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Language Policy Division  
Division des Politiques linguistiques

# Language Education Policy Profiles

## *A transversal analysis: trends and issues*

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## 1. Introduction

'Language Education Policy Profiles' are an activity of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe which provides member States with an opportunity to analyse their current (and past) policy and practice and to formulate possible future developments.

The focus of a Profile can be an entire member State or a region or city within a member State.

The activity was first conceived and launched in the period 2002-03 when a set of Guidelines was written and a pilot Profile carried out in Hungary. Since then, Profiles have been instigated in 13 member States, 2 Regions of member States, and 1 city. Completed Profiles exist for 10 member States, 2 Regions, with 4 Profiles in progress (at January 2009) ([www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang))

The Profile procedure is one of self-analysis and evaluation of policies and practices by member States with help from the Council of Europe. The process involves several stages and usually takes approximately one and a half years to complete, from the preliminary visit to publication of the Profile. It is important to note however that the actual length of the process in specific cases depends very much upon factors in the context, which are often political e.g. a change of government, or of the Minister of Education, or of the person responsible for language education at Ministry level. The process in general consists of the following:

- a request from the member State to the Steering Committee for Education for the Language Policy Division to participate with the member State in the development of a Profile;
- a preliminary visit to the member State by a member of the Language Policy Division and a nominated Rapporteur to discuss the process and any specific focus required; this is followed by the appointment of 3-4 experts who will participate in the Profile process;
- the production of a Country/Regional/City Report by or on behalf of the authorities of the member State or region or city; these reports have varied in length from 40 to 140 pages depending on whether they give background information to specific issues or are used to produce full documentation of developments over many years;
- a visit by the Council of Europe Expert Group (including a member of the Language Policy Division) to the country/region/city to meet stakeholders and visit institutions of education;
- the production of an Experts' Report which is usually approximately 40 pages;
- a roundtable meeting of Experts and stakeholders invited by the authorities to discuss the Experts' Report, leading to additions and amendments where necessary;
- the joint production of a Profile by the authorities and the Experts, published by the Language Policy Division and usually translated and published by the authorities of the Country/Region/City; the product of the process includes the (possibly amended) Country/ Regional/City Report and a Profile – based on the Experts' Report.

Throughout this process, the Council of Europe Experts act as catalysts in the analysis by member States/regions/cities of their own policies and practices in language education. They bring to the situation their individual experience and expertise and the Council of Europe perspective on language education, which comprises Council of Europe policies and actions, including its conventions. In this way, language education policy in member States can develop in tune with the specific needs and circumstances of the country/region/city and take note of the broader European context and contemporary political and social change. For it is clear to all involved that language education policy is a dimension of social and economic policy at local,

regional, national and European levels and must take into account questions of social inclusion and equity in general, and policies of education for democratic citizenship in particular. Between 2002 and 2009, the following Profiles have been undertaken (in chronological order approved by the authorities):

Hungary  
Norway  
Cyprus  
Luxembourg  
Slovenia  
Lombardy  
Lithuania  
Poland  
Ireland

Slovakia  
Valle d'Aosta  
Austria

*Profiles currently in progress:*  
Armenia  
Sheffield  
Estonia  
Ukraine

## 2. Purposes of a transversal analysis

The outcomes of the Profile process are diverse. They include;

- providing specific input to educational reform in a member State
- creation of opportunities for stakeholders from different sectors of society to meet and share perspectives and opinions
- documentation of current and past policies and their implementation
- proposals for medium and long-term developments
- identification of new and imminent issues which education systems need to address
- education authorities and others becoming more aware that they have problems and solutions in common with other countries/regions/cities.

Many outcomes are thus medium-term. The purpose of this transversal analysis is therefore to establish trends which may be appearing in the analyses, variations in the process and common and particular themes.

This analysis will function as a summary of the first few years of the Profile activity and a point of reference for the next period.

## 3. 'Common' themes

The diversity in member States and their particular preoccupations at a given point in time mean that there are unlikely to be themes common to all Profiles except in a very general sense. The following themes appear however in some Profiles and, taken together, provide an overview of current issues, which may well be present in other member States which have not yet engaged in the Profile process:

### 3.1. Language education and social policy

The significance of the linguistic competences of the population for the economic development of a member State in a period of globalisation of trade is recognised, and the implications for individuals and their careers emphasised, for example in Cyprus:

Given its position at the cross roads between Europe and the Middle East and its limited natural resources, Cyprus has sought successfully to become a significant player in service industries in the region, notably in finance, and banking and in tourism. In this situation, there is great awareness in Cyprus of the relevance of education for careers. There is a premium on effective communication and languages are seen as important. [Cyprus Profile (Chapter 3.3.9)]

