance with changing practical and cultural needs.
15. At a suitable stage in general education, sensitise pupils to the role of languages in working life and prepare them, where appropriate, for vocational contacts in their chosen field.

D. Vocationally-oriented language learning

16. In the period of transition from full-time education to working life, and at all stages of vocational preparation and training, offer all young people language courses wherever possible and appropriate so as to widen their access to information, equip them to participate in international projects, prepare them for taking up an occupation and increase their vocational mobility.
17. Ensure a balance between vocational, cultural and personal development by offering language courses that combine general and vocational components.
18. Promote training courses that use a flexible approach (modules, for example) to meet special vocational needs so that credit is given progressively as competences are built up.

E. Adult education

19. Encourage the development of appropriate facilities to enable adults to maintain and further develop their language skills and to encourage those with little or no previous language learning experience to acquire the ability to use a foreign language for communicative purposes.
20. Promote adult learners' development of both general and vocational language skills on a lifelong basis in order to assist their personal development, facilitate intercultural understanding, mobility and international co-operation at all levels.
21. Support the provision of national and international structures so as to ensure the widest availability of facilities for distance education (including the use of communication and information technologies), in order to promote the development of diversified advanced communication skills, where possible linking autonomous learning to institutionalised learning.

F. Bilingual education in bilingual or multilingual areas

22. Take the necessary steps, particularly – although not only – in bilingual or multilingual areas to ensure that :
- 22.1. the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities are taken into account as indicating desirable parameters for policy on regional or minority languages or cultures ;
- 22.2. there is parity of esteem between all the languages and cultures involved so that children in each community may have the opportunity to develop oracy and literacy in the language of their own community as well as to learn to understand and appreciate the language and culture of the other ;
- 22.3. where bilingual and bicultural education is provided, it develops a genuinely intercultural outlook and provides a foundation for the learning of further languages.
23. Continue to promote bilingualism in immigrant areas or neighbourhoods and support immigrants in learning the language of the area in which they reside.
24. Facilitate and promote learning the languages of neighbouring countries in border regions.

G. Specification of objectives and assessment

25. For all European national and regional languages, develop realistic and valid learning objectives – such as are to be found in “threshold level” type specifications developed by the Council of Europe – so as to ensure quality in language learning and teaching through coherence and transparency of objectives.
26. Encourage institutions to use the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference to plan or review language teaching in a coherent and transparent manner in the interests of better international co-ordination and more diversified language learning.
27. Encourage the development and use by learners in all educational sectors of a personal document (European language portfolio) in which they can record their qualifications and other significant linguistic and cultural experiences in an internationally transparent manner, thus motivating learners and acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language learning at all levels in a lifelong perspective.
28. Encourage institutions engaged in assessment and certification – especially those which award recognised qualifications – to make their objectives, criteria and procedures clear both to candidates and teachers, thus facilitating the comparability of qualifications and European mobility.
29. Promote the development of varied forms of assessment and recognition of plurilingual competences which take into account the considerable diversity of needs, paying particular attention to the definition of objectives for partial competences and the assessment of their attainment.
30. Promote and facilitate the awarding of certificates and diplomas at the end of a course of study followed in more than one language.

H. Teacher training

31. Take steps to ensure that adequate numbers of suitably trained language teachers are available at all levels so that, where appropriate, a wide range of languages may be taught.
32. Provide all future teachers of modern languages with a high standard of training which strikes a proper balance between study of academic subjects and professional preparation.
33. Take steps to ensure close co-operation between education authorities, universities, educational research centres and schools in the training of future teachers.
34. Promote, in the design of teacher training courses, the elaboration of precise and coherent objectives in the form of a set of core competences which include linguistic, intercultural, educational and psychological components.
35. Through bilateral or multilateral agreements, enable intending teachers to spend a part of their degree course in a country where the language they will be teaching is spoken as a language of daily communication.
36. Recommend to institutions responsible for initial and in-service training that their courses take account of :
- 36.1. the particular importance of the intercultural component in creating awareness of and respect for cultural differences ;
- 36.2. the “learning to learn” dimension, which assists lifelong development of plurilingualism ;

- 36.3. the use of modern technology, so that teachers acquire the ability and confidence necessary to make flexible use of it in their day-to-day classroom practice and their professional lives ;
- 36.4. the principles and practice of language testing and assessment, including learner self-assessment.
- 37. Offer teachers of modern languages in-service training so that they :
 - 37.1. retain a high level of language ability and teaching skill ;
 - 37.2. keep abreast of methodological advances (such as the use of new technologies);
 - 37.3. extend and deepen their experience and knowledge of the cultures of the country whose language they are teaching, in particular through time spent in that country ;
 - 37.4. create and develop international interaction networks for pooling of experience and expertise ;
 - 37.5. contribute fully to the implementation of the European dimension in education.