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## MODERN LANGUAGES IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE 1954-1997

*International co-operation in support of lifelong language learning for effective communication, mutual cultural enrichment and democratic citizenship in Europe*

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## 1. The First Decade 1954-1963

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the division of Europe which followed, culminating in the Communist seizure of power in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the lowering of the 'Iron Curtain'. The physical and moral devastation wreaked by the war, the general depression and anxiety engendered by the use of the atom bomb and the race to develop an even more terrifying hydrogen bomb and to build up nuclear arsenals: all these factors led to a mood of deep despair typified by Orwell's 1984. As to the relations between peoples, they had been totally disrupted for ten years and were still marked by mutual antagonism, distrust and ignorance. Transport facilities were antiquated and worn-out, international travel still subject to political and financial restriction. The normal means of international academic communication, congresses, journals, were at a very low level, or in total abeyance.

The first priority of the Council of Europe, as an intergovernmental body with at first 10 members, was to provide a rallying point for the maintenance of pluralist parliamentary democracy and the protection of human rights. In the following years, a framework of treaties and conventions was constructed (now totalling 200) for the restoration and further development of international communication and co-operation. Among these conventions, which once signed and ratified are legally binding, the first and beyond any doubt the most fundamental is the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (more commonly known as the European Convention on Human Rights) of 1950, the cornerstone of all subsequent activities.

Activities in the fields of culture, education and sport are carried out within the framework of the European Cultural Convention, signed in Paris in 1954. Article 1 of the Convention imposes upon each of its signatories the obligation to take appropriate measures to safeguard and to encourage the development of its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe. Article 2 requires each of them, insofar as may be possible, to:

- a) *encourage the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to those Parties to promote such studies in its territory, and*
- b) *endeavour to promote the study of its language or languages, history and civilisation in the territory of the other Contracting Parties and grant facilities to the national so of those Parties to pursue such studies in its territory'.*

Other provisions include promoting cultural activities, facilitating the movement and exchange of persons and of objects of cultural value, as well as safeguarding and giving access to those objects under the Contracting Parties' control. The use of the term 'study' shows that in the atmosphere of that time language learning was still conceived in humanistic terms, derived from the study of the classics. It was not yet seen as a prerequisite for communication but rather as a formal discipline giving access to a 'culture', which in turn was not yet seen in its socio-anthropological sense as covering the full range of the values, beliefs and practices of a community, but as 'high' culture, treating of the arts and 'the training and refinement of mind, taste and manners; the intellectual side of civilisation' (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Oxford 1944).

In fact, though a Committee of Cultural Experts was set up to control the use of a Cultural fund, it was another five years or so before a coherent educational policy for Europe was actively pursued. After the stabilisation of Europe, the 1950's were a period of post-war recovery, during which the main instruments of international co-operation were created, but the attention and energies of member states were turned inward, devoted to economic and social reconstruction.

It was only towards the end of the decade that the need for a much broader knowledge of foreign languages came to public attention. On 4-6 November 1959, a conference of senior education officials in Paris convened by the French government with the participation of the Council of Europe proposed an outline programme of co-operation in the field of secondary and secondary technical education. One of the four main points of concern identified by the Committee was 'the co-ordination of curricula and extension of language studies', which should be the subject of joint consideration by member states. Some days later the first meeting was held in the Hague of what has since become the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, which endorsed this programme in virtually the same wording.

At the subsequent meeting in Strasbourg of the Committee of Cultural Experts (shortly afterwards replaced by the Council for Cultural Co-operation), it was agreed that a short series of seminars should be organised on common problems in education. As part of this programme the French Government, which in those early days was definitely the pace-setter, organised in April 1960 a *stage*, or 'course' on 'New Methods of Language Teaching'. 'Course' is perhaps misleading. These early meetings attended by leading experts from the member states of the Council of Europe were, for technical reasons, termed '*stages*', but were far from having a simple teaching function. This *stage* was 'devoted to a method intended for those whose needs are more urgent, namely adults. This is a direct method for teaching French as a foreign language. Conceived by the Centre de Recherches et d'Etudes pour la Diffusion du Français (CREDIF), it is based on a methodically chosen progressive vocabulary. The equipment consists principally of lantern slides and a tape recorder'. It is difficult now to recapture the revolutionary impact of the early work of CREDIF in *Le français fondamental* and *Voix et images de la France*. The course on new methods in modern-language teaching made a series of recommendations: that more importance should be attached to audio-visual methods in all countries; that 'linguistic research should be carried out everywhere with a view to compiling, for each language, a basic vocabulary and a selection of elementary grammatical constructions'; that textbook authors should be informed; that the adaptation of the method to secondary school teaching should be studied; that carefully-prepared courses should be organised and exchange of teachers and research workers arranged.

These results and recommendations were reported by Mme. Laurent of the French Ministry of Education to the Second Conference of Ministers of Education, meeting in Hamburg 12-14 April 1961. Her report, primarily an expansion of the recommendations, casts some light on the values and methods of FL teaching before the 'communicative turn'. The adaptation of the CREDIF method to secondary school teaching, she believes, 'will be of no avail where the teaching staff refuse to admit that learning the spoken language is no bar to the acquisition of culture. Children will continue to waste years in accumulating a great amount of passive knowledge on which they will be unable to draw in order to express themselves'.

Mme. Laurent's Report was accompanied by another from Mr Reimers of the Federal Republic of Germany on 'measures required to ensure that all European children receive instruction in at least one foreign language'. In fact, the paper is surprisingly tentative and falls far short of that objective. Reimers estimated that at the time of writing the percentage of children receiving training in even one foreign language for an adequate number of school years seldom exceeded 20% of the number of school children in any country. Indeed, 'experience has shown that by no means all children are capable of assimilating language instruction, even if the requirements are kept low. It may therefore be unwise to recommend that the study of a foreign language be made compulsory for all schoolchildren in all types of compulsory schools'. He advocates introducing 'into all our schools instruction in one foreign language for all children capable of benefiting from such courses' and estimates 'that the percentage of pupils of such ability may well exceed 75%'. To implement such a policy 'will entail long-term planning and a policy of proceeding step-by-step'. He identified teacher supply as a key obstacle and recommended

study abroad to make all teachers competent in at least one foreign language. Finally, he called for a survey to ascertain the actual state of language teaching in schools.

On the basis of these two reports, the Second Conference of European Ministers of Education, Hamburg 10-15 April 1961 adopted its Resolution no. 6, closely mirroring their recommendations and conclusions and advocating a series of measures, among which were:

- *Each country should stimulate linguistic and psychological research, the object of which would be the improvement and expansion of modern-language teaching.*
- *Further meetings of experts should be held under the auspices of the Council of Europe for the purpose of studying methodological and other problems of modern-language teaching*’;

The Ministers also hoped that the Council of Europe would convene meetings of research workers and technical and linguistic specialists to consider ‘a concerted effort with regard to the study of the specialised language needed in scientific and technical branches’. The Resolution concluded: ‘The Ministers accordingly hope that the Council of Europe will convene meetings of research workers and technical and linguistic specialists to consider these problems’.

The Council responded quickly to the request. The Committee of Ministers set up the Council for Cultural Co-operation on 1.1.1962, which appointed a brilliant young Swedish diplomat (and member of the national athletics team), Sven Nord, to prepare a programme of international co-operation in the modern-languages field in preparation for the Third Conference of European Ministers of Education, to be held in Rome 8-12 October 1962. First, however, a second seminar was held in London, 12-23 March 1962. This marked the engagement of the Staff Inspector of Modern Languages, Dr. Donald Riddy. The seminar was a direct follow-up to the Paris seminar and concentrated on audio-visual methodology in the context of an oral approach to language teaching and directed to a broader cross-section of the school population, on residence abroad for language teachers and on languages for young children. These topics all proved to be of importance for UK language policy. All secondary schools were subsequently equipped with language laboratories; a year abroad was made a universal feature of university degree courses in modern languages, which were lengthened from three to four years, and the large-scale experiment in primary-school foreign-language teaching was launched, with high expectations, in 1963, with perhaps excessive reliance on the use of audio-visual courses such as *Bonjour, Line*.

At Rome, the Ministers supported the seminar recommendations, endorsing ‘good oral methods’ and the use of audio-visual methods’. They gave strong support to initial teacher training, including ‘reasonable periods abroad’. They particularly supported better communication between universities and research institutes and the teaching profession, agreeing: ‘to promote the in-service training of qualified teachers, especially through courses run in conjunction with teachers’ associations, at which courses teachers would be introduced:

- a) to the results of the work of universities and research institutes on the spoken forms of language and the language used in specialised subjects;
- b) to new methods of teaching modern language, for example audio-visual methods;’

They agreed ‘further to endeavour to promote research and experiments designed to enable teachers not yet qualified for language teaching to obtain the necessary training, so that the extension of modern language teaching can be carried out as soon as possible’, and were ‘in favour of international co-operation designed to establish, on a comparable basis, and through national research teams, basic vocabularies and fundamental grammatical structures in the European languages’.

1963 was, then, a year of great activity. In August, a third seminar was held in Sweden to face the doubts which had been raised by Reimers by considering the teaching of a modern language to pupils of less than average ability in the age groups 10-13. Again, drills and reliance on audio-visual media were seen as the answer to problems of teacher supply.

Following the recommendations on linguistic research made at Hamburg and Rome, a series of studies was commissioned and published in 1963. On the audio-visual side, Eberhard Zwirner of the University of Münster contributed a substantial *guide to linguistic tape recording* and Gougenheim, Rivenc and Hassan from CREDIF gave an account of the nature and development of *Le français fondamental*. Bernard Pottier, who combined a Professorship at Strasbourg with a visiting lectureship at Nancy, wrote *on basic grammatical structures* and Peter Strevens, at that time Professor of Contemporary English in the University of Leeds, gave a broad overview of *linguistic research and language teaching*.

Strevens' paper concluded with a plea 'for setting up machinery which will permit and encourage consultation and collaboration between the national bodies in each country, which will enable the results of research in one area to be made known quickly in other areas, and which will help to accelerate and guide the complex processes of the language teaching revolution'.

The question arose, of course, what form this 'machinery' should take. The French Government, still the pacemaker, pressed for the establishment of a European Centre for Applied Linguistics. In a memorandum presented to the Council for Cultural Co-operation, the French delegation spoke of the vast amount of research going on in Europe, but much of it wasted owing to insufficient information about the numerous teams who, in Europe and America are making a study of European languages. To meet the need, not only for information but also for co-ordination of linguistic and educational research, they held it to be essential;

1. to make an inventory
  - a) of the means already to hand: methods and teaching aids;
  - b) of current research into modern-language teaching methods;
2. to arrange for the regular centralisation and circulation of information and documentation;
3. to promote research by assisting isolated research workers and national institutes, drawing their attention at the same time to the most urgent needs and to the deficiencies of modern-language teaching in Europe;
4. to undertake research projects if need be in conjunction with national institutes.

The work could be carried out in stages. In a preliminary stage, to begin in 1964, it might be contemplated to create a modern-languages section in the Council of Europe Documentation Centre for Education. A proposal might then be submitted to the *ad hoc* Committee for the rapid setting up of a 'European Centre of Applied Linguistics' (CELA). It could begin with a very small staff of three university-trained specialists working in conjunction with recognised experts in the various fields to form teams of consultants to advise on the extension and improvement of modern-language teaching in Cultural Convention countries.

