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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORT

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# Language Education Policy Profile

**SLOVENIA**

Language Policy Division  
Strasbourg

Ministry of Education and Sport  
Slovenia

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## Executive summary

This *Language Policy Profile* is the final stage in the process of analysing the language education policy of Slovenia. It sets out the policies of the Council of Europe and the Slovenian authorities on language education, reviews the current situation regarding languages and their teaching, identifies issues requiring further examination and proposes guidelines for future action.

The language policy of Council of Europe member States is based essentially on the principle of promoting plurilingual education in Europe, a field in which Slovenia already has a well-established tradition. The approach adopted in implementing plurilingual education is to regard it as a holistic concept encompassing the mother tongue (or first language), minority languages (recent or longstanding) and foreign languages. The goal of language education is to promote plurilingual education making possible the inclusion of all linguistic and cultural groups. It is therefore a part of social policy.

Slovenia aims to apply a coherent language education policy and develop effective strategies in that field. This is evident from its strong involvement in European Union and Council of Europe language teaching activities. Its participation in this *Profile* is a further sign of its desire to promote quality and innovation in a spirit of openness, with the aim of fostering social cohesion.

The issues addressed concern:

- the national language
- the language teaching situation in the mixed territories
- language teaching for Roma/Gypsies
- the question of children and adolescents who do not have Slovenian as their first language
- the positive acceptance of linguistic differences
- the place accorded to languages at all educational stages and at university
- language teaching for adults.

These issues raise a number of points for further discussion and reflection relating to possible future developments in language teaching:

- general provision of a second language in primary education
- inclusion of a third language in secondary general education
- extension of language learning to include secondary technical and secondary vocational training
- structuring and development of initial and continuing professional training of teachers
- development of language curricula co-ordinated over time through more systematic use of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Learning, Teaching, Assessment*

- large-scale co-ordination between educational stages in the area of languages
- linking of national examinations, using the process proposed in the document *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessing – Draft Manual*
- expansion of Italian and Hungarian teaching outside the mixed territories
- systematic taking into account of "neighbourhood languages", which are frequently also the first languages of certain Slovenian groups or of migrants
- a certain relativisation of the position of English as a language of international communication
- quality creation and control in language teaching
- centrality of education for linguistic acceptance and democratic and intercultural citizenship.

# **1. Background to the *Language Education Policy Profile* of the Republic of Slovenia, conduct of the Profile process and aims pursued**

## **1.1. Background to the Language Education Policy Profile**

Slovenia is a longstanding participant in Council of Europe activities, particularly those promoted by the Language Policy Division, and in workshops organised by the European Centre for Modern Languages. Slovenia is also a place where groups of people who do not share the same first language or language of identity have long co-existed. The country thus possesses a strong linguistic potential because its inhabitants often have direct experience of plurilingualism. With the aim of ensuring social cohesion and safeguarding the country's rich linguistic and cultural diversity, it has also followed a policy of renewing and reshaping the legal and technical arrangements protecting the rights of linguistic minorities and the transmission of their first language. Experts agree on the major importance of these arrangements.

It is thus quite understandable that Slovenia was interested in the Council of Europe's idea of *Language Education Policy Profiles* which was presented at the *Intergovernmental Conference; Languages, Diversity, Citizenship: Policies for Plurilingualism in Europe* (Strasbourg, 13-15 November 2002)<sup>1</sup>. In this area, the Council of Europe offers member States the benefit of its co-operation and collective experience to enable them to create an opportunity for analysis and discussion of their language teaching policies from an overall perspective. The procedure developed by the Language Policy Division states, in *Guidelines and Procedures*<sup>2</sup>, that "the aim is to offer member States the opportunity to undertake a 'self-evaluation' of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts, with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country."

Aware that drawing up a *Language Education Policy Profile* does not constitute an external assessment but a process of reflection by the Slovenian authorities, members of civil society and Council of Europe experts, Slovenia wished to be included in this structure for dialogue between member States. The Slovenian authorities are convinced that the process itself is just as relevant as its outcome, namely this *Profile*. They therefore initiated it for general reasons, not because they were compelled to do so by any special educational or political factors.

## **1.2. Conduct of the Profile process**

The stages in the process were as follows:

- the Profile request was accepted by the Bureau of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Education at its meeting on 17 and 18 March 2002;
- the Council of Europe Expert Group was then set up, as follows: Jean-Claude Beacco (Rapporteur), France; Gábor Boldiszár, Hungary; Alan Dobson, United Kingdom; Georges Lüdi, Switzerland; Herta Orešič, Slovenia; representing the Language Policy Division: Joseph Sheils, Head of Division; contact person: Zdravka Godunc (Slovenia) [see Appendix 3];

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<sup>1</sup> See Conference Report, Council of Europe, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Document DGIV/EDU/LANG (2002) 1 Rev.3

- a preparatory meeting was held in Ljubljana on 1 April 2003 between the head of the Language Policy Division, the Rapporteur of the Expert Group and the national authorities (in particular, the group of authors chosen for the *Country Report*);
- the *Country Report* was completed and made available at the end of 2003;
- the talks between the Expert Group, the Slovenian authorities and other parties took place on the spot from 18 to 23 January 2004;
- an initial draft of the Report was examined by the Expert Group in Strasbourg on 25 June 2005; a final version of the Experts' Report was prepared in July and September 2004;
- a Round Table to analyse and discuss the Experts' Report was held in Ljubljana on 30 November 2004 ;
- the present *Language Education Policy Profile* was drawn up by the Council of Europe and the Slovenian authorities on the basis of this Round Table.

The Expert Group had available as references:

- the *Country Report* (hereafter referred to as the CR)<sup>3</sup> drawn up for the purpose according to the *Profile* protocol;
- the report by the Slovenia Eurydice unit (1999-2000) on the teaching of foreign languages (May 2001), certain elements of which were incorporated in the Country Report;
- the *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia* (Ljubljana, September 1996), particularly the chapters entitled *Gymnasium and Other General Education Secondary Schools* (pp 167-188) and *Development of Adult Education* (pp 293-315);
- the presentation by Z.Godunc and K.Pavlič Škerjanc: *Foreign Languages in Slovenia* (year 2002-2003) (7 pages), included in the Country Report;
- *The Development of Education. National Report of the Republic of Slovenia* by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (May 2001), particularly the section on *Educational principles and aims* (pp. 31-32).

The Expert Group also consulted the reports of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, those of the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* and the bibliography available concerning these subjects<sup>4</sup>. It based itself on the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe. From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education* (Council of Europe, Main Version, Draft 1, April 2003) and on its members' knowledge of other language education policies in Europe either as participants or as analysts.

This *Language Education Policy Profile* is the end product. Published in the Council of Europe languages (English and French) and in Slovenian, it is designed to be a source of information and ideas for other member States. The purpose of this approach, based on complementary and joint analyses, is to move discussion of these language issues firmly into the arena of democratic debate, identify "good practices" and jointly develop new perspectives according to each State's educational culture. Like those that preceded it,

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<sup>3</sup> Quotations are from the December 2003 French version of the *Country Report*.

<sup>4</sup> Including A.Nečak Lük: *Language Education Policy in Slovenia* (2003), published by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, part of which is incorporated in the Country Report.

this *Profile* is not limited to the study of a particular country but should be regarded as a source of good practices for general use.

This *Profile* has the following structure:

- explanation of the aims pursued (1.3) ;
- analysis of the present situation based mainly on the data in the Country Report (Parts 2 and 3) and on the analyses and observations of the Expert Group (2);
- identification of language education issues requiring further discussion / research and action in the medium term (3).

### **1.3. Aims of the *Language Education Policy Profile*: plurilingual education and multicultural citizenship**

The analyses carried out in this context are not intended to be essentially technical. Although they may have a technical outcome (organisation of the curriculum, syllabuses, teacher training etc), their aim is the application of shared educational values.

Because of the linguistic diversity of the European area and its individual States, the Council of Europe has adopted a position in favour of valuing and developing plurilingual education. Other "solutions" could be envisaged, e.g. the use of English as the sole language of communication between Europeans. However, a consensus, which is fully shared by Slovenia, has crystallised around plurilingualism for every European as the chief aim of language education policies. This position is enunciated in Council of Europe documents (see Appendix 1) and explained in detail in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (see Appendix 3). Versions of this position are to be found in many official Slovenian documents.

#### *Plurilingual education*

Under this perspective, it is not languages for their own sake and multilingual diversity<sup>5</sup> but the users of languages who are central to language policies. The emphasis is on the ability of all individuals to learn and use more than one language for social communication. Plurilingualism is defined in Council of Europe documents as the ability to use several languages for the purposes of communication where a person has proficiency, of varying degrees. It is not a "... juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather... the existence of a complex... competence". It is the task of plurilingual education to stimulate this competence and undertake its development. The aim is not to turn Europeans into polyglots but to help them develop plurilingual competence throughout their lives.

There are many reasons for valuing and developing such competence in individuals. Plurilingualism is a concept that simultaneously involves psycho-cognitive, pedagogical, political and educational dimensions which, singly or together, can represent shared aims for language education policies in Europe.

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<sup>5</sup> In this *Report*, as in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*, "multilingualism" refers to the presence in a large or small geographical area of more than one linguistic variety (forms of verbal communication regardless of their status) and "plurilingualism" refers to the repertoire of linguistic varieties that may be used by speakers; it includes mother tongue/first language and all languages acquired subsequently, again regardless of their status at school and in society.

Plurilingual competence is innate in all individuals, who are potentially or actually plurilingual; it is the physical manifestation of the language ability genetically available to every human being and capable of encompassing more than one language. It is the task of the school system to see that all pupils develop plurilingual competence in a balanced way, just as it develops their physical, cognitive and creative/imaginative abilities.

Furthermore, everyone's plurilingual repertoire contains different languages (learned in childhood, learned later, learned by following a course, learned independently etc), in which different competences have been acquired (conversation, reading, listening etc) at levels of proficiency which themselves differ. However, in any political and social entity, languages do not all enjoy the same status and recognition: some are official languages, languages of instruction, languages of recognised minorities, languages of unrecognised groups; some are sought-after and a source of prestige, others have a low status or are a handicap and a factor for exclusion etc). It is the State's business to strike a democratic balance between the plurilingual repertoires of groups and between the languages used by the community for its various activities (relations with border regions, integration in the regional area, European area, international trade etc).