The potential of the individual for full participation in social processes in multilingual areas is strongly emphasised in Luxembourg:

A striking complementarity is observed in the use of the three languages. The distribution of the different languages seems to depend as much on sectors of activity and types of personal interaction as on geographical factors. [Luxembourg Profile (Chapter 2.2)]

Thirdly, it is evident that social integration of migrants and immigrants to a society depends in part on language competences. The point is made in the following quotation from the Ireland Profile by relating it to matters of identification with a society at different levels and by contrasting it to concern with resources and assets whether national or individual:

Within a changing environment, the issues regarding language policy are not limited to questions of national resources and assets nor to individual needs and opportunities. They relate also to identity building at different levels. And the debates at present in Ireland are a clear sign of tensions in a transitional period, even when seemingly focusing on curriculum reform or examination results. [Ireland Profile (Chapter 3.4.3)]

### **3.2. Language education and (national/regional) identities**

The development of language(s) acquired in the home, and in particular the acquisition of literacy during schooling, is closely related to the question of identification with a country and/or region. Here are three examples.

The study of Standard Modern Greek in the Gymnasium aims at enabling children to understand the distinctive nature of the language and uniqueness of contemporary Greek civilisation and to treasure and enjoy its literature. [Cyprus Profile (Chapter 3.1)]

There are two varieties of Norwegian, nynorsk and bokmål both of which pupils have to learn (...) Norwegian is described as a subject which is crucial to identity; this has become an increasingly important element as the focus on identity/cultural belonging has become a major part of the teaching of Norwegian as 'education' (dannelse). [Norway Profile (Chapter 2)]

The language situation in the Valle d'Aoste encompasses both strict Italian/French bilingualism and the effective plurilingualism of the very great majority of the region's population. Thus, for instance, the presence of linguistic minorities (speakers of Walser German dialects in the Lys Valley, Franco-Provencal in the greater part of the valley) is considered and presented as an asset, but is just as much perceived as the affirmation of an "identity to be defended" [Profile of the Valle d'Aoste (chapter 2.1)].

Languages other than French and Italian are taught in the region's schools, in pursuance of regional or national provisions. Since Regional Law No. 18 of 2005, in particular, the other two languages which constitute the Valdotain identity are being officially taught from nursery school to the end of lower secondary education [Profile of the Valle d'Aosta (chapter 3.2)].

The role of non-standard varieties and of two or more languages/language varieties in linguistic identification is part of this complex issue, as is the need to establish a standard variety:

Central to language issues is Slovenian, a young official language which may still appear to suffer from a legitimacy deficit, if only relative. (...) “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. [Slovenia Profile (Chapter 2.2.1)].

A similar focus can be found in Armenia where legislation operates in terms of duties:

The law defines the language duties of RA citizens, officials in particular, as well as employees of certain spheres of service, according to which they must be proficient in Armenian, and in their official speeches they must provide purity of the language (Article 3).

and there is a State Programme on Language Policy which inter alia deals with the regulation of the literary Armenian language:

The programme gives importance to the creation of academic normative grammar of the modern literary Eastern Armenian for the present phase of language development, drafting standards for language purity, regulation of different functional styles of the literary language, drafting principles of joint terminology making for Western and literary Armenian languages, etc. [Armenia Country Report. (Chapter 6.1)]

This is in turn related to the ways in which a language carries a cultural heritage and at the same time has to develop or be developed to meet the requirements of a constantly changing world:

In some ways, but this is not unique to Lithuania, the situation is one of double bind. Lithuanian has to be preserved as a heritage and at the same time to be developed and adapted to new functions in a fast changing society; it is inherent to the identity and the culture, but there is a risk of the society being disappointed in its effectiveness. [Lithuania Profile (Chapter 3.1.1)]

Further issues are raised by the historic presence of several languages within the frontiers of a state:

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 Country Report, pp 25-28, 51-75) is an integral fact of political life. [Slovenia Profile (Chapter 2.2.2)]

There is in this view acceptance of minorities and their languages into political life and the opportunity to ‘experiment’ in a sociolinguistic laboratory, but the issues can be seen from different perspectives, for example in Slovakia as ‘richesse ou contrainte’:

To an outside observer, as has already been pointed out in the first part of this report, the linguistic situation in Slovakia cannot fail to give the impression of rich diversity full of opportunities (...). However, this rich diversity and complexity, while they bring a range of opportunities, seem to be experienced more in terms of a constraint [Profile of the Slovak Republic (chapter 7.2.1)].