The CCC 'expressed interest' in the proposal, if rather lukewarmly, and referred it for examination to its three Permanent Committees. The Committee on Higher Education and Research backed the setting up of a special section of the recently established (April 1963) Documentation Centre for Education, and assigned to it the functions listed by the French delegation, but preferred to support the development of national centres placed in Universities



rather than set up a European Centre. The committees for General and Technical Education and for Out-of-School Education followed this lead, *mutatis mutandis*.

Meanwhile, however, events were moving in a different direction. Following up the Rome recommendations with considerable energy, Nord began to assemble a nucleus of experts in the fields concerned, in particular ‘three wise men’, one for each of the sectors of the CCC, and for each of the countries which had held the first three seminars.

Donald Riddy was the Staff Inspector for Modern Languages in England and Wales. A person of great energy and authority, he authored the published account of those seminars, identifying with the aims pioneered by CREDIF, and did much to ensure the application in England of the programme set out in the recommendations of the seminars for the schools sector.

Max Gorosch was at that time Director of the Institute of General and Applied Linguistics at the University of Stockholm, visited by the participants in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Seminar in March 1963. A specialist in Spanish, he had a deep concern for languages in adult education and a broad conception of language in lifelong learning. He played an important role in the setting up of a European Youth Centre.

Bernard Pottier was the Professor at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Strasbourg and Chargé de Cours in the University of Nancy. He was not primarily concerned with language teaching, but rather with the formal analysis of grammar and lexicon in the context of machine translation and automatic documentation. His involvement came through the final paragraph of the resolution of the Rome Conference, that the Ministers ‘are in favour of international co-operation designed to establish, on a comparable basis, and through national research teams, basic vocabularies and fundamental grammatical structures in the European languages’.

In March 1963, Nord addressed a refresher course for over 200 language teachers in Strasbourg and presented a first comprehensive account of ‘Council of Europe action in the field of modern languages’. Using the Rome and Hamburg recommendations as a framework, he classified the actions already taken and planned to follow them up. In the introduction, he characterised the overall approach: ‘As a result of the arrangements made by the CCC Committees concerned with modern languages, the action envisaged is taking the form of a “combined operation”. The Secretariat, assisted by a joint group of experts representing the various committees, is responsible for co-ordinating activities and ensuring fruitful co-operation with the other organisations engaged in the same work, in particular, with associations of modern-language teachers’.

Foremost among these was the *Fédération Internationale de Professeurs de Langues Vivantes* (FIPLV), which covered the interests of the Committee on General and Technical Education and to a lesser extent those of the Committee for Out-of-School education. There seemed, however, to be no comparable partner in the area of higher education and research, since research in university modern-language departments was overwhelmingly literary or philological in character. The quinquennial International Congresses of Linguists were also oriented either to philology or to theoretical linguistics. The 4-yearly Congresses of Phonetic Sciences had a more empirical orientation, but were limited in scope. The complex of research in the areas identified by the Ministers as fundamental to language learning and to teacher training appeared to be underrepresented in universities and underorganised at the international level. The expert group advising the Council of Europe therefore set out to strengthen applied linguistic research in universities as described by Strevens and to stimulate the creation of a non-governmental organisation to structure international co-operation among experts in its member states. At the Meeting of Experts on audio-visual aids for the teaching of modern languages at University level in Stockholm 22 – 25 October 1963, the decision to set up an ‘International Association of Applied Linguistics in Modern Languages’ (AILA) was taken.

In March 1964, a follow-up meeting to Stockholm on modern-language teacher training was held in Paris with Prof. Culioli in the chair, and the first meeting was held of Gorosch, Pottier and Riddy as a Co-ordination Group for the three Permanent Committees. This meeting was reported along with Nord's report and more recent developments to the CCC, which also received the reports from the three committees on the proposal to establish the European Centre for Applied Linguistics. The CCC decided 'that for the moment it would be best to limit itself to its modern-languages programme entitled 'Major Project, Modern Languages'. It accepted the Committees' other recommendations and received a number of 'hopes' expressed by the French delegation, including 'co-operation with non-governmental organisations in connection with publications dealing with applied linguistics and modern-language teaching methods'. Finally, 'several delegations paid tribute to the French delegation, which had been largely instrumental in launching European co-operation in modern-language teaching and had planned and realised *avant-garde* projects in this field, which would be of benefit to many other member countries'.

The tone is somewhat valedictory. Having remitted the modern-language programme to the Major Project, neither the CCC nor the Conference of Ministers concerned itself further with language policy. Nothing more was heard of a European Centre for Applied Linguistics.

## **2. The Major Project in Modern Languages, 1964-1974**

To launch the Major Project, a budget was voted to enable the 'three wise men' first to assist in 'co-ordinating all linguistic activities in the programme', which entailed 'sending one member of the group to every meeting organised in the framework of the modern languages programme and to enable the plenary group to meet twice yearly with the Director', and secondly 'to prepare a publication reviewing past activities and presenting a coherent programme of action for the subsequent years'. This publication, entitled 'Modern Languages in the World of Today', appeared in 1967.

In the second half of the Sixties, the Major Project was pursued with energy and achieved considerable progress towards its major goal, to break down the traditional barriers which fragmented the language teaching profession in Europe and to promote its coherence and effectiveness as a major force for European integration, whilst preserving linguistic and cultural diversity. This meant bringing together those performing similar tasks in different member states. That was perhaps less difficult than getting teachers of different foreign languages to see themselves as partners rather than as competitors and to persuade teachers of mother tongues and foreign-language teachers to see any relevance of the one to the other. It meant also breaking down the barriers to communication between teachers and administrators concerned with successive sectors in the educational process, separated by accommodation, curricula, methods, training and status. How could an *agrégé* have anything in common with an *institutrice*, or an *Ordinarius* with a *Realschullehrer*? Finally, it meant bridging the gap between theory and practice, persuading governments and institutions, especially universities, almost exclusively concerned with literary and philological research, to accept and promote research into language as such and its use, learning, teaching and assessment.

This was, and remains, a gigantic task, far from complete in most countries. However, in 1963-72 all these fields were covered, not only in consultative meetings of experts, commissioned studies and publications, but also in a highly significant and influential series of Governmental Conferences (*stages*) held in ten different member states. These conferences, each organised by the national ministry concerned, served to bring modern languages to ministerial attention and to establish ongoing co-operation based on personal acquaintance among national ministries. This contributed to a growing international consensus among those whose hands were on the levers of power, and to their seeing the Council of Europe as a natural focus for

modern-languages policy development, upon which later, perhaps better-known, projects of the Council of Europe were able to build.

This consensus was incorporated in the first of the major Recommendations to Member Governments by the Committee of Ministers, the highest policy-making organ of the Council. The preamble to Resolution (69)2 ‘On an intensified Modern-Language Teaching Programme for Europe’ sets out the basic tenets on which subsequent work has been based:

*That if full understanding is to be achieved among the countries of Europe, the language barriers between them must be removed;*

*That linguistic diversity is part of the European cultural heritage and that it should, through the study of modern languages, provide a source of intellectual enrichment rather than be an obstacle to unity;*

*That only if the study of modern European languages becomes general will full mutual understanding and co-operation be possible in Europe;*

*That a better knowledge of modern European languages will lead to the strengthening of links and the increase in international exchanges on which economic and social progress in Europe increasingly depends;*

*That a knowledge of modern language should no longer be regarded as a luxury reserved for an élite, but an instrument of information and culture which should be available to all.*

Having expressed its satisfaction at the progress already made, the Committee then recommended to the Governments that an intensified programme be undertaken as follows:

1. *In primary and secondary schools:*

- *Introduction, to the maximum extent possible in existing national circumstances, of the teaching of at least one widely-spoken European language to pupils from the age of about 10, with a view to extending such teaching as soon as possible to all boys and girls from about this age;*
- *Preparation of modern teaching materials for use in language courses making full*
- *and systematic use of audio-visual means;*
- *Development of language courses, making systematic use of television, radio and other audio-visual media in combination with modern study materials;*
- *Installation of special facilities for modern-language teaching, including well-stocked libraries and equipment enabling schools to take advantage of suitable radio and television programmes, etc;*
- *Revision of methods of assessment (tests, examinations...) to give due prominence to auditory and oral skills;*
- *Systematic experimentation into the feasibility of introducing at least one widely-spoken foreign language into the curriculum of all European schoolchildren at the earliest possible stage before the age of 10.*

2. *In institutions of higher and other forms of post-secondary education:*

- *Modernisation of courses of study for students who specialise in modern languages to ensure their proficiency in the present-day use of these languages and their acquisition of a sound knowledge of the civilisation of the country concerned;*
- *Installation of equipment to enable these students to practise their languages in the best possible conditions;*

- *Introduction, or expansion, of arrangements for study visits (by means, where appropriate, of exchange or interchange) to foreign countries whose mother tongue is being studied;*
  - *Provision of facilities (for instance, language centres) to cater for the general and professional needs of students who are not language specialists but who wish to learn, or to improve their command of, modern languages.*
3. *In adult education:*
- *The creation of proper facilities for “permanent education” in modern languages enabling all European adults to learn a language or languages of their choice in the most efficient way;*
4. *In initial and in-service training of modern language teachers:*
- *Organisation, for all future and serving modern language teachers, of courses on recent developments in teaching methods, on such findings of linguistic science as are relevant to language teaching and on ways of using modern teaching apparatus efficiently;*
  - *Promotion of arrangements for interchange or study visits abroad at regular intervals (for example, programmes allowing serving teachers to teach or study in the countries whose language they teach);*
  - *Provision of special training courses for modern language teachers entrusted with classes of adult learners;*
5. *In research:*
- *Research into the factors affecting language acquisition, learning and teaching at all ages and with all categories of learner;*
  - *Research into the development of the most suitable syllabuses, materials and methods of teaching for all categories of pupils and students;*
  - *Definition of criteria of language proficiency leading to the production of tests for evaluating the results of language learning;*
  - *Preparation of basic lists of words and structures of the European languages (spoken and written), to facilitate the construction of study materials appropriate to modern aims and methods of language teaching, and examination of the possibility of furthering the study of less widely-known European languages;*
  - *Analysis of the specialised language of science and technology, economics, etc.*

After making these recommendations, the Committee of Ministers went on to invite each government of member states, as soon as possible:

*To nominate or create national centres specialising in such fields as:*

- (i) *Systematic collection and distribution, to language teachers and others, of information on the findings of research having a bearing on modern-language teaching;*
- (ii) *Documentation on the specialised use of languages particularly in science and technology;*
- (iii) *Techniques of testing proficiency in modern languages;*
- (iv) *Use of modern technical equipment for teaching languages.*

Recommendation (69) 2 remains a landmark in the history of language teaching in the twentieth century in a number of ways. It proclaimed clearly that the aim of language learning was to enable Europeans to communicate and co-operate freely with each other whilst maintaining the full diversity and vitality of their languages and cultures. It rejected elitism and set as the main goal of national language policies effective provision for language learning for all, throughout the educational process from young children in primary education to specialist and non-specialist students in higher education and on to lifelong 'permanent' education. It recognised the potential of information technology. It emphasised the central importance of teacher training and foresaw the need for the reform of examinations and the introduction of new methods of testing. Lastly, it set out a programme of research and proposed more effective ways of making results available to the language teaching profession.

