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# Language Education Policy Profile

**POLAND**

Language Policy Division, Strasbourg  
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## Executive Summary

A *Language Education Policy Profile* is the final stage of a three-phase analysis of language education policy: the production of a *Country Report* by the national authorities, the production of an *Experts' Report* by an international team from the Council of Europe, and the production of a *Profile* jointly by the Council of Europe and the national authorities.

The process of producing an *Experts' Report* involved a group of experts appointed by the Council of Europe, who spent a week visiting educational institutions and discussions with representatives of the Polish education system and of civil society. The experts collated the views they heard and presented an analysis based on the policies of the Council of Europe, with suggestions for possible future developments. This *Experts' Report* became the basis for the *Profile*.

The *Profile* explains Council of Europe and Polish policies on language education, analyses the current situation and discusses some directions for future developments.

### *The Council of Europe perspective*

The value of a review informed by the *Experts' Report* is to bring a Council of Europe perspective to existing planning and innovation. This can be summarised as follows:

- that all language education must be analysed and planned holistically to include mother tongue/first language(s) (the language(s) of education used as media of instruction), minority languages (both well-established and recent) and foreign languages; and that the aims of education should include the promotion of plurilingualism of the individual
- that language education policy should promote the inclusion of all linguistic and cultural groups in a society, and that language education policy is thus an aspect of social policy; at national and regional level it promotes social inclusion and from an international perspective it promotes interaction with other societies and their members.

### *Analysis of the current situation*

Language learning has a high priority in Poland. There is high social demand, represented inter alia by the presence of many private language schools. There is significant political interest, marked for example in ministerial concern about the starting age for learning a foreign language at school and the introduction of a second foreign language.

There has been much change since the early 1990s, not least in the change from the dominance of Russian to that of English, and in the changes in teacher training: founding of new institutions and re-training of former Russian teachers for example.

There are also significant minorities in Poland whose demographic changes are creating new conditions in which the vitality of their languages is at risk.

The analysis of the current situation identifies a number of important factors:

- the problems in the **employment** situation together with the recent entry of Poland into the European Union are producing demands for languages from those who may seek employment abroad and from the increasing numbers of foreign companies investing in Poland;
- the significance of **regional government** has an impact on the financing of education – provision of classes in foreign languages, teacher' salaries – which can lead to disparities among regions with an impact on equality of opportunity;

- in **adult education** there is much demand – witness the presence of private language schools – but as yet no over-arching policy;
- in **school education**, the debate on an ‘early start’ for language learning is very advanced and the question of an automatic choice of English is being questioned, bearing in mind the strong regional presence of German and Russian;
- the teaching of **Polish as a second or foreign language** is gradually gaining a significant role both within Poland and abroad, in part because of the migration of Polish people abroad and immigration to Poland;
- although Poland has a self-image of being a monolingual country in which there are some minorities, there is much **potential plurilingualism**, which with a proactive approach could be realised to the benefit of the individual and society as a whole; many people are plurilingual already and yet the value of this is not widely recognised;
- current **curricula** for language teaching (including Polish as mother tongue) are under review and the relationship between public and private education – the fact that some learners are advantaged by attending private schools – is an issue for discussion; the frequent changes in **textbooks** is a cause for concern as they lead to constant expense as new editions appear; developments in **teaching methods** are well known but not as widely implemented as they might be;
- the position of languages in **vocational schools** is a matter of concern with respect to the hours devoted and the conditions of teaching and learning;
- **bilingual education** – the teaching of other subjects through a foreign language – has a long history of high quality but is limited to an elite of good language learners and the possibility of extending this to more students is not a simple matter as the conditions will change and success will not necessarily be of the same standard;
- there has been much successful innovation in **examinations** with respect to the introduction of national tests at the end of primary, lower secondary and notably at the end of upper secondary and *Matura*, which has had beneficial washback effects on teaching in schools;
- **teacher training** has experienced much change and has been a success both at pre-service and in-service levels, not least with respect to the introduction of new methods; the status and conditions of employment remain however a problem leading to a lack of teachers in some areas; teacher training for bilingual schools is in need of more development;
- it is difficult to analyse languages at **universities** because of the autonomy of universities and the lack of networks and co-ordination; there are good examples of language-learning policies in some universities and more exchange of experience would benefit all;
- although Poland has not yet ratified the European Charter for Minority Languages, the education of **minorities** is placed on a legal footing providing opportunities for minority languages to be maintained; some minorities, such as deaf people, are not so well placed, and would benefit from the establishment of networks of mutual support.

### *Suggestions for future directions*

Language education has an important role in social inclusion and participation in democratic processes for all European citizens. Language education refers not only to foreign languages but to all languages learnt and developed in education systems, especially during the years of compulsory education. People need access to the officially recognised languages of a country to participate fully in its life, and to the languages of other European countries to be members of a European society. Equality of opportunity of access to languages and the possibility of developing appropriate competences is therefore a matter of social policy, and the Polish authorities are aware of this.

The **creation of a plurilingual mentality** – a positive outlook on languages and cultures and the learning of them – is thus important and can be developed from the plurilingual potential which is present though not widely recognised in Poland.

The strong development of the European Language Portfolio in a number of versions in Poland is a sound base for the encouragement of a plurilingual mentality. This needs to be pursued with an active dissemination of the ELP.

The **teaching of Polish** needs to be seen as an integral part of language education with options for curriculum scenarios which break with the tradition of seeing each language in the curriculum as a separate unrelated entity.

To introduce a **foreign language into the first grade of schooling** is to follow the European trend and is a valuable addition to the national policy and the development of a national capacity in languages. Research literature shows however that success depends on having the appropriate conditions, not least having well-qualified teachers, and the introduction of an 'early start' needs to be accompanied by research and evaluation.

In **vocational education** there is a need for a national debate and further consideration of the language curriculum, not least because graduates from vocational schools often seek employment abroad; travelling to work abroad is no longer the province only of those with an academic education.

In **adult education**, where there is high social demand but little regulation, there is a need to consider establishing national standards for quality assurance. This is an important part of lifelong education and planning for lifelong education for the individual could be facilitated by use of Europass and the European Language Portfolio.

**Teacher training** has developed rapidly in recent years and has been innovative in its approaches. It needs to continue to adapt to new circumstances. There may be an argument for the closer integration of teaching and research, and teacher-training institutions need to consider how they should respond to the demands for teachers in bilingual education or other forms of 'Content and Language Integrated Learning', and for teachers in minorities. Above all, teachers need to become teachers for plurilingualism and this has implications for teacher-training institutions – both pre-service and in-service. Teachers already active in service also need incentives to continue to improve their skills and knowledge.

In the context of changes at European level – the EU Lisbon process for example – there is a need for a **national strategy** for and a **holistic view of language education**. The planning for implementation of such a strategy might benefit from consideration of similar strategies in other countries. In particular, consideration should

be given to the establishment of a national body, or regional bodies which could ensure the full implementation of a national strategy on a day-to-day basis.

## 1. Introduction

The core objective of the Council of Europe is to preserve and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as was re-iterated in the Warsaw Declaration of May 2005. Within that context, the fostering of the active involvement of citizens and civil society in democracy and governance, and a European identity and unity based on respect for shared fundamental values and respect for a common heritage and cultural diversity, are crucial conditions for success. As stated in the Cultural Convention, this requires the study of languages, history and civilisation in order to gain mutual understanding. It is only on the basis of such understanding that the particular need for political, intercultural and interfaith dialogue mentioned in the Warsaw Declaration can be fostered. It is appropriate to recall this at the beginning of a *Profile* of Language Education Policy in Poland.

Language teaching and learning is therefore not merely an educational matter. The view that language learning is for an educated, “cultured” elite, a means of access to the important literature, philosophy and art of civilised nations is no longer adequate, if it ever was. Language learning and plurilingualism is a fundamental condition of successful interaction with and understanding of people of other cultural and linguistic groups within and beyond the boundaries of a society. This does not exclude language study as a key to significant thought in other languages. The two purposes are part of a whole, and intercultural understanding involves both everyday interaction and knowledge of the traditions and thought which underpin the ways in which people think and act.

A second aspect of language teaching and learning has become more important as societies have lost any cultural and linguistic homogeneity they ever had, a homogeneity which was seldom truth, often myth. The recognition that all linguistic and cultural groups in a society must be included, and not dominated as minorities by a majority, presupposes interaction among all members of society, whatever their language. Language education policy is therefore social policy. In Poland this is recognised *inter alia* by the attention to the needs of groups whose language of identity is other than Polish.

When social, economic and political interactions with linguistic groups beyond a society’s boundaries are taken into consideration in this way, it becomes evident that language education policy becomes part of the discussion of “national interest” and can be referred to in terms of “national language capacity”. Similarly, there is an important relationship between language education and education for the kind of democratic citizenship which is oriented beyond the national boundaries. No contemporary society can ignore this and the importance of language education and its significance in education for democratic citizenship are crucial, as the Warsaw Declaration emphasised.

### **1.1. The origins, context and purpose of the Profile**

Given this context, the analysis of language education policy is part of the effort which all Council of Europe member states make to develop their social policy, and the *Language Education Policy Profile* is a contribution to this process.

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe offers to member states assistance in carrying out analyses of their language education policies. According to the *Guidelines and Procedures*<sup>1</sup>, “the aim is to offer member states (or regions or

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<sup>1</sup> Document DGIV/EDU/LANG (2002) 1 Rev. 3

cities) 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. [...] This does not mean 'external evaluation'. It is a process of reflection by the authorities and members of civil society, and the Council of Europe experts have the function of acting as catalysts in this process".

The process leads to an agreed report, the *Profile*, on the current position and possible future developments in language education of all kinds.

The view of the Council of Europe is that analysis and evaluation of language education cannot be compartmentalised, and that language teaching and learning in a country needs to be understood holistically, to include teaching of the national language(s)/language(s) of education, of regional and minority languages, of the languages of recent immigrant groups, of foreign and second languages.

The process of the *Profile* consists of three principal phases:

- the production of a *Country Report*<sup>2</sup>, describing the current position and raising issues which are under discussion or review; this report is presented by the authorities of the country in question;
- the production of an *Experts' Report* which takes into account the *Country Report* and discussions and observations during a week's visit to the country by a small number of experts nominated by the Council of Europe from other member states;
- the production of a *Language Education Policy Profile* developed from the *Experts' Report* and taking account of comments and feedback from those invited to a 'roundtable' discussion of the *Experts' Report*; this *Profile* is a report which is agreed in its final form by the experts and the country authorities, and published by the Council of Europe and the country in question.

Thus the experts act as catalysts in the process of self-analysis and provide an external view to stimulate reflection on problems and solutions. In the production of the *Profile*, attention is paid to both the priorities of the country in question and the policies and views of desirable practice presented in documents of the Council of Europe, in particular with respect to the promotion of plurilingualism.

## **1.2. Council of Europe Language Education policies**

The language education policy of the Council of Europe is founded on the key concept of the plurilingualism of the individual. This needs to be distinguished from the multilingualism of geographical regions.

According to Council of Europe principles:

- 'multilingualism' refers to the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language' i.e. the mode of speaking of a social group whether it is formally recognised as a language or not; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety;
- 'plurilingualism' refers to the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism; it includes the language variety referred to as 'mother tongue' or 'first language' and any number

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<sup>2</sup> A '*Country Report*' is the generic term. This activity may also be applied to a smaller entity such as a region, a local authority or a city. The *Country Report* for Poland was updated between December 2005 and October 2006 to take some developments into consideration.

of other languages or varieties at whatever level of competence; in some multilingual areas some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual.

Europe as a geographic area is multilingual, as are most member states. The Council of Europe has developed an international consensus on principles to guide the development of language education policies which promotes plurilingualism for the individual as a principal aim of all language education policy. This position is formulated in a number of documents listed in Appendix 1.

Plurilingualism is defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*<sup>3</sup> in the following way:

(Plurilingualism is) the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent, has proficiency of varying degrees, in several languages, and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw. (Council of Europe, 2001: 168).