The chief function of language policy is thus to organise the balanced management of plurilingual repertoires, local languages and collective needs according to the available resources and cultural and educational traditions, in order to ensure social cohesion, if necessary by explicitly recognising all parties' linguistic rights and duties. Slovenia has already had to deal with social cohesion matters of this nature and is therefore particularly keen to exchange viewpoints with other European States in this area.

#### *Intercultural education*

The development of plurilingual competence through plurilingual education is an integral part of European political and cultural perspectives. Its purpose is to prevent the economic and cultural losses resulting from the disappearance of speakers of a language whose transmission the community has been unable to support, and to enable every European to act effectively as a citizen in the public arena at both the national and transnational levels.

Another of its functions is to make everyone more aware of Europe, which is not merely an economic and administrative organism. Europe is also a place of many cultures and languages wherever one may be, and the feeling of belonging to it depends, among other things, on the ability of individuals to recognise the richness of linguistic repertoires and to see themselves both collectively and emotionally as part of that plurality. Linguistic civility and "benevolence" towards others can bring about an allegiance to Europe based not on the status accorded to a particular language but on respect for the diversity of the plurilingual repertoires of European citizens as a plural expression of their identity.

Plurilingual competence is one of the foundations of democratic coexistence. If we recognise the diversity of the languages in our own repertoire and the diversity of their functions and value, this awareness of the diversity we bear within ourselves can encourage a positive view of the languages of others. The promotion of plurilingualism is thus the basis for education in linguistic acceptance, as intercultural education. It is the function of the education system, particularly in the case of the most sought-after languages, to lead learners and users to regard the development of their plurilingual competence as a personal goal on a par with the discharge of their responsibilities as democratic citizens.

The promotion and development of plurilingualism thus constitute one of the fundamental aspects of policies on social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship, which can only be intercultural. In its Declaration and Programme on education for democratic citizenship of 7 May 1999, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed that the preservation of European linguistic diversity is not an end in itself, since it is placed on the same footing as the construction of a more tolerant and more interdependent society: "*a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity*" (CM (99) 76). Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to linguistic acceptance and hence to respect for linguistic differences. Language education policies are thus bound up with education in the values of democratic citizenship by virtue of the complementary nature of their goals: language teaching, with its exceptional opportunities for intercultural contact, is a sector in which the intercultural aspects of education for democratic living can be specifically incorporated in an educational system.

Slovenia is rich in plurilingual potential because of the presence of speakers with varied linguistic repertoires, the collective acceptance of linguistic differences, individuals' desire to learn languages as a result of the geopolitical and economic context, substantial collective expertise in the field of language education and linguistics etc. It has based its policy on principles identical with those jointly developed under the auspices of the Council of Europe, as indicated, for example, by this view of language education: Slovenia boasts high awareness of the importance of intensive learning of foreign languages and the learning of several widely spoken languages, minority languages, the languages of the neighbouring countries and less taught languages, providing a sound basis for linguistic diversification<sup>6</sup>.

These principles are identified and accepted. However, they can be put into practice only gradually; the introduction of appropriate measures (e.g. syllabuses and curricula, teacher training etc) may require new forms of organisation involving additional financial resources or important policy decisions. On the technical level, the development of education for plurilingualism is based on the principle that it should not be viewed in a compartmentalised fashion but as part of a holistic approach: language teaching/learning concerns both so-called foreign or second languages (to which it is generally limited) and the national/official language, regional and minority languages and the languages of recently settled immigrants.

## **2. Description of the present language education situation**

The first phase of the *Profile* consisted of the drawing up of a *Country Report (CR)*, which is published with the present document. The *Country Report* contains a description of things achieved in this area and of points which it is felt should be examined with an eye to developments in language teaching. These observations largely coincide with the analyses proposed in the Expert Group's report. They are presented jointly below in the form of an inventory of Slovenia's actions in the field of language education, together with the associated problems.

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<sup>6</sup> *Education System in Slovenia 2003-2004* (Part V: Educational Areas of Special National Significance, 2: Teaching and Learning Forum Languages, p. 20), Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

## **2.1. Language policy to promote social cohesion**

The Republic of Slovenia has been and remains very active in the area of language policy and education co-operation. Its involvement in the Council of Europe since independence bears no relation to its demographic and economic "weight" (see CR, section 7).

### **2.1.1. Strong involvement in Council of Europe activities**

The Republic of Slovenia has been extensively involved in all the Language Policy Division's projects since their inception, particularly the activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, of which it was one of the very first members. The Republic of Slovenia also ratified the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* on 4 October 2000 and the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* in 1997. This involvement is again demonstrated by the speed with which it participated in the *Profile* process<sup>7</sup>.

### **2.1.2. A clear awareness of language policy issues**

Since independence, Slovenia has thoroughly overhauled its education system after a period marked by serious political and "ethnic" conflicts on its borders which caused an inflow of non-Slovenian-speaking refugees and migrants. The organisation of language teaching falls within the framework set by the White Paper (*White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia*, 1995), whose guiding principles are equal opportunities, choice, encouragement of excellence, teaching quality, increased teacher and school independence and professional responsibility, plurality of culture and knowledge, and lifelong learning.

For the first time in history, the Slovenian language has fully become a State language. A longstanding teaching subject and a rich literary source, Slovenian has undergone a process of standardisation. The new situation has had implications for the definition of citizenship. Article 11 of the 1991 Constitution stipulates that "Slovenian is the official language; Italian and Hungarian are official languages in regions and communities which contain Italian and Hungarian minorities."

The Slovenian State, which contains minority language groups having as their first language, for example, Hungarian, Italian or Romany, fully acknowledges its multilingual status. This shows it clearly realises that the stakes of language education policies are not just technical (quality of language teaching, proficiency level attained etc) but also societal.

The *Country Report* reveals that there is no particularly serious language policy issue as far as education is concerned. However, the present document could help to improve its structure and effectiveness without any major upheavals, using targeted sectoral measures alone, bearing in mind that Slovenia has already introduced sound basic arrangements to encourage plurilingual education.

## **2.2. Socio-linguistic balances and teaching of the languages present on the territory**

Throughout history, Slovenia has been a multilingual area where numerous languages have long existed side by side. The intermingling of languages has increased over the past few years because of increased movement of persons resulting from Europe-wide

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<sup>7</sup> Slovenia is the third country to have applied to take part in the *Language Education Policy Profile* process, which was introduced at the Intergovernmental Conference in November 2002.

migrations, seasonal tourist flows and, specifically, the Balkan conflicts. Slovenians appear to perceive plurilingualism as a "natural" skill and their language repertoire, as far as can be judged, includes some of the languages of this environment and "foreign" languages (such as English). This plurilingual tradition appears to be still alive in young people and can constitute an extremely favourable starting point for organising institutional teaching focused even more strongly on plurilingual education.

### **2.2.1. Slovenian, the national language**

Central to language issues is Slovenian, a young official language which may still appear to suffer from a legitimacy deficit, if only relative. It proved necessary to "carry out an overall modernisation of the Slovenian educational system during the 1990s (1994-1998) [...] Modernisation of the Slovenian language course has stressed the communication functions of teaching whilst simultaneously taking account of the new social importance of language communities and the Slovenian State". In a newly independent State the national language may be expected to be the subject of debate and a source of concern, including as regards the teaching of Slovenian to foreigners and the teaching of Slovenian outside Slovenia.

One major source of concern is the functional literacy of part of the population, which is often perceived by public opinion as a serious and even urgent problem. Moreover, serving teachers seem ill-prepared as a whole for contemporary linguistic analysis and for the functional guidelines issued on the teaching of the national language in order to train the population in the public use of Slovenian in legitimate situations (i.e. to encourage the creation of a "high" variety of Slovenian rather than its numerous regional varieties).

The focus on Slovenian also reflects the collective attachment to the "mother tongue" (see the introduction to the CR). The necessity to stabilise this "young" national language will inevitably give rise to prescriptive or purist reactions reflecting inward-looking attitudes.

### **2.2.2. Language education policy for the "mixed" territories**

The treatment afforded to officially recognised minorities in the mixed territories is designed to facilitate management of these multilingual border areas (about 3000 Italian and 8500 Hungarian speakers), which serve as a kind of full-scale socio-linguistic laboratory. The organisation of language teaching on behalf of these minority language groups in Slovenia (see CR, pp 25-28, 51-75) is an integral fact of political life.

#### *Established arrangements*

The principle underlying these arrangements is to recognise the existence of the two languages either as a language of instruction or as a priority subject (Italian/Slovenian, Slovenian/Italian in Istria and Hungarian/Slovenian and Slovenian/Hungarian in the Prekmurje area) in order to create comparable plurilingual repertoires regardless of learners' first language (see Table, CR p. 36).

The "symmetry" between the linguistic treatment of these two groups should not hide the fact that the situations are not identical: the Mur district, which was "given back" to the former Yugoslavia under the Treaty of Trianon (1920), was transferred to Hungary in 1942 and then returned to the former Yugoslavia in 1946. However, these variations in political status do not seem to have been accompanied by mixing of the populations, unlike the Italo-Slovenian case in which similar political variations have led to a more pronounced intermingling of the two language groups (50,000 Slovenian-speakers in Italy).

The bilingual education system (Slovenian and Hungarian) in the Prekmurje region is generally regarded as a model of its kind and is also recognised as such by the Hungarian national authorities. It aims to promote pluri/bilingualism in a multi/bilingual and multi/bicultural region.

In four schools in the region, from nursery school to the *matura*, pupils are required to learn Hungarian and Slovenian as Language 1 or Language 2; other disciplines are also taught in one of the two languages, for example arts and geography are taught in Hungarian. The aim is for young people in the region to acquire a sound bilingual competence. However, this is not easy to verify at the moment and it has been pointed out that, from the ninth year of schooling onwards, 70% of classes are given in Slovenian and the *matura* can be taken entirely in one of the two languages. This could encourage the development of less diversified skills than desired.

#### *Evolving regions*

These "mixed regions" are themselves changing, as are other parts of the territory. For example, the data below reveal that the number of Slovenian citizens regarding themselves as of Hungarian language/culture has fallen by nearly 50% in 50 years and 20% in 10 years. These data appear to show that the minority Hungarian culture is melting into the majority population, which in itself is not a problem. However, this process could lead to a poorer knowledge of the Hungarian language, now emerging as particularly necessary because of the strengthening of regional economic and cultural co-operation between Slovenia and Hungary following their entry to the European Union.

