



Strasbourg, June 2004

DGIV/EDU/LANG (2002) 1 Rev. 5

Languages, Diversity, Citizenship

Language Education Policy Profiles

Guidelines and Procedures

Language Policy Division

Strasbourg

www.coe.int/lang

1. Introduction

The Council of Europe proposes an activity to assist member States who so wish in reflecting upon their language education policy. The aim is to offer them the opportunity to undertake a 'self-evaluation' of their policy in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts, and with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country. It is important to note that developing a language education policy profile does not mean 'external evaluation'. It is a process of reflection by the authorities and members of civil society, and the Council of Europe experts have the function of acting as catalysts in this process.

In practical terms this activity involves the preparation by the country¹ of a short report on its current language education policy (*Country Report*) according to general guidelines described below, and focusing in particular on the priorities identified by the country. This report is studied by a group of experts nominated by the Council of Europe who then visit the country for 5 days in order to gain a deeper understanding of the situation. They meet with the national authority, authors of the report and representatives of institutions and civil society involved in the area of languages. The experts, who may report orally to the authorities at the end of the visit, then prepare their written report (*Experts' Report* – see below 3. Reports).

This analytic report then serves as a stimulus for a further discussion between the authorities, different partners and the Council of Europe experts during a second visit, which includes a Round Table discussion (or other forum) dealing in particular with the tasks and priorities for future action (identified initially in the Country Report and then further analysed and developed in the Experts' Report). The final step involves the drafting of a *Language Education Policy Profile* by the Council of Europe Expert Group in consultation with the national authorities. This forward-looking report is published by the Council of Europe (and national authorities), and may also serve for policy debate within the country at a later stage if desired.

2. Guidelines

2.1. Framework for a Country Report

These guidelines offer *suggestions* for the contents of the Country Report which should provide a comprehensive outline, offering an overview of all language and language education policies: official/national language(s), regional and minority languages, foreign languages. However, the Report should deal in detail only with those areas which the country considers a priority for this activity. Extremely detailed or statistical information is not essential unless the country requires this for its own purposes.

The Country Report is produced by the Member State with its priorities in mind and provides the Council of Europe experts with a factual presentation of relevant aspects of education - formal and informal - in the country concerned, and the languages present in the country. Secondly, it examines the country's response to Council of Europe policies on language education, in particular the recommendations concerning diversity and plurilingualism. Thirdly, it presents the issues which the country concerned wishes to make the focus of the Profile.

¹ This activity may also be applied to a smaller entity such as a region, local authority, city, etc.. The term 'country' in this document will be used to cover these and other entities.

The suggested structure for the Country Report mirrors these three main purposes, but alternative structures may be preferred by the authorities of the country in consultation with the Council of Europe.

2.2. Suggestion for the structure of a Country Report

Overview

The Country report shall comprise three parts:

Section 1 – Factual description

- short introduction to the country;
- context for language teaching/learning;
- description of the forms of language teaching in the education system
 - o compulsory and optional languages (if possible with figures);
 - o acquisition of levels;
 - o estimation of levels of competence aimed at in examinations (in relation to the scales in the *Common European Framework of Reference*)
 - o place of languages in examinations;
- organisation of the languages curriculum in some or all sectors of education.

It is recommended to refer to Appendix 1 of the *Appendices to the Guidelines*.

Section 2 – Plurilingualism and diversification of language learning

This part will show how the country responds to issues of diversity and plurilingualism in Council of Europe policy. All languages are to be considered: modern and classical languages, the national/official language(s), minority and regional languages, languages of migrants and ethnic groups and sign languages;

Countries are invited to analyse concrete applications of Council of Europe instruments and reference documents.

In particular, the authorities are invited to indicate their involvement in Council of Europe or European Union projects or programmes in the field of languages.

Section 3 – Issues for discussion

The final part sets out the issues and problems on which the country wishes to focus; in particular, this section would usually include consideration of 'Tasks and priorities' with respect to specific themes:

e.g.

- o the 'national capacity and national need' with respect to languages in the medium term; the coherence of language teaching across the curriculum and vertically through the education system; the development of objectives for teaching and more generally for language education policies, and the involvement of civil society in this process; quality of language education; teacher training policy; the relationship between language teaching in the education system and the linguistic marketplace, including the role of private provision for languages
- o diversification in the provision and choice of languages
- o quality in language education;
- o the relationship between the teaching of different languages.

(See Appendix 1 in the document *Appendices to the Guidelines and Procedures* for more detailed suggestions)

3. Reports

The full process involves the production of three documents:

- a *Country Report*, which is prepared by the national authority, as indicated above and in Appendix 1, and is published in the language in which it is submitted to the Council of Europe (English or French);
- an *Experts' Report* - produced by the Council of Europe Expert Group – based on the *Country Report* and the results of the Expert Group's first visit. It offers an analysis of the current situation in language education in the country with regard to the Council of Europe's policy, and the views formed by the Expert Group during its visit. It includes a forward-looking section. The Experts' Report is sent by the authorities to all participants in the Round Table (visit 2) as a basis for discussion. The Round Table is attended by representatives of the national authority and civil society, as well as by the Expert Group (2nd visit). The report is not published by the Council of Europe;
- the *Language Education Policy Profile* is drawn up by the Council of Europe Expert Group, in close co-operation with the national authority, on the basis of the *Experts' Report* and in light of the discussions held during the Round Table. The report is finalised following consultation between the authorities and the Expert Group. The Profile is then published by the Council of Europe and the national authority and disseminated, along with the *Country Report*.