Thus plurilingualism refers to the full linguistic repertoire of the individual, including their 'mother tongue' or 'first language', and in this document we are concerned with all language education in Poland, including education in Polish and in regional and minority languages as well as those languages which are labelled as 'foreign' languages.

This perspective places not languages but those who speak them at the centre of language policies. The emphasis is upon valuing and developing the ability of all individuals to learn and use several languages, to broaden this competence through appropriate teaching and through plurilingual education the purpose of which is the creation of linguistic sensitivity and cultural understanding as a basis for democratic citizenship.

The Council of Europe's position, contained in the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and in normative instruments such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, and presented in detail in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*<sup>4</sup>. In this latter document it is made clear that plurilingualism is also a fundamental aspect of policies of social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship:

In the Declaration and Programme on Education for Democratic Citizenship of 7 May 1999, the Committee of Ministers stressed that the preservation of European linguistic diversity was not an end in itself, since it is placed on the same footing as the building of a more tolerant society based on solidarity: "a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity" (CM (99) 76). By making education for democratic citizenship a priority for the Council of Europe and its member states in 1997, Heads of State and Government set out the central place of languages in the exercise of democratic citizenship in Europe: the need, in a democracy, for citizens to participate actively in political decision-making and the life of society presupposes that this should not be made impossible by lack of appropriate language skills. The possibility of taking part in the political and public life of

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<sup>3</sup> *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge University Press. Also online at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/>

<sup>4</sup> Published by the Language Policy Division, Council of Europe . Available online at [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang).

Europe, and not only that of one's own country, involves plurilingual skills, in other words, the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with other European citizens.

The development of plurilingualism is not simply a functional necessity: it is also an essential component of democratic behaviour. Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to linguistic tolerance and thus to respect for linguistic differences: respect for the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and linguistic majorities, respect for freedom of expression, respect for linguistic minorities, respect for the least commonly spoken and taught national languages, respect for the diversity of languages for inter-regional and international communication. Language education policies are intimately connected with education in the values of democratic citizenship because their purposes are complementary: language teaching, the ideal locus for intercultural contact, is a sector in which education for democratic life in its intercultural dimensions can be included in education systems. (*Guide for Language Education Policies in Europe* Main Version 2.3)

It should be noted that while the development of plurilingualism in education systems is a generally accepted aim of language education, its implementation is only just beginning in most education contexts. Measures may be more or less demanding, e.g. ministerial regulations concerning curriculum, or new forms of organisation, which may require special financial arrangements, or political decisions, implying extensive discussion at all levels.

Implementation of policies for the development of plurilingualism can be approached in different ways, and it is not necessarily a matter of "all or nothing". The responses to the Country *Profile* in any particular country can thus be expected to vary according to their circumstances, history and priorities.

## **2. Description of the current situation and education priorities**

### ***2.1. Priorities in the review of language teaching and learning***

Since the early 1990s there have been major changes in language teaching in Poland, the most symptomatic of which was the abandonment of the obligatory teaching of Russian and the consequent re-training of Russian teachers. Many of these became teachers of English (or German) and the presence of English in the languages curriculum has become dominant in most parts of the country, although German has a strong position in the western region.

Other major changes have taken place in teacher education with the establishment of specialised colleges, and in the further development and expansion of bilingual programmes.

The entry of Poland into the European Union is an important factor as it permits and encourages schools and other educational institutions to increase exchanges and other international contacts with financial support.

The interest in language learning among young and older people is demonstrated by the rapid growth of private-sector language schools and private tuition. This interest is mainly, but not exclusively, focused on English.

Language education policy is thus an important issue and one which is high on the political agenda. For example, a change of government in 2005 was marked *inter alia*

by a statement by the Prime Minister that the teaching of languages would become compulsory from the early years of primary education.

The preparation of a *Profile* is thus part of a substantial review of education in general and language education in particular.

There are several issues of particular concern which will appear in this *Profile*:

- the major changes in teacher education have been a substantial achievement in Polish education, but there are still weaknesses to be addressed: the need to implement teaching methodology which leads to active learning; the problem of retention of teachers after qualification and the limited possibilities of continuing training offered them as a result of low levels of funding;
- the question of the age at which children should begin language learning and how the learning of the first foreign language is related to the second: at what point in the curriculum; how the languages curriculum can be understood and implemented as a whole;
- how to meet a high social demand for language learning within the education system rather than relying on the private sector: the question of payment for private-sector teaching raises questions of equality of opportunity for children and young people whose parents cannot afford the extra expense.

Poland has a number of minorities with their own language. The legal provision for such minorities is well assured but the fall in birth rate in Poland in general is having a significant effect on the learning of minority languages. Fewer children are learning the minority languages at home and it is difficult to maintain the teaching of them – and the training of appropriate teachers – for financial reasons. There is a need to find ways of ensuring continuity for these languages.

## **2.2. Significant contextual factors**

The *Country Report*, which accompanies this *Profile*, refers to all languages -Polish, national and ethnic minority and regional languages, and foreign languages - because it is acknowledged that language education should be viewed holistically. Similarly the *Country Report* emphasises the significance of languages education in the promotion of democratic citizenship and the fact that language education policy is part of social policy.

In addition a number of specific factors need to be noted in the analysis of language education policy and reflections on possible future developments, and were given particular attention in the development of this *Profile*:

- The importance of the regional structure and administration of education in Poland.
- The legal provision that Polish is the official language but that other language rights are not infringed by this; the existence of nine national minorities, four ethnic minorities and one community using a regional language, which thus emphasises the multilingual nature of Poland and the presence of many plurilingual people in Polish society.
- The fact that a second foreign language is not compulsory in lower secondary school and learnt by relatively small numbers of students in upper secondary school with few hours of instruction devoted to it, and that there is some regional variation in the choice of first foreign language, notably with German strong in the western regions.

- The growth of private language schools and the make-up of the student body, which is comprised mainly of women, often with higher education and with an average age of 22; the presence of school-age pupils in such schools is one of the concerns which will be addressed in this *Profile*.
- The use of the levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference* to describe and design language examinations and the improving results in the Matura examination in recent times.
- The development of a family of European Language Portfolios to change attitudes towards language teaching and learning.
- The concept of 'educational path' as a means of ensuring cohesion in the curriculum of schools and its use *inter alia* to develop European awareness across the curriculum.
- The significance of several reforms in the provision of language teaching, in teacher training (especially the establishment of teacher training colleges) and higher education in a relatively brief period since the early 1990s.
- The significant impact of new programmes of in-service teacher training.
- The presence since the 1960s and the reinforcement in recent years of bilingual education/Content and Language Integrated Learning and the adaptation of the examination system at Matura level to cater for students in such programmes.
- The wide range of activities in languages and international curricula within and beyond the school curriculum.

### **3. Analysis of the current situation in language education**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter is based on discussions with representatives of civil society and of different sectors of the education system, including teachers and pupils. The *Profile* process brings together the perspectives of different groups within Poland as well as providing an external view based on knowledge of other education systems and the policies of the Council of Europe.

Language education policy cannot be analysed without attention to contextual factors, contemporary and historical. The changes on the political scene in the last 15 years and more have had a direct impact on language education as indicated in the *Country Report*. In particular the following factors cannot be ignored in the current situation:

- Political change is still continuing and the new emphasis on teaching languages from the early years of primary school together with attention to the issues in the Education Commission of the Polish Parliament demonstrates that language education is a priority.
- The employment situation is problematic and the high rates of unemployment lead *inter alia* to Polish people seeking work in some other European countries. The importance of foreign language competence for such people is self-evident. Furthermore the relatively low rates of pay in the teaching profession, which is an aspect of the general employment situation, has consequences for language teachers too. In the larger cities, they can supplement their income by working in the private sector but this is not always the case in the provinces, and this is one of

the factors creating inequality in the education system as teachers are less likely to seek work in schools in some regions.

- On the other hand, the growing presence of foreign companies investing in Poland may lead to work for people who have the necessary qualifications including competence in a foreign language.
- The need for language competence in the present employment situation is probably also one of the main factors in the rise of private language schools. This leads to actual and potential inequalities since only affluent adults and parents of children can take advantage of extra tuition in such schools or in private tuition. The question of equality and the way in which language learning is a central element of the increase in inequality is a matter of concern to many people involved in language education.
- The question of the funding of education has, as elsewhere, a major impact on policy and on the implementation of policy. It is important to note here the devolution of financial decisions to the regions. A number of issues arise from this:
  - it may lead to disparities in the equipment for schools, particularly between schools in Warsaw and other big cities on the one hand and schools in small towns and rural communities on the other;
  - with regard to teachers' salaries, disparities can arise through the presence or absence of opportunities to earn bonus payments, which are decided locally;
  - local and regional control of finance means that education policies differ in some respects and, for example, a local authority can introduce language learning for younger pupils without waiting for a national policy.
- European funding is particularly important in language education policy to enable learners to use their languages in international contacts, real or virtual.

### **3.2. National policy**

Foreign languages are perceived as important and there is active interest at the highest levels of government because of the increasing internationalisation of the labour market and Poland's present and future role in Europe. The issue of integration and the teaching of minorities is similarly a focus of attention in government.

There is widespread agreement among members of civil society and education professionals about the high demand for language learning, especially from adults who did not have an opportunity for learning a foreign language other than Russian earlier in life. This demand is demonstrated by the large, private language-tuition sector, but there is little needs analysis or research being done in this field.

#### *Adult education*

Although there is no legal provision for adult education, and there is no single institution responsible for adult education, a national strategy for language education is being prepared as part of a strategy for lifelong learning and this is linked to the EU Lifelong Learning Strategy.

In the public services and in many private companies, potential employees now commonly present documentation of competencies in 2-3 foreign languages in their CVs and the Leonardo office reports that it is very common for companies to offer language tuition to employees. For in-company language courses the demand is mainly for English and German, although there is some provision for Polish for foreigners, especially for representatives from foreign companies either establishing

themselves in Poland or recruiting Polish employees for jobs abroad. There is also a demand for language tuition in the languages spoken in countries which have opened their borders to Polish workers (Ireland, Sweden, the UK, Norway). There is a growing need in the service industries in particular for language courses.

Despite the apparent need for in-service language courses, there seems to be little interest in Leonardo projects. There is interest in placement abroad, but it is difficult to find people willing to take up placements in other than English and German speaking countries, and two thirds of mobility programmes are for German. Employers believe in international language certificates and exams, but there is little interest in Europass.

#### *Education for children*

At the other end of the age continuum, parents are stimulating the demand for private language tuition for young children as well as teenagers. Already from kindergarten, parents invest in language tuition for their children, and about a third have had private lessons in English. This can be a problem in schools as classes become very heterogeneous, and there is concern in some quarters that the extent of private tuition challenges the idea of equal opportunities for education. This concern has been voiced by the teachers' union which points out that provision for language learning is not equally distributed throughout Poland and that in some regions, access to language education is a big problem.

There has been discussion about introducing English as a mandatory subject from the first grade of schooling, and the pressure for English is very high, but it is also recognised that it is no longer enough to be proficient in English, which means that learning a second foreign language becomes more important. Currently a foreign language can be introduced in the first grade but it need not be English. Furthermore there is a political will to introduce a compulsory second language earlier than at present although it is also recognised that a lack of qualified teachers is as yet a major main obstacle to implementation in the short term.

The question of language teaching in vocational education cannot be dealt with in detail in this *Profile*, but the very restricted number of hours allocated to languages in this sector is a matter for concern among many language professionals.

Finally, both teachers and politicians put a lot of emphasis on students exchanges and would like to increase the possibilities. However, the lack of interest from other EU countries for co-operation is a problem.

In brief, the following points have been identified as significant:

- Needs analysis: language policy is best developed after the analysis of needs and the sociolinguistic situation, and policy deciders might find it useful to consult the Council of Europe's *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* and supporting papers on, for example, needs analysis and the introduction of languages from an early age.
- Early start: the advantages of an early start in language learning seem obvious but it is also necessary to consider the consequences for later years, and the introduction of other foreign languages; the above-mentioned *Guide* and supporting papers on the introduction of foreign languages to young learners might be considered.
- Policy for a holistic language curriculum: education for plurilingualism implies an approach to teaching all languages, including Polish, which takes into consideration the ways in which people learn several languages and acquire a composite competence; this may have implications for curriculum design which

could be given further consideration, as suggested for example in the Council of Europe's *Guide for Language Policy Development in Europe*.