	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2002
Slovenians	1415448	1522248	1578963	1668623	1689657	1631363
Italians	854	3072	2987	2138	2959	2258
Hungarians	11,019	10,498	8943	8777	8000	6243
Roma	1663	158	951	1393	2259	3246
<b>Total</b>	<b>1466425</b>	<b>1591523</b>	<b>1679051</b>	<b>1838381</b>	<b>1913355</b>	<b>1964036</b>

#### 2002 Census (CR, p.8)

It might be worthwhile performing a precise assessment of the results in these two regions from the viewpoint of standard of knowledge and the ways in which Italian and Hungarian are used by learners with Slovenian as their first language.

It is also important to see whether and how the technical solutions adopted for these "mixed regions" could be extended to other groups and areas without cumbersome legal procedures (such as amendments to the Constitution). This is, in fact, unnecessary because current regulations applying throughout the country already allow the local introduction of specific arrangements for language teaching for any group of speakers. The *Country Report* (p. 48) highlights the sensitive nature of this type of education in mixed environments where continuing teacher education, constant verification of the effects of education, and modernisation of educational procedures are necessary. Likewise, the research of social-psychological implications of the coexistence of two national communities is also of crucial importance for the preventative work in the field of linguistic contact, where, together with co-operation and coexistence, the potential possibility of conflict is also present".

### 2.2.3. "National" affiliation

Membership of a national group (*narod*) constitutes the traditional basis for considering the rights of those groups whose members belong exclusively to it. This focus on "ethnic" groups, which is common throughout central and eastern Europe, is the framework adopted by the Slovenian authorities to demonstrate their concern for the recognised linguistic rights (whose institutional continuity is laid down in the 1991 Constitution) of "national minorities" and their implementation, because this continues to be an instrument of national cohesion. The principle behind this language policy always seems to be the "protection of national minorities"<sup>8</sup>, i.e. groups of residents (or their descendants) who claim as their common characteristic the fact of having belonged to another political entity and who were transferred to the jurisdiction of another entity following population movements or border changes.

The factual description in the Country Report (p. 9 and p. 35) adopts this descriptive framework of national specificities/community specificities (*ethnic specificities* in both cases in the English version of the CR, p.7 and p.51). This feeling of belonging to a certain group leads (CR, 2.1, p.9) individual linguistic repertoires to be reduced to the language of identity alone and causes other languages in which speakers may be proficient to be ignored, thus strengthening the sense of group membership. For example, symbolic signs of dual national allegiance (e.g. flags) are traditionally found in secondary schools for recognised minorities. This inheritance from the past should be regarded as an excellent foundation for multicultural training based on plurilingual education.

This viewpoint is also adopted because of its relevance for speakers of Slovenian (ethnic Slovenians) living in neighbouring States, or "Slovenes with a non-Slovene citizenship" (CR, p. 14). A law passed under the Amato government should thus safeguard the collective rights of the Slovenian minority in Italy<sup>9</sup>. The number of Slovenian speakers is estimated at 50,000 in Italy, 25,000 in Croatia (1981 data) and 15,000 in Austria (1991)<sup>10</sup>.

This state of affairs inherited from the past is doubtless changing. The "historical" minorities are tending to redefine themselves because:

- the effects of military conflicts and of violence suffered and inflicted are fading with the generations;
- the European process tends to give another meaning to current political borders and to show territorial differences and regional affiliations in a fresh light;
- cross-border mobility is increasing;
- members of these communities are moving outside their historical areas of settlement;
- "mixed" families are being constituted, especially in the towns.

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<sup>8</sup> The term "national minority" can thus have two meanings: a group belonging to a "nation" defined in cultural/historical terms, or a group recognised as specific by the State where it lives.

<sup>9</sup> For the teaching of Slovenian in Austria, see the Mercator-Education site: *The Slovenian language in education in Austria*: [http://www.l.fa.knaw.nl/me...ional\\_dossier\\_slovenian\\_in\\_austria.htm](http://www.l.fa.knaw.nl/me...ional_dossier_slovenian_in_austria.htm)

<sup>10</sup> According to A.Sellier and J.Sellier (2002, new edition): *Atlas des peuples d'Europe centrale*, La Découverte, Paris, p. 148.

An example of these processes is described in some socio-linguistic studies, such as that concerning the town of Lendava<sup>11</sup>, which posits an ongoing transition from a group identity experienced as exclusive (*identity as an island*) to a henceforth more complex and plural identity (*identity as a crossroads*).

One of the important future tasks of language education policies will be to take account of these trends. Current arrangements may well be unsuitable for the rising generations, who were born in a different Europe from that of their parents.

#### **2.2.4. Acceptance of linguistic diversity**

The 1976 *White Paper* establishes non-discrimination as one of the founding principles of the education system. The *Act organising and financing education* defines as one of its purposes (Article 2) education for mutual acceptance and raising awareness of equal rights for men and women and of respect for human diversity and mutual co-operation. An example of these educational practices can be found in the policy followed at the Ciril Kosmač primary school in Piran. The school accepted refugees during the Balkans conflict; those pupils (mostly Bosnian) joined mainstream schools in 2003. This experience contributed to a major breakthrough (by law, Italian is taught as Language 1 to the children), with the result that the school acquired UNESCO school status, as did some 70 others in Slovenia. This school, about half of whose pupils come from other parts of the former Yugoslavia, provides an impressive example of plurilingual and pluricultural education: four languages are taught and early language learning activities are organised, making use for teaching purposes of the diversity of languages and cultures represented in the school population. All this is done in partnership with schools in other countries.

However, as in many States, development of a culture of acceptance and mutual understanding is not easy and requires constant effort. The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) refers in its second Report on Slovenia<sup>12</sup> to reports of the existence of racist attitudes (CRI, p. 18, § 43). It identifies the following as "vulnerable groups": Roma/Gypsies (§32-37), the German-speaking minority (§ 39) and religious groups (particularly the 30,000 Moslems, whose numbers have been swelled by the arrival of refugees from Bosnia- Herzegovina). It also raises the question of the legal situation of minority groups from the former Yugoslavia (§ 47-54) who have no legal status, even though the Citizenship Act was amended in 2002 to enable their situation to be regularised (§ 52).

Nevertheless, the foregoing can only strengthen the determination of all parties involved in education to continue their efforts to promote intercultural education both inside and outside language education, for example in education for democratic citizenship and its values.

#### **2.2.5. Linguistic education of Roma/Gypsies**

According to ECRI, there are some 3000 to 10,000 Roma/Gypsies (ECRI, p.15). Twenty municipalities provide a home to indigenous Roma. As in many States, questions concerning Roma/Gypsy children are not so much legal as practical. The Council of

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<sup>11</sup> Albina Nečak Lük, George Muskens, Sonja Novak Lukanović (editors) 2000: *Managing the Mix Thereafter: Comparative Research into Mixed Communities in the Three Independent Successor States*, Institute of Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana.

<sup>12</sup> Adopted on 13 December 2002; document CRI (2002) 39.

Europe (ECRI, languages Charter etc) has reported concerns about Roma/Gypsy children being placed in classes for children with special needs (Reports of this nature are made by special committees) and the existence of discriminatory attitudes at school (e.g. a ban on using the mother tongue). This is an important issue because 80% of these children appear to be illiterate. Their inclusion in mainstream education is a priority and adjustments must be made to incorporate the teaching of first languages in the curriculum. Teachers still show an active tendency to "adapt" these children to the school system and language and not to make allowance for their language in lessons<sup>13</sup>, but this latter option is not necessarily approved of by the parents concerned and is not easy to apply in actual teaching.

Slovenia intends to take an active part in Council of Europe projects to draw up a framework curriculum and produce teaching material for the Romani language, once this instrument has been clearly defined. It is clear to everyone that the key factors in all educational action in this policy area are the availability of teachers who are proficient in Roma/Gypsy languages and/or aware of the issues involved in educating these children and the initiatives taken by each school.

#### **2.2.6. Sign language**

This question has been addressed by the Slovenian authorities with the attention it deserves (legal and regulatory provisions), although the *Country Report* does not quote any assessments of this action (CR, pp. 30-35) with reference, for example, to Council of Europe Recommendation 1598 (2003) on the *Protection of sign languages in the member States of the Council of Europe*.

The Maribor specialised centre is active in this field, as also are the Ljubljana centre (which has had a first-year primary class since 1995-96) and the Portorož centre (which, like Maribor, has used the verbo-tonal method since 1963). The Maribor centre combines medical and educational treatments in the form of an approach focusing on educational development and integration in a hearing environment.

#### *Conclusion*

The overall conclusion is that Slovenian society possesses linguistic assets whose potential in relation to speakers' actual practices can undoubtedly be further developed. The need for plurilingual education is fully grasped but is systematically put into practice mainly for recognised linguistic minorities.

### **2.3. Foreign languages in the education system**

An important place is devoted to languages in the education system; this meets a collective need originating in Slovenia's geographical position on the borders of the Romance-speaking and German-speaking areas. The curriculum reforms necessitated by the implementation of the *White Paper* were completed in 2004. The first children to have received language education under the new (primary and secondary) system should leave secondary education by 2008.

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<sup>13</sup> Mojca Kovac Sebart and Janez Krek, *Les Roms en Slovénie entre le droit et le pratique* in *Education et sociétés plurilingues*, No 134, June 2003, p. 57-68.

### 2.3.1. Language teaching in compulsory basic education

#### Language provision

In response to social demand, the Slovenian authorities have been keen for schools to offer foreign languages at an early stage, i.e. before the 4<sup>th</sup> class (CR, pp. 56-57), including non-compulsory pre-school education, which accounts for 55% of children. Lessons are optional or have been the subject of pilot projects designed to introduce languages before the 4<sup>th</sup> class, e.g. foreign languages at primary school (1990-1996), French course at primary school (beginning of 1995) etc. The available data on the current situation have not been assembled (see CR, Annex 1, *Pre-school Education*, which reports 421 activities involving about 4600 pupils with no details as to languages).

It would be important to be able to influence these initiatives which schools are allowed to take, so as to correct any inequalities resulting from the differing cultural, social and financial resources of families and regions.

The Slovenian authorities have strengthened the position of foreign languages: in the primary stage (henceforth three 3-year stages) covering children from 6/7 to 15 years of age, a language is compulsory from class 4 (9 years) (CR, pp. 57-58). Language 2 as a compulsory option (i.e. compulsory with a choice between several languages) has been available since the beginning of the 2003 school year, but the conditions for making this choice and flow data are not yet available. A second optional language (i.e. Language 3, CR p. 57) is provided from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> classes, with a total hourly figure of 210 periods, or 2 every 35 weeks. Co-ordination arrangements with higher secondary education are being finalised. Language provision in Slovenia is thus around the average for European countries (two languages during the compulsory curriculum), but Language 2 is not yet compulsory.