The text of the Profile of the Slovak Republic includes reference to 11 national minority languages, to the so-called 'new minorities' and to the varieties of the Romani language.

The presence of 'newcomers' may also raise concerns about identity:

The slow transformation of Italy from a land of emigrants (....) to a land of immigration came to an abrupt climax at the beginning of the 1990s. At that time the massive immigration of, above all, Albanians caused immediate problems (...) Later the immigrants moved to the north where they could find jobs more easily. The impact of the transfer movement was perceived (also by the press) as menacing, raising fears and political resistance. [Lombardy Regional Report (Chapter 5.3)]

In such circumstances, speaking a language in addition to that of the state or 'national' language, can sometimes be perceived as a symbolic threat to the society. Yet speakers of more than one language are, from a European perspective, models for emulation. The development of plurilingualism is desirable and integral to the language policy of the Council of Europe. It is therefore an important theme in all Profiles.

### **3.3. Potential for plurilingualism**

The potential of all individuals to become plurilingual is a principle expounded by the Council of Europe and stated, for example, in the Profile for Slovenia and exemplified there.

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. [Slovenia Profile (Chapter 1.3)].

This potential is not always recognised when it is realised within a country:

Norway is a multilingual country, a country in which many languages are spoken, and Norwegians are plurilingual people, people who speak and / or understand several languages. This fact strikes outsiders immediately. It is not just a question of the well-known presence of Sami and other indigenous groups, nor the oft-cited proficiency of Norwegians in English. There are other long-established languages and many newly-arrived languages present in Norwegian society, and Norwegians have plurilingual competence much beyond the ability to speak English. (.....) Much of this linguistic wealth is taken for granted and underestimated. It is perhaps not even noticed by many young people who may for example complain about their lack of a full mastery of their second foreign language learnt at school rather than celebrate their plurilingualism. [Norway Profile (Chapter 3.1)].

This potential is acknowledged in the City of Sheffield (UK):

"Sheffield will be a successful distinctive city of European significance at the heart of a strong city region with opportunities for all"

Languages and the promotion of plurilingualism clearly have a significant role to play in achieving this ambition, and it is one of the aims of the Sheffield Languages Alliance [...] to see that languages are given their proper status and profile in the City Strategy and its implementation. [Sheffield City Report (Chapter 1.4.3)]

In Luxembourg, the trilingualism of current education policy is well acknowledged but not clearly defined and not comprehensive:

In Luxembourg, it goes without saying that the plurilingualism sought by schools must incorporate knowledge of Letzeburgesch, German and French. Equally it must encompass communicative skills in English and all the linguistic abilities of individuals in linguistic varieties other than the four languages already mentioned. [Luxembourg Profile (Chapter 4.1.2)]

Since plurilingualism is a fundamental principle of Council of Europe Policy, the Experts make frequent reference to it in their reports and to the publications and tools of the Council of Europe which are designed to help promote education for plurilingualism. This is the additional value of a Profile which is essentially self-analysis but has an extra dimension through the presence of Council of Europe experts. In Council of Europe documents, the particular position of English is acknowledged and is an inevitable theme in the Profiles.

### **3.4. The impact of English**

The relationship of English and plurilingualism is not a simple one as is evident from comparison of just two countries. In Luxembourg, as can be seen from the quotation at the end of the previous section, plurilingualism includes acquisition of English and *has to* include English alongside the three languages present in the country and the education system. In Norway, the focus on English obscures the presence of other languages in the repertoire of Norwegians.

The particular role of English is not just an educational issue but is present in the discussion of language learning inside and outside educational institutions. In Norway and Cyprus, attention is drawn to the acquisition of English outside formal education:

It is estimated that more English is used in Cyprus today than at any previous time (...) English is omnipresent in everyday life, through the media (...) tourism (...) and the influence of global American culture. (...) Thus the learning of English is far from dependent on the classroom and most Cypriots have the opportunity to practice their knowledge the language, or at the very least their receptive competence, through regular exposure to English in everyday life. [Cyprus Profile (Chapter 3.3.1)]

The dominance of English in school and higher education curriculum is noted in other Profiles too and in Lombardy for example is much debated:

The decision to generalise the teaching of English in primary school to the exclusion of other languages is much debated within the education system. The decision is justified on the grounds of seeking to ensure continuity between primary and secondary school and of offering the compulsory study of a second foreign language in lower secondary school. Under the new system, students will be learning English for 13 years. [Lombardy Profile (Chapter 3.3./b)]

The learning of English over a long period raises its own problems. First there is the question of coherence and continuity noted in Norway and in other Profiles:

Students learn English throughout the curriculum, including a 'grunnkurs' (foundation course) in upper secondary education and vocational classes. However, as far as the curriculum is concerned, some educationists argue that the successive reforms have not built up a sufficiently coherent progressive learning content from the 1<sup>st</sup> Grade (.....)