In some ways (e.g. the stress laid on audio-visual methods) the recommendation shows the limitations of its time. In practice, the profession was not always ready to implement a programme that was ahead of its time. In particular, Riddy's attempts to reform language teaching in England met with only limited success. The inclusion of one modern foreign language (almost always French) for all pupils aged 11-16, the large-scale equipment of secondary schools with language laboratories and the conduct of a large-scale experiment in primary French were all in accordance with R(69)2. However, language laboratories ran into technical problems; equipment was unreliable and both difficult and costly to maintain, while tape recordings were too often of poor acoustic quality. Above all, questions of class management and the role of the teacher remained unsolved and little understood. The evaluation of the primary French experiment by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was at best ambiguous: it found that older learners were better than younger ones under class conditions and that by the age of 16 no significant difference was to be found between those who had started at 8 and those who had started at 11. Whilst supporters of an early start could point to deficiencies in the conduct of the experiment and its evaluation, the British Government did not feel justified in proceeding further when the preconditions for successful innovation had not been met. Generalisation would have meant a major programme of in-service teacher training for which the profession was not prepared.

These findings were communicated to Council of Europe symposia held in London, Copenhagen and Reading. A paper by Riddy's successor, HMSI Hoy, detailed over 20 'conditions for success' in primary language teaching, few of which were or could foreseeably be met. As a result, the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools across Europe was set back by over a decade. Even the introduction of a foreign language for all pupils in secondary education proved hard to sustain. The objectives and methods both of teaching and of testing appropriate to 20% of the population were not equally successful with 100%. While the 'grass-roots' Graded Objectives movement of the seventies and eighties appeared to have come close to solving the problem, its generalisation did not meet with the same success and the British Government has now retreated to make a foreign language optional from 14. While the British situation is by no means typical, its example shows that the most progressive policies have to be followed with care and caution and that the founders of the Council of Europe were wise in empowering the Committee of Ministers to issue recommendations, not directives, to member governments. Nevertheless, despite the problems of immediate implementation, the perspectives opened up by the formulations of Recommendation R (69)2 have remained dominant in the development of European language-teaching policy over almost half a century.

The 'wise men', in particular Gorosch and, later, Nickel, saw applied linguistics as a key element in this development and saw to it that wherever possible a *stage* was used to promote the foundation or development of a local AILA affiliate. AILA was officially launched as planned at the First International Colloquy of Applied Linguistics, organised by the *Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences humaines de l'Université de Nancy* on 31 October 1964. The Second

Congress was held in Cambridge, 8-12 September 1969. In 1970 the Council of Europe and AILA held a joint meeting to discuss the intensification of its modern-language programme. An ambitious programme of research and development was proposed. However, the global expansion of AILA made its close relation to the Council of Europe increasingly inappropriate and Sven Nord, together with the officers of AILA, negotiated the transfer of the Association from the aegis of the Council to that of UNESCO. The Major Project continued until the mid-seventies, but was weakened after 1970 by the premature withdrawal of Nord, as a result of ill-health following a severe car-crash in Italy, and by the continuing dedication of Gorosch and Nickel to the world-wide development of AILA. Documentation on the Major Project is now sparse and difficult of access. Indeed, many people believe that the work of the Council in modern languages started in 1971. In fact, the programme initiated then was able to build on the inheritance of the preceding decade.

### **3. The European unit/credit scheme for adult education**

The Major Project was planned as a ‘horizontal’ undertaking, involving all three of the educational sectors into which the work of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC, later CDCC) was divided. In fact most of the activities came under the Committee for General and Technical Education or the Committee for Higher Education and Research. The Committee for Out-of-school Education (COSE) concerned itself with developing the concept of ‘permanent education’.

This included that of ‘recurrent’ education. The conditions of adult life meant that study usually had to be intermittent, with qualifications in a particular field built up over a period of years with perhaps frequent interruptions. How was this process to be organised and managed? A promising suggestion came from M. Bernard Schwarz, responsible for *éducation permanente* in the University of Nancy. He proposed that wherever possible subjects should not be taught or examined globally, but broken down into constituent parts, which could be taken one by one as learners were ready to do so. He termed these ‘*unités capitalisables*’, in some ways analogous to the unit-credit systems operated in the United States. The Committee thought that it might contribute to the Major Project in Modern Languages by investigating the feasibility of introducing such a system into language teaching on a European basis, giving the following reasons for doing so:

- a) Modern languages is the subject of one of the major programmes of the Council of Europe, as language learning is a crucial factor in the promotion of European integration and the mobility of populations.
- b) Mobility may evolve a new language need not foreseen in the period of full-time education.
- c) Differing social situations demand different degrees and directions of linguistic knowledge and skills.
- d) Language teaching is inherently a suitable field for the application of media-based educational technology.
- e) International co-ordination of production effort is already recognised as a necessity, since large development and production costs have to be offset by comparable economics of scale.

The Committee enlisted the co-operation of the Swiss-based Eurocentres organisation, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which organised language courses in a number of countries, teaching always the language of the country concerned, and enjoyed consultative status with the Council of Europe.

Following a number of preparatory meetings of experts, a Symposium on “The Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education” was held at Rüschtikon, Switzerland, on May 3 – 7 1971, to examine three issues considered central to the introduction of a unit/credit system:

- i) New forms of organisation of linguistic content.
- ii) Types of evaluation within a unit/credit system.
- iii) Means of implementation of a unit/credit system in the teaching/learning of modern languages in adult education.

The Rüschtikon Symposium was held on 3-7 May 1971. The papers presented in all three areas were vigorously debated, but it was evident that, while the prospects of a unit/credit scheme for adult education aroused enthusiasm, even excitement, ideas on its structure and content were at a very early stage. In addition to abstracts of the papers presented and an extended Appendix by Trim ‘Towards a situational definition of language contents in foreign languages’, containing a schematic inventory of roles, activities and uses, the report of the Symposium (Doc. CCC/EES (71) 135) contains six pages of conclusions including a number of recommendations for follow-up action. According to the first recommendation under Topic (iii), “it was suggested that the viability of a unit/credit system depended on the findings of a feasibility study.”

Following the Rüschtikon Symposium, the Committee for Out-of-school Education and Cultural Development accordingly decided to examine further the possibility of introducing a European unit/credit system. The Director of the Division, Dr. Herbert Jocher, set up a small working party to investigate its feasibility. The members of the working party were:

John Trim (Chairman), Director of the Department of Linguistics, University of Cambridge, UK, had recently organised the Second International congress of Applied Linguistics. His background was in German Studies and his special field of interest phonetics and its applications. He was methodological adviser to the BBC in language programmes for adults and author of the German TV series: ‘Komm Mit’, and a member of the (British) National Council for Educational Technology (NCET).

René Richterich ran the *Service de Recherche et d'Application* at the Eurocentre, Neuchâtel, specialising in the analysis of the language needs of adult learners of French as a foreign language.

Jan van Ek was Director of the Institute for Applied Linguistics in the University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. His special field was the Grammar of English and he was an adviser to the Deutscher Volkshochschulverband (DVV).

David Wilkins, of the Department of Linguistics, University of Reading, UK, had a background in French Studies and was a specialist in the application of linguistics to the teaching of foreign languages, particularly English.

The work of the group was administered by Mme Antonia de Vigili. From the start, Antonietta (as she was always known) threw herself wholeheartedly into the Project, which she animated with understanding and dedicated efficiency over some 25 years. Its success is largely due to her driving force and powers of persuasion.

The group, meeting in Strasbourg on 30 September and 1 October 1971, agreed to concern itself with the following tasks:

- a) to break down the global concept of language into units and sub-units based on an analysis of particular groups of adult learners, in terms of the communication situations in which they are characteristically involved. This analysis should lead to a precise

articulation of the notion of “common core” with specialist extensions at different proficiency levels;

- b) to set up on the basis of this analysis an operational specification for learning objectives;
- c) to formulate, in consultation with the Steering Group on Educational Technology, a system defining the structure of a multimedia learning system to achieve these objectives in terms of the unit/credit concept;

As it came to tackle the first of these tasks, it was very soon apparent to the Expert Group that it was not possible to divide up a language into a set of discrete building blocks ('Baukastensystem') which a learner could sequence and assemble in any order. Of course, any large-scale teaching or examining institution has to divide and order, and course and test designers have to make such decisions in great detail. Many of these decisions will be taken in the light of the learners concerned and many will in fact be arbitrary. It did not seem proper for an international organisation to seek to impose arbitrary decisions on the field or to pre-empt the decision-making of others more closely in touch with the needs, interests and characteristics of learners. The group therefore felt it to be more appropriate to support independent decision-making as close as possible to the point of learning by setting out general aims and principles, providing models which practitioners could adapt to their own circumstances and encouraging the exchange of ideas and experience amongst them. The first priority therefore attached to the serious consideration and formulation of the fundamental principles upon which a long-term European language policy could be based.

The situation in 1971 presented the EES Expert Group with a unique opportunity. The accelerating internationalisation of life was at its point of take-off, as technical developments in the communications and information industries massively transformed social life in many interconnected aspects. Multinational industries; global financial markets; mass tourism and entertainment; science and medicine were creating a mass demand for practical proficiency in modern languages, particularly for English, which was rapidly establishing itself as the first foreign language in schools and the primary medium of international communication outside the Soviet bloc. Was the language-teaching profession well placed to meet the explosion in demand? It was agreed that methods must be modernised and the Major Project had helped to show the way forward. However, the (possibly excessive) discrediting of Skinnerian behaviourism and post-Bloomfieldian structuralism (which Chomskyan grammarians had no intention of replacing) had led to disillusion with mechanistic audio-lingual and audio-visual methodologies. The language-teaching profession was in need of a new approach to meet the challenge. Yet, as we have seen, much more was involved than new equipment, methods and materials, the introduction of which into a system unprepared for change could actually prove counter-productive. Fundamental changes were needed, but to make them in an established system of national education is a long-term process fraught with practical difficulties and certain to encounter both active and passive resistance from those at all levels set in their existing ways. In this respect, the marginal position of adult education in national systems was actually an advantage. Away from the spotlight, the Expert Group was able to develop a new approach without the political constraints to be expected in a large intergovernmental organisation, but was, hopefully, in a position to exert considerable influence should its ideas gain the support of the Council's decision-making bodies.

The intellectual and experiential backgrounds of the members of the Group enabled it to draw upon and attempt to synthesise a wide range of influences. The aims and purposes of the Council of Europe provided the ideological base. These included:

- the strengthening of pluralist participatory democracy and the development of an informed, independent but socially responsible public opinion,



- the encouragement of personal mobility and interaction;
- the promotion of intensified international co-operation and joint action to tackle the significant social issues of the time;
- respect for human rights, implying:
- understanding and tolerance of cultural (and hence linguistic) diversity as a source of mutual enrichment,
- the democratisation of education, with languages for all rather than for a social or professional élite and the participation in decision-making of all those affected by the decisions.