#### *Pre-eminence of English*

English is chosen as Language 1 by 85% and German by 15%, the only possible choices (CR, Annex 1, 2000/01 data for basic schooling). It is not known with certainty whether this pre-eminence constitutes a possible obstacle to the subsequent diversification of language teaching following the "*English is enough*" principle.

Young adults seem open to language diversification and many children follow private foreign language courses out of school both in English and in other languages, although some parents do not seem to want "serious" language teaching before the 4<sup>th</sup> class (but it is not known whether this view is widely shared). Such additional courses are organised by the schools themselves or other institutions, partly with teachers from the school itself and outside normal school hours.

Non-compulsory, often "early", teaching creates difficulties at beginner level. Classes containing both pupils who have already followed English courses and beginners tend to show a wide range of ability. The teachers try to manage this situation, which creates difficulties. There are differences of opinion as to the magnitude of these difficulties: they may arise from straightforward differences between children of the same group, quickly solved or capable of being dealt with in the classroom, or from differences in basic attainment requiring a differentiated approach that is not always practicable.

School-leaving examinations are external and standardised (50% of the final mark). The objectives of the examinations and the examinations themselves are formulated under the

supervision of the same national institute but seem to be applied by the different committees according to different models.

Languages are not subjects which it is compulsory to assess (assessment by the pupils' teachers, CR p. 58), with the result that language learning may be partly delegitimised.

English occupies a predominant position in the education system, being studied by 85% of pupils in compulsory education (which now lasts for 9 years), with a total of 655 periods of 45 minutes each, i.e. about 490 hours (CR p. 89). It is considered necessary to learn at least two foreign languages, but only some schools meet this requirement in the normal curriculum. Pupils who do not continue their training in general secondary education (i.e. about 45% of the school population in 2002) mostly learn only one language.

While this situation is still unsatisfactory, it is important to stress that under the education system of the Republic of Slovenia schools possess a degree of independence in the languages they provide, which enables them to offset these shortcomings. They may provide less frequently chosen languages (e.g. Russian, Spanish and so on). The exact role played by the local authorities and school heads would be worth analysing, not only as regards the administrative and financial aspects, but also in terms of pedagogical guidelines (for example, through the governing boards). Apart from national initiatives, these bodies are probably decisive for the implementation of a plurilingualism-oriented language policy.

### **2.3.2. Language teaching in higher secondary education**

#### *Technical and vocational education*

This non-compulsory 4-year stage accepts pupils from 15 to 18-19 years of age. The proportion of pupils in the final year of compulsory schooling who continue their education beyond that point is not specified. Technical and vocational courses are chosen by about 60% of pupils in higher secondary. The Country Report states that: "A second foreign language (German, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian) is studied in some four-year programmes; it is compulsory in general education programmes (the so-called gimnazija, gymnasium, liceo) and some technical programmes while only one foreign language, if any, is taught in vocational schools" (p. 57). At the technical *matura* level, pupils have the choice between an examination in a foreign language (English, German, Italian) and one in mathematics.

This interest in languages, which may be regarded as minor in the vocational branches, suggests that the language question does not enjoy much priority in this type of education owing, in particular, to the importance devoted to employment-oriented training. Such an orientation calls for corrective action to avoid giving elitist connotations to a knowledge of languages because of their more limited presence in courses with an often lower social prestige.

#### *General education*

A second modern language forms part of the curriculum in general secondary education (a choice between 6 languages, CR p. 58-59). It either follows on from compulsory education or may be started at beginner level (total hourly figure of 420 periods). A compulsory subject must be chosen from a selection which includes a third language.

The study of Language 1 takes place within a 420-period timetable and thus lasts 13 years. As this education stands at present, it has not been established that the syllabuses for the successive stages and the adjustments made to them over the past few years are resulting in consistent learning arrangements which exclude repetitions, for example, and which do not deal with cultural and intercultural aspects only at the end of the learning path. Ceiling effects may occur which would not appear in oral skills but in skills connected with written comprehension and production, particularly in academic and scientific work.

Language choices are as follows (all courses):

English	103,424	88.9%
German	67,943	58.41%
French	3152	2.7%
Italian as a foreign language	10,344	8.89%
Italian for the Italian minority	1841	1.58%
Spanish	399	0.34%
Hungarian as a foreign language	0	0%
Hungarian for the Hungarian minority	546	0.47%
Russian	14	0.01%
Classical Greek	86	0.07%
Latin	2136	1.84%

Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2003

Languages in the mixed areas have very different audiences (none for Hungarian, substantial for Italian). Russian teaching has virtually disappeared. The "languages of neighbours", though widely offered by the education system, are neglected by learners, at least at this stage in their education, in favour of English, which is chosen as the language of professional and social success; the languages of the former Yugoslavia are available for learning on a limited basis.

The Slovenian authorities have introduced incentives to encourage a more diversified range of foreign languages in schools. Although the standard size of a language class is 30 pupils, schools receive special funding to organise the teaching of "rare" languages to smaller groups (minimum threshold 15/16). This financially costly administrative measure shows the authorities' manifest commitment to plurilingual education. However, despite this diversification of the language provision, parents in general still clearly prefer monolingual education, as they do in many other European countries.

Foreign languages have been taught experimentally as a language of instruction (CR p. 58). However, this orientation is not currently regarded as of prime importance and there seem to be legal difficulties in this area. A trial project with European sections is also in progress in the *gimnazija* (document translated into French "*Lycée, sections européennes, Projet, Lycée d'enseignement général, décembre 2003*"), in which a greater place is given to languages ("more extensive teaching of one or two compulsory languages" and

teaching in a foreign language of music, visual arts, geography, sociology and philosophy).

The final examination for the *gimnazija*, the *matura*, includes language tests, but there is no distinction between Language 1 and Language 2. The lower level is considered to correspond to level B2 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, while the upper level appears to be "slightly above" B2. The teachers in charge of this could usefully employ the new Council of Europe instrument (*Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Manual*: [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)), which could help to address this question.

### **2.3.3. Languages at university (for students of non-language disciplines)**

Language teaching timetables are highly variable: from 45 hours to 240 hours depending on the faculty (CR pp.69-73). Choices (of language and timetable) have not been made according to "the special needs of the students or those of the study orientation, but often displayed the understanding of the meaning of foreign language knowledge of the momentary dean or faculty council, and the number of hours, which could be separated for foreign languages. The majority of faculties opted for the teaching of English, or English and German, only a few faculties such as the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Social Sciences implemented a wider selection of languages, meaning, in addition to English and German, also French, Italian and Russian" (CR, p. 66).

Generally speaking,

- language knowledge plays no special role in university access: language teaching is often the responsibility of language centres and of courses given by qualified teachers (who include 58 assistants for English and over 24 for the other languages;
- courses are devised by the teachers on the basis of the specific needs of each faculty;
- certifications (whose level is defined by each faculty) do not seem to be calibrated with respect to the *Framework*.

It is important to ascertain whether language provision and the choices made by students are more highly diversified at university than in secondary school.

### **2.3.4. General adult training and private-sector availability of language courses**

Important work is done by the adult education institutes, where language teaching is particularly highly developed. Courses are fee-paying. They are attended mainly by adults seeking professional skills but also by persons interested in learning languages, a taste that has grown since independence. The range of languages offered is wider than in schools, with courses in Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Portuguese.

Provision in the private sector is substantial: in 2000-2001 there were 20,000 pupils as against 14,500 at the State-run centres (CR, Annex 1,4). No breakdown is available of this extremely substantial private-sector language provision.

The official centres work in conjunction with the economic sector. The Chamber of Commerce does not have a department for helping businesses to develop their language policies. However, it does give its members information about training facilities. Courses are geared mainly to immediate ad hoc needs, which depend on the opening up of new markets. The economic sector, which consists mainly of small and medium industries, is becoming generally more aware of the usefulness of employing plurilingual staff.

The *Andragoski Center Slovenije* is developing language teaching in non-institutional education contexts (particularly study circles, which deserve to be more widely known). The average age of participants is 30 to 50 (75% of whom are women); under the supervision of voluntary mentors and in groups set up for one year, members of study circles learn languages, mainly the German and Italian of the border areas, where these circles function best because they are in touch with real life. The Centre is also highly involved in functional literacy training (CR, pp. 111-114), which is proving to be a fundamental educational issue for disadvantaged groups (young people between 16 and 25 who left school without qualifications, unemployed persons, immigrants, people with low resources, poor vocational skills etc).

The experience acquired by these bodies (with respect to the analysis of language needs, teaching approach etc) could certainly be utilised more widely in the education system through improved cross-sectoral co-operation.

### **2.3.5. Training of language teachers**

The Slovenian authorities recognise the importance of language teacher training for language education policies. Initial theoretical training is in the hands of the universities.

Teacher training partly common to all language teachers is still provided on a relatively small scale. However, diplomas with languages as a major or minor subject are offered by the Arts Faculty of Ljubljana University and by the Teacher Training Faculty of Maribor University. Each language department has its own training system, which is taught in the target language; the number of hours devoted to training varies: English is markedly better catered for than other languages, but such training does not seem to account for more than 10% of the total amount of initial training.

Initial practical training covers a 10-month year with practice periods, but it only applies to State teachers.

In-service training has a recognised role: teachers must follow 40 hours of such training every year. Courses are chosen from a training catalogue and are normally free of charge. Schools must release teachers for 40 hours per year, but school heads do not always give the necessary permission. Training takes place in seminars and is assessed by the participants. It has specified goals but tries simultaneously to maintain a high level of professional culture on the part of the teachers.

The way teacher training is organised should probably be re-examined, particularly in order to train teachers as a group to manage linguistic and cultural diversity better, but from the viewpoint too of their role in education for democratic citizenship.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

Following the *Country Report*, the Slovenian authorities believe that the following topics deserve further study:

- greater diversification of languages in the curriculum not in order to increase provision but to meet the complex demands of parents and pupils (CR, p. 81: "How to raise the plurilingual/pluricultural awareness of parents, school directors, teachers?");
- greater diversification, this time of the curriculum, in particular through syllabuses not covering all competences (partial competences), for (secondary) vocational education or for university students who are not language specialists (CR, p.78);

- the resources to be employed, devised or activated in order to make parents, teachers and school heads aware of plurilingual education: linguistic diversity is not a frequent subject of public debate;
- the actions to be undertaken regarding the status of the national language and definition of the competences expected in Slovenian at the end of each educational stage;
- proper recognition for first languages (other than Slovenian), second/foreign languages (other than English), regional or neighbouring languages and languages of migrants and Roma/Gypsies;
- relating of language training to European perspectives, above and beyond participation in European programmes (CR, pp. 76-80).