Second there is the possibility that a long course of study does not guarantee progress:

Some people even believe that a 'ceiling effect', where students do not progress after a certain stage of development, cannot be avoided in the present system, and there is some suggestion that students' competence in academic English in Higher Education is poor. (...) Students may have very high conversational fluency which is in fact

misleading and is not congruent with their academic proficiency, (...). [Norway Profile (Chapter 3.2.1)]

This concept of 'ceiling effect' – which can develop in any language but is the particular effect of the focus on English - merits further analysis and research.

There is evidence from several Profiles that education authorities – and parents – consider English alone is crucial in economic policy whereas the Council of Europe has a perspective on the relationship between language education and economic policy which suggests that it is plurilingualism which is crucial in economic policy.

A different perspective on English is present in anglophone countries, as is evident in the Ireland Profile, where the relationship of language learning and economic development is emphasised:

The fifth priority is to develop in society at large the conviction that “English is not enough”. That is to say, to convey the message that the economic, cultural and European future of Ireland depends on the valorisation of plurilingualism. [Ireland Profile (Chapter 4)]

The tendency to believe that ‘English is enough’ is nonetheless widespread in non-anglophone countries, where the close association of ideas between the learning of English and economic success is widespread. It is for example strongly formulated in the regional profile in Lombardy:

This emphasis on (lack of) oral competence comes from government and policies which link language competence in society to economic policy. It comes from parents who have a similar view for their own children. It comes from industry and commerce which has the same rationale. Given this perception of language competence as crucial to economic success, and the widespread notion that the business world has and will continue to need a lingua franca, it is not surprising that the main focus in language teaching policy is on English, as government meets the demands of society. [Lombardy Profile (Chapter 4.1)]

There are however dissenting voices, exemplified in Hungary where the question of knowing that ‘English is not enough’ is related to the widespread recourse to language schools for those who can afford them, and the use of language competence as a criterion of social differentiation:

(there is) the danger of social reproduction of inequality through language learning. It is clear that "English is not enough" (as indicated by the representative of the Confederation of Employers and Industrialists), that advantages in the employment market will be gained by knowledge of other languages in addition to English (or German in the western part of Hungary). This information does not appear to be widely known and only well-informed parents of learners are aware of this new development. [Hungary Profile (Chapter 2.3.4)]

### **3.5. Instrumental and educational purposes**

The focus on the instrumentality of English should not hide the fact that all languages can be used instrumentally, as is the case for example of Russian in Armenia. On the other hand, language teaching has educational purposes too, and the question of the relation between the instrumental and the educational is addressed directly in the Slovak Republic Profile. Here, the range of factors in social demand are referred to:

Relations between supply and demand do not depend only on cyclical economic conditions, the geographical neighbours preferred or rejected, the effects of a degree of



globalisation or the wish to overcome a plurality regarded as difficult to manage through use of a kind of single *lingua franca*.

The wide offer of languages in the curriculum is evidence that these points have been taken into account in Slovak education system although there are dysfunctions in the ways in which languages are chosen for instrumental reasons and ultimately the issue of how language education can be integrated into the educational purposes of schools and higher education :

(...) the choice of languages and continuity of the learning process are de facto subject to significant structural dysfunctions, which merely aggravate the instrumental decisions (professional or economic benefit of the knowledge of any given language) which families tend to take, and which schools often tend to encourage, particularly for organisational reasons.

The Profile of the Slovak Republic addresses the tensions directly and identifies the challenge :

Thus one question here is that of the extent to which, and the conditions in which, foreign languages, in their plurality, can effectively be better integrated into the overall educational project, from primary to higher education, also on account of their educational, cultural and civic value, and another question is how the message of the importance of diversification can be better disseminated in civil society [Slovak Republic (chapter 7.3.2)].

The tension between instrumental and educational purposes is expressed in the final sentence which calls for greater attention to this educational message in civil society.