4. Procedures

The authority of a country, region or town (with the agreement of other relevant authorities where necessary) sends its application to the Council of Europe (Language Policy Division); the application is submitted to the Steering Committee for Education or its Bureau.

A national (or regional) **Correspondent/Representative** is appointed by the authority. He or she is responsible for co-ordination with the Council of Europe Expert Group and Secretariat and contributes actively to the process. It is recommended that the Correspondent be either a member of the ministry or occupy a similar position at regional or local level.

The Correspondent's duties include:

- co-ordinating the preparation of the *Country Report*;
- helping to ensure that the the Expert Group is provided with information as required;
- providing logistic co-ordination and arranging meetings with local partners during the Expert Group's first visit;
- organising the Round Table (or forum) during the second visit;
- accompanying the Expert Group during its visits;
- representing the national/regional authorities throughout the process.

Timetable

Point zero:

Preparatory visit by the Secretariat and Rapporteur of the Council of Europe Expert Group for preliminary discussion with the authorities, the Correspondent and the author(s) of the *Country Report* (and any other partners considered necessary) concerning the scope of the *Language Education Policy Profile* in the light of the country's priorities.

Purpose: to agree on outline of the *Country Report*; calendar; outline programme for the visit of the Expert Group; composition of Council of Europe Expert Group.

Within six months later:

- Country Report written by a person/team or institution 'commissioned' by the national authorities either from within or from outside the national authorities/ministry; this report is approved by the national authorities and forwarded to the Council of Europe (Language Policy Division).

During the following month

- *Country Report* studied by Council of Europe experts and further information gathered if necessary; co-ordination of Expert Group views by Rapporteur and suggestions made for interlocutors and meetings to be held during the country visit
- interaction between the national/regional authorities, the authors of the Country Report and the Council of Europe Expert Group.

First visit_ – (5 days)

- Meeting with the authorities and authors of the *Country Report*
- Individual or group discussions with relevant interlocutors
- Visits to institutions
- The Expert Group gives an oral summary of its initial reactions at the end of the visit.

The following five months

- Drafting of the *Experts' Report*; the report may be finalised at a meeting of the Expert Group, which is attended by the Correspondent.

The following one or two months:

- the authorities circulate the *Experts' Report* to relevant partners who will attend the Round Table (during the second visit 2)

Second visit – (1.5 days)

- Round Table (or forum) with national authorities and other interested parties from the education system and civil society.

Six months later approximately

- Production of the *Language Education Policy Profile*, written by Council of Europe experts in close co-operation with the authorities

- Profile finally approved by the authorities at the highest level, who may decide to have it translated and published in the national/official language(s)
- Publication of the *Profile* and *Country Report* by the Council of Europe (the latter is published in the language in which it was delivered to the Council of Europe).

5. The Council of Europe Expert Group and its role

The experts are selected for their knowledge / experience of, among others:

- education systems in a number of countries within Europe and beyond
- priorities/needs of the country concerned
- language policy development.

The role of the experts is above all to act as catalysts for discussion within the country of issues/problems which are already identified by the authorities.

Experts are not examiners/inspectors since the purpose of the Profile process is essentially to enable self-evaluation by the country. They may however offer advice.

Secondly, the experts may identify issues/problems which the authorities may decide to examine in greater depth.

Finally, the experts are expected to raise and discuss the priorities/policies of the Council of Europe, in particular with respect to the development of plurilingualism and diversification.

Experts will have the following tasks:

- to study the *Country Report* and, where necessary, identify needs for further information;
- to meet the authorities and any other parties as considered appropriate by the authorities, in consultation with the Secretariat and the Rapporteur;
- to provide a written analytic report - *Experts' Report* - between the first and second visit;
- to take part in a Round Table (or forum) during the second visit
- to draft a *Language Education Policy Profile* after discussions with authorities in the country during the second visit;
- to agree with the national authorities on the final version of the *Language Education Policy Profile* for publication.

The Expert Group will base its analyses on the policy principles of the Council of Europe.

The authorities may decide to add an optional final chapter on future policy proposals.

The experts group shall consist of:

- four experts from other Council of Europe countries, one of whom will act as Rapporteur;
- a member of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe.
- where appropriate, one expert appointed by the authorities.

6. Organisational and financial arrangements

Countries, regions or towns wishing to undertake this activity are invited to make a voluntary contribution to assist the Council of Europe with its implementation.

The Council of Europe covers the fees, travel and subsistence expenses of the Council of Europe experts for the visits to the country and for the co-ordination meetings

The national authorities are responsible for covering expenses related to:

- i) the preparation of the *Country Report* and, if necessary, its translation into English or French;
- ii) the organisation of the programme of the Expert Group's first visit, including local transport for experts during their visits;
- iii) the translation, where necessary, of the *Experts' Report* into the language of the country in preparation for the Round Table;
- iv) the organisation of a Round Table (or forum) during the second visit
- v) the translation, as necessary, of the *Language Education Country Profile* into the languages of their choice and its publication (the *Profile* in English and French is published by the Council of Europe)

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APPENDICES (separate documents)

- Appendix 1: *Country Report*: detailed suggestions
- Appendix 2: Council of Europe instruments and reference texts
- Appendix 3: Extracts from Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning modern languages
- Appendix 4: Extracts from Recommendations on languages with reference to migrants