During this analysis, other topics falling within more conventional fields emerged:

- compulsory second modern language in basic education
- introduction of a third language in secondary education
- important place devoted to languages in technical, vocational and university education
- quality of teaching and control of that quality
- initial and continuing training of teachers.

These points call in turn for study and reflection both from the technical viewpoint and from the viewpoint of plurilingual and pluricultural education.

### **3. Prospects**

#### **3.1. The outlook for plurilingual education**

The purpose of this last section is not to put forward fresh, ready-made proposals but to consider from a medium-term perspective some possible ideas which may later give rise to new political and technical measures. These possible future directions for language education have been identified from the foregoing data and analyses.

As announced in 1.3, the approach adopted will be that of plurilingualism, as it appears in the Council of Europe recommendations endorsed by Slovenia and other member States, and as set out in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*. The ideas set out below, whose purpose is to provide food for thought, will therefore be addressed from the viewpoint that language teaching is not just an educational matter involving the theory and practice of teaching and its specialists but an area requiring societal choice as regards:

- organising the coexistence of cultural groups in a particular political space both inside and outside the State's borders;
- creating a sense of European belonging rooted in shared current values, including democratic citizenship as a full reality in Europe;
- social equity and egalitarian access to education and languages: language proficiency (or lack of it) can reinforce divisions of all kinds, leading to discrimination and/or

marginalisation whose effects it may be considered the education system's responsibility to try to alleviate.

These concerns can be broken down into the following specific points:

- the relationship between language teaching and education for democratic citizenship in Europe;
- the diversity of specific target groups: what forms of teaching and what place should be reserved for the languages of minorities which have no legal or regulatory status, particularly languages used by groups with a minority culture and by migrant or recently settled communities?
- national language requirements and the country's capacity to satisfy them in the light of medium-term demographic, social, economic and geopolitical trends;
- coherence in language teaching (through the curriculum, at regional level);
- how to define the aims of language teaching and language policies in general, their explicitness and the role of civil society in this process.

If they are to be met, these concerns must take account of certain technical aspects, for example:

- assessment of the way in which principles and directives concerning teaching in general and language teaching are implemented in practice;
- in compulsory or secondary education, the forms assumed both by the diversification of language provision and by the language choices actually made, given a social demand often concerned solely with English or other languages of international communication;
- convergence between the different kinds of language teaching (language of instruction and so-called foreign languages, between one foreign language and another, and between languages taught in secondary school, at university and in business);
- relationship between the national education system and the private language market ;
- assessment of teaching quality in the light of the definition of teaching objectives via the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*;
- position accorded to lifelong learning and, in particular, to autonomous learning and learning to be independent;

implications for the training of language teachers.

This leads on to the idea of plurilingual education forming a coherent whole and linked clearly to education for democratic citizenship as a constituent element of social policy. The vision of a society composed of plurilingual individuals may be regarded as not yet a reality in the majority of Council of Europe member States. However, potential exists in this area and could be strengthened by realistic medium-term proposals. Required as it is to manage a situation of linguistic diversity inherited from the past and to build its economic future regionally and internationally in the face of recent and coming migratory movements, Slovenia is well-placed to take full advantage of its language policy experience, the existing linguistic competences of its citizens and the professional skills of its educational staff and its researchers. While the Slovenian authorities are aware of

these requirements, this is not always necessarily the case for employers, parents and certain teachers, who may be willing to accept the current situation, with bilingualism limited to the mixed territories, the dominance of English and, to a lesser extent, of German in teaching, a considerable degree of school autonomy, which facilitates appropriate language provision but may lead to territorial divisions, etc. This *Profile* could constitute a starting point for debate on innovation in this area under the aegis perhaps of a Profile follow-up committee.

### **3.2. Coherence: towards a "global concept" of language teaching**

It is difficult to bring about and support innovation without a degree of co-ordination of language teaching, divided as it is into separate disciplines (national language, foreign language etc) and into not always mutually coherent educational stages. "Education for plurilingual awareness, which aims to make people aware of the way various natural languages function in order to bring about mutual comprehension among the members of a group, may lead to increased motivation and a curiosity about languages that will lead them to develop their own linguistic repertoires" (*Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*, p. 65). This necessity for greater co-ordination has been identified, for example, in an analysis by a Slovenian specialist in socio-linguistics, who stresses that "In spite of the fact that the Slovene linguistic and political expert sphere has always been intensively engaged in reflection of the language policy and planning issues, no explicit language strategy document has been created so far<sup>14</sup>". While this situation is not peculiar to Slovenia, the possibility of introducing monitoring arrangements yielding an overall view of language education should be considered. The idea behind such an approach would be to bring languages and language education into the arena of public debate and not leave the matter to insiders and technicians.

#### **3.2.1. Cross-sectoral co-ordination**

To give greater coherence to language education policies, it might be useful to:

- identify and/or institute language policy co-ordination coming under the highest decision-making levels of State or Parliament, which would be responsible for designing and implementing an overall language strategy (possibly set out in a strategic policy document) and co-ordinate, in particular, the deliberations of the various councils and committees handling these questions or even replace them by incorporating them into a single new structure;
- establish regular consultation and permanent synergy between, for example, teachers and heads of language teaching in schools and universities, those with responsibility for Slovenian as the mother tongue and the Andragoski Center, which is responsible for adult literacy, the National Examination Centre and the National Curriculum Council or the Board of Experts responsible for curriculum development; between the Chamber of Commerce and the Slovenian Adult Education Centre in the field of language requirements for vocational training or for retraining; and between administrative officials and elected representatives (Parliamentary Education Commission) etc ;
- prepare a policy document on language teaching under the auspices of the ministries concerned and through dialogue with civil society, particularly with associations of

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<sup>14</sup> A.Nećak Lük (2003): *Language Education Policy in Slovenia*, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, pp 11 and 75.

teachers, students and parents of pupils, with the aim of devising a long-term policy (see above);

- organise closer co-ordination between the departments concerned with language teaching at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, between the ministries concerned (employment, social affairs, foreign affairs, home affairs etc) and make administrative and financial provision for drawing up joint projects on languages and their teaching/learning.

At the organisational and teaching level, it would then be useful to consider whether (and with what investment) it might be possible to:

- organise closer co-ordination of language teaching at local authority level, including border areas (European interregional co-operation);
- organise networks of schools so as to be able to offer complementary language teaching in areas of limited size (i.e. teaching which cannot be provided by one school alone because of the small number of potential pupils but which would be possible for an "area" school);
- harmonise the different language curricula, which seem to be planned in isolation from one another but which could be given common goals, comparable objectives and similar methods of teaching and assessing attainments and competences;
- introduce explicit relationships between one language and another in the teaching of each of them (between the national language and foreign language 1, foreign language 1 and foreign language 2, between Slav, Germanic and Romance languages etc), for reasons of pedagogical coherence and with an eye to education for plurilingualism;
- design a common policy for the universities, with due heed to their regional and historical specificities but with at least minimum common language requirements linked to general secondary and vocational education and taking account of the personal expectations of students and academic requirements;
- reflect these common features in the initial and continuing training of language teachers by introducing at least a common training core (at university level);
- against this background of common aims and shared standards but in specific social and linguistic contexts, train school heads in the roles of language policy designer/leader/adviser which they often play in practice at local level; school heads have considerable influence on parents' language demands and are important intermediaries in promoting broader language provision, which many of them are already doing;
- introduce clearer co-ordination between those responsible for the university training of teachers, those responsible for their initial teacher training, those responsible for continuing training, school heads and central government;
- give a more important place in initial teacher training to teaching theory and practice (currently 10% of the total), to training periods abroad and to continuing training (currently 40 hours a year).

The purpose of this "global concept" for plurilingual education is to give greater coherence to education and training pathways during professional life and make the

State's investment in language teaching more cost-effective. A further aim is to allow better use to be made of positive sectoral experience (e.g. bilingual teaching in the mixed territories). Contact between the many players of all kinds engaged in various capacities in language teaching could take place in a regular "national forum" where points of view could be expressed and compared by policy-makers or administrative officials, parents of pupils, students, representatives of cultural groups, members of the economic and artistic world and other leading figures in civil society.

### **3.2.2. Curricula and examinations: explicit and shared norms and standards**

To make plurilingual education a reality, one must seek ways and means of creating additional coherence between the different objectives of language teaching in terms of competences to be acquired and levels of competence expected of each individual. This clarification is already a major concern of the National Examination Centre, which is required to correlate the levels recognised through adult language examinations with those provided for in basic or secondary education. To do this, it makes partial use of the competence levels in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, although such linking (with a particular examination corresponding to a particular level in the *Framework*) are still probably overvalued, as generally happens when intuition is employed.

Still as regards examinations, the acquisition of Slovenian nationality depends, except in certain cases (CR, p. 11), on success in a Slovenian language test of so-called "basic" level corresponding to B1 of the *Framework*, which represents the level of *independent user* and not *basic user*. The objectives and considerations underlying this type of verification, whose use seems to be spreading in Europe, should perhaps be discussed. However, at the technical level alone it would be important to check:

- whether this examination has in fact been calibrated with respect to the Framework levels and corresponds to level A2 or B1;
- whether this required language threshold is indeed the one intended by legislation;
- whether the objectives are explicitly stated;
- whether the conditions for taking this language test offer the desired guarantees of fairness.

In order to create further transparency and thus increased co-ordination in this decisive sector of language training, consideration should be given to the desirability of explicitly constructing national language syllabuses on the basis of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* so as to make them mutually comparable from one language to another and from one educational stage to another. Special studies could be performed to see whether by using the *Framework* it is possible to specify the expected competences in the national language for which it is planned to teach functional communication skills.

This new-look syllabus could be based on the *Reference Level Descriptions for National and Regional Languages* drawn up language by language, development of which is co-ordinated by the Council of Europe's Language policy Division. These documents supply the list of "verbal material" per language corresponding to each communicative competence level in the *Framework*. The above instruments are available for German (*Profile Deutsch*), French (*B2 level*) and are being developed for Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, Italian and other languages. The Council of Europe has drawn up an explicit

common protocol designed to relate language examinations and tests to the Framework (*Relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, preliminary pilot version*, DGIV/EDU/LANG (2003) 5 rev. 1, September 2003). The latter is illustrated by test material and video examples of learner productions regarded as corresponding to a particular competence level. All these instruments are available for drawing up explicit, mutually consistent syllabuses.