We have seen already the networks and working methods inherited from the Major Project in Modern Languages of the sixties and the guidelines laid down in Recommendation (69)<sup>2</sup>. The project on permanent education contributed the concept of lifelong learning as a coherent and purposive development, as well as learner-centredness, learner autonomy, and the demystification of objectives, breaking down global subjects into transparently describable sub-parts. From the Eurocentres came the proposals for an approach based upon the analysis of situations and also the articulation of learners' needs, which had also been developed in the Hawkins and Vaughan James enquiries in UK. From DVV (Deutscher Volkshochschulverband) and the associated International Certificate Conference (ICC) came a model for fully explicit syllabuses, based on *le français fondamental* developed by CREDIF. The detailed defined language syllabuses of the Nuffield Foundation were an important input, the *Sprechsituationen* of its *Vorwärts* syllabus being a valuable contribution to the classification of speech functions, together with the *In the Air* syllabus developed by Svanta Hjelmström for the Swedish experimental media-based school at Linköping, as well, of course, as the work of Austin and Searle on speech-acts (and Roget's *Thesaurus!*). Educational technology (e.g. the work of Tony Becher at the NCET and M.Schmidbauer for COSE) provided the basis for a 'systems approach', in which the analysis of needs and resources, the specification of objectives, the development of materials and methods, and the processes of assessment and evaluation form a coherent system, in which the transparent formulation of worthwhile and feasible objectives has a central role. Educational technology also brought realism and concern with human and material resources, especially media, and an understanding of their possibilities and limitations. In linguistics, the socio-anthropological, ethnographic approach of Firth and Malinowsky and particularly the concept of 'communicative competence' developed by Del Hymes (together with a virtual withdrawal of a rejuvenated grammar from any concern with applications), facilitated - indeed made almost inevitable - a re-orientation of applied linguistics and language didactics from structural formalism to pragmatic functionalism (though of course the legacy of the detailed descriptions of English Grammar by Jespersen, Zuidema and others was known and available). The sociolinguistic schemata of the German followers of Habermas (Wunderlich, Ehlich, Rehbein) and the early work of Candlin provided models for the description of interactional strategies. As to the language teaching methodology itself, the abiding influence of the work of Harold Palmer on British EFL was strongly felt and, in particular, the functional analysis embodied in Palmer and Blandford's *Everyday sentences in spoken English*. More generally, the perspectives of the Group were clearly within the paradigm of the reform movement of the 1880's and the neogrammarian linguistic revolution of the 1870s.

There was thus no shortage of relevant ideas, knowledge and experience for the Expert Group to work upon. Its task (clearer perhaps in retrospect than at the time) was to distil from it a coherent set of basic principles and to give them concrete expression in the form of models, which practitioners could adapt and apply to their own situations. Furthermore, the Group

aimed to develop strategies of educational innovation, leading to syllabus and examination reform, to improved course design and materials production, to corresponding forms and content of initial and in-service teacher education and training. These steps were expected to lead to deep and permanent changes in classroom practice and - what is of ultimate importance - the experience of language learning itself. Evidently such a process of educational innovation on a continental scale requires coherent and convergent decisions by a very large number of policy makers and practitioners at many different levels. In a non-directive grouping of pluralist democracies the process must rest on conviction and consent. Principles must be such as to gain and hold conviction and achieve wide consensus, and prove themselves in practice to be both progressive and realistic, avoiding rhetorical utopianism on the one hand and quietist acceptance of present constraints on the other. It is important for a framework to be provided which can sustain effort and provide continuity over a period long enough for deep and lasting reform to take effect. At the same time the process must be dynamic and responsive to changes in any of the parameters, avoiding the ossification which so often leads ardent young revolutionaries to develop into arch-conservatives, clinging to obsolete solutions to yesterday's problems.

In this spirit, the basic aims of successive projects closely geared to the general educational and political aims of the Council of Europe have been to:

- facilitate the free movement of people, information and ideas in Europe with access for all and to encourage closer co-operation by providing the linguistic means of direct interpersonal communication, both face-to-face and at a distance;
- build up mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity in a multilingual and multicultural Europe, with respect for individual, local, regional and national identities, developing a common European intercultural identity by unforced mutual influence;
- promote the personal development of the individual, with growing self-awareness, self-confidence and independence of thought and action combined with social responsibility as an active agent in a participatory, pluralist democratic society;
- make the process of learning itself more democratic by providing the conceptual tools for the planning, construction, conduct and evaluation of courses closely geared to the needs, motivations and characteristics of learners and enabling them so far as possible to steer and control their own progress;
- provide a framework for close and effective interactional co-operation in the organisation of language learning.

Over the past 25 years these aims have gained wide acceptance in the language teaching profession. In pursuing them, the successive projects have consistently advocated and promoted the following principles:

- a systems-development approach, interrelating aims, objectives, methods, materials, assessment and evaluation should be adopted;
- objectives should be appropriate, desirable and feasible:
  - appropriate in the light of the characteristics of the learners
  - desirable in the light of the needs, (vocational, recreational, cultural and personal) and motivations of learners and the interests of society
  - feasible in the light of the human and material resources which can be brought to bear;

- methods and materials should be selected and/or developed which are appropriate to learners, teachers and the learning situation and used so as to achieve the agreed objectives;
- methods of assessment and evaluation should be employed and developed which are directly related to learning objectives and provide accurate and relevant information to learners, teachers and other interested parties;

tThe approach to language learning and teaching should be learner-centred rather than subject centred or teacher centred;

- the function of teachers and other partners is to facilitate appropriate and effective learning;
- there should be consultation and agreement on objectives and methods among all the partners for learning;
- a permanent education perspective is needed, as the developing individual learns to understand and to communicate in diverse ways for diverse purposes in a multilingual and multicultural Europe;
- all educational programmes should involve preparation for future independent learning.

In 1972-73, members of the Expert Group undertook a number of fundamental studies. Richterich developed a model for the description of language needs of adults and undertook an analytical classification of the categories of adult needing to learn foreign languages. Wilkins outlined the linguistic and situational content of the common core in a unit/credit system. He offered and exemplified a first categorisation of 'notional' categories, dividing 'semantico-grammatical' categories from those of 'communicative function'. Van Ek gave preliminary consideration to the concept of a 'threshold level' in a unit/credit system. At this point, he still followed the *français fondamental* model, specifying a minimal vocabulary and grammatical structure list. Expanding his Rüsclikon appendix, Trim set out the basic characteristics of a possible scheme and the fundamental principles it should follow, drawing on his collaboration with K. Bung on a multidimensional model for the specification of objectives (Bung 1973b), which the latter had exemplified in a major study on the language needs of waiters and hotel staff. The studies by van Ek, Richterich, Trim and Wilkins were published in 1973 and later republished by Pergamon Press (Trim et al 1980).

At a meeting in Cambridge in January 1974 the Group, reinforced by A. Peck and S. Hjelmstrom, 'brainstormed' categories for the parameters of the model. Even in the form of unordered lists, this document had an immediate impact, being circulated by DVV to all its language committees. Moreover, it formed the basis upon which J.A. van Ek elaborated later in 1974 a detailed specification of the minimum language requirements of 'people who want to prepare themselves, in a general way, to be able to communicate socially on straightforward everyday matters with people from other countries who come their way, and to be able to get around and lead a reasonably normal social life when they visit another country'. This was termed 'The Threshold Level', a title which may be thought to require explanation.

The Group recognised the necessity of constructing a system of units on a system of defined levels of language proficiency. But how many levels should there be? It was sceptical about the existence of natural levels, and could see no cogent argument in favour of one number rather than another. However it seemed possible that an exception might be the point in language learning when the acquisition of isolated pieces of language cohered into an overall competence, which could be brought to bear on the general run of situations in daily life. This might be seen as a threshold effect, analogous to those found in other fields, and was considered at the time to be the lowest level at which it was possible to speak of a general level

of language proficiency. Van Ek's work, published by the Council of Europe in 1975, was a solid achievement, which has stood the test of time.

It stood the received model of language learning on its head. Hitherto, progress had been seen in terms of the words and grammatical structures learnt, and evaluated in terms of the learner's ability to construct sentences containing them without error. *The Threshold Level* model first listed the situations in which learners would need to use the language and what they would be called upon to do with language in those situations. It then detailed language *functions* in six broad categories:

- Imparting and seeking factual information
- Expressing and finding out attitudes
- Getting things done (suasion)
- Socialising
- Structuring discourse
- Communication repair

It then specified the *notion*, both general and situation-specific, the learner would need to understand and express. Words and structures were specified only as 'exponents' of the functional and notional categories, thus emphasising their status as means to an end, not as ends in themselves.

*The Threshold Level* was very warmly received by the field. In particular, the shift of attention from form to function was very quickly followed by EFL textbook writers and the apparatus of situations, themes, notions and functions were soon adopted as a descriptive framework by syllabus designers for both curricular guidelines and public examinations. In 1976 a French equivalent: *Un Niveau-seuil* was published (Coste et al 1976), following a related model. However, determined to avoid the danger of the model imposing a single pan-European objective on all learners, the CREDIF team provided a much richer inventory of exponents, covering a wide range of registers. The aim was to allow learners to respond to the diversity of language uses to which they must expect to be exposed, and to select for use what they felt to be appropriate to themselves and their relation to the interlocutor. Inevitably, *un Niveau-seuil* was much more voluminous than *The Threshold Level*. It demanded a considerably higher degree of linguistic sophistication from the user and was less widely followed. The feared danger of users slavishly following the Threshold level model did not materialise, not least because copyright considerations obliged textbook authors and testers to innovate within the overall framework of the model.

Versions were then commissioned for Spanish (Slagter), following closely the model applied to English in order to test its general European applicability, and for German (Schneider et al), drawing on both *The Threshold Level* and *Un Niveau-seuil*. Since then, the model (usually the *Threshold Level* variant) has been successively applied to Italian (1982), Danish (1983), Dutch (1985), Norwegian (1988), Basque (1988), Portuguese (1988, strongly influenced by *Un Niveau-seuil*), Galician (1993), Welsh, Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Russian, Greek, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian and Slovenian. Versions for Swedish (for migrant workers), and Catalan have been produced and published outside the Council. The concept has clearly proved its worth over some thirty years. Far from reinforcing the domination of major languages, especially English, it has served increasingly to provide a focus for the renewal and promotion of smaller national and regional languages. The model has not stagnated. Following studies undertaken in the eighties (Trim et al. 1984, van Ek 1986, 1987), an extensively revised and extended version *Threshold Level 1990* (van Ek and Trim (1991) has been produced. In that version, the Threshold level model has been of particular value to the states of Central and

Eastern Europe which acceded to the Cultural Convention at that time and for whom it was a useful tool in the reorganisation and reorientation of language teaching..

When first introduced, the Threshold Level was considered to be the lowest to be recognised in a unit/credit scheme. Indeed, few examining bodies at that time acknowledged the validity of lower-level examinations as being of public interest. The ICC rapidly adopted the Threshold specification as the basis for examinations for a *Grundbaustein* preliminary to its Certificate in a number of languages, notably English. For a short period, Threshold Level was attacked for ‘minimalism’ and for lowering the standard of language teaching. In fact, however, experience in the Viennese *Volkshochschulen* soon showed that whilst a good receptive knowledge of the content was achievable after one full year of study under the normal conditions of adult education, active, productive mastery reached no more than 33%. For a one-year objective, a lower target was required. *Waystage* was therefore developed by van Ek and L.G.Alexander as the basis for the course design of *Follow Me!*, a 72-unit multimedia broadcasting-led English course co-produced by BBC, Norddeutscher Rundfunk and Bayrischer Rundfunk under the aegis of the Council of Europe, for use, in the first instance, by *Volkshochschulen* in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, which used the occasion to launch an intensive programme of teacher training. The course enjoyed a phenomenal success and was eventually followed by 500 million viewers in well over 60 countries across the world.