This challenge is also a concern in the Austria Profile:

The plurilingual and reflective intercultural personality is the ideal of European language education. The development of such a personality is seen as a civic virtue, but also as a means of facilitating later job mobility, and it is a key principle of European curricula that the process of development should begin as early as possible. In the Country Report this topic features prominently, as in the question: 'How can one come to terms with existing plurilingualism in primary schooling?' (...) This implies a need for practical measures, but also for changes in teacher education. Practical measures concern the provision of high-quality German language support and mother tongue teaching for children of migrant workers. [Austria Profile (Chapter 3.1.2)].

### **3.6. Quality and standards**

There can be no doubt that the question of quality in education is a contemporary concern now that compulsory education and access to education for all are well established in Europe. 'Quality' is associated with and expected to be guaranteed by the setting of 'standards' – and by comparing the standards set and the standards reached by learners in different countries.

The question is often raised by education authorities in their Country Report, as for example is the case in Armenia:

Basic goals of the present reforms in the field of general education are:

- improving the general education quality
- ensuring the conformity of Armenia's education system with the present requirements of society and the economy and internationally accepted education standards
- guiding Armenia's education system development towards conformity with the 'knowledge economy' requirements.

[Armenia Country Report (Chapter 8.2.1)]

Here the crucial phrase ‘knowledge economy’ is presented and put in quotation marks to show that it is part of a common discourse and it is clearly a driving force nationally and internationally in all European societies.

The question of standards is operationalised by review and revision of examinations and examination systems – sometimes with a shift to the centralisation of examinations being a major factor, as the example from Poland shows:

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

What is also important is that review leads not only to clarification of validity and reliability but also to innovation:

The Matura examination has an innovative character, has flexibility to allow students to have their strong subjects assessed. [Poland Profile (Chapter 3.8)]

Innovation is stressed also in the Sheffield City Report:

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, with the freedom to raise standards through innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and curriculum. [Sheffield City Report (Chapter 1.6.4.2)]

It is noteworthy that the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*<sup>1</sup> is a main source of approach to change:

In many countries communicative proficiency objectives are specified with explicit reference to the levels of the CEFR (...) Such an approach to quality improvement would require the alignment of a standard-based curriculum with the assessment and exam systems as well as the qualification of teachers to make use of feedback data on achievement for devising and evaluating strategies of classroom development. [Lithuania Profile (Chapter 4.3)]

### **3.7. Coherence in language curricula**

The Council of Europe’s commitment to a holistic vision of language education – evident in the new project of ‘Languages in Education. Languages for Education’ –implies close collaboration among all teachers of languages horizontally in the curriculum and vertically from one educational institution to the next. This is usually raised by Council of Europe experts as it is still largely under-developed in practice. In particular there is often a need to discuss how the teaching of the national/official language(s), and their use in the teaching of other subjects, is related to the teaching of second, immigrant/migrant and foreign languages. Questions of curriculum design are particularly important here and regularly mentioned in the final Chapter of a Profile, a chapter which is always forward-looking:

In order to improve transparency and co-ordination, it would be helpful if the national programmes of study for languages and those of institutions accredited by the Ministry of Education were based on the CEFR, so that the levels at each stage and across languages could be related and readily compared.(...)

Issues such as the following could then be addressed in a more informed way:

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<sup>1</sup> *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Council of Europe/Cambridge University Press, 2001. Available online at [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang).

- the longitudinal co-ordination of language teaching, particularly between the final years of primary education and the first year of the Gymnasium (...)  
[Cyprus Profile. (Chapter 4.3.3)]

In some cases however, there is already a concern in a country about coherence and continuity.

Lack of continuity between successive educational levels is one of the key issues raised in the Country Report. It was also one of the most frequently mentioned concerns during the LEPP process, captured in a deceptively simple question:

- How can later language teaching be designed so that it is continuous with what went before and builds on 'the most various different previous levels of knowledge'?

(...) The problem is multi-dimensional, embracing curricula, pre- and in-service teacher education, textbooks and other teaching materials, teaching methods and assessment  
[Austria Profile (Chapter 5.1.1)]

In another case, where the continuity of efforts had produced excellent results, the coherence in language curricula seems to stop at the end of lower secondary education:

The most striking feature of the system in use in the Valle d'Aosta is the failure to maintain the effort to encourage bilingual teaching in upper secondary education. [...] This interruption in the effort to provide teaching in French in the non-linguistic disciplines on admission to upper secondary education in the Valle d'Aosta, coupled with a lack of continuity, are of vital importance to the appraisal of pupils' effective skills. At the end of the final five years of schooling which culminate in the State Examination, bilingual skills may well at best stagnate, or even decline by comparison with the standards achieved in the previous stages of education. [Profile of the Valle d'Aosta (chapter 4.4)]

This is one of the four central questions reported in the Profile of the Slovak Republic, where as is said in the Profile, the issue was initially raised in the Country Report:

The national report emphasises that it seems necessary to introduce the principle of a continuous process of language teaching (at the transition from primary to secondary school) in all secondary school curricula, in order to develop learners' capacity to communicate in two foreign languages [Slovakia Profile (chapter 3)].