Such a structuring of syllabuses and examinations should not be regarded as merely a technical adjustment but as probably one of the conditions for language teaching coherence and diversification. It would spell out objectives, using the most explicit criteria possible, and establish a typology of language competences, not all of which would need to be taught jointly and/or necessarily to an identical level of proficiency.

Adoption of such criteria would probably provide responses to questions currently arising in the Slovenian education system, such as:

- the longitudinal co-ordination of language teaching, especially the links between educational stages. Language 1 in primary school is usually continued in secondary school: the link between Language 2, which can be learnt for three years in primary school, and another possible language in secondary school would gain by being based on the criteria in the *Framework*;
- the level of competence expected of teachers and thus the question of verifying knowledge of the languages taught;
- the teaching of languages offered as options or as Language 2 or 3, which takes place in an often limited timetable. If the objectives were concentrated on certain competences (e.g. oral interaction, oral and/or written reception), the teaching of such languages would undoubtedly be more credible, although the dominant social representations concerning language teaching are still highly focused on "native speaker competence".

On the basis of such compatible language syllabuses, it would also become possible to assess (using empirical data such as work done by pupils) the level that a majority of learners can be expected to achieve within the available hourly timetable or, conversely, to estimate the average number of hours needed to bring the majority of learners to a particular level of proficiency in a certain competence. This would permit better phasing of investment in terms of time and funding.

### **3.2.3. Quality**

The question of teaching quality is a perennial one and does not concern languages alone. The local authority can clearly check whether public funding is being used effectively. Whether justified or not, doubts about the quality of language teaching - a standard complaint - highlight the case for measuring language teaching efficiency according to objective criteria and representative data.

Here too, not all the *Framework's* potentialities have yet been exploited in Slovenia. Comparative studies of the time needed by learners in the education system to reach a particular *Framework* level might, for example, supply some of the efficiency indicators expected by the national authorities and public opinion.

The *European Language Portfolio* is very actively used in Slovenia (CR, p. 77; a validated *Portfolio*) to help learners think about their own attainments in the area of

languages, with the aim of recording their language competences and attaching a value to their plurilingual skills. Slovenia was one of the first member States to adopt this scheme, which is being very actively pursued.

However, the question of how to monitor teaching quality overall is important, especially as Slovenia has chosen a teaching 'self-evaluation' system which dispenses with the normal inspection arrangements.

It is therefore important to take a close look at teaching practices despite the official adoption of *communicative* approaches to language teaching (CR, p. 54). It is also worth considering the place to be accorded in education syllabuses and teacher training to:

- the role of teaching teams (by class but also by disciplinary branch, e.g. languages);
- training in autonomous learning, to be introduced more specifically into syllabuses, class activities and teacher assessment criteria;
- integrated activities (by project etc).

There are numerous such avenues for further reflection, which should be utilised to identify priorities compatible with the Slovenian Republic's human and financial resources. They should be regarded as primarily constituting a reservoir of ideas and hypotheses for promoting innovative projects and structuring developments in the system.

### **3.3. Language teaching and plurilingual and pluricultural education: taking account of education for multicultural democratic citizenship in Europe**

The development of competences in the first/national/minority/neighbourhood language is certainly important for the purposes of communication and professional qualifications but is also part of the rights of the majority of the population and of minorities whatever their nature. Its purpose is not exclusively knowledge of languages but also positive acceptance of those who speak them. It therefore seems important to make an investment in this educational field capable of safeguarding, over the long term, the coexistence of culturally different groups and democratic "living together". The Slovenian authorities took an active part in the European Year of Languages and made a significant contribution to the 2005 European Year of Citizenship through Education.

Little information is available on how language teaching, which represents a particularly significant opportunity for contact with otherness, is exploited to strengthen attitudes to cultural diversity as values underpinning the positive acceptance of linguistic diversity, although isolated reports<sup>15</sup> highlight the necessity to strengthen such education for linguistic acceptance.

In any case, it is important to remain vigilant in these intolerant times and see whether new educational actions must be considered as regards:

- the forms that citizenship education must take not only as a goal of language training but also as a specific objective involving identified teaching activities. Plurilingual education and citizenship education share the same goals as regards intercultural

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<sup>15</sup> *Country Reports on Education: Slovenia. Perspectives for Multicultural Co-operation in Slovenia and Education: Framework for a Country-Wide Report* by Albert Mrgole, Slovenia Adult Education Center. Site: Education and Media in Southeast Europe: Country Reports, [http://www.gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/csbsc/country\\_reports/Education\\_Slovenia.htm](http://www.gewi.kfunigraz.ac.at/csbsc/country_reports/Education_Slovenia.htm)

competence: education for intercultural citizenship can constitute a cross-cutting theme of education syllabuses;

- the forms that teaching activities must take in order to produce an understanding of the multiple dimensions of all group identity (local, national etc), which are linked with, and include, a sense of belonging to Europe;
- the forms that intercultural education must take (intercultural education not understood in the narrow sense of a knowledge of other societies); there should at least be objective comparisons between "us" and "them", in order to try to relativise certain forms of ethnocentrism;
- the place to be accorded to this fundamental educational responsibility in the initial and continuing training of all teachers;
- the specific role falling in this educational task to teachers of the languages with the greatest legitimacy in the eyes of the learners (probably Slovenian and English), because those teachers are in the best position to demonstrate the value of other languages and of plurilingualism as a personal competence and shared value. It will be useful to take advantage of the experience acquired by schools and teachers working in a multilingual and/or multicultural setting, particularly as regards the teaching methods used in schools in the mixed territories.

These actions could be the subject of small-scale educational action research programmes for the development of teaching material or curriculum proposals.

### **3.4. Managing linguistic diversity: accompanying and anticipating socio-linguistic developments**

#### **3.4.1. Slovenian, the national language**

The CR (pp. 11-19) describes very aptly the current situation of Slovenian in the country and the risks implicit in this doubtless transitory situation:

- risks of division between the written language and spoken Slovenian;
- risks of division between the different regional oral varieties of Slovenian: "On the other hand, the strengthening of linguistic regionalism resulted in some unwanted consequences in the Slovene public. Already, certain groups of speakers have problems when verbally communicating with speakers from other regions, particularly in official and public speaking positions, due to the fact that they do not know how to adjust their speech. This does not mean they would not understand the message or that they would not be understood; it is more regarding the possibility for partial or hidden social discrimination of such unadjusted speakers" (CR, p.15);
- risks of division between citizens possessing a good knowledge of English (for example, B2 level, as in the case of those who have followed upper secondary non-vocational technical courses) and those who are not proficient in that language (or only to A1 and A2 levels): the status of English is high in Slovenian society although there is no particular historical reason for this. It is synonymous with social success, quite apart from its communicative function;
- the still fairly hypothetical risks of a "conflict of languages" of high status such as Slovenian and English, which could crystallise in particular around use of the national language as a language of scientific discourse or university instruction.

These issues tie in with one of the major components of Slovenian national identity and are part of public debate. To illuminate this debate, it would be useful to collect accurate data so as to anticipate possible but not necessarily desired socio-linguistic developments connected with the following possible points:

- the desirability of setting up a National Terminology Agency separate from the academic instances, using, for example, experience gained in Catalonia or Quebec;
- the balances to be struck between the socialisation role accorded to the language of instruction (and the development of Slovenian identity) and the teaching of that language according to its uses in social communication. From this viewpoint, what relations should be established between methods of teaching "foreign" languages and the method of teaching the Slovenian national language?
- the forms (especially oral) in which Slovenian is used by teachers and children, and identification of the specific difficulties to which those forms may give rise (uncontrolled socio-linguistic switching, use of faulty vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation), in order to distinguish between genuine difficulties and value judgements based on a dominant linguistic norm.

### 3.4.2. New linguistic minorities

The Slovenian State grants specific rights to three language groups (speakers of Italian, Hungarian and Romany/Gypsy), on territorial bases in the case of the first two. These minorities have evolved since the days of the "nationalities", through mixed marriage, moves to urban centres, increased exchanges in border areas etc. The conflicts in the Balkans have also brought economic migrants to Slovenia from neighbouring States, but the arrival of Serbian and Croatian immigrants has simply swelled the ranks of groups that have been settled in the country for centuries.

	1953	1971	1991
Slovenians	1,415,448	1,578,963	1,689,657
Albanians	169	1281	3629
Montenegrins	1356	1978	4396
Croats	17,978	42,657	54,212
Macedonians <sup>16</sup>	640	1613	4432
"Moslems"	1617	3231	26,842
Serbs	11,225	20,521	47,911
"Yugoslavs"	-----	6744	26,263
Unspecified	-----	3073	9011

(Census data)

The proportion of Slovenians (i.e. of citizens claiming Slovenian as their first language) fell from 96.52% in 1953 to 87.84% in the year of independence. The majority of migrants have obtained Slovenian citizenship, and the Constitution provides for a framework for preserving the linguistic and cultural characteristics of those groups (Article 61).

Owing to the relative autonomy of schools, there is little centralised information about the specific educational adjustments introduced for children for whom Slovenian is not the first but a second language. Several hundred appear to be affected: the Eurydice

<sup>16</sup> Self-identification term used by the persons concerned.

Report (September 2000: *Foreign Language Teaching: Slovenia*) refers (p. 3) to courses provided in their mother tongue (in 2000/2001) to children of immigrant origin, namely Croats, Macedonians<sup>17</sup>, Albanians and "Arabs" (115 in number). In some primary schools, non-Slovenian-speaking children receive extra teaching in Slovenian in years 1 and 2. Cases are also known in which volunteers assist the parents of children wanting to improve their knowledge of Slovenian.

The *Country Report* mentions this situation (p. 35) and describes action in this sector as composed of "sporadic efforts, with different methodic approaches, to promote Slovene as the teaching language in Slovene schools also for the pupils with a different mother tongue", with no indication as to the forms in which these children are instructed in their mother tongues. It is very important to verify both this assessment and the statement concerning the need to provide for an active policy that will anticipate migratory processes, since "the existing legal, financial and organisational frameworks on the state level are not quite appropriate anymore" (CR, p. 27).

This situation has already been reported by European bodies and is pinpointed in Slovenian analyses: "there is a gap in the determination of linguistic priorities for migrant groups, at least at the formal level"<sup>18</sup>. This question is already receiving local responses. It would be particularly useful to highlight these more prominently, identify good practices and make all schools aware of their scope for action in this field.