### **3.3. Regionality and equal opportunities**

The Polish education system is characterised by a combination of central and local/regional responsibilities which allows for a flexible reaction to differing conditions and local circumstances. Within a given framework schools and local authorities are free to decide as far as methods, materials, the employment of teachers and also certain subjects are concerned. A system of external assessment of pupils is expected to guarantee national standards. This system of a high local and regional autonomy has consequences for the teaching and learning of languages. Some local or regional authorities (e.g. Gdansk) have introduced their own language policies, for example an early beginning of language teaching in primary education. Whereas the teaching of English is fairly evenly spread across the country, the teaching of other languages shows a stronger regional distribution (see below).

The high degree of local autonomy raises the question of equal opportunities. One view is that access to foreign languages varies according to regions and depends on the wealth of the local community. In an education system where local or regional bodies determine the amount of money and the programmes of schools, the question of equality/ inequality, as well as the balance between local/regional autonomy and central standards, has to be carefully observed. It is argued in some sections of society that more uniform conditions for learning should be assured in order to promote equal opportunities. Since different regions are not developed equally, the conditions for learning (e.g. size of groups, number of hours devoted to different subjects) vary. As far as early foreign language teaching is concerned, in some regions children in kindergarten have access to language teaching whereas in others they do not and the standards are lower. Regional differences can also be seen in teacher training (see below), and it is also difficult to attract qualified teachers to small towns and rural areas and this may affect the standard of teaching.

The *Country Report* points out (chapter 4.2), that especially in small towns, schools become centres of cultural and social life. This could be an influential starting point for motivating people to learn languages and making them familiar with the idea of multilingualism and plurilingualism. It would be interesting to include languages in such activities and to collect examples of good practice in this field.

#### *Regional distribution of foreign language learning/teaching*

The distribution of foreign languages in schools (with the exception of English) shows strong regional differences: German is the dominant language in the western voivodships, French on a much smaller scale is strong in some southern voivodships and Russian in the eastern part of Poland. There is also a difference between towns (English and German) and rural areas (Russian). English is dominant as the first foreign language on all levels of the education system, German being the dominant second foreign language. On the other hand, there is a certain return of Russian, or at least pupils seem to be developing a more positive attitude.

The fact that German and Russian are learned in the western and eastern border regions respectively leads to intensive contacts with the neighbouring countries. This provides much potential (easy and not too expensive possibilities of exchange and cross-border contacts with native speakers; access to radio and television of the neighbouring country). This could become a systematic feature of language learning at least in these regions and consideration should be given to whether and how other regions could profit from this kind of opportunity. However, such exchanges are

sometimes difficult to organise because the great interest of learning German in the west of Poland does not correspond to an equal interest of learning Polish in the east of Germany. Whether the accession of Poland to the EU will change this situation does not seem to be clear at the moment, but there is a potential which needs to be followed up.

Another potential of the differing regional expertise in language learning and teaching could be exploited in domestic Polish activities: for example, the expertise of teaching Russian in the east and teaching German in the west might be beneficial in in-service teacher training, in other regions, through exchanges of good practice.

On the whole, one could say that English is present everywhere in Polish schools whereas linguistic diversity develops only on the level of the second foreign language as a result of regional and economic factors, bilateral contacts, etc. If one wants to make progress as far as linguistic diversity is concerned, it is extremely important to give as many pupils as possible access to a second foreign language.

The following points have been identified from this analysis and may be further considered by all involved:

- Equality of access/opportunity: it is important to review the influence of local autonomy on equality of opportunity and to consider how the developments promoted by autonomy can be generalised to other regions or cities.
- The use of regional variation in foreign language learning: more consideration might be given to developing cross-frontier contacts – for example with Germany – so that learners of their languages can be involved in exchanges. Similar opportunities might be developed for teachers at lower cost than otherwise required for refreshing linguistic competence and developing pedagogical know-how.
- The dominance of English: the *de facto* dominance of English (although not so strong in the west of the country) and the possible introduction of a mandatory language from an early age have implications for second foreign languages which need to be part of the planning for teaching first foreign languages, and especially English.

### **3.4. Polish as a second and foreign language**

The presence of immigrant and minority pupils in schools raises the question of whether there is a need to teach Polish as a second language, since Polish is the regular language of instruction. There is general agreement however that minorities show a high readiness to acquire the Polish language, and therefore at the moment there seems to be no need to prepare special support for them. As specified in the national report of Poland on integrating immigrant children into Polish schools (Eurydice 2003/2004), immigrant children have a right to receive additional Polish language tuition (organised by local authorities), free of charge. However, there is little or no evidence of concrete projects, research or development in this field. Some school principals note that there are problems in mixed ability classrooms, and it may well be that the different linguistic backgrounds of pupils add to the heterogeneity.

Because of the small numbers of children and – in the light of unemployment in Poland – a difficult public debate regarding immigration, there is neither public interest or awareness, nor a policy to provide support measures for immigrant children on a broader scale, from which children with a minority background might also benefit. For one minority, deaf people, whose first language is Polish Sign Language, Polish is quite clearly a second language. All this suggests the need to consider provision for

Polish as a second language through legislation despite the absence of a high level of interest in the issues.

On the other hand, there is an increasing interest in teaching Polish as a foreign language outside Poland, not least in Asian countries, as noted by the Polish parliament's Commission for Education, Science and Youth. It is however worrying that this is not the case within the EU where the language of communication tends to be English. Parliamentarians feel that if more foreigners were to learn Polish, it would encourage Polish people to learn more foreign languages.

With respect to motivating people in neighbouring countries to learn Polish as a foreign language, the relationships among Slavonic languages, which would make it fairly easy to develop at least a receptive competence in other Slavonic languages, have not been exploited. Consideration might be given to the concept of 'intercomprehension', which is being developed among Romance languages, and which could attract Polish people to learn other Slavonic languages.

Training for teachers of Polish as a foreign language started in 2003 in a teacher centre in Lublin, and one of the results of such training is the existence of teaching materials. Until further developments take place which acknowledge the difference between Polish as a second and Polish as a foreign language, these teachers and materials could be used for both, including teaching Polish as a second language for students with Sign Language as their first language.

However, in view of demographic changes in Poland and EU regulations allowing for more mobility of people it may well be that the number of immigrants in Poland will increase, making it worth developing action plans for research, curriculum and materials development and teacher training for Polish as a second language. This could be done by making use of the experience gained in the field of Polish as a foreign language, which might also require further professionalisation.

The following points arising from this analysis might be given further consideration:

- Polish as a second language: in anticipation of the needs of immigrants, consideration should be given to developing a more systematic approach to teaching Polish as a second language (including teacher training), drawing on existing experience of Polish as a foreign language but noting the differences.
- The teaching of Polish as a second language might also benefit from the study of work in other countries on the teaching of the Language(s) of School Education, and from the new developments in this area of interest at the Council of Europe.
- The teaching of Polish as a foreign language needs to be further developed with the aim of intercomprehension which would make Polish more attractive to a wider public in Europe.

### **3.5. Plurilingual potential and Poland's linguistic capacity**

The concept of *plurilingualism* (see section 1.2) is central to the Council of Europe's language policy, whose purpose is to promote mutual understanding and cultural exchange while maintaining linguistic diversity. The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) provides tools for describing plurilingual repertoires, including partial competences (e.g., the ability to read but not to speak a language, the ability to speak but not to write a language). As the CEFR observes (Council of Europe, 2001: 133), plurilingual competence is generally uneven. We typically attain greater proficiency in one language than in the others we know, and our *Profile* of

competences is likely to vary from language to language. What is more, plurilingual competence embraces languages learnt outside as well as inside systems of formal education. Polish people tend to be plurilingual independently of the education system: they find it relatively easy to understand other Slavonic languages, especially Slovak and Czech. This fact is evidence of substantial linguistic capital. Yet this is usually considered self-evident and not very interesting, and people see more advantage in learning English or another western European language than in building on what they can already do without effort in the language of a neighbouring country. On the other hand, job advertisements are beginning to appear that require proficiency in other Slavonic languages, and this may be an incentive to value this capacity for intercomprehension.

In spite of this characteristic, on the whole Poland sees itself as an essentially monolingual society in which having a first language other than Polish still tends to be stigmatised or at least treated as a curiosity. For example, a Belarusian-speaking person might experience a sense of “conflict” between Belarusian and Polish speakers in the east of the country, sometimes heightened by religious differences between the two communities, whereas in Warsaw people find the fact that one speaks Belarusian “interesting”.

At the same time, there is a long tradition of plurilingualism among Poland's educational and cultural elite and today's plurilingual pupils and students represent significant linguistic capital for the country's future. Clearly, bilingual schools have great potential to promote plurilingualism and plurilingual awareness; pupils recognise that having an educational focus on one language and culture helps to open up other countries and their cultures. The Polish government's commitment to the earlier introduction of the first foreign language and the intention to make a second foreign language obligatory in lower secondary education are also positive signs.

On the other hand, there are a number of trends that may work against the growth of plurilingualism in the population in general. Among them are parental demand not for “languages” but for English; economic factors that appear to support the further promotion of English and the neglect of other languages; and the desire for continuity of language learning provision from one educational level to the next. If English were to become the obligatory first foreign language, this latter trend could serve to increase still further the dominance of English in the Polish educational system. The fact that in the past English has not been the obligatory first foreign language has permitted diversity of language provision according to regional needs and circumstances, including teacher availability. Unless there is an attempt to promote its development within the school system, there is a clear danger that plurilingualism will remain what it has been in the past, the preserve of an elite.

The explicit development of plurilingualism is one of the goals that the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is designed to meet. The National In-Service Teacher Training Centre has developed a family of ELPs to support L2 learning in kindergarten, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools (something that has been achieved in very few other Council of Europe member States). In addition the ALTE/EQUALS ELP for adults has been adopted. All five models are designed to serve the ELP's pedagogical function of making the language learning process more transparent to the learner and of supporting the development of learner autonomy. There is, however, still much to do in this respect because although the ELP is disseminated through teacher training, implementation to date has been on a very small scale.

Finally, in the context of promoting plurilingualism, there is little evidence of interest in the learning of non-European languages. Yet in a time of economic globalisation, it may be important to pay more attention to the numbers of learners of Chinese, Japanese or Arabic, which are in fact offered for study in several universities. This is a matter of national linguistic capacity.

#### Regional, minority and migrant languages as part of the national linguistic capacity

The long-standing presence of regional and minority languages, and the increasing presence of new immigrant languages is, generally speaking, not seen as a potential contribution to the national language capacity. There are Polish people who speak one of the regional and minority languages as a consequence of acquiring it in the home; there are others for whom a language is a cultural heritage, but they first learn it in school as a subject; there are yet others who receive at least part of their education through the medium of one of these languages. In the case of new immigrant languages, young people speak the language as a consequence of acquiring it in the home.

As is noted in the *Country Report*, the population numbers of national and ethnic minorities are small, but the potential for these young people to develop their own plurilingualism, and thereby become part of the national language capacity, needs to be considered and encouraged.

There is a legal framework to ensure that minorities can maintain their languages – Armenian, Belarusian, Czech, German, Hebrew, Kaszubian, Lemko, Lithuanian, Slovak and Ukrainian are taught at diverse levels from kindergarten to secondary school. The position on this is that it is the responsibility of the state to provide the rights, but that it is the responsibility of individuals to make use of these rights. The National Ministry of Education finances the production of curricula, teaching materials, etc., and participates in promoting minority and regional languages, but the interest of members of minority groups is not very high.