More generally, the Group was now in a position to present a developed model of language-learning systems development, according to the following sequence:

- a) Determine what the learner will need to **do** in using the language for communication
- b) Calculate the knowledge and skills he will need to acquire to be able to act in the required way
- c) On this basis, set out clear, operational objectives
- d) Assess the characteristics of the learner
- e) Survey the resources of the teaching institution
- f) If necessary, modify objectives in the light of the analysis of resources
- g) Plan the course, in terms of the activity required of the learner
- h) Conduct the course, with continuous monitoring of the learner’s progress
- i) Evaluate the learner’s proficiency and the effectiveness of the course

By the mid- to late-Seventies, adult language teaching in Northwestern Europe had been profoundly affected by the work of the Council of Europe, which was acknowledged as leading the reforms under way in course construction, textbook authorship, testing and examinations, teacher training. A detailed study outlining options for the introduction of a concrete European unit/credit scheme were drawn up. It appeared possible that a Special Project might be launched, with ministries and major institutions serviced by a small Council of Europe secretariat, to oversee the introduction and maintenance of the scheme . This might have provided a strong supportive structure for adult language learning, but the negotiations were abortive; the time was not yet ripe for such a move.

In any case, the influence of the Expert Group did not long remain confined to the adult sphere. In 1976 the Committee on General and Technical Education (GTE) of the Council for Cultural Co-operation commissioned adaptations of *The Threshold Level* (van Ek 1976) and *Un Niveau-Seuil* (Porcher et al. 1980) for schools. At a meeting in 1977 to receive van Ek’s work, the recommendation was made to abandon the wide-ranging objectives of the ten-year Major Project and to concentrate the limited resources available on the approach developed by the EES Expert Group. This move was given greater weight by the action of the Parliamentary Assembly. Following a report by Mr Piket (Netherlands), the Assembly adopted Recommendation 814 (1977). ‘Considering that Resolution (69)2, adopted by the Committee

of Ministers, could have proved a suitable instrument for the implementation of effective and co-ordinated language teaching programmes, but that it does not seem to have obtained the anticipated results', it recommended that the Committee of Ministers should:

- a) *call on the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe to develop the teaching of modern languages, taking account of:*
  - i) *the particular needs of the less privileged groups, particularly migrants;*
  - ii) *the need to diversify the languages taught;*
  - iii) *the cultural advantages of maintaining language minorities in Europe;*
  - iv) *the pedagogical aspects of language learning;*
- b) *encourage, with regard to the teaching of languages, the adoption of co-ordinated educational policies based on proposals drawn up at European level;*
- c) *report on the action taken by member states on Resolution (69) 2 adopted by the Committee of Ministers;*
- d) *support the activities of the CCC in the field of modern languages, and in particular the work of the group of experts engaged in the development of a European unit-credit system with special emphasis on the differing basic requirements of types of learners (threshold levels).*

This position obliged the Group to consider carefully its resources, methods, strategies and structure. The financial resources available for the work were extremely restricted. In fact the operational budget agreed annually from the Cultural Fund was never more than the minimum sum required to run meetings and commission a small number of studies for purely nominal honoraria. The Council could not be approached as a source of funding. There could be no question of providing research grants or subsidising the work of the institutions involved in projects. Their co-operation had to be on the basis of their own funding. This meant that they had to be convinced that participation in the Council's work was to their own advantage, perhaps through being in close touch with others at the cutting edge of development, perhaps because it enabled them to obtain funding from other sources. In some ways these constraints imposed a valuable discipline, an obligation to produce concrete, useful output, a need to carry the constituency along. The strategies employed by successive projects were therefore to:

- a) identify the most effective and advanced institutions and individual workers in the various member countries engaged in the various aspects of the organisation, planning and conduct of adult learning and teaching;
- b) make the results of the work of these individuals and institution available to their counterparts in other member countries, so as to raise the level of activity all round;
- c) bring institutions with similar interests and problems into structured working relationships, and in this way steadily to develop mutual confidence and the mechanisms of inter-institutional and international co-operation.

These strategies were then to be pursued by:

- a) commissioning studies under contract from individuals, dealing with critical areas of systems development;
- b) establishing sub-groups and working parties to develop key areas;
- c) engaging institutions in case studies and pilot experiments;
- d) encouraging the formation of groups of institutions;
- e) issuing a series of planning documents directed towards administrations, course planners, media producers, teachers and learners;

- f) encouraging, supporting and engaging in the development of large-scale multimedia language-learning systems based upon the use of mass media, and
- g) by giving encouragement, support and direct guidance to learner groups trying to develop methods of autonomous learning.

From 7 to 14 September 1977, the Expert Group submitted its work to an Intergovernmental Conference held in Ludwigshafen-am-Rhein, FRG. Following introductory lectures on Threshold level developments, needs analysis, evaluation, media and methodology, accounts were given of pilot projects in Eurocentres, the Swedish LIV Project, the ICC Certificates, the tourist industry in Austria and industrial training in France and Germany. The proposals for the introduction of a fully-fledged European Unit/Credit System were also presented. Detailed discussion in working groups led to a set of recommendations. The participants in the Symposium considered 'that the conditions are now satisfied for the setting up of a European structure of information, consultation and action with a view to promoting the study and implementation of a systemic approach to language learning by adults and, eventually, a European unit/credit system in this field'. Detailing the areas to be covered in a systems approach, they recommended 'that in pursuit of these objectives, institutions in all member countries should be encouraged to take part in case studies and pilot projects. To manage this project, they recommended a strengthening of its administrative structure. 'A small permanent unit should be set up, consisting of at least two co-ordinators, together with the necessary administration and secretariat. Consideration should be given to ways in which the expert group could be further strengthened in respect of its structure and composition'.

#### **4. Project 4: Modern Languages – 1978-1981**

The Ludwigshafen Symposium signalled the conclusion of the unit/credit feasibility study. The scheme itself was never implemented and the unit recommended was not set up. Instead, the CDCC decided on a change of direction. The principles developed and formulated in the feasibility study were now seen as of general applicability and a formal medium-term Project was instituted to test their validity on a wider scale. The small expert group was replaced by a Project Group of 19 members representing 13 countries, under the chairmanship of John Trim (Project Adviser).

The Project was entitled: 'Modern Languages: improving and intensifying language learning as factors making for European understanding, co-operation and mobility'. The remit of the Project was defined as follows:

The Aim of the Project is to serve the interests of increased European understanding, co-operation and mobility by improving and broadening the learning of modern languages, making appropriate provision for all sections of the population. This entails:

- making generally available the basic conceptual tools for planning, construction and
- conduct of learning programmes closely geared to the needs, motivations and characteristics of the learner, and enabling him as far as possible to steer and control his own progress;
- providing a framework for close and effective international co-operation in the organisation of language learning;
- developing systematic procedures for:
  - i) identification of target audiences and the analysis of needs, motivations, learner characteristics and resources;
  - ii) the detailed specification of communication objectives;

- iii) the devising of methods and materials appropriate to different classes and types of learner;
- iv) the evaluation of learning systems and of the achievement and proficiency of learners;
- considering the implications of the above aims for the training and retraining of teachers of modern languages;
- disseminating and exchanging information about the Project, in order to ensure that the principles and practical instruments associated with it become more widely known and that the results of the current work and experiments become available to member states;
- contributing to applied research on the conditions under which languages are learnt by individuals (problems related to motivation, learning mechanisms, etc.)’.

In the course of Project 4 pilot projects were carried out in a variety of educational contexts. The applications of the new approach are described in *Modern Languages 1971- 81*. This report gives a balanced account of the full range of the Council’s work in the field of modern languages over the whole of the preceding decade and is divided into six chapters, preceded by a 16-page résumé prepared by the Project Adviser, which contains the gist of the report.

Chapter 1 contributed by the Secretariat, placed the Project in the context of the general aims of the Council of Europe and, more particularly, situated the work in relation to the general principles of permanent education which had guided a large part of the work of the Council for Cultural Co-operation.

Chapter 2 was contributed by those members of the Project Group most closely concerned with developing the principles of language-learning systems development from 1971 onwards, together with other colleagues who had played an important part in different aspects of that development. It included a section by Richterich on needs analysis, a concept now broadened to ‘identification of needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners, teaching institutions and society’. Van Ek, Porcher and Trim wrote on the specification of objectives, Coste on communicative methodologies, Alexander on materials development and Fitzpatrick on the use of media. Evaluation and testing were treated by Harrison, while Groot described a specimen test of threshold level proficiency in English, which was finalised, tested and validated but never published, and Oskarsson wrote on self-assessment. Two contributions which dealt with areas of growing importance were on learner autonomy (Holec) and teacher training (Edelhoff).

Chapter 3 was devoted to accounts of pilot projects in which the principles set out in Chapter 2 had been applied to language learning and teaching in a wide range of educational situations at all educational levels. Projects in adult education were presented from Germany (Halm), Austria (Satzinger) and Sweden (Salin), while Porcher and Perusat wrote of projects in the teaching of French in Greece and Germany. Schärer gave an account of projects conducted in the Eurocentres organisation. Five pilots were reported relating to migrant workers and their families: in France (Porcher and Huart), Germany (von der Hand), Sweden (Salin and Sandström) and UK (Jupp and Hoadley-Maidment). Fitzpatrick gave an account of the hugely successful *Follow Me* broadcast-led multimedia project. In the field of languages for vocational special purposes, Satzinger wrote of an Austrian project for English in the tourist industry. Rittershaus presented the well-developed unit/credit scheme developed by Ford Köln for in-house language training and Døssing described a project for Danish hairdressers. The above projects were all in the field of out-of-school education. For the school sector, Bergentoft presented a report of some 20 pages on ‘the application of communicative language learning systems development in schools in Europe’, following the publication of *The Threshold Level for Schools*. In the Spring of 1979 the CDCC had asked the governments of the member countries for particulars concerning experimental activities planned or in progress in the



various countries, based on or stimulated by CDCC documents. On the basis of the replies, a meeting was called in Strasbourg in June 1979, at which leaders responsible for experimental projects in progress in eleven countries (Austria, Denmark, FRG, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and UK) presented their projects and formed an interaction network. Projects in eight countries had been visited by other project leaders and experts. Tertiary education was represented by three studies. Harding-Esch described German courses for students of engineering and veterinary sciences at Cambridge university, Ladousse gave an account of a working party representing universities in eight countries co-operating with the Association of Partially or wholly French-language Universities (AUPELF) and Winslow and Gardner described present and proposed methods of determining the needs of students joining courses in public sector higher education in the United Kingdom containing a significant language component. Otherwise, although the Trim Project Adviser had produced a paper on the implications of the unit/credit scheme for universities, mainstream university language teaching remained outside the remit of the successive Modern-Languages Projects, lying within the competence of another Directorate (Higher Education and Research).

Chapter 4 describes work undertaken to collect, store and disseminate information on language teaching and research, with some suggestions for the improvement of this function. Under the Major Project, a Research Information Network had been set up. It was co-ordinated by The UK Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT), which maintained a European Language Research Register, publishing entries submitted by other nominated national centres. An attempt was now made to rejuvenate this network, since only those in Denmark, FRG and Norway appeared to be fully active.

Chapter 5 gives an account of the way in which a framework of international co-operation had been developed, based on the establishment of close working relations among the leading institutions in member countries, with indications as to how that framework might be strengthened and co-operation intensified.

Chapter 6 attempted to evaluate the results achieved so far, to define the most important outstanding issues and to make recommendations for the conduct of a new medium-term project in the language field, building upon and extending the work of Project No. 4. In its evaluation, the Project Group had 'no doubt that participants in the Project at all levels, including particularly the learners and their teachers, have been enthused by the Project. Their motivation and sense of purpose have been strengthened, and confidence has grown'. The group then summarised its evaluation in the following words:

'...it may be fairly claimed, not that a panacea has been found which will provide immediate and effortless solutions to the long-standing difficulties of language teaching and learning, but that a body of firm principles and a set of working methods is now well developed which will enable teachers, learners and many other partners to the language-learning process to learn from each other and combine forces in an effective way in the service of the freer movement of people and ideas among the European nations. The system evolved is an open one, moving generally from theory, principles and models to concrete application in courses, methods and materials, but with ample scope for exercises to modify theoretical ideas. A powerful initiative has been gained, extensive goodwill achieved. An integrative framework has been erected, principles have been laid down and, on a pilot scale, workable methods have been developed.'