The issue is then treated at length under a number of headings : continuity in the teaching of Slovak language, in the teaching of foreign languages, in the design of curricula and materials.

It is made clear in the Profile that continuity is a complex matter but one which is relevant to all education systems:

The question of continuity frequently arises in Europe's education systems. It would be restrictive to consider it only in terms of the sequential nature of curriculum content. In practice:

- It is impossible to divorce this question of continuity from others affecting the curriculum more broadly or relating to the structural features of the school system.
- Neither structures nor curricula guarantee continuity unless it is fully incorporated into the practical implementation of teaching and learning.
- Continuity between the different levels of schooling (vertical continuity) cannot be effectively ensured unless horizontal (transverse) consistency between the different subjects and different languages is also taken into account.
- In any education system, there may be continuity for some pupils, but far less for others. Thus, where learners of the same age are pursuing different courses, there may be greater continuity in one than in another.

- Continuity also depends on factors such as inclusion and access to education, in so far as such access, and therefore this continuity, may be affected by geography (differences between urban and rural areas), socioeconomic factors or specialised education needs. Certain social or linguistic groups may come up against more obstacles than others where the continuity of their language education is concerned [Slovakia Profile (chapter 3.1)].

#### 4. Other significant themes

Other themes which appear are not necessarily common to all Profiles but could form a checklist of issues to be considered in new Profiles for possible inclusion in the Country/Regional/City report and/or the Experts' Report.

They include:

- new/immigrant languages and their role in identity formation and in citizenship: the question of migration and how education systems meet the linguistic and intercultural competence needs of temporary migrants or permanent immigrants – both adults and children – is important in many Council of Europe member States, both those which are 'hosts' and those which are 'senders'; the question of the relationship of language and identity is prominent in this context as is that of the linguistic competence expected or required for formal acquisition of citizenship for *all* learners
- language education and education for democratic citizenship: related to the above point but also with a much wider import is the question of how language education – in first, second and foreign languages – and its objectives can and should be associated with the objectives of education for democratic citizenship
- rates of language acquisition and its assessment: the CEFR and the levels it describes are frequently referred to in member States and their curricula documents; this often leads to discussion of what levels of competence can be expected at different stages in an education system, how and when these should be assessed and how much timetable time should be dedicated to learning languages (first, second. (im)migrant and foreign)
- role of universities: university and other higher education institutions (HEIs) have a significant role in planning for national capacity in foreign languages (including less frequently taught languages); similarly the significance of HEIs in teacher training is crucial to language education policy and any medium and long term planning; the question of the relationship of HEIs with schools is frequently considered important with respect to maintaining or creating a vertical coherence in language education
- training for principals and other language education policy makers: the question of curriculum design and time allocation for language teaching and learning raise issues of training for principals and other making policy decisions at institutional level since they cannot be expected to understand the technical issues if they are not language specialists themselves; principals are crucial agents in the implementation of policy
- signed languages: although signed languages are in some member States fully recognised and can be embraced within the Council of Europe's holistic vision of language education, it is often important to give particular attention to signed languages and inter alia the learning of other languages by sign language users.

- role of the private sector in education: this can have a range of effects, and can include the contribution of commercial language schools in developing the overall language capacity of a population, and the issue of private tutoring for individuals.

## 5. Processes of the Profiles

### 5.1. Purposes

#### From the perspective of the Council of Europe

- the Profile is a continuation of the policies and texts developed over many years (presented most recently in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* 2.2.1.) and summarised in the paper 'Plurilingual Education in Europe' (Feb 2006, p.4)

PLURILINGUALISM: all are entitled to develop a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime in accordance with their needs

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: Europe is multilingual and all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity; the right to use and to learn one's language(s) is protected in Council of Europe Conventions

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: the opportunity to learn other languages is an essential condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences

DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals

SOCIAL COHESION: equality of opportunity for personal development, education, employment, mobility, access to information and cultural enrichment depends on access to language learning throughout life

- the procedures involved, symbolised in the notion of the Expert groups being a 'catalyst' for the process of self-evaluation by member States, are equally a continuation of the dialogic relationship between the Council of Europe and its member States. In this dialogue, member States expect the Council of Europe, through its expert groups, to present a European agenda of policies and to make suggestions for their implementation in the circumstances peculiar to each member State.