There is currently much innovation and change in this field:

- Terminology resulting from the provisions of the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language is being introduced successively into the provisions of the Act on the System of Education and its executive provisions;
- The Joint Government and National and Ethnic Minorities Committee was established by virtue of the provisions of the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language. The Group for Education of National and Ethnic Minorities and the Group for the Romani Minority were established within the framework of this Committee;
- Works on the Draft Strategy for the Development of Education of the German Minority in Poland have been completed (the draft will be submitted by the competent Minister for Education and the Minister for National and Ethnic Minorities for signature by the Prime Minister);
- Rules of financing schools for national and ethnic minorities, as well as schools which undertake additional tasks of providing education for Romani pupils, were changed in the budgetary year 2006. Thanks to these changes a higher number of schools benefited from the increased funding transferred within the framework of the educational part of the General Subsidy allocated to local government units;

- The implementation of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland 2004-2013 is being continued (including an education module, within the framework of which remedial classes on the Polish language for Roma pupils are financed from the state budget).

It might also be important to consider whether the situation could be improved if minority languages were not treated as subjects for which a written request has to be made. A written request by parents for the teaching of these languages to be provided, might have the effect of being a barrier, as has been shown to be the case in other parts of Europe, especially where it might be known that headteachers or local school authorities have other priorities.

Furthermore, in order to maintain viability of classes and to encourage majority pupils to study and understand a minority language in their country, classes in a minority language could be offered as regular school subjects open also to Polish-speaking students. It is clear, however, that the function of the language for the minority pupils and for the majority pupils would be different. For the former it is an identity and heritage language, whereas for the latter it is a foreign language or a second language spoken in their country. The pedagogical approach would need to take the interests of both groups into consideration.

A similar situation pertains as far as migrant languages are concerned, even though at the moment they exist only to a negligible degree. Poland is seen as a country of transit, but with accession to the European Union, Poland has begun to develop a migration policy. Here, it is the necessity for migrants to learn Polish and to participate in the national community which seems to determine measures, whereas the maintenance of their languages of origin, perhaps also as a resource for Polish people, is at the moment not an acknowledged perspective.

In short, the national potential as far as all of these languages are concerned is higher than is currently recognised and could be much more exploited than is the case at the moment.

The following points summarise the analysis and merit further consideration:

- Recognition of existing plurilingualism: the potential for intercomprehension with other Slavonic languages should be recognised and consideration given to including it as a teaching and learning aim in the Polish language curriculum.
- Plurilingualism for all: the value attached to plurilingualism needs to be encouraged among all pupils and parents and not left as the preserve of an elite; there is a need to educate parents about plurilingualism with the help of schools, for example through information leaflets and/or the implication of parents in the use of the ELP.
- Languages from outside Europe: the rapid growth of the economic strength of China and the significance of the Arabic-speaking cultures are two of the various reasons for considering the need to teach Chinese, Japanese and Arabic, and to develop a national capacity in such languages, not only at university level as at present, but also, through the introduction of 'taster courses' in secondary education.

- Regional and minority languages: a more pro-active approach to such languages is needed to support the speakers of these languages and also to develop the national potential in languages which open opportunities to interact – for example in trade – with countries to the east.
- Migrant languages: although the presence of such languages is still negligible, it is possible that new minorities will soon settle in Poland and their needs – and the potential they offer for multilingualism in the country – should be under active consideration already.

### **3.6. Languages in school**

The teaching aims and content of language education are set out in the Core Curriculum for General Education in Specific Types of Schools. This Core Curriculum is designed for the Polish language and foreign languages as well as languages of national minorities or ethnic groups. The Polish Core Curriculum is not a teaching curriculum, but sets out general guidelines, which constitute the basis for the development of curricula for specific educational contexts. These teaching curricula can be developed either by individuals according to the needs of a given school or class, or by institutions such as publishers. The curricula must be submitted to the Ministry of Education for recommendation. Schools are free to choose teaching curricula and textbooks from a list approved by the Ministry. Exceptions to this are textbooks for languages of national and ethnic minorities and the regional language. These textbooks are developed for particular language classes, financed by the Ministry of National Education and distributed free of charge.

#### Polish

Regarding the teaching of Polish in schools, the following are the main points, set out in greater detail in the *Country Report*:

- Polish is taught as a compulsory language at all levels and types of schools and instruction;
- Polish is also the prescribed language of instruction;
- Polish language competence is tested both in oral and written form at grade VI of primary school, the final examination of lower-secondary school and at the Matura exam.

The hours allotted to Polish per week are counted for each stage of education. There are 4 stages:

Stage 1 (grade 1-3) primary school

Stage 2 (grade 4-6) primary school

Stage 3 (grade 1-3) lower-secondary school

Stage 4 ( grade 1-3) upper-secondary school

For example, for Stage 2 (three years of education) there are 16 hours:

6 hours per week in the first year of instruction in this stage

5 hours per week in the second

5 hours per week in the third

Total :16 hours over three years

- 14 in compulsory secondary education (Gimnazjum) and the four year *technikum*
- 14 in general secondary education

- 14 in the 3-year specialised lyceum
- 5 in the 2-year basic vocational school

In Stage 1, Polish is taught as part of integrated teaching (18 hours per grade per week – 54 over the whole Stage 1).

Although the concept of plurilingualism and education for plurilingualism includes Polish and the need to develop linguistic competence in Polish, teachers of Polish generally speaking do not see themselves as language teachers. Especially at Matura level there is a strong focus on literature, even if exams and competence tests emphasise language skills. Despite this skills-orientation in assessment, teaching methods are traditionally more academic/analytical compared to the teaching of foreign languages, which are seen as more practical.

### 3.6.2 Foreign languages

The situation with respect to foreign language teaching is under development:

- The Ministry of National Education is currently working on amendments to *the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2003 on the Core Curriculum For Pre-Primary And General Education In Specific Types Of Schools* (No 51, item 458 amend. O.J. 03/210/2041 and 05/19/165). The planned changes concern, among other things, the development of a core curriculum for foreign language teaching following the introduction of compulsory foreign language teaching into integrated teaching, i.e. from grade I of primary school (for 7- year-old children) from the school year 2008/2009.
- The introduction, as of 1 September 2006, of a pilot programme of English language teaching in grade I of primary school. This programme includes the provision of 2 lessons of English per week, without dividing pupils into groups. These lessons should be taken by a teacher holding qualifications in foreign language teaching at the level of integrated teaching. 65% of Polish schools have participated in this pilot programme in the school year 2006/2007. It is planned to continue the pilot programme in grades I and II of primary school in the school year 2007/2008.

Moreover, the planned changes also include issues of plurilingualism as a follow-up to the Communication from the European Commission to the Council, European Parliament and the European Social and Economic Committee as well as the Committee of the Regions – “New framework strategy for Multilingualism”. The provisions of the draft of the Regulation stipulate that schools should encourage and prepare their pupils to use foreign languages as well as develop the ability of coexistence of plurilingual communities in one geographic area.

This represents major changes, as is evident from a summary of the situation hitherto:

- At primary school, a foreign language was a compulsory subject from grade IV, i.e. the second stage of education.
- Some schools offered a foreign language as a non-compulsory subject in the first stage.
- English was the dominant foreign language followed by German and Russian in primary and lower secondary schools, with Russian more popular in rural areas.
- German was a more popular choice than English in vocational schools.
- Two foreign languages were compulsory in upper secondary schools, German being by far the most popular choice as a second foreign language. With respect to languages in vocational school, there is concern about the low

number of hours per week allotted to the teaching of foreign languages in vocational school.

This is the situation in the public education system.

It is also important to take account of private language schools. Because of the strong demand for foreign language teaching, many private language schools were established in the early 1990s. In many cases these institutions are branches of international companies and have a strong tradition of communicative language teaching. Private language schools are subject to laws regulating economic activities, but there is no pedagogical supervision from the state. In many cases teachers in private language schools also teach in public schools. The fact that a considerable number of students receive language instruction outside public schools creates problems, because it leads to increasing mixed proficiency in classes and a lack of equality of opportunity. There is, moreover, an awareness in the language teaching profession of the comparative success and failure of public and private education to develop competences among young people in languages. Since the teachers are often the same people working in two different environments, it can be argued that the conditions of the teaching and learning environment in public schools are a more important factor in pupils' lack of success than the skills of the teachers themselves.

With regard to one of the conditions for success, the decentralised system of curriculum development and a large market for language textbooks have made available modern and communicatively oriented teaching materials which are used in public as well as in private schools. The communicative approach is generally embraced by foreign language teachers in Poland and this might reflect positively on the influence of international publishing companies. On the other hand, the cost of textbooks is considerable, since new editions are produced very quickly and textbooks are expensive. There may be questions to ask about the responsibility of publishers towards their customers and the need to avoid unnecessary publishing of new editions and the consequent financial demand on the education system.

In short, the following points merit further consideration:

- Allocation of hours: any curriculum has to balance demands for teaching time for different subjects, and consideration should be given to flexible use of a block of time for languages, rather than specific allocations for Polish, for the first and second foreign languages.
- Teaching methods: it seems clear that modern teaching methods are well known but not widely implemented in schools. As in other countries, this is a problem which needs to be addressed, e.g. by research, and ways found for encouraging teachers to use modern methods.
- Cost of textbooks: the education authorities might investigate the issue of textbook costs raised by our interlocutors.

### **3.7. Bilingual education**

The *Country Report* points out that there is a social demand for an increase in 'bilingual education' in which a foreign language is used as the medium of instruction for other subjects. In one such programme, there are four applications for every place and a high language competence, such as can be acquired in this way, is seen by some learners as a key to travel and to employment mobility.

The tradition of this kind of programme is well established in Poland as in other East and Central European countries, reaching back at least 40 years. It is recognised that

such schools are reserved for a linguistically competent elite, chosen by language aptitude test. Some schools are particularly well sponsored to allow very impressive project work by pupils, visits abroad and so on. Teachers are paid extra, which allows them to devote more time to their work and not be obliged to seek a supplementary income. The teachers have excellent language competence, conducting their lessons entirely in the foreign language in the bilingual education programme, as well as combining Polish and foreign language in the transition classes.

It is particularly noteworthy that the education system, and in particular the examination system, has adapted to the needs of bilingual education. Special options for students of these programmes are offered in the Matura and the mutual recognition of results by authorities in other countries is being actively pursued. Such arrangements allow students more options for further study in Poland and abroad.

The question of extending this system to meet demand does not have a simple answer. The high standards of pupils and teachers, due no doubt to competition for places, would be very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain in larger numbers of such programmes. Similarly, the financial sponsorship is unlikely to be as high if more programmes are founded, and the extra payment to teachers may be difficult to generalise.

One question which needs to be pursued in these bilingual programmes is the development of a composite plurilingual competence as envisaged in the Council of Europe documents quoted in 1.2 above. Furthermore, the teaching of Polish language and literature might be seen more explicitly as an integral part of the languages curriculum. Pupils and teachers are aware of the ways in which their plurilingual competence develops when asked to reflect on this, but have apparently not considered how this might be deliberately enhanced, by collaboration among teachers and appropriate curriculum design.

'Bilingual education' encompasses 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (CLIL) but is not the same. Where 'bilingual education' often refers to all subjects (except the L1) being taught in the foreign language – a type of 'late immersion' programme – CLIL may involve only one or two subjects. Some such programmes exist and this is a possible direction for development instead of or alongside expansion of the bilingual programmes.

There are no bilingual programmes in languages other than the dominant European languages (English, French, German, Spanish). The question of bilingual education in the languages of national and ethnic minorities – for pupils not born into those minorities – might be considered, in part to enhance the national capacity in other European languages, although it has to be recognised that the purpose of such programmes for the two types of pupil would be different. For minority pupils, such programmes are not 'bilingual' in the sense of being a means to develop competence in a foreign language, but are intended to enrich their sense of cultural heritage and identity. For the majority of pupils they would be programmes to enhance language competence, as in existing bilingual programmes. There may be resistance to this combination among minorities, as is the case elsewhere in Europe, but the idea should not be dismissed without consideration.

Furthermore, bilingual education or CLIL may also be a practical means of introducing languages from outside Europe. Students who have acquired a competence in a European language in this way will be able to extend their plurilingualism to include an Asian or African language, for example, by a language course which takes the foreign language hours of their timetable.