Following this positive evaluation of past achievement, the project group turned its attention to the future.

'A note of warning must, however, be struck. Educational innovation is a notoriously laborious and hazardous undertaking. It is not difficult for an intelligent and disinterested observer to see the deficiencies in existing provisions, or to make programmatic suggestions

for improvements. If these carry conviction, it is possible to find groups of enthusiasts to carry out pilot experiments and to make them work. These steps are necessary, but not of course sufficient. If the effect of educational innovation is not to be partial and transitory but is to lead to substantial and lasting changes in educational practice, much more is required.

The partners in learning must all agree to change their practice in conformity with new ideas and to adopt correspondingly new ways of working. For example:

- the mass of learners and teachers must be willing and able to replace existing aims and methods by new ones. This means that:
  - learners must find the new methods successful and enjoyable; they should understand and accept the basis of aims and methods;
  - teachers must be convinced that the new ways of working will be more effective and provide greater job satisfaction;
- they must be properly prepared for the new tasks facing them; this implies radical changes in the pattern of initial teacher as well as a well-developed programme of in-service training;
- new tasks must not be simply an extra load but must supersede less appropriate tasks;
- the new way of working must be compatible with necessary constraints upon the evolution of educational systems;
- the new objectives and methods should be required or encouraged by central curricular guidelines, syllabuses and examinations;
- appropriate teaching materials must be available on an adequate scale.

‘It will be seen that effective innovation requires consensus among examiners, administrators, publishers, inspectors and teacher-training institutions as well as teachers and learners. To achieve a consensus on this scale requires a sustained effort over a lengthy period. This is especially so where mandatory decisions cannot be made centrally, as is the case with the Council of Europe, a voluntary association of independent democracies many of them having decentralised education systems not only geographically but also in the sense that the different education levels are separately organised and controlled. Yet the interdependent nature of primary, secondary and tertiary education may make it extremely difficult for incompatible aims and methods to be adopted by different sectors. Furthermore, coherence and continuity are essential to the linking of initial full-time institutional education to recurrent and general adult education within the framework of permanent education. However, a strong, consistent, long-term programme such as the Council for Cultural Co-operation has pursued since its inception, can help senior decision makers in member countries in a number of ways. It enables them to situate national policies in line with policies elsewhere, and above all to share the burden and risks of innovation with colleagues in partner countries. At the same time, a series of well-chosen intermediate objectives within a long-term programme ensures steady and significant progress within the time span dictated by political considerations.’

‘Without consensus and a sustained effort, successive attempts at innovation are likely to achieve no more than a partial and transient effect, and ultimately a patchwork of conflicting practices and an overall intellectual confusion.’

‘This is just what appears to have been the case in modern-language study in the recent past, as successive new methods and approaches have temporarily dented, but never quite superseded the classical model. There would seem, on the face of it, a considerable danger that the work of the Council of Europe might suffer the same fate, unless the CDCC and those directly involved with modern languages in member countries can find the necessary stamina to carry changes through.’

The Project Group then rounded off its conclusions on a note of challenge:

‘This is essentially a matter of political will. If that will exists among member governments, the time seems ripe for a decisive move in all member countries to change the paradigm of language teaching, to take the measures necessary to ensure that all European citizens have access to the means of learning the languages of other member countries for effective communication. What steps should we now take to bring that about?’

The Project Group then formulated detailed recommendations regarding language policy for consideration by the CDCC. They fell into two groups. The first, concerning national policies, formed the basis for action by higher authorities. The second related to further activities to be pursued in a new modern-languages project, covering in some detail the fields in which pilots had been carried out in Project 4 (schools, migrants, adults, teacher training). At this point a sufficient momentum had been built up for there to be no doubt in anyone's mind that the work would continue. The Project Group's findings and recommendations were submitted to an Intergovernmental Conference: ‘Across the threshold towards a multilingual Europe – Vivre le multilinguisme européen’, held in the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, 23-26 February 1982. The Conference accepted the report, elaborated the proposals for the future Project into a detailed working plan and reformulated the general policy recommendations so as to form the draft of a possible Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member governments to supersede Resolution (69)2, now some 13 years old.

The Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference (Doc. CC-GP4 (82) 3) were considered by the CDCC at its 42<sup>nd</sup> Session, held in Delphi, Greece, 1-4 June 1982, at a full-scale Debate on Modern Languages (Doc. CDCC (82) 36). The debate provided an impressive demonstration of the high esteem in which the work of the Project was held. Following a presentation of the work carried out over the previous ten years, a debate ensued in which virtually all CDCC delegations and the representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly and the CC-PU took part.

The representative of the Parliamentary Assembly warmly endorsed the work carried out by the CDCC in the field of modern languages in the light of the Recommendation 814 on modern languages in Europe (based on the “Piket” report), and congratulated Mr Trim for his presentation of the work and for his personal contribution to its success.

The representative considered that although the project could be seen as being mainly a technical undertaking for the Assembly, and the CDCC, the political and social aspects were of equal importance. The project provided an outstanding example of small financial means, properly employed, at an international level provoking important financial investments in many member countries at a national level. These investments were to continue, and necessitated the continuation of co-ordination and co-operation at the Council of Europe level. This alone was a substantial reason for wishing the CDCC to continue its commitment to the programme.

In conclusion, the representative confirmed that the Parliamentary Assembly encouraged the CDCC to pursue its effort in this field and would be grateful if the CDCC could take the decision to do so that very day.

Seventeen delegations intervened to express their support for the work carried out in Project No. 4 and gave examples of actions being undertaken in their country based on the project. They stressed the practical and political impact of the project which had acted as a bridge between member states and promoted European co-operation, and had inspired many new developments. They expressed their satisfaction with the proposals for Project No. 12 which in general coincided with their national priorities, and thanked Mr Trim, the experts and Secretariat for their commitment.

On the advice of the CCDC, the Committee of Ministers issued Recommendation R(82)18, recommending to member governments the general reform of modern-language teaching. The Recommendation was central to the reform process over the following 15 years and placed a seal of approval at the highest level on the ‘Council of Europe approach’ as developed up till that time. It has to be remembered that a recommendation of the Committee of Ministers in a particular field is a rare event. It is formulated after a lengthy period of reflection and has to pass the close scrutiny of a succession of bodies in an ascending hierarchy. It will be adopted by the Committee only if it is acceptable in principle and even in detail to all member countries, who are at least well disposed to carrying out its provisions. Of course, a recommendation is not a directive. The Council of Europe has no directive powers, working always by persuasion towards consensus. A Recommendation is therefore a significant milestone in the evolution of a programme. In view of its long-term importance, Recommendation (82) 18 is reproduced as an appendix to this document.

After glancing at previous documentation, (82)18 sets out in its preamble the ideological bases of the Council’s approach to language issues:

‘Considering that the rich heritage of diverse languages and culture in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding’;

‘Considering that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination.’

These two ‘considerations’ express the dual objective of Council of Europe language policy, between which there is always a certain tension. On the one hand, the objective of the widest interpersonal communication and mutual intelligibility across a continent with over 40 official languages tends towards the learning and use of a common medium. The Council itself has always operated with just two official languages. The steady advance of globalisation exerts even more pressure, to which national education policies have responded by making one language, English, dominant in curricular provision. On the other hand, the objective of mutual enrichment through exposure to a continuing linguistic and cultural diversity tends towards the presence of many languages in educational systems and the learning of a number of languages by individuals. The modern-language projects tried to avoid polarisation by promoting all forms of language learning. Quite often this has meant that the first advances were made in respect of the larger languages, particularly English and French (but also, later, German), for which larger resources were available. At this point it might seem that the Council was favouring the big battalions. However, the models and procedures pioneered in this way were then at the disposal of those promoting the learning of the smaller national and regional languages. This process can be seen at work, for example, with the Threshold Level specifications.

Accordingly, ‘Considering that member states, when adopting or developing national policies in the field of modern-language learning and teaching, may achieve greater convergence at the European level, by means of appropriate arrangements for ongoing co-operation and co-ordination of policies’, the Committee of Ministers ‘Recommends the governments of member states, in the framework of their national educational policies and systems, and national cultural development policies, to implement by all available means and within the limits of available resources, the measures set out in the appendix to the present recommendations’.

The Appendix contains the actual content of the recommendation. Section A commends the basic approach to language learning and teaching, developed and refined over the preceding decade and now generally known as ‘the Council of Europe approach’:

1. to ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of other member states (or of other communities within their own country) as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them to satisfy their communicative needs and in particular
  - 1.1 to deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so;
  - 1.2 to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them;
  - 1.3 to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other people and their heritage.
2. to promote, encourage and support the efforts of teachers and learners at all levels to apply in their own situation the principles of the construction of language-learning systems (as these are progressively developed within the Council of Europe “Modern languages” programme):
  - 2.1 by basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners;
  - 2.2 by defining worthwhile and realistic objectives as explicitly as possible;
  - 2.3 by developing appropriate methods and materials;
  - 2.4 by developing suitable forms and instruments for the evaluation of learning programmes.
3. to promote research and development programmes leading to the introduction, at all educational levels, of methods and materials best suited to enabling different classes and types of student to acquire a communicative proficiency appropriate to their needs.

Sections B-E contain 13 recommendations relating to successive sectors of education systems, to language learning by migrants and their families and to teacher training. For secondary schools, the Threshold Level objective is specified: ‘to encourage the teaching of at least one European language other than the national language or the vehicular language of the area concerned to pupils from the age of ten or the point at which they enter secondary education (or earlier according to national or local situations) in such a way as to enable them by the end of the period of compulsory schooling, within the limits of their individual ability, to use the language effectively for communication with other speakers of that language, both in transacting the business of everyday living and in building social and personal relations on the basis of mutual understanding of, and respect for, the cultural identity of others’. They further advocated the diversification of language teaching in schools and the intensification of international visits and exchanges. They further called for the universal availability of language-learning facilities in upper-secondary, further, higher and adult education. They then called for ‘the provision of ‘adequate’ facilities for migrants, covering the languages of both the host country and the country of origin. The recommendations regarding teacher training defined its aim as to ‘enable them to develop the attitudes and acquire the knowledge, skills and techniques necessary to teach languages effectively for communicative purposes’. The Committee of Ministers supported periods of residence and study in the country whose language they were teaching or intended to teach. It also raised the question, whether the pattern of modern language studies in higher education provided an adequate preparation for future teachers. This was clearly aimed at courses which still gave most weight to philological

and high literary studies to the neglect of contemporary language and culture. Finally, governments were invited to 'contribute to an intensified programme of in-service teacher training, including internationally organised, staffed and recruited in-service courses for language teachers, and facilitating the participation of serving teachers in such courses: Courses of this kind, not so much for teachers as for teacher trainers, were to form a major component of the next decade of the Council's programme.