Taken as a whole, these good practices could probably provide an effective response to the demands of Slovenian citizens who consider themselves to belong to national minorities and help them win better recognition for their language rights. It would doubtless be more appropriate to show that their legitimate demands regarding transmission of the first language (or language of identity) of their children can now be met in practice (syllabuses exist for Serbian and Croatian) within the present education system, as well as by optional extra teaching. It might also be useful to make schools aware of this possibility of modifying language teaching arrangements in order to increase the take up for Hungarian (which is only taught in the mixed territories), German in the Maribor, Celje and Ptuj regions or Friulian.

To develop this national plurilingual potential further, forums might be set up to study inter alia the following possibilities:

- profit from bilingual education experience in the mixed territories to set up bilingual schools in other areas which might also be a possible general model for language teaching. This would show whether the curricula of "minority" bilingual schools can be brought closer to "general" bilingual curricula (outside the mixed territories);
- to that end, establish mutual, complementary and alternating cross-border collaboration for secondary schools and/or university training courses of a similar kind, mainly (but not exclusively) for students from linguistic minorities;
- experiment with the possible role of distance learning (at least partial distance learning, with periodical face-to-face tutorials) for minority linguistic groups scattered throughout the territory;
- provide children with the opportunity of learning Slovenian in clearly determined frameworks so that they can be properly integrated in the education system. They

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<sup>17</sup>. Self-identification term used by the persons concerned

<sup>18</sup> Lük N, 2003, see above, p. 75.

could be provided with training in their first language wherever reasonably possible, bearing in mind the costs to the community. In this way, families would be helped to transmit the languages concerned. The acquisition of solid mother tongue competence could clearly form a basis for the rapid development of competence in Slovenian and for the development of their plurilingual repertoire in general;

- highlight the value of the diversity of the languages of Slovenia in foreign language and other courses (mother tongue, civics etc), particularly through activities connected with the *European Language Portfolio*;
- give priority to targeted and contextualised solutions, as seems possible wherever it is permitted by the numbers of children and adults present, but co-ordinate such action so as to avoid local disparities in treatment.

By reason of its geopolitical position, Slovenia has always had close cultural and economic ties with neighbouring regions: 42 cultural agreements with other countries are currently in force. These ties will probably become stronger now Slovenia is part of the European Union. It might be a good idea to consider organising more extensive training in the languages of neighbouring countries (including not only Hungarian and Italian but also Croatian, German etc) for the needs of administration and trade and for intercultural purposes (e.g. Russian).

### **3.5. Social equity and access to languages: promoting policies of inclusion**

To be considered inclusive, language policies must clearly allow equitable and effective access by all to language teaching without distinction as to "ethnic" origin, language, gender, age, resources etc.

The *Country Report* and the Expert Group's observations note in this connection that:

- pre-school teaching is not compulsory except in the final year (5-6 years). This results in more limited early language learning opportunities for children who do not follow this optional teaching for whom the school does not organise such teaching on a voluntary basis;
- in secondary vocational and technical education, the provision and place of languages is generally more limited than in general education;
- similar differences are observed in university education, depending on the faculty;
- adult education accords an important place to languages but is fee-paying and it seems that the 45-plus age group has specific needs in this area, which is an important one for professional qualification and integration;
- private fee-paying teaching may play a certain role in the production and reproduction of linguistic inequalities;
- the language arrangements made for groups with special educational needs are not spelt out in the available regulations;
- foreign language provision varies with the region - urban areas probably have the edge over rural areas;
- gender differences are probably insignificant in teaching of the first language, which is predominantly English.

It would be instructive to have sociological data on the "democratisation" of education (and the role played therein by languages) in the light of an educational philosophy based on equal opportunities. This point, together with the question of the place and role of private education, could perhaps be debated, which would be helpful for the conduct of language education policies.

### **3.6. Diversification: expanding the range of languages on offer, differentiating teaching**

#### **3.6.1. Language provision**

A large number of languages can be learnt under the Slovenian education system (as well as in the Adult Training Centres), but two languages - English and German - are the main choices, which seems to reduce interest in the others (with the probable exception of Italian). This is due to the wishes of families that their children should learn "useful" languages, but it is not certain that their idea of "usefulness" is always relevant nor that their choices necessarily coincide with the language needs of the Republic of Slovenia.

The *White Paper* noted that in 1991 45% of the population had not attended complete basic schooling (p. 295) and therefore had probably not received any language education. The situation has changed greatly since then.

About 28,000 primary school pupils (out of around 115,000) attend courses in an optional language (which is therefore Language 2) and 40% of pupils attending secondary schools (i.e. about 54,601 out of 91, 739, CR, pp. 82-83) have access to a second foreign language. Immigration by returning Slovenians and out-of-school learning may substantially reduce the significance of these figures. However, there is still scope for expanding language provision.

It would also be useful from a technical viewpoint to see whether the study of Language 1 (English or German) over 10 years leads to ceiling effects, which could be dealt with by recourse to forms of teaching other than inclusion of the "language class" in the weekly timetable.

A major opening-up of the national education system to languages requires investment and must be regarded as a gradual process. Expansion of language provision will not automatically lead to more diversified demand. However, it would be useful to consider what means could be devised by the education system to stimulate diversity based on the widest possible range of languages allowed by the human resources available and by the funds which can be allocated to languages. Possible actions include:

- expansion of forms of facilitation or positive discrimination with a view to the introduction and learning of less frequently taught languages (as currently happens when minimum class numbers are lowered);
- investigation of curricular scenarios allowing room for English but also for other languages, by encouraging experimentation with new language teaching structures (e.g. organisation into language groups rather than classes during set periods of the weekly timetable, i.e. all language teaching for all languages and classes would take place during the same slot);
- development of autonomous languages learning and creation of language resource centres in school documentation centres/libraries;

- introduction of information sessions for the parents of pupils and the pupils themselves conducted collectively by school heads and language teachers, in order to highlight the value of languages and plurilingualism. The *European Day of Languages*, which is a sequel to the *European Year of Languages* (in which Slovenia was a leading participant; CR, pp. 75-76), could be a good opportunity to organise such sessions;
- introduction of specially equipped "language rooms" for the use for teaching purposes of information technology, with its potential for more active and diversified teaching methods.

### **3.6.2. Forms of differentiation**

Differentiation in language choice is very much the practice in the *gimnazija* (at least in the towns), where the choice of a 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and sometimes even a 4<sup>th</sup> language is offered. The figure is very much lower in certain types of secondary technical and vocational education.

Differentiation can also take the form of grouping within a class. This practice is recommended in the official syllabuses ("flexible diversification in the last years of school", CR, p. 32), especially in the last two years. It would be useful to have surveys showing what data and criteria are employed in constituting these language streams and whether account is taken of previous or parallel language-learning experience. Teachers therefore have to adapt their approaches to the different competence levels, something calling for very advanced expertise, and to assess attainment according to the typical ability of the stream concerned, the aim being for pupils to make progress compatible with their level. Activity of this type demands a high degree of professional skill (e.g. analysis of needs, selection of content, adaptability in management of the stream from a teaching viewpoint). It is important to assess the practical implementation and effects of such differentiated teaching and appraise the extent to which this particular professional skill is facilitated by teachers' initial and continuing training. Differentiation also entails consideration of questions concerning the existence of minimum standards of knowledge to be acquired by all streams and what must be done if they are not attained (repeating a class, remedial courses etc).

### **3.7. Management of language teaching: stimulating and monitoring innovation**

Given the many different suggestions described so far, priorities need to be set for the reorganisations envisaged. The most detailed knowledge possible of the state of the education system is required in order to assess the appropriateness of those reorganisations.

The report entitled *Development of Education* (May 2001) mentions numerous annual evaluation studies and monitoring reports (p. 26) which could be useful for this purpose. Data collection on languages is only in its first stages and specific data are unavailable on language choice by gender, region, socio-occupational category of the parents of learners, languages used by the latter etc. As regards the management of language education policies, it could be instructive to collect more detailed information, particularly on:

- choice of languages per student (in the education system) and not simply per language (so many students learning a particular language);

- nature of adults' language repertoires (languages transmitted and acquired in the secondary system, in the university system, by private means, by autonomous learning etc);
- competence levels reached by learners in a particular class.

This research could be conducted in collaboration with the National Examination Centre.

Responsibility for assessment, management and data collection could be assumed jointly by schools (in the form of self-assessment protocols) and national censuses (for languages spoken by parents and to children). In conjunction with the economic and forecasting services, Chambers of Commerce and so on, it would be useful to set up a system for identifying medium-term national language needs, taking into account geopolitical factors, the broad trends of the economy and trade, the structure of the employment market, changes in occupations, cultural consumption, demographic and migratory movements etc. This information could help establish priorities regarding language needs for the purposes of international integration, regional integration and social cohesion. It would undoubtedly be valuable in anticipating needs for non-European languages (e.g. Chinese) or languages of neighbouring States with which strong ties are likely to be re-established in the EU context, and for trying to ensure that those languages are transmitted within the families and groups where they are already spoken on Slovenian territory.

### **3.8. Initial and continuing training of teachers**

Teacher training is a decisive factor in the implementation of language education policies. The best possible reforms cannot produce satisfactory results unless teachers are brought on board. The recruitment of qualified teachers is an essential element in planning medium-term reforms. This quality aspect of education can only be assured by the initial and continuing training of teachers.

In some other member States, future teachers are accordingly required to spend six months or a year abroad as part of their training in order to acquire linguistic and intercultural awareness and competences. A study could be made of such a measure, which has financial implications. Practising teachers could be given more systematic encouragement to make use of the European Union's specific programmes in this area.

Generally speaking, initial and continuing teacher training could aim at clear training objectives along the lines indicated in, for example, the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education; A Frame of Reference*<sup>19</sup>. As regards the plurilingual education perspective in particular, this training should also include:

- for teachers of the most taught languages (Slovenian, English, German and so on) especially, methodological training in which the learning of these languages is set in the context of individual plurilingualism and becomes a means of access to others, in addition to their use as mediums of international communication;
- a common training core for all language teachers enabling them to familiarise themselves with methodologies which will help learners develop their plurilingual competences through integrated teaching leading to the development of cross-cutting competences;

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<sup>19</sup> Report to the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture, by M. Kelly and others, September 2004. [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/doc/profile\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/doc/profile_en.pdf)

- training in the cultural and intercultural issues and dimensions of language teaching through activities which produce an awareness of the relations between language learning, the acquisition of cultural skills and the creation of attitudes of openness to cultural differences. It is important to bring out the role of language learning and knowledge in the development of democratic and intercultural citizenship.