Although in some cases, Expert groups have been asked to make 'recommendations' to the member State, the Council of Europe does not make recommendations through the Profiles. The Profiles, in their final form, contain a section which discusses future developments. This is variously called 'Visions and tasks for the future', or 'Possible future directions' or 'Prospects'. Since this is written in collaboration, like the rest of the Profile, by the Council of Europe and the authorities of the member State in question, there can be no formal 'recommendations'. However, in practice, this section is used as an opportunity to make suggestions, sometimes quite radical, which strongly reflect the Council of Europe agenda and the analyses by the Expert groups which allows the process to benefit from an external perspective and critique.

#### From the perspective of member States:

- the reasons for embarking on the Profile process are various and not usually made evident in the Profile report itself. In the case of Norway, however, the profile took place during a period of educational reform which was documented in the Profile report. The Profile was seen as input to the debate, being eventually cited in documents proposing reforms. In other

cases, the relationship between the Profile and contemporaneous processes in the education system of a member State are reported (e.g. the World-Language Strategy in Hungary) or implicit throughout the text.

- In some cases, the request for a Profile is made as part of an ongoing dialogue with the Council of Europe and/or may be part of the reflection stimulated by large-scale changes. Several member States which have changed radically since 1989 have requested Profiles. Others which have become recent members of the European Union have also requested Profiles.

## 5.2. Procedures

Although the main features of the Profile process are present in all cases, there are variations according to circumstances:

### National/Regional/City reports:

These are sometimes written by one or two individuals and sometimes by a group, in each case on behalf of the authorities, which 'sign off' the report and send it to the Council of Europe

Some reports serve as an opportunity for a comprehensive documentation of language teaching/learning in all sectors of the education system, obligatory and post-obligatory, public and private, from early years to life-long learning/adult education. Others focus on specific issues - with brief contextualisation - which are of particular interest at the time of the Profile.

There is variation in the amount of space dedicated to the 'issues for discussion' raised at the end of these reports. In a number of cases (e.g. Ireland) it is clear that the authors and authorities have specific questions which they hope to see addressed during the Profile process. In other cases (e.g. Slovenia) the issues for discussion during the Profile process are formulated as recommendations by the authors of the National/Regional Report. In the case of Norway, the 'issues for discussion' section is a substantial part of the analysis and refers to priorities decided by the Norwegian national authorities. In the case of Luxembourg, the authorities present their perspective and a number of frameworks within which changes could be considered.

There is considerable variation in the treatment of the 'national' language(s) but this is particularly strong where there is thematisation of the national language issue in society, and where the presence of linguistic minorities – both long-established and newcomer – makes language a constant matter of debate. On the other hand, there is as yet little evidence of a holistic vision of language education embracing plurilingualism as a basis for policy.

### Experts' Reports

Experts' Reports are not as widely available as Country/Regional reports or Profiles because they are written for the stakeholders within the country/region in question and distributed by the authorities. They are not made public on the Council of Europe website, unlike the Country Report and the Profile. Experts' Reports are written with a structure which anticipates and acts as a draft for the Profile. Like the Profile, they introduce the Profile process for readers, analyse the current situation and have a reaction on possible future developments. They differ from the Profile itself in that they are written by and in the name of the Council of Europe team and therefore reflect the specific investigation, analysis and interpretations of the Experts, some of which may be complemented and enriched in the Roundtable and subsequently by stakeholders and the authorities.

## Consultation with stakeholders and Roundtables

Experts meet a range of stakeholders during their visit before writing their report. In advance of the visit a list of possible categories of people who could be invited is sent to the authorities and the person/people responsible for logistics. The decision about whom the Experts will meet is in the final analysis in the hands of the authorities, who often also add others to the list. The number of people who meet the Experts during their visit varies considerably from case to case, sometimes including large groups of people and usually including representatives of organisations (e.g. of employers, employees, teachers, parents, pupils, headteachers, etc).

Usually all those whom the Experts meet during their visit are invited to the Roundtable, and often others are invited too. The decision about the invitations and the nature of the programme is in the hands of the authorities (in consultation with the Language Policy Division and the Rapporteur if necessary).

## Language Education Policy Profiles

The Profiles are made public on the Council of Europe website in tandem with the Country/Regional reports. The two are to be taken together as the product of the Profile process. Publication within the country/region in question is a matter for the authorities, as is the question of translation from French or English into the language of the country.