### **5. Project 12, 1982-1987**

Project 12 marked the full flowering of the Council of Europe's promotion of modern languages. Following the first establishment of contacts and exchange of modernist ideas in the Major Project of the Sixties, the synthesis of principles and models in the early Seventies had led to the successful and in some cases large-scale (e.g. *Follow Me!*) pilot projects of the late Seventies. The confidence and expectations of ministries had now been built up to a point where a serious programme of reform could be conducted by national governments acting independently, but within a framework of mutual information and assistance under the aegis of the Council. Throughout the eighties the main aim of the Council's Project 12: 'Learning and teaching modern languages for communication' was to support member states in their efforts to reform lower-secondary education in line with R(82)18. Two principal mechanisms were employed.

The first was a Schools Interaction Network, in which small teams of persons engaged in innovative projects visited other member states for discussions with colleagues in schools similarly engaged as well as with ministry officials involved in national curriculum development (Bergentoft 1983, 1987).

During the operational period of Project No. 12, fourteen visits were organised in 13 different countries, six of them being "contact" visits and the eight others "intensive" ones. Seven of the thirteen countries, Belgium, Spain, Greece, Iceland, Malta, Norway and the Netherlands, were visited for the first time. The further visits to Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United Kingdom were variously intended to fulfil a desire for a more probing intensive visit after an initial contact; to investigate a new situation following the introductions of a recent reform or the inception of a new project; or to look at work in different regions in countries with a substantially decentralised educational system. (Spain, Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom).

Most of the visits were made by a group of 7 or 8 experts from different countries with various responsibilities: project leaders; teacher trainers; administrators; research officers and teachers involved in experimental activities.

A common objective in all countries visited was to implement a more communication-oriented language-teaching approach relying on a wide range of methodologies in order to cater for the various teaching situations. The outstanding characteristic of these very diverse projects was that they sharpened teachers' and pupils' awareness of the goals, means and methods of language teaching, especially in relation to the following aspects;

- teachers' own language proficiency and attitude to pupils;
- pupil motivation (influenced, for example, by the introduction of short-term goals in the "graded objectives" movement in the United Kingdom);
- the necessary harmony between teaching objectives and appraisal of skills (promoted by a deliberate effort to compile documentation on which to base the appraisal of verbal output, as in Ireland and Sweden).

The replies to the questionnaire circulated by the rapporteur for the network to all member countries plainly demonstrated that the interaction network in the school sector had played an important part in spreading knowledge of the Council of Europe's language policies and of pilot experiments based on or inspired by them. One undeniable benefit of the network was to give virtually all member countries the opportunity of studying those experiments which they saw as particularly interesting for their own purposes. The numerous contacts established by those involved in the visits to schools led to profitable on-the-spot exchanges, stimulated projects in hand and were often followed by on-going exchanges of documentation (syllabuses in use or in preparation, guidelines for teachers, teaching materials, tests and examination papers). It is fair to say that such interchanges of experience and documents enhanced the quality of the material produced in Europe and helped reduce costs. It should also be pointed out that many of the visits, unlike the previous ones, which were confined to pilot projects, provided a better idea of current action at national level.

The fruits of the observations were synthesised in Sheils' *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* (1988). The introductory chapter ("Some principles of communicative language teaching") places the study in the context of the latest developments in language teaching, emphasising what are usually called 'communicative approaches'. It mentions the respective positions in the teaching procedure occupied by learning objectives and the related methodology, and their implications for the three elements involved, viz. Teachers, learners and classroom materials.

Following a general chapter on the difficulties of implementing activities of an interactive nature and the help afforded by group work and pair work, the bulk of the publication centres on the development of the four basic skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing), while bearing in mind the importance of integrating all four. Oral and written comprehension is first discussed in the general context of the choice of texts and tasks to be offered. The final chapter shows what place grammar teaching should occupy in a communicative approach.

Each of the eight chapters features a theoretical introduction intended to justify the procedures listed and to relate them to an overall objective incorporating the various skills. Most of the remaining space is however devoted to a mass of practical examples taken from German, English, Spanish, French and Italian textbooks, some of them seen in use during visits to classes belonging to the interaction network. A fairly large number of other activities are drawn from reports on trainers' workshops and are accordingly submitted as an adjunct to the "workshops" operation of Project No. 12.

In its design and execution, the book by Sheils has proved to be of great value to a host of language teachers who do not always have the most effective resources to implement a communicative teaching approach in all its dimensions and forms, chiefly oral but also written – from the most elementary exchanges to the most natural, or even the most demanding, kind of expression – in the admittedly limited setting of the language class, where the first requirement is to learn to relieve constraints.

The second was the series of international workshops for teacher trainers. At its first meeting in November 1982, Project Group No. 12 confirmed the priority to be given to teacher training and accepted with gratitude the offer of the Greek government to host a governmental symposium on language-teacher training in Delphi, which was duly held from 23 to 28 May 1983. After considering more generally the role of teachers in the learning and teaching of languages for communication, this symposium examined in some detail a scheme for international workshops for language-teacher trainers and made recommendations as to how the workshops should be organised, their results disseminated and the resulting "multiplier effects" monitored. Topics for the workshops were also considered, ranging from mixed ability teaching to co-operation between host countries and countries of origin in the promotion

of language learning by immigrants and from the role of universities in initial training to the techniques, use and problems of error analysis. At the same time participants considered possible guidelines for the conduct of workshops. The relevant recommendations of the Delphi symposium form Appendix A to the symposium report.

After considering the report of the Delphi symposium, Project Group No. 12 decided to proceed with the organisation of a series of international workshops for teacher trainers according to the model proposed and invited member governments to co-operate.

In deciding to focus its activity in support of teacher training on a series of workshops for teacher trainers, Project Group No. 12 was aiming to make the most effective deployment of its limited resources. The size of the language-teaching profession in Europe is very large. If all educational levels are taken into account and part-time as well as full-time teachers are counted, the numbers are unlikely to be much less than 500,000. A series of workshops covering 1,000 teachers would still cover only one in five hundred – an infinitesimal percentage. The benefit to an individual practising classroom teacher in the daily exercise of his/her profession might be considerable, though no substantial retraining could be financed. The multiplier effect would be very small. Teacher trainers, on the other hand, are in many ways key personnel. Their numbers are limited but their influence is considerable. 1,000 teacher trainers might well directly influence 100,000 teachers, and many more indirectly. They would be in a better position to incorporate the results of a short but intensive workshop into their professional practice and to pass on its benefits to considerable numbers of teachers over a long period of time. In this way, the limited resources of the Project could, it was felt, make the most effective contribution to the achievement of the overall aim of Project No. 12, namely the raising of the level of the learning and teaching of languages for communication throughout Europe.

More specifically, the workshop series had as its principal objectives:

- informing practising teachers of the principles, concepts, working methods and results of CDCC Projects Nos. 4 and 12 in modern languages and considering ways of making them better known to practising teachers.
- facilitating the application of the principles of needs-based, learner-centred communicative language-learning systems development in concrete learning and teaching situations
- contributing to the professional development of participants in respect of attitude formation, knowledge, awareness and professional skills
- discussing and reporting on themes of importance to modern-language learning and teaching for communication
- producing materials and models of use to learners, teachers and teacher trainers
- improving the quality of teacher training
- promoting ongoing co-operation among teacher trainers in different member countries

The series would also contribute to the implementation of more effective learning and teaching for communication in a number of different ways. The participants would bring their own experience to bear on the themes and topics treated in the workshop and benefit in their own national situations from exchanging experience and views with participants from other member countries. They would contribute to a developing pool of technical expertise in the field of teacher training and take this expertise back to the teachers for whom they were responsible in their own institutions. It was also expected that they would, through meetings and publications, make their workshop experience available to other teacher trainers. In this way, a considerable multiplier effect was hoped for, which would benefit the host and member countries alike.



The series of 37 international workshops for teacher trainers (Council of Europe 1985, Trim 1988) was held in 15 countries between 1984 and 1987 and attended by some 1 500 participants from 20 countries. In the course of these workshops some 230 animators delivered and discussed in depth 222 themes covering:

- theoretical bases of the learning and teaching of languages for communication (24 items);
- aims and objectives (33 items);
- materials and methods (98 items);
- the teaching and assessment of communicative proficiency (14 items);
- the training of modern-language teachers (41 items) and
- the management of innovation (6 items).

Although it constituted only one, if central, aspect of Project 12, this undertaking involved a truly monumental effort on the part of all concerned. The success of the workshop series was, necessarily, entirely dependent on the voluntary co-operation of member states. The model recommended by the Delphi Symposium and set out in doc. CC-GP12 (83)23 revised was almost always closely followed. Each workshop lasted 5 days and was held on the invitation of a member state of the Council of Europe (or signatory to the European Cultural Convention) or an institution in that country with the approval of the member state concerned. The host country or institution made available the conference facilities required and accommodation with full board for participants and staff. Travel expenses of participants were borne by their country of origin, 50% being nominated by the host country and 50% by other member governments. The host country appointed a local Organiser and Director of Studies, who co-operated with the Council of Europe in the planning, conduct and reporting of the workshop. A team of animators, usually 3-5 in number, was recruited partly from the host country and partly from other member countries following negotiations between the national organiser and the Council of Europe, which took financial responsibility for foreign animators, the expenses of a preliminary planning meeting, the preliminary despatch of documentations and the publication of the workshop report. The preliminary planning meeting was held either in Strasbourg or in the workshop centre. At this meeting the objectives, theme, preparation and organisation of the workshop were planned in detail by the local organiser, animating staff and Council of Europe representatives. The workshops themselves generally were held from Monday to Friday, though in many cases participants arrived on Sunday evening and dispersed on Saturday morning, allowing a full five-day working week. In other cases, local constraints reduced the workshop to a four-day duration, starting with lunch on Monday and finishing with lunch on Friday. The theme of the workshop was proposed by the host country or institution in consultation with the Council of Europe.

These arrangements proved popular with national authorities, who were often able to accommodate them within their existing arrangements for in-service training. In any case, the financial, organisational and administrative load was well distributed. Decision-making rested largely with the host country and the scheme remained sensitive to the priorities of member states, both as hosts and senders. The limited resources of the Council of Europe were used to maximum effect, but even so, were fully stretched. There was, of course, relatively little central strategic planning, neither the choice of theme nor of participants being under the control of Project No.12. However, careful attention was given to the profile of participants in relation to well-articulated specification of themes and objectives.

When the series was first conceived, the scale on which member states would participate was a matter for speculation. In the difficult financial circumstances of the early 1980s it was difficult to forecast how many member states would offer to act as hosts or be willing to meet

the travelling expenses of their nominees to workshops abroad. In the event, the take-up was in excess of the most optimistic forecasts. It had been envisaged that at most 30 workshops might be offered over a three-year period. In fact, between April 1984 and May 1987, 37 workshops were held. This probably represents the largest and most intensive project of international co-operation in the teacher-training field so far undertaken.

Substantial though these actions were, they did not constitute the whole of the project. Versions of the Threshold Level appeared in a further five national and regional languages, with more in preparation. Other theoretical and practical developments at national and international level covered the enrichment of the model for defining language-learning objectives and the revision of the Threshold Level and Waystage accordingly (later published as *Threshold 1990* and *Waystage 1990*), studies on needs identification, on the selection and distribution of contents in language syllabuses, on methods of learning and teaching languages and on evaluation and testing. In addition, concrete developments were reported in all areas at national level. These achievements are reported in the Final Report of Project 12 (Girard and Trim 1988).