The following points, in summary, arise from this analysis and merit further consideration:

- Plurilingualism through bilingual education: the potential for developing learners' and teachers' awareness of plurilingualism and its benefits during bilingual education needs to be considered, and methods for linking the teaching of Polish and other languages should be reviewed.
- Expansion of bilingual education: there is a need to consider a variety of ways in which bilingual education or CLIL can be extended to other learners, since the simple expansion of existing models is unlikely to be successful or practical.
- Bilingual programmes in other languages: the presence of other languages as the languages of minorities allows for the extension of bilingual education to members of minorities but also to members of the Polish majority, and in the case of languages such as German would be attractive to substantial numbers of learners.

### **3.8. Assessment and examinations**

Schools are required to have their own internal assessment systems, but they are not a high priority for evaluation and review. On the other hand, much effort has been invested in recent years in developing an external examination system to ensure validity and reliability in assessment by high-status examination.

At Matura level, the new system is replacing the use of commercial examinations in languages offered by cultural institutes and others, although the latter may still be expected by employers when selecting new employees. The Matura examination has an innovative character, has flexibility to allow students to have their strong subjects assessed.

There are special arrangements for students in bilingual education and those from ethnic and national minorities. A national or ethnic minority language is a compulsory subject during the Matura examination for all pupils who declared their participation in classes of a particular language at the level of general upper-secondary school (*lyceum*). There is limited take-up on this option, however, due to the fact that a number of pupils declaring their participation in classes of such a language in higher stages of education is decreasing.

The washback effect for language education has already been observed: textbook writers and teachers are changing their practices.

At the end of primary school, pupils take an interdisciplinary competence test. All tasks are based on the same theme and the skills tested are reading, writing, reasoning, using information and the practical application of acquired knowledge. This serves to provide information about the attainment levels in schools but does not have any gate-keeping or selection function. It has been suggested that foreign language tests should be included at this point in the education system in order to increase motivation, but this is a contestable view.

A cross-subject examination consisting of two parts: Arts (Humanities) and Science(s) takes place at the end of lower-secondary school and does have a selection function. There is also an argument that a foreign language test should be introduced here, too, in order to enable selection and streaming of students entering upper-secondary school.

In addition, feedback to schools on examination results enables them to compare their results with other schools, but the effect of this on schools and their planning of the

curriculum is not known and the notion of 'added value' in assessing the effectiveness of schools has not yet been considered. A similar argument might be made about national, ethnic and regional languages. The absence of such languages in the lower-secondary tests may help to discourage young people in those minorities to pursue these languages in formal education.

On the other hand, the nature of this examination, which does not check pupils' knowledge in specific subjects, means it cannot at the moment include issues concerning minority or other languages. Nevertheless, pupils who follow regular classes in their minority language (in schools with a minority language as a language of instruction) may take the final exam of lower-secondary school in this language.

For further details on the system of exams in Poland in English, see:

[http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/stories/English/edusystem\\_1.pdf](http://www.cke.edu.pl/images/stories/English/edusystem_1.pdf)

The following points summarise this analysis and merit further consideration:

- Language examinations at pre-Matura level: it is already recognised that it would be worth giving further consideration to the introduction of language examinations at national level at earlier stages, and we would support this view.
- Value-added statistics: feedback to schools of information on their standards in comparison with other schools is helpful in curriculum planning at school and local level, but needs to be combined with the notion of 'value-added', and this might be considered in future planning.
- Minority languages as subjects in Matura examinations are not widely taken up. Making this option more attractive might be considered.

### **3.9. Teachers and teacher training**

#### *3.9.1. How to cope with the demand for language teachers*

In 1990, Poland had about 18 000 teachers of Russian but a lack of teachers of other languages (e.g. only 1 200 teachers of English). The figures of the *Country Report* for teachers in 2002/2003 show 36 289 teachers of English, 20 182 teachers of German, 6 914 teachers of Russian and 2 929 teachers of French. This means that Poland has made great efforts to train teachers in order to cope with the demand for foreign languages by parents and schools. One of the most important instruments was the installation of Foreign Language Colleges in almost all voivodships in order to increase the training of language teachers in Higher Education Institutions. Currently, 82 Foreign Language Colleges exist to train teachers of English, German, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian. These colleges are supervised by and co-operate with universities so that student teachers can either leave the college with a diploma and the vocational title of Bachelor or go on to a Master's programme. The link of the colleges with Higher Education Institutions varies, and there are also non-university based colleges. This results in different programmes and a range of quality in courses.

An additional way of improving the supply of language teachers is through close co-operation with the cultural institutes (British Council, Goethe Institute, Austrian Institute, Cervantes Institute, Italian and French Institutes). These institutions may award appropriate certificates, which are necessary, besides the requirement of higher education qualifications and "methodological path", to obtain qualifications in foreign language teaching. This is an additional way of obtaining such qualifications. The main way is to complete pedagogical studies.

Currently, co-operation in the field of teacher training concerns only Spanish and is run within the framework of EuroProf programme.

The third way of finding teachers for other languages was a programme to retrain teachers of Russian – this programme was especially important as a means of providing primary schools with teachers and giving as many pupils as possible an opportunity to learn the language(s) they or their parents wanted. It was a conscious decision first to cope with the demand for teachers and then, in a second step, to pay attention to quality, because Poland wanted to respond to the pressures of parents and economic needs after 1990 and give the public as a whole an opportunity to learn other languages. Inevitably this resulted in uneven quality in the programmes and in unequal qualifications of teachers. Principals and others are aware of the different levels of teachers' linguistic competence as well as methodological weaknesses. The *Country Report* suggests that innovative methods are not very popular and that teachers still prefer traditional methods. This contradicts some other evidence mentioned earlier that modern methods are well known, but the explanation may be that teachers who are unsure of their linguistic competence are the ones who prefer more traditional methods.

Lack of teacher quality seems to be a particular problem for English, whereas teachers of French are highly qualified, as are most German teachers, though not always in smaller towns and rural areas.

The ministry is establishing standards in order to raise the qualification of teachers, although it has to be recognised that the still existing shortage of teachers results in temporary solutions.

### *3.9.2 Status and Profile of foreign language teachers*

Because teachers' salaries (compared with those of other professions) are rather low, many participants in teacher training programmes do not become teachers but find occupation in better-paid areas. So there is still a need for qualified teachers of foreign languages, and language graduates without a specific teacher training are allowed to teach. This is especially true in smaller towns where it is more difficult for teachers to find ways of supplementing their salary. Attempts to prioritise languages by giving higher salaries to language teachers have failed; at the moment there is discussion about whether principals can give bonuses to certain teachers. Because of the demographic development on the other hand, students' employment prospects are becoming less good so that the foreign language colleges are trying to open up employment possibilities besides teaching.

Until 2004, teachers in Poland were trained to teach one subject, but the system was then changed so that nowadays it is possible for teachers to acquire qualifications in two subjects. This not only improves employment prospects for student teachers but also prepares teachers to teach other subjects through the foreign language (CLIL – see above). However, the foreign language colleges do not yet have the expertise nor appropriate programmes for this. At the moment, teachers of other subjects showing a linguistic competence corresponding to C2 CEFR are expected to teach in bilingual schools without any further specialised training (see also 3.9.3).

### *3.9.3 In-service teacher training*

In-service-teacher training is therefore of high importance. Poland has introduced an in-service training system which is innovative and efficient. Although in-service training is not compulsory most teachers take in-service courses because this is the only way to get a pay rise and professional advancement.

The National Centre for In-service Teacher Training (CODN) develops and offers programmes, and in addition there are local training centres which co-operate with school authorities. Principals have control over a budget for in-service training (0.5 % of the school budget). This structure guarantees practice-centred training. On the other hand, since local teacher-training centres act independently and are autonomous, there are problems for the central teacher training institution CODN in implementing new concepts.

It is worth considering whether compulsory in-service training for language teachers could be helpful and to what extent it would be useful to strengthen the role of the CODN, e.g. by implementing an inspection or evaluation scheme.

Initial teacher training as well as in-service training are at the moment focused mainly on the teaching of particular languages. This is not only true of training programmes offered by the cultural institutes of Germany, France, etc., but a general characteristic of training programmes. The advantage is that most of the lectures and seminars are given in the target language and the exit levels of students compare well with other countries. On the other hand the result is that teachers perceive themselves as teachers of a particular foreign language, not as teachers /experts in languages and plurilingualism. It is worth considering whether the fact that the colleges teach two or more languages could be used to develop students' plurilingualism.

Two problem areas are recognised in the colleges and by principals: special training for teachers teaching at bilingual schools and for combining the teaching of a language with that of another subject (CLIL) is not evenly present in all sectors. It is evident to those working in the colleges that CLIL will be an important perspective for foreign language teaching/learning as the future of advanced levels, but at the moment this is not a regular part of teacher training. On the other hand, with regard to French, such training sessions are organised on a regular basis by the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre (CODN) and the French Embassy ('Classes ouvertes' - European Label 2006). Training sessions are also organised in German and Spanish.

It is to the credit of Polish teacher training that teaching methodology plays a much more important role in teacher training than in many other countries. In this respect the curricula of the foreign language colleges and the in-service training institutions (at least at national level) show a high standard. However, there are no direct links to research even though Poland has a well-known tradition of research in the area of 'glottodidactics' (research on learning and teaching foreign languages). It is worth considering whether a research link or component in teacher training could be strengthened.

Issues which arise from this overview are the following:

- Teaching methods: there seems to be evidence that some teachers are confident in their linguistic competence and knowledge of modern methods – using them when teaching in private language schools – but that others are not, and consideration needs to be given to developing a model of in-service training which uses those with expertise to help those without.
- Status of teachers: the well-recognised problem of teacher status and employment is a crucial issue which needs constant attention and innovative planning.

- In-service training: consideration should be given to the option of introducing compulsory in-service training, as is the case in some other countries, with appropriate rewards and promotions.
- Plurilingual teachers: training at pre-service and in-service stages should include some attention to the methods of developing plurilingualism as well as to the teaching of specific languages.
- Research on teaching: consideration needs to be given to promoting research and developing appropriate structures provided to encourage specialists in teaching methods and language curricula to engage in such research as part of their work in Higher Education.

### **3.10. Languages at university**

#### *3.10.1. Contribution of universities to plurilingualism*

Universities in Poland (as elsewhere) are autonomous and it is therefore difficult to make general statements about the university system. Nevertheless, universities play a very important part in language policy as well as in practical matters: it is universities which support small languages taught nowhere else; they do research in linguistics, language learning and teaching methodology; and they award qualifications to language experts including teachers. Polish universities have a long-standing tradition and reputation, especially in the field of glottodidactics, and they are the co-operating and supervising institutions for the foreign language colleges.

There is a language requirement for students of all disciplines and by teaching languages to students of all subjects, Polish universities play an active role in promoting plurilingualism.

Some universities invest considerable money and energy in their language programmes, but there is no network for exchange of experiences between universities and the foreign language colleges, including the university based ones, are not directly linked to the language programmes of the universities. The same is true as far as in-service teacher training is concerned.

The autonomy of universities should not be a hindrance to including universities in an overall language policy and to systematically make use of their expertise in other fields of language teaching.

#### *3.10.2 Teaching languages to students of all disciplines – an example*

The University of Warsaw has organised its language programme through a number of regulations passed by the rector and the academic senate, and the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* is used as a kind of guideline for syllabus and examinations but not followed strictly. The university offers courses in some 50 languages including Polish as a foreign language; Polish Sign Language was included in 2006. About 12 000 students a year (of the total of 65 000) participate in language classes. All students are provided with 240 hours and two exam tokens fully funded from the university's budget. The minimum language requirement is 120 hours study and a B2 certificate in at least one foreign language on completion of studies.