The changes desirable in the initial training of teachers in education for plurilingualism require a shift of emphasis from the object (language) to its transmission to learners via teaching.

The goals of continuing training are, as expected, similar:

- improve teachers' linguistic and cultural competences
- encourage participation in continuing training through varied measures
- bring about awareness of and participation in European Union programmes
- establish stronger bilateral co-operation with target-language countries
- inform teachers about Council of Europe instruments, e.g. the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, the *European Language Portfolio*, the *Guide for the development of language policies in Europe*, and additional Council of Europe publications such as the *Reference Level Descriptions* by language
- raise awareness of the issues and means of language policies and language education policies.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

Slovenia has had to confront numerous educational challenges in the first decade of its political independence. The advances made in education as a whole as well as in the particular area of languages are highly significant. Slovenia's potential regarding the development of a plurilingualism-oriented language education policy is considerable, as shown by its active involvement in European language programmes. Changes to the system are already directed at plurilingual education and have been introduced gradually. The first results of the new curricula introduced in 1996 are being evaluated and other adjustments are conceivable as part of an evolving rather than a fixed policy.

Slovenia and the Council of Europe are agreed that such adjustments could concern in the immediate future:

- general provision of a second language in primary education, even before it starts to be formally studied;
- possibility of a third language in general secondary education;
- extension of language teaching to include all branches of secondary technical and vocational training;
- continuation of language training at university in all faculties;
- initial and continuing professional training of teachers to include training modules focusing on awareness of linguistic diversity and openness to the languages of others. Stress on intercultural education and, in particular, the promotion of attitudes of positive acceptance of linguistic and cultural differences remain among the major

responsibilities of language education, above and beyond its functional and professional value. This linguistic acceptance is essential for social cohesion. The historical experience gained in these matters by Slovenia should serve as a basis for the pursuit of new arrangements aimed at reducing potential cultural divisions through education for plurilingualism as a culture of peace and enhanced intercultural communication.

These adjustments could be brought about by:

- building curricula co-ordinated over time and with reasonable objectives by making more systematic use of the *Framework* to define the competences to be taught, teaching content and levels to be attained;
- where necessary, adapt national examinations to these new objectives and link them to the Framework using the process proposed in the *Manual*.

Carrying out these adjustments would enable:

- the teaching of Italian and Hungarian to be extended outside the mixed territories;
- systematic allowance to be made in curricula for "neighbourhood languages", which are frequently also the first languages of certain groups of Slovenes or migrants;
- reconsideration of the place of English as always constituting the predominant element of individual repertoires.

At a more general level, closer alignment of the objectives and syllabuses for foreign languages with those for the national language could prove valuable, particularly for functional literacy and communicative language competence.

These adjustments to current arrangements would make it easier to create and control quality. They would involve major co-ordination between educational stages and the instances responsible for managing them, major co-ordination of language policy bodies and the setting up of language teaching monitoring and forward planning mechanisms designed to anticipate national needs in a European and global context.

## **Appendix 1:** *Council of Europe viewpoint on language education: Plurilingualism*

In view of the linguistic diversity of Europe and each of its states, the Council of Europe has taken a stand, which entails valuing and promoting plurilingualism. A consensus has been reached by Council of Europe member states that plurilingualism for every European should be the principal goal of language education policies. This position is set forth in various documents (see Appendix 2) and is spelled out in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe* (see Appendix 3).

The concept of plurilingualism can be misunderstood and should be clearly defined. In the first place, this approach puts the chief emphasis of education policies not on languages as such and multilingual diversity<sup>20</sup> but on the persons who use them. Attention is then focused on each individual's ability to learn and use more than one language in social communication.

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, plurilingualism is defined as "the ability to use languages for the purpose of communication and to take part in cultural 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, page 168)

In any political and social entity, languages do not all enjoy the same status or even recognition: they may be official languages, languages of instruction, languages of recognised minorities, languages of unrecognised groups; some are sought after and a source of prestige, while others are devalued or a handicap and thus a factor conducive to exclusion, etc.

It is for the state to ensure by democratic means a balance between the plurilingual repertoires of different groups and between the languages which the national, regional, federal etc community uses for its projects (relations with border regions, integration in the region and in Europe, international trade etc). The major role of language policies is thus to organise the balanced management of plurilingual repertoires, the languages of the territory and collective needs, according to the resources available and cultural and educational traditions, in order to ensure social cohesion, if necessary by the explicit recognition of the linguistic rights and duties of each individual.

The valuing and promotion of plurilingualism thus forms one of the fundamental aspects of social inclusion and education for democratic citizenship.

In its Declaration and Programme on education for democratic citizenship of 7 May 1999, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe stressed that the preservation of European linguistic diversity was not an end in itself, since it was placed on the same footing as the building of a more tolerant and more interdependent society: "*a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a cultural heritage enriched by its diversity*" (CM (99) 76). In making, from 1997 onwards, education for

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<sup>20</sup> "*Multilingualism*" refers to the presence in a given large or small geographical area of several linguistic varieties (forms of verbal communication regardless of their status). "*Plurilingualism*" refers to the repertoire of linguistic varieties that may be used by speakers (including mother tongue/first language and all those acquired subsequently, again regardless of their status at school and in society and the level of mastery).

democratic citizenship a priority of the Council of Europe and its member states, Heads of State and of Government defined the central place of languages in the exercise of democratic citizenship in Europe: while the active participation of citizens in political decisions and society is necessary in a democracy, this means that such participation must not be rendered impossible by the absence of appropriate language skills. The possibility of taking part in the political and public life of Europe, not only in that of their own countries, presupposes plurilingual competence, that is, the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with the other citizens of Europe.

The development of plurilingualism is not just a functional necessity, but is also an essential component of democratic behaviour. Recognition of the diversity of speakers' plurilingual repertoires should lead to linguistic acceptance and thus to respect for linguistic differences, i.e. respect for the linguistic rights of individuals and groups in their relations with the state and with linguistic majorities, respect for freedom of expression, respect for linguistic minorities, respect for the least spoken and taught national languages, and respect for diversity in interregional and international communication. Language education policies are closely bound up with education in democratic-citizenship values because their goals are complementary: language education, which provides a particularly favourable opportunity for intercultural contact, is a sector where education for democratic living in its intercultural dimensions can be given tangible form in education systems.

It should be stressed that this goal, which reflects a consensus among the member states, will have to be reached gradually. The introduction of appropriate measures (syllabuses and curricula, teacher training etc) may involve new forms of organisation requiring additional financial resources or important policy decisions. The formulation of language education policies for the development of plurilingualism can be envisaged in many ways. We can therefore expect the implications of the *Profile* and its potential or actual consequences to vary with the country according to the national political situation or to its history and educational traditions.

**Appendix 2:** *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 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 3: Council of Europe instruments: Presentation

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

#### 1. [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 web site) which have been 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 has been 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 not for language specialists but for policy makers who may have no specific specialist knowledge of technical matters in language education.

The *Guide* and the Reference are available on the website.

## 2. [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, Strasbourg, from 1998 until 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 acceptance 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 web site)

Accreditation of ELP models: see detailed information on the website.

## 3. [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 eighteen languages: Basque, Catalan, Czech, English, Finnish, French, Galician, Georgian, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Moldovan, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian and Spanish (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.

**4. [Manual for relating Language Examinations to CEFR](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.

## **Appendix 4: *Expert Group***

### **National authorities:**

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### **Expert Group:**

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**Appendix 5: The week's programme of the Expert Group visit, 18-24 January 2004**

Date	Hour	Place	Meetings (the expert group and Slovenian representatives)
19 January	9.30–10.00	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ljubljana	Dr S. Gaber, Minister, Ms V. Lukas, Dr A. Barle Lakota, Head of Education Development Office, Slovenian expert group and expert group of CoE
	10.00–12.00		
	14.30–15.30	Faculty of Arts – Department of Slovenian as a second/foreign language, Ljubljana	Representatives of the Department
	15.30–16.30	Faculty of Arts – foreign languages departments (specialist training)	Representatives of the departments (Dr J. Skela and the INSETT Trainers group)
	16.30–17.30	Faculty of Arts – teachers' societies	Representatives of IATEFL, IDV, Slovenian Society of Foreign Language Teachers
	18.00	Dinner at the hotel	Ms B. Kogoj, advisor, National Education Institute (INSETT)
20 January	10.30–12.30	Bilingual area of Prekmurje – Slovenian-Hungarian frontier, Lendava: bilingual elementary school	10.30–11.30 Classroom visit
			11.30–12.30 Meeting with headmistress, advisor for Hungarian, and teachers
	15.00–16.00	Murska Sobota, the Roma	Representatives of Slovenian Roma Association (Mr J. Horvat)
	17.30–18.30	Maribor, Centre for Children with Hearing Impairment	Representatives of the Centre
20 January	9.30–11.00	The Primorska region: Piran, Ciril Kosmač Elementary School (UNESCO school)	Meeting with teachers involved in various language projects
	11.30–12.30	Piran, Italian <i>gimnazija</i> (general secondary school)	Meeting with students, teachers and other school representatives
	15.00–16.00	Koper, National Education Institute	Meeting with teachers of Italian as a foreign/second language
21 January	9.00–10.00	Slovenian Parliament	Representatives of parliamentary commissions for minorities and for education, culture and sport
	10.00–12.20	Poljane <i>Gimnazija</i> (classical general secondary school, oriented to teaching languages), Ljubljana	Meeting with students, teachers and other school representatives
	13.15–13.45	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia	Mr J. Dekleva and Ms B. Krajnc
	14.00–18.00	Visit to Postojna Cave	Expert group
	18.30–19.00		Dr J. Krek (the Roma)
	19.15	Dinner at the hotel	Representatives of Bosniac Cultural Association
22 January	9.00–13.00	National Examination Centre, CMEPIUS (Socrates National Agency), Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, Centre for Permanent Education	Meeting with representatives of adult education
	11.00–12.00		Meeting with Slovenian Institute for Adult Education representatives
	12.00–13.00		Meeting with National Examinations Centre representatives
	15.30–16.30	Vič Elementary School	Meeting with CMEPIUS representatives
	17.00–18.00	Vič <i>Gimnazija</i>	Meeting with pupils, parents, headmistress, and teachers
			Meeting with students, parents, headmistress, and teachers
23 January		Concluding discussions	Visit to the Information and Documentation Centre of the CoE, Ljubljana Discussion about future work