The Profile is drafted by the Rapporteur in cooperation with the expert team and finalised in consultation with the authorities. In some cases, the final version of the Profile has been considered, amended and approved at the highest levels in ministries of education.

The Profile reports follow the same basic pattern: an executive summary, an explanation of the Profile process and its purposes, an analysis of the current situation, a discussion of possible future developments and appendices giving essential information on the Council of Europe's documents and policies, on the membership of the Expert Group and national/regional experts and on the programme of visits.

## **6. Implications of the Profiles for the member States**

The Profiles do not contain 'recommendations'. They do include, however, consideration of possible 'future directions' and 'priorities', tailored to the specific case. The issues are usually ones on which there might be discussion of implementation, and in some cases 'action plans' are formulated. In most cases 'future directions' and 'priorities' include the following points which thus form a common basis on which policy deciders and those who implement policy might meet:

- Although there is often much innovation, there is often a lack of dissemination of findings and of an overall perspective on what direction language education policy should take. In several cases, there is a suggestion that a national or regional council be formed to address all language education policy (including the teaching of the national language(s) and languages used as media of instruction). To provide support for this approach, there have also been suggestions that a resource and development centre be established.
- Policy matters are often seen as the business of high level deciders but the Profiles often make the point that policy is made locally as well and indeed within each educational institution, whether school or university. The role of school principals in policy making is highlighted and the need to provide them with appropriate and adequate understanding of language education, in which they may not be well-versed.

- The significance of teacher education in the implementation of policy changes is widely recognised and each Profile deals in detail with teacher education policy and discusses short- and medium-term developments. Short-term developments are crucial since changes in policy are usually sought immediately but medium-term changes in teacher education are also discussed according to the specific context.
- The holistic vision of a curriculum which implements education for plurilingualism is fundamental to all Profiles and to the policy of the Council of Europe as indicated earlier. It depends ultimately on the understanding and flexibility of teachers and school principals. There is reference to the need for decompartmentalisation of the curriculum 'horizontally' so that teachers and learners of several languages draw on the concept of education for plurilingualism in their planning of teaching and learning. Similarly there is emphasis on the importance of a coherent 'vertical' planning and continuity especially across the boundaries of different schools and universities through which learners progress over time. It is with this focus on education for plurilingualism in particular that the Profiles point to the instruments provided by the Council of Europe (especially the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*; the *European Language Portfolio*; the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policy in Europe*). The significance of these is usually well understood but not always known to all those involved in language education.

## 7. Implications of the Profiles for the Council of Europe

Hitherto follow-up has consisted of information on the impact of the Profile being conveyed to the Language Policy Division, usually by the liaison person who worked with the Experts and the Language Policy Division. In late 2008, a general study of the impact of the Profiles was conducted based on interviews with key persons involved in a number of the Profiles (those at least completed two years).

In future, it might be envisaged – as suggested in the Guidelines - that the Language Policy Division offer to review and discuss with the authorities of specific countries/regions/cities, after a period of time of perhaps 2-3 years, the impact and possible further consultation and advice needed.

In all cases, the Experts have taken a holistic view of language education and included the teaching of L1s/languages of schooling/national languages in their discussions with stakeholders. It is nonetheless the case that the Council of Europe is perceived as a body concerned with foreign languages and discussion of policy for other languages is not easily developed with stakeholders. Expert Groups too have perhaps not paid as much attention to the use of languages as media of instruction in majority schools, even if they did pay attention implicitly to this theme in their analyses of education for minorities.

The new 'Languages in Education. Languages for Education' project launched by the Language Policy Division pays particular attention to the 'Languages of Schooling' i.e. the teaching of 'national' languages ('language(s) as subject'), and languages used as media of instruction across the curriculum ('languages and other subjects'). The project will ultimately bring the 'Languages of Schooling' into relationship with foreign and minority/immigrant languages. It would therefore be possible to draw on the expertise generated in this project to carry out complementary analyses for those member States where Profiles have already been produced (or are currently being produced).

In future Profiles, it will be important to draw on the new project (for example by including experts on "Language as Subject" and on "Languages and other Subjects" in the expert



groups). There will be an even stronger case than hitherto to ensure that the significance of language learning for social inclusion policy is addressed.

Finally, as indicated in section 4, there are some themes which are important but are not addressed in every Profile. These themes – together with the major themes which are frequently found in most Profiles – form a ‘checklist’ of issues which could be proposed to authors of Country Reports for comment in their specific situation. This and other suggestions coming from the ‘impact study’ undertaken in the Language Policy Division in late 2008, will be part of new proposals for developments of and from the Profile process to be developed within the next medium term programme.