Maximum class size is 17, minimum class size is 5 for small languages. Where possible, DIALANG is used to determine students' initial proficiency level. Students are free to choose which courses they want to attend. Different faculties and centres of the university offer language classes, but external examinations and certificates are recognised as well. There is a Rector's Plenipotentiary for Foreign Language Teaching

whose office is responsible for the overall programme. It is financed by 4 million Euros per year from the rector's budget.

About 50% of the students choose English as the foreign language to fulfil the university's language requirement, but probably because of a growth of business interests and requirements of job advertisements there is some interest in "exotic" languages such as Kazakh, Belarusian and also a renaissance of interest in Russian.

As an innovative feature, the language centre of Warsaw University has incorporated an intercultural module into the regular language courses.

The scale of this language programme and the different types of institutions involved result in some problems. One is the uneven quality of teaching. The Language Centre of Warsaw University tries to establish models and offers training. Such training is needed, for example, as far as use of the European Language Portfolio is concerned. Students are not too eager to use portfolios because this documentation of their work is sometimes felt to be an instrument of control, and teachers are not prepared to give it support. Furthermore, provision of classes is still insufficient so that students may have to wait for one semester or even a year for a course to be available.

Despite these points, the University of Warsaw is satisfied that what is offered is cost effective and serves both academic purposes, the mobility of the students and their employment prospects.

Further developments might include use of the European Language Portfolio more systematically and the instigation of a network for exchanges of experiences between universities, especially in the area of languages for specific purposes and as far as the qualification of lecturers is concerned.

### *3.10.3. Content and language integrated learning at university level – an example*

The Leon Kozminski Academy of Entrepreneurship and Management was the first university-level institution in Poland to introduce an English-language track. Nowadays, the academy offers programmes completely in English and German and has installed German and an English language centres as well as a Polish-German Centre for Executive Education, which concentrates on developing academic and business links with Germany. Languages offered are Chinese (*ab initio*), French, Spanish and Russian at an advanced level. Since about 50% of the students come from abroad, Polish as a foreign language is taught, but only as a survival language because for their academic studies they need English or German. Key issues addressed in this course are openness, tolerance, and awareness of difference.

There is internal training for the teachers and the conditions of teaching and learning (small groups up to 15) are good.

Further developments might include using the languages of the international students as resources for Polish students in tandem learning, and introducing elements of multilingual didactics into the curriculum. It would also be worth discussing how the experiences of this Academy, as far as CLIL and international cooperation are concerned, could be transferred to other institutions of higher education.

To summarise, the following points merit specific attention:

- Universities and language-teaching policy: consideration needs to be given to the full integration of universities into national planning for languages, including their role in the supervision of teacher-training colleges.

- Universities network: there appears to be a need for exchanges of experience across universities, and consideration needs to be given to the formation of such a network and integration with the European network CercleS - *Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur*.
- Using international students as a language resource: the use of the 'tandem' system of learning languages in higher education might be considered as increasing numbers of international students join Polish universities.

### **3.11. Minorities**

Poland has not yet ratified the European Charter for Minority Languages and this has important policy implications.

#### *3.11.1 Linguistic minorities*

There are decreasing numbers of pupils in linguistic minority schools. In most cases the pupils are more fluent in Polish than in the minority language, which is partly a reflection of centralisation prior to 1989 and partly the effect of mixed marriages. Some schools for the German linguistic minority are attended by Polish-speaking pupils or children from mixed marriages.

Members of minority groups are subject to the same requirement to learn foreign languages as the Polish-speaking majority.

It is argued in some quarters that Poland's provision for linguistic and ethnic minorities compares well with that of other countries. For example, it can be argued that the Polish minorities in Belarus and Lithuania fare less well than the Belarusian and Lithuanian minorities in Poland. Furthermore, it is thought that linguistic and ethnic minorities in Poland are well integrated and that the state is responsible only for making educational opportunities available, not for encouraging take-up.

#### *3.11.2. Roma*

Special provision has to be made for Roma children, who typically come to school with little Polish as is explained in the *Country Report*. The national programme for Romani seeks to increase the number of Roma children in pre-school, introduce remedial educational activities, provide Romani language assistants to help teachers with mediation, and increase the number of Roma completing upper-secondary education.

Although in the view of some people, Roma parents do not want their language to be taught in the educational system, it is nevertheless worth noting that the Council of Europe recently launched a project to develop a curriculum framework for the teaching of Romani at primary and lower-secondary levels.

#### *3.11.3. Migrants*

Migrants are seen as a potentially large problem, even though at present the numbers are small; at least for the time being Poland is a country of transit rather than a country of destination. The greatest number of refugees comes from Chechnya. There is also a Vietnamese community of 20 000, in which parents tend to be very committed to their children's education, but this community is not maintaining its own language.

Although there is legal provision for migrants to be taught their own languages outside normal school hours, this is not compulsory and there are few if any examples of this happening. However, examinations are not provided in migrant languages (as they are for minority languages).

There are training programmes for teachers of Polish as a second language, both to migrants in Poland and abroad, which is separate from all other language teacher training provision. One possibility would be to accommodate some migrants in bilingual schools, which is an interesting suggestion when set against the elite status of such schools.

#### *3.11.4. The Deaf*

There are some 30 schools for the deaf in Poland, each of which devises its own curriculum. Polish Sign Language is not recognised and deaf people in Poland have no linguistic rights. There is therefore a sense of neglect at the Institute for the Deaf, which runs counter to the strong tradition of deaf education in Poland, going back almost 200 years. The teachers at the Institute feel that PSL should be recognised as a minority language alongside Kashubian. In this connection it is worth noting that the Council of Europe is currently looking into the possibility of developing a new convention for the protection of sign-language communities.

The Institute for the Deaf in Warsaw uses a bilingual teaching method (modelled on the method used in Sweden) in which PSL is developed as the pupils' first language and Polish as their second language. The method is followed rigorously and the Institute is successful. At the same time, pupils at the Institute are at some educational disadvantage: although they take the Matura exams, they are necessarily excused examination in some competences, and PSL itself is not assessed.

The achievement of the Institute is all the more commendable in view of the fact that Poland has no tradition of sign-language research, partly no doubt because no university linguistics department appears to have developed an interest in PSL, and the training of teachers of the deaf does not enjoy official recognition.

#### *3.11.5. The Jewish School*

The teachers in the school are very much concerned with issues of language and identity. They feel somewhat isolated and have a strong desire for contacts with other minority groups that would enable them to explore issues of concern to them in a broader context.

To summarise, the following points have been identified as important in the teaching of Polish:

- Romani: consideration should be given to the Council of Europe's current initiatives in education for Romani and whether these are appropriate for Poland.
- Sign language: consideration should be given to current Council of Europe initiatives in sign languages and the possibility of a convention for their protection; there is a need for more active consideration of education for the deaf and the recognition of Polish Sign Language in society.
- Minorities network: the issues faced by all kinds of minorities have some common strands, and consideration should be given to the establishment of a network which would help develop the interest of all minorities with respect to language education.

## **4. Visions and tasks for the future**

### ***4.1. Citizenship and social inclusion***

The importance of giving everyone resident in a state – whether citizens or recent immigrants – a sense of being included and respected is a priority in the policies of the Council of Europe and its member States, expressed most recently in the Warsaw Declaration of 2005. Language education has a significant role in a number of ways. First of all, people cannot be active members of a society without adequate language skills and knowledge of the political and social landscape; the teaching of Polish to new residents is one element of this. Secondly, those who speak a language other than the one (or ones) officially recognised need to have acknowledgement of their language and identity, but also those who speak a recognised minority language need to feel that their participation in society is not diminished by speaking a minority language; recognition needs to be accompanied by active encouragement for minorities and their languages and cultures. Thirdly, the inclusion of all who are resident in European countries in an identification with Europe as a whole, a European identity and citizenship, depends to a substantial degree on a capacity to interact linguistically and culturally with other Europeans, and language learning, and the interest in others that language teachers can stimulate, is a significant factor. The creation of a plurilingual mentality, discussed below, is not simply a matter of expanding skills and knowledge in languages, it is a part of a social policy of inclusion.

Given this perspective on languages education, equal access to language learning is important in the strategies developed to realise policies of social inclusion. The presence of a private sector of foreign language education to fill gaps in basic provision by the state and its national or regional authorities implies that access is unequal because it depends on the capacity to pay. There is concern in many quarters about this situation and the authorities are aware of the need to ensure equality of access throughout Poland because, at the moment, there is a lack of balance between town and country and in particular between larger cities and the provinces.

The position of minorities with languages other than Polish is an important consideration in social inclusion policy. On the one hand discrimination is forbidden and language rights are protected by legislation; on the other hand it is also important to develop an infrastructure for encouraging and actively supporting minorities in developing a high degree of biliteracy as well as naturally acquired bilingual oral skills. Bilingual/minority education which provides access to full citizenship in Polish society whilst supporting membership of a minority community, is an important part of a strategy for social inclusion.

The presence of increasing numbers of new immigrants is a further factor in such policy. Numbers are still relatively low but likely to increase. The acquisition of Polish is a significant condition for inclusion and the development of opportunities for learning Polish, particularly for adults, needs to be widened. There is much experience and expertise in the teaching of Polish as a foreign language in other countries, and this needs to be used as a basis for teaching Polish to second-language learners in Poland. It should be borne in mind, however, in the development of courses and curricula, that teachers of Polish as a second language can be key agents in the socialisation of newcomers into Polish society, providing the means to discover and understand Polish society and not simply language skills and knowledge. There is therefore a need to develop training in the teaching of Polish as a second language and recognition of its particular characteristics distinguishing it from Polish as a foreign language.

Whether established and recognised or newcomers, all minorities may benefit from greater awareness among members of the majority of the linguistic and cultural enrichment they bring to Polish life. The sense of belonging and inclusion in a society for members of any minority depends on both the commitment of its members to the society as a whole and the interest of the majority in the contribution of minorities. The relationships are, however, not only bilateral between majority and minority, but also multilateral among minorities, and there is a need for mutual interest and support through the establishment of networks for languages education, which *inter alia* could promote research and development in language education. Such networks should include minorities not yet widely or officially recognised, such as the deaf community, and others such as the Roma or the Jewish community and newcomer groups are equally important in this strategy.

#### **4.2. Creating a plurilingual mentality**

As the CEFR explains,

“...the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person’s experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact?” (Council of Europe, 2001: 4)

We observed in Chapter 3 that Poland has significant plurilingual capital arising from the fact that speakers of Polish can communicate with relative ease with speakers of neighbouring languages, but we also observed that this capital is not much valued. Poland’s language education policy needs to acknowledge this ‘natural’ plurilingualism and seek to exploit it. As the CEFR also explains, from the perspective of plurilingualism...

“...the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve ‘mastery’ of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the ‘ideal native speaker’ as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place.” (Council of Europe, 2001: 5).

This has four important implications both for language education policy and its implementation. First, because plurilingualism is rooted in the individual’s first language, the teaching of the mother tongue (national language or language of education) must be brought into interaction with the teaching of second and foreign languages. Second, wherever possible the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and curricula should allow them to be combined in a variety of ways. Third, since the development of a plurilingual repertoire is a lifelong process, children and adolescents at school and students at college and university must not only learn languages, but how to learn languages. In this way they can develop skills that they can deploy in later life in response to changes in their language needs or linguistic context. Fourth, even though they may teach only one language, teachers need to develop a sense of themselves as contributing to the development of a variety of plurilingual repertoires.

The current notion of pathways in the curriculum could be used to help teachers and learners to explore relations between languages. School principals and other educational managers could assist this process by promoting whole-school

approaches to the teaching and learning of languages and facilitating contact between the languages in the curriculum. This is a new idea, not just in Poland but in education generally, so it would be important to provide in-service training for principals in the necessary managerial and pedagogical techniques. An important dimension of this would be to facilitate, at different points and stages in the education system, co-operation and exchange among all language teachers and teacher advisers, including teachers of Polish.

Because the European Language Portfolio (ELP) embraces all the languages its owner knows, it also accommodates languages learnt outside school and is apt to support whole-school and cross-curricular approaches to language teaching and the development of language awareness. The ELP is also designed to foster the growth of learner autonomy, and learning how to learn (gradually developing the reflective skills of planning, monitoring and evaluating one's own learning) is fundamental not only to the pedagogical function of the ELP but to any realistic strategy to promote lifelong learning. The Ministry of Education intends to embed its language education strategy in its strategy for lifelong learning.

As suggested in Chapter 3, for a number of years the different cultural institutes have sought ways of collaborating with one another in order to avoid wasteful duplication. The ELP could provide a ready focus for such collaboration, which might then lead to significant consolidation.

A language education policy that is intent on developing plurilingualism must find ways of making plurilingualism visible. Among the ways of doing this are: promoting European projects that focus on languages other than English; exploiting the existence of linguistic minorities; introducing language-awareness activities early in the educational system; finding a way of overcoming the isolation of the different foreign languages both in the curriculum and in schools by developing whole-school approaches to language teaching and learning (for example with the help of the ELP).

Above all, the ideal of plurilingualism proclaims that English is not enough. It demands a policy of gradual diversification that begins with the earlier introduction of an obligatory second foreign language.

#### ***4.3. Polish language education and Polish in the school curriculum***

It is a principle of Council of Europe language policy that plurilingualism is a concept which embraces all the languages and language varieties an individual has, not least their first language(s), and the Council of Europe has recently launched a project on language(s) of school education which is intended to undertake a survey of curricula, develop benchmarks for describing and assessing competence in the language(s) of school education, and bring forward proposals for increasing convergences and coherence between different languages in the school curriculum.

Education for plurilingualism in Poland includes Polish, but an integrative vision of Polish, second and foreign languages and minority languages requires those responsible for Polish to accept their role in this vision and the possibilities of interaction with the teaching and learning of other languages. This is a point for further reflection and development.

It is also widely recognised in educational research that the successful learning of other subjects in the school curriculum, from mathematics and science to the arts and history, is dependent in large part on the language used as a medium of teaching and learning. Countries where bilingual education is the norm are particularly aware of this and it will be an important issue if bilingual education/CLIL is extended beyond an elite

in Poland. It is, however, also an issue when young people are learning through their first or dominant language as has been recognised in some countries after the PISA investigation. This is also an issue for further research and development in Poland.

#### ***4.4. Early start***

In Polish schools a foreign language was taught until recently as a compulsory subject from Stage 2. Introducing language learning as early as possible is generally accepted as contributing to a good foundation for later language development, although the research findings are not unambiguous. The Government's decision is a confirmation of the emphasis on foreign language education in Polish society. Given the strong demand for foreign language education in general and for English particular, this decision will be generally welcomed. It may, however, raise questions about the availability of trained teachers, for it is also widely accepted from research that an early start is not necessarily advisable if the conditions, particularly the quality of teaching, are not right.

According to data from Eurydice 2005 pupils in over half of the member states of the European Union study one specific mandatory language. About 65% of Polish students learn English, about 34% learn German, about 7% Russian and 3% French. This variety represents a valuable national language capital. Although the growing demand for private English-language instruction needs to be taken seriously, not narrowing the scope to English only will provide a broader language competence base on which to develop a multilingual society.

It would be desirable that the introduction of a foreign language from the first grade be accompanied by research to include such issues as the availability of trained teachers, the effects on foreign language instruction at later stages and on quality of output as assessed in public examinations.

#### ***4.5. Vocational education***

The meagre allocation of hours to languages in this sector is a matter of wide concern and needs to be given careful consideration in the course of developing a language education policy appropriate to Poland's present and future needs. Here it is appropriate to make three points. First, students in vocational education are just as likely to travel abroad as students in any other sector; in some cases, indeed, they may be more likely to travel because they have practical skills that are urgently needed in other countries. Secondly, and arising from this last consideration, students in vocational education do not necessarily need English; other languages may be more appropriate for them; in relation to their particular vocational needs, language courses should pay particular attention to learning how to learn and intercultural issues. Thirdly, CLIL offers itself as an obvious way of consolidating more general language learning while preparing learners for work placements abroad.

#### ***4.6 Adult education***

The teaching of foreign languages to adults is left to private language schools, companies and other non-public establishments, which have to adapt to a free market system (about 7 000 private language schools in 2004/05 with nearly 800 000 participants). The tremendous development of out-of-school language learning, despite the fact that there has been no public funding or special encouragement, has two reasons. One is the fact that Polish people see foreign language learning as very important for their careers; therefore preparatory courses for international language exams are very popular. The other reason is that many students and/or their parents

are not satisfied with foreign language teaching at public (state) schools (about one third of the participants in out-of-school institutions are at the same time pupils of primary or secondary schools). However, because it is easy to establish a language school the quality cannot always be guaranteed and there is a high fluctuation (71 % of participants at Warsaw private language schools change the school because they are not satisfied). Employers are also thought to be very concerned about languages and the future role of businesses in language learning is an issue for consideration.

As a consequence of all this, there is a growing awareness of the necessity to improve quality and to develop a new framework for out-of-school language education. One of the first steps should be to develop national standards for institutions offering languages programmes and certificates, i.e. internal and external quality management. As explained in the *Country Report*, there are local networks which might be used for adult language education as well, and this would support the idea of continuity so that out-of-school institutions can build on school programmes. The cultural institutes representing major European languages can also play an important part in the professionalisation of language teaching for adults and offering international certificates.

The European Parliament has established Europass as an instrument to support mobility of people within Europe by documenting their skills and qualifications. Promoting of Europass (including the Europass Language Passport) and making people familiar with the European Language Portfolio could help to increase the standing of adult language education.

In short, the promotion of a wide range of training after completion of compulsory education seems to be necessary in order to do justice to all talents and interests and to serve the needs of the occupational sector in a flexible way. A strengthening of coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies will need some public funding in order to establish equal opportunities.

#### **4.7. Teacher training**

Teacher training is a key element in further developing language teaching and learning in Poland. Current difficulties in supply of teachers are due to a large extent to the discrepancies of salaries between teachers and other occupations where languages are needed. The shortage of teachers may become even more of a problem as an early start to language teaching is introduced, and if a second foreign language is made compulsory.

The training of teachers for minority and regional languages including sign language as well as teacher training for Polish as a second and a foreign language is developing only slowly. As explained in the *Country Report*, it is difficult to train teachers of minority languages because only a few are needed. It is worth considering whether only one or two foreign language colleges or universities should specialise in designing programmes for this purpose. It would also be worth studying solutions in other European countries or perhaps co-operating with countries where a particular minority language is a national language or taught as a foreign language on a broader scale.

The differences in quality in teacher training in general are in part a function of the decentralised system of teacher training and the different institutions responsible. Whereas the universities focus on a philological perspective, the foreign language colleges concentrate primarily on teaching methods and language competence. In a long-term perspective it might be worth discussing how the foreign language colleges could be institutionally and qualitatively upgraded to 'teacher-training universities' or

how the two systems could be integrated while maintaining the strengths of both of them.

In short, the difficulties that have to be dealt with are:

- an improvement as far as status and salary of language teachers are concerned so that it will be possible to attract highly-qualified teachers. This is especially a challenge in smaller towns and rural areas;
- a possible integration of the different systems of teacher training;
- the establishing of teacher training for minority languages and for teaching Polish as an L2 for migrants;
- the provision of teachers for early language learning and for teaching a second foreign language.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Poland has a long-standing tradition of teacher training with an emphasis on linguistic and didactic competences. Nevertheless, it is still a challenge to prepare teachers for new ways of teaching, especially to adopt a positive attitude towards learner autonomy and plurilingualism. Teaching languages for plurilingualism will only be successful if language teachers themselves are plurilingual and are aware of the values and potential of plurilingualism. Foreign language colleges could be seen as ideal institutions to take such an approach as most of them do teacher training for more than one language. There is still much to be done in exploring this potential for plurilingualism using existing instruments such as the European Language Portfolio as a way to develop learning skills and strategies and a linguistic and cultural awareness both for teachers and learners.

A second focal point is teacher training for content and language integrated learning. As a consequence of the introduction of a compulsory second foreign language it would be necessary to limit the hours of language teaching in favour of CLIL and/or bilingual classes.

Poland has also started a number of projects integrating ICT into language teaching. It is essential to develop openness for innovative methods in teacher training. The European label for innovative language projects as well as other ways of making good practice available might be a starting point.

The readiness for innovation and change is the shared responsibility of initial and in-service teacher training. It is therefore a promising step that Poland has created incentives for teachers to participate in in-service training. It is also essential that in-service teacher training is sufficiently funded so that as many teachers as possibly can participate and receive training of a high standard. Experienced teachers are important models for novice teachers and it often depends on them whether new entrants will bring new ideas into teaching or whether they assimilate existing traditions. It would cause serious drawbacks if – as the *Country Report* puts it – the low level of expenditure were to constitute a threat to the existing in-service teacher training system. It needs further development.

The following characteristics and focuses are important and need consideration in the further development of initial and/or in-service teacher training in Poland:

- sufficient funding in order to enable teachers to adopt innovative ways of teaching (including the use of ICT in language teaching);
- continuation and improvement of incentives for participation in in-service training programmes;

- establishment of a network to distribute good practice, including participation in the work of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, the European Label and other actions;
- specialised programmes for teaching minority languages, teaching Polish as an L2, teaching in bilingual classes and CLIL;
- training in methods which encourage the development of learner autonomy;
- training in ways which help teachers to become plurilingual themselves and become aware of the values of plurilingualism; this includes making them familiar with the European Language Portfolio so that they can help learners to develop their plurilingual competence.

The teaching of foreign languages in a plurilingual and intercultural perspective can contribute considerably to education for democratic citizenship. Teachers' roles are changing in the knowledge-based society. This requires a high standard of teacher education in both initial and in-service training. It also requires training for the teacher trainers, which has to be developed as a next step.

#### **4.8. Strategy**

Poland is entering a period where important steps will be taken to further improve the quality and availability of language education. This is a unique opportunity for a national debate about innovative approaches and measures which will have far-ranging consequences for future generations.

Innovation is, however, difficult to sustain without co-ordination. Consideration needs to be given to the question of creating new tools for maintaining an overview and impetus in language education. The development of a national strategy for language education currently underway is crucial in this.

Such a strategy will take a holistic view of language education to include all languages of education, including Polish as first language as well as a second and foreign language. It will span all levels and sectors of language instruction, from kindergarten through general education, vocational education, in-company training and adult education for older people.

In the context of the EU Lisbon process, a new initiative is being taken to develop an action plan for lifelong learning. It will be important for the further development of language teaching for adults that language teaching and learning be included in such an action plan for Poland. This is all the more important because the school system cannot cover all foreign language needs, e.g. train enough people who are able to speak two or more languages, especially non-European languages, which seem to be needed by the economic sector. It also has to be recognised that a considerable number of people who left school ten or more years ago probably do not have sufficient training in languages (with the exception of Russian) and will depend on out-of-school institutions to compensate.

In order to define national targets a national language audit would be useful in order to establish needs and wants and there is a need for self-assessment of linguistic capital and potential. A national action plan could then define development fields and medium-term objectives as part of a national strategy.

A national strategy issued by the Ministry of Education might explain the historic background and also describe and analyse the present language situation in Poland. Specific measures to further improve the quality and provision of Poland's language education might be included and responsibility for implementation within a given

period delegated to relevant institutions and organisations. There is also a need to learn from new initiatives undertaken in language education in Poland over the past fifteen years which have on the whole not been subject to empirical evaluation, and to develop research and evaluation as part of a national language strategy.

The way language education policies are implemented varies considerably from country to country throughout Europe. Some countries, such as Austria and Norway, delegate wholly or partly the responsibility for implementing language education policies to directorates or national language resource centres. A bilateral collaboration has recently been established between the Austrian and Norwegian national language resource centres with a view to disseminating information and co-operating on specific projects. This collaboration might be extended to include other countries in a European language resource centre network.

A national body, or regional bodies, responsible to and funded by the Ministry of Education to co-ordinate the implementation of a national strategy needs to be considered. In particular the absence of a central institution for the development of the teaching of Polish as a second language is notable and needs urgent consideration.

## Appendix 1: Documents formulating the position of the Council of Europe on language education policy

### Conventions:

- [European Cultural Convention](#) (1954)
- [European Charter](#) for Regional or Minority Languages [[www.coe.int/minlang](http://www.coe.int/minlang)]
- [Framework Convention](#) for the Protection of National Minorities, [www.coe.int/minorities](http://www.coe.int/minorities)

### Policy recommendations and Resolutions:

- **Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe** [www.coe.int/T/CM](http://www.coe.int/T/CM)
  - [Recommendation R \(82\)18](#) based on the results of the CDCC Project N° 4 ('Modern Languages 1971-1981')
  - [Recommendation R \(98\) 6](#) based on the results of the CDCC Project 'Language Learning for European Citizenship' (1989 – 1996)
- **Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe** [www.assembly.coe.int](http://www.assembly.coe.int)
  - Recommendation 1383 (1998) on [Linguistic Diversification](#) and (CM(99)97 )
  - Recommendation 1539 (2001) on the [European Year of Languages 2001](#)
  - Recommendation 1598 (2003) on the protection of [Sign languages](#) in the member states of the Council of Europe
- **Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education**
  - [Resolution](#) on the *European Language Portfolio* adopted at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference (Krakow, Poland, October 2000)

These instruments and recommendations provide the legal and political basis for language education policies at all levels which not only facilitate the acquisition of a repertoire of language varieties - linguistic diversity for the plurilingual individual - but also ensure that attention is paid to diversification of the options for language learning. The latter refers to the need to encourage and enable the learning of a wide range of languages, not only those which have been dominant in language-teaching traditions, and not only the contemporary demand for English.

The documents in question focus primarily on languages which are defined as 'minority languages' or 'modern languages' /'langues vivantes'. These terms usually exclude the languages considered to be the national and/or official languages of a state and education policies dealing with the teaching of these. There is, however, a need to include such languages in language education policies because they are part of the linguistic repertoire of individuals. In the third part of the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, options for the implementation of policies include the teaching and learning of national/official languages, which for many but not all individuals are their mother tongue/first language.

## Appendix 2: Council of Europe instruments: Presentation

1. *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*
2. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*
3. *Manual for relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*
4. *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*

### 1. Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe

[www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)

The aim of the *Guide* is to offer an analytical instrument which can serve as a reference document for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in member states. Its purpose is to provide a response to the need to formulate language policies to promote plurilingualism and diversification in a planned manner so that decisions are coherently linked. It deals, for example, with the specification of guiding principles and aims, analysis of the particular situation and resources, expectations, needs, implementation and evaluation. Accordingly, the *Guide* does not promote any particular language education policy but attempts to identify the challenges and possible responses in the light of common principles.

To this end the *Guide* is organised in three parts:

- i. analysis of current language education policies in Europe (common characteristics of member states policies and presentation of Council of Europe principles);
- ii. information required for the formulation of language education policies (methodologies for policy design, aspects/factors to be taken into account in decision making);
- iii. implementation of language education policies (guiding principles and policy options for deciders in providing diversification in choice of languages learned and in promoting the development of plurilingual competence; inventory of technical means and description of each 'solution' with indicators of cost, lead-in time, means, teacher-training implications, administration, etc.).

In order for the proposals made here to be accessible to readers with different needs, the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* is available in two versions to suit the needs of specific groups of readers:

- the *Main Version* (reference version), which discusses, argues and exemplifies all the principles, analyses and approaches for organising European language education policies, as they are conceived in the framework of the Council of Europe. This version is designed for readers interested in all aspects of these issues, including their technical dimensions. It provides the means of answering the question: *how can language education policies geared towards plurilingualism actually be introduced?*

This version is itself extended by a series of **Reference studies** (see website) which were produced specifically for the *Guide* by specialists in the relevant fields. They provide a synthesis of or take up in more detail the issues dealt with in this version. They are published separately.

- an *Executive Version*, which was written for those who influence, formulate and implement language education policies at any level, e.g. individual institution, local government, national education system or international public or private institution. It is a document intended not for language specialists, but for policy makers who may have no specific specialist knowledge of technical matters in language education.

Both versions of the *Guide* (revised in 2007) and the Reference Studies are available on the website.

## **2. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages : Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)**

Developed through a process of scientific research and wide consultation, this document provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. The Framework provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates. The Framework is a document which describes in a comprehensive manner

- the competences necessary for communication
- the related knowledge and skills
- the situations and domains of communication

The Framework facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods. It provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency.

The CEFR is of particular interest to course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers and teacher trainers - in fact to all who are directly involved in language teaching and testing.

It is the result of extensive research and ongoing work on communicative objectives, as exemplified by the popular 'Threshold level' concept

The success of this standard-setting document has led to its widespread use at all levels and its translation into 31 languages; further translations are in progress. (see website).

Guides and Case Studies are available on the Council of Europe website.

English version: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, 2001 - Cambridge University Press - ISBN: Hardback 0521803136 Paperback: 0521005310.

## **3. Manual for relating Language Examinations to the CEFR [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)**

A pilot version of this Manual for relating language examinations to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) has been produced by the Language Policy Division in order to assist member states, national and international providers of examinations in relating their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

The primary aim of this Manual is to help the providers of examinations to develop, apply and report transparent, practical procedures in a cumulative process of continuing improvement in order to situate their examination(s) in relation to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR).

The Manual aims to:

- contribute to competence building in the area of linking assessments to the CEFR;
- encourage increased transparency on the part of examination providers;
- encourage the development of both formal and informal national and international networks of institutions and experts.

The Manual is supported by illustrative material (video / DVD and CD-Rom) for the levels in a number of languages.

In addition it is complemented by a Reference Supplement which provides the users of the Pilot Manual with additional information which will help them in their efforts to relate their certificates and diplomas to the CEFR.

#### 4. European Language Portfolio (ELP) [www.coe.int/portfolio](http://www.coe.int/portfolio)

The European Language Portfolio was developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe from 1998 to 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.

##### ***What is a European Language Portfolio?***

It is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

The Portfolio contains three parts:

- a **Language Passport**, which its owner regularly updates. A grid is provided where his/her language competences can be described according to common criteria accepted throughout Europe and which can serve as a complement to customary certificates.
- a detailed **Language Biography** describing the owner's experiences in each language and which is designed to guide the learner in planning and assessing progress.
- a **Dossier** where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

##### ***Aims***

The European Language Portfolio seeks to promote the aims of the Council of Europe. These include the development of democratic citizenship in Europe through

1. the deepening of mutual understanding and tolerance among citizens in Europe;
2. the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity;
3. the promotion of lifelong language and intercultural learning for plurilingualism through the development of learner responsibility and learner autonomy;
4. the clear and transparent description of competences and qualifications to facilitate coherence in language provision and mobility in Europe.

##### ***Principles***

- All competence is valued, regardless whether gained inside or outside of formal education.
- The European Language Portfolio is the property of the learner.
- It is linked to the *Common European Framework of reference for Languages*.

A set of common *Principles and Guidelines* have been agreed for all Portfolios (see website)

Detailed information regarding the accreditation of ELP models may be found on the website.

### **Appendix 3: Council of Europe Expert Group**

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**Appendix 4: Programme of Experts' visit to Poland, 12-16 December 2005**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Monday – 12/12/2005</b>	<b>Tuesday – 13/12/2005</b>	<b>Wednesday – 14/12/2005</b>	<b>Thursday – 15/12/2005</b>	<b>Friday – 16/12/2005</b>
10.00		Visit to a bilingual school/parallel session with employers possible during national Europass conference.	Visit to Warsaw University and its School for Foreign Languages (representatives of other Higher Education Institutions also invited).	Visit to the Parliament and the meeting with MPs.	Meeting with regional education authorities – good pract. examp.
11.00	Official meeting with the Minister and prof. Komorowska and session with authors' group.	Meeting with school principles, teachers and pupils.	Visit to Warsaw University and its School for Foreign Languages continued.	Session with National In-Service Teacher Training Centre – young learners and teacher training.	Meeting with regional education authorities – good pract. examp. (continuation).
12.00	Session with Ministry's Departments involved in the report–national language, regional and minority languages.	Meeting with school principles, teachers and pupils continued.	Meeting with teachers' trade unions: ZNP and Solidarity.	Visit to the school of the deaf – issues connected with sign language.	Visit to Socrates office/ Visit to Leonardo and Europass's office.
13.00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break

14.30	Session with National In-Service Teacher Training Centre – teacher training.	Meeting with Central Examining Board.	Meeting with Teacher Training Colleges.	Meeting with teachers' associations (also PASE) at National In-Service Teacher Training Centre/parallel session on continuity and diversity.	Meeting representatives of parents.
15.30	Session with National In-Service Teacher Training Centre – bilingual education, CoE's instruments.	Meeting with Central Examining Board (continued).	Meeting with Teacher Training Colleges continued/Meeting with Centre for Civic Education.	Meeting with representatives of minorities at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.	Closing meeting in the Ministry.
16.30-19.00	Conference room available for Expert's Group at FRSE with computer facilities and refreshments	Conference room available for Expert's Group at FRSE with computer facilities and refreshments	Conference room available for Expert's Group at FRSE with computer facilities and refreshments	Conference room available for Expert's Group at FRSE with computer facilities and refreshments.	Conference room available for Expert's Group at FRSE with computer facilities and refreshments.
19.00		Official dinner sponsored by the Ministry.			Farewell dinner sponsored by the Ministry.

## Appendix 5: Developments from 1 January to 31 December 2006

The following information provides an update of developments during the year following the Experts' visit in December 2005 in two areas included in the *Profile*.

### 1. National and ethnic minority language teaching and teaching of the Kashubian regional language:

- terminology resulting from the provisions of the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities as well as the Regional Language is being introduced successively into the provisions of the Act on the Education System as well as into its executive provisions;
- the Joint Government and National and Ethnic Minorities Committee was established by virtue of the provisions of the Act of 6 January 2005 on National and Ethnic Minorities as well as Regional Languages. The Group for Education of National and Ethnic Minorities as well as the Group for the Roma Minority were established within the framework of this Committee;
- work on the Draft Strategy for the Development of Education of the German Minority in Poland was completed (the draft to be submitted by the competent Minister for Education and the Minister for National and Ethnic Minorities for signature by the Prime Minister);
- the rules for financing schools for national and ethnic minorities, as well as schools which undertake additional tasks of providing education for Roma pupils, were changed in the budgetary year 2006. Thanks to these changes, a higher number of schools benefited from the increased funding transferred within the framework of the educational part of the General Subsidy allocated to local government units;
- the implementation of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland 2004-2013 is being continued (including an educational module, within the framework of which remedial classes in the Polish language for Roma pupils are financed from the state budget).

### 2. Foreign language teaching:

- the Ministry of National Education is currently working on the amendments to *the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 26 February 2003 on the Core Curriculum For Pre-Primary And General Education In Specific Types Of Schools* (O.J. No 51, item 458 amend. O.J. 03/210/2041 and 05/19/165). The planned changes concern, among other things, the development of a core curriculum for foreign language teaching connected with the introduction of compulsory foreign language teaching into the integrated teaching, i.e. from grade I of primary school (for 7 year-old children) from the school year 2008/2009.
- the introduction as of 1 September 2006 of a pilot programme of English language teaching in grade I of primary school. This programme includes the provision of two lessons of English per week, without dividing pupils into groups. These lessons should be provided by a teacher holding qualifications in foreign language teaching at the level of integrated teaching. 65% of Polish schools participated in this pilot programme in the school year 2006/2007. It is planned to continue the pilot programme in grades I and II of primary school in the school year 2007/2008.

The planned changes also include issues related to multilingualism as a follow-up to the Communication from the European Commission to the Council, European Parliament and the European Social and Economic Committee as well as the Committee of the Regions – “New framework strategy for Multilingualism”. The provisions of the draft of the Regulation stipulate that schools should encourage and prepare their pupils to use foreign languages as well as develop the possibility of coexistence of plurilingual communities in one geographic area.