## 6. 'Language Learning for European Citizenship' 1990-1997

On the recommendation of two Intergovernmental symposia: *Language learning in Europe: the challenge of diversity*, Strasbourg 1988 (Council for Cultural Co-operation 1989) and *Language learning and teaching methodology for citizenship in a multicultural Europe*, Sintra 1989 (Council of Europe 1992), the Project: *Language learning for European citizenship* was launched in 1990. The aim of the Project was to develop further the principles and models evolved in the course of previous projects and in doing so to give priority to educational sectors not previously focused upon and to a number of themes of particular current concern. The new priority sectors were:

- a) primary education, which had been a focus of attention in the sixties, but had fallen into neglect following the adverse findings of the Burstall Report *Primary French in the Balance* (Burstall, et al. 1974);
- b) upper-secondary education and the interface between school and university;
- c) vocationally-oriented education and training, particularly in the transition from school to work;
- d) advanced adult education, building on a successful experience of language learning, whether at school, in higher/further education or in an earlier phase of adult education.

The priority themes were:

- new and broader definitions of objectives at various levels to take account of theoretical advances in recent years, particularly in respect of the sociocultural dimension;
- the use of new technologies and the mass media, in particular computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and the exploitation of the opportunities offered by information technology in view of the wide availability of computers in schools and colleges as well as in the home;
- bilingual education, both the role of languages in education in bilingual areas and the use of a foreign language as the medium of instruction in one or more curricular subjects;
- the integration of educational links, visits and exchanges into the school curriculum, with special reference to language learning and teaching;

- 'learning to learn', helping learners to acquire the necessary attitudes, knowledge, understanding, skills and strategies for lifelong language learning;
- the evaluation of language proficiency and of learning programmes.

In all the above, special attention should continue to be paid to teacher education and training, both initial and in-service.

In order to bring to bear on these issues as wide a range of European experience and expertise as possible, a further series of 31 workshops was held over the period 1990-96. Five of these were single workshops similar to those held in Project 12. The other 26 were organised as 13 action programmes, or 'new-style' workshops, in which a particular theme was proposed by two member governments as the subject of a two-year programme of research and development. Each programme was introduced at a first initiating workshop (A) to survey the field, identify issues and projects and define responsibilities. A second workshop (B) was then held some two years later to receive the findings and products, assess their potential use internationally and make recommendations for further work. The workshops organised a considerable volume of work. Each workshop produced a published output, consisting of the Reports of workshops A and B, and one or two reports on the inter-workshop programme of research and development. Taken together with the reports published for each of the 37 workshops conducted under Project 12, the publications provide a very full survey of the communicative approach to language learning, teaching and assessment, which is still of relevance today.

In addition to this workshop programme, the Project was involved in a number of other sub-projects. In the years following the programme was agreed at Sintra, the number of signatories to the Convention on Cultural Co-operation rose from 24 to 44, mostly through the accession of the members of the former Warsaw Pact, including the successor states to the USSR. These countries requested advice and support for their programmes of educational renewal and curricular reform. Here, the guidelines for policy development contained in Recommendation R(82)18 proved to be particularly significant and influential. Assistance was sought particularly in respect of teacher training. Not only did substantial numbers of teachers find themselves in need of conversion from teachers of Russian to teachers of Western languages. In all cases, including that of Russian, the adoption of the aims and objectives advocated by the Council of Europe meant a far-reaching reorientation of teachers' values, attitudes and beliefs and fundamental changes in teacher – pupil relations and everyday classroom practice. In this respect the Sheils publication was very important and was translated into Russian, German and Lithuanian. Representatives of the new member states took part in all the 'new-style' workshops.

A number of the new member states, especially in the Baltic area, were faced with the task of restoring the national language to its central position in public life. In this connection the Modern Languages Section was asked for advice in the implementation of linguistic legislation relating to employment and citizenship. Its advice led to the development and adoption of tests and procedures which were widely agreed to be fair and appropriate. These various concerns also contributed to the continuing interest in threshold-level type descriptions. Versions based on the 1990 model have been elaborated by national research teams for Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Russian and Slovenian. The threshold level concept continued to be of value for the smaller national and regional languages elsewhere in Europe, with versions produced for Galician (1993), Catalan (1992), Welsh (1996), Maltese (1996) and Greek (1999). It will be seen that the Threshold Level concept, though now 20 years in existence, continues to develop and to play a creative role not only in renewing the basis for the teaching of major languages of international communication but also in consolidating and strengthening the position of the languages and cultures of smaller independent countries, established territorial minorities or work migrants and refugees. By

focusing attention on processes of communication and on shared experience, needs and ideas, as well as improving the understanding of the differences between peoples which result from their different situations, traditions and customs, the Threshold Level-type specifications have proved of great value in reorienting the teaching of languages away from sterile formalism so as to make language teaching a more powerful instrument for combating prejudice and xenophobia and improving international mobility and understanding.

After pressure from adult language-teaching institutions, a specification of an objective at a level above threshold was undertaken by van Ek and Trim, in order to provide a benchmark for learning beyond the stage reached by the completion of compulsory education at, say, 16. The specification was later published by Cambridge University Press as *Vantage* (van Ek and Trim 2001). This did not involve major extensions to the functional, notional and grammatical coverage of the objective but rather:

- refinement of functional and general notional categories with consequent growth in the available inventory of exponents;
- expanded range of specific notions and hence concrete vocabulary, thus enabling the learner to express him/herself more adequately and to respond to other users more sensitively;
- increased range and control of goal-directed conversation strategies, enabling a learner to handle more complex and problematic situations and to deal with the unexpected;
- greater socio-cultural awareness;
- increased ability to understand and produce, with greater fluency and accuracy, longer and more complex utterances;
- recognition and (limited) control of some important register varieties;
- improved reading skills applied to a wider range of texts.

The Project formally ended in 1996. A Final Report was submitted to the Education Committee, covering the aspects set out above. The Report contained a wealth of recommendations, mostly taken from the reports of the new-style workshops concerning further developments in respect of the new priority sectors and themes. They were mostly addressed to the educational authorities in member countries and to the language-teaching profession generally. There was also considerable support for the continuation of co-ordinating activities by the Modern Languages Section in these fields. The Report with its recommendations was submitted to an Intergovernmental Conference in the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, 15-18 April 1997. While the Conference welcomed the report and endorsed its recommendations, it was clear that, for many reasons, an era was coming to an end and that changes of structure, policy and method were now due.

In April 1996, delegates representing member governments on the Project Group were asked for information on 'ways in which the present Council of Europe Project *Language learning for European citizenship* has contributed to the promotion of language teaching/learning in their country'. The replies, from 26 member states, attest to the profound practical impact of the Project's work upon language learning and teaching across the continent (see Appendix).

Reports from member states (see Appendix) showed that the values, aims, objectives and methods advocated and piloted by the Council of Europe since the beginning of the seventies or even earlier, were now accepted and being implemented everywhere at national, regional and local level. Further development could be left to member governments and to the field.

Fifty-one areas are specified, confirming the conclusion that all parts of a wide-ranging project were of practical value for at least one member country. Areas mentioned by at least seven countries will give some indication of relative impact, though it must be understood that the

lack of a specific mention on the part of a respondent does not mean that there was no impact or influence in that area: Frequently cited areas were: a) curriculum development (24 countries), b) textbooks and course materials (20), c) teacher training (18), d) testing, assessment and certification (15), e) communicative teaching methodology (14), f) primary education (12), g) professional contacts (12), h) student autonomy and learning to learn (11), i) diversification (9), j) information technology (8), k) sociocultural aspects (8), l) T-level developments (7). This list demonstrates the extent to which the work on priority sectors and themes met practical national needs.

However, the success of the movement towards language teaching for communication did not extend to the principle of maintaining and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. The past half century had seen a continuous, seemingly inexorable advance of English as the sole 'hypercentral' language, taking up most if not the whole of the expansion of language teaching in educational systems across Europe (and indeed globally) as well as in international usage. The encouragement of diversification was now an important policy issue.

An important factor in the changing situation during the nineties was the fact that the Section in Strasbourg was no longer acting in isolation. The European Economic Community had had no competence in the educational field, only in that of vocational training (including teacher training). However, the situation was changed by Maastricht. Paragraph 1 of Article 126 of the Treaty on European Union, 1992, states: 'The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organization of educational systems and their cultural diversity.' Paragraph 4 underlines the principle of 'subsidiarity', stating that the Council [of the European Union] 'shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States'. It may, however, 'acting by a qualified majority on a proposal from the Commission', adopt recommendations. In 1995 the Commission published its White Paper: *Teaching and learning: towards the learning society*. It announced as its fourth general objective: 'proficiency in three Community languages', the need for 'everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue'. It advocated a start at pre-school level, systematic teaching in primary education, with a second Community language starting in secondary school, including some subject teaching in a foreign language. In addition, 'vocational training - initial and continuing - must place great stress on language learning'. Support measures were proposed for a) assessment systems and quality guarantee systems b) the award of a 'European quality label' to schools meeting certain criteria (one FL at primary, 2 FLs at secondary; internationally recruited teaching staff; promotion of self-learning methods; participation in international links and exchanges), c) language-teaching materials exchange, d) early learning.

The language policies of the EU and the Council of Europe are very close to each other. However, their different status and resources inevitably result in a very different pattern of activity. Both secretariats are quite small. That of the European Commission has to define its objectives, set up structures to give financial support on a substantial scale to institutions for projects which pursue those objectives, then monitor the projects and evaluate and disseminate their results. The Council of Europe, with very slender resources, has to enlist the engagement of experts in the field, develop policies and tools of use to the field through workshops and publications, formulate recommendations to member governments and persuade those experts and governments that it is in their own best interests to support and participate in the projects concerned. In the post-Maastricht situation, it makes very good sense for the two bodies to co-operate. Addressing the Conference, Mr Lenarduzzi, Director for Education in the European Commission stated: 'I firmly believe that by intelligently pooling our resources and

endeavouring to complement each other's work we shall succeed in what we have set out to do'. It should also be borne in mind that with the continuing expansion of the European Union, the overlap in the membership of the two organisations has increased. It was less and less the case that only a minority of the member states of the Council of Europe were members of the Union. Complementarity was therefore increasingly a matter of functions and responsibilities and co-operation more clearly in the interests of states which were members of both bodies.

The Modern Languages Section also modified its work after the establishment of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria, which is described in detail in Chapter 8. Central to the mission of the Centre is the conduct of workshops for the professional development of language teaching, which had been a central feature of the projects in 1982-87. The Modern Languages Section, which became the Language Policy Division, could then concentrate on language policy development and meet the urgent needs of member states following the international political changes of the time. The Division began by piloting and finalising reference tools such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* and the *European Language Portfolio*. Both are treated in Chapter 7 below. The sense of impending change was perhaps also signaled to the Conference by the fact that the completion of the Project Directorship of its General Rapporteur, John Trim, coincided with the retirement of Antonietta de Vigili from the Headship of the Modern Languages Section, bringing to an end their association with successive projects since 1971.

## **7. A Common European Framework and Portfolio**

On the initiative of the Swiss government, a Symposium: *Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe : objectives, evaluation, certification* was held in Rüslikon, Switzerland in November 1991 to consider a) the introduction of a *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* for the description of objectives and methods for language learning and teaching, curriculum and course design, materials production and language testing and assessment, and b) the introduction of a *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*, in which individual learners could record not only institutional courses attended and qualifications gained, but also less formal experiences with respect to as wide a range of European languages and cultures as possible. The Symposium agreed that it was 'desirable to develop a Common European Framework of reference at all levels, in order to:

- promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries;
- provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;
- assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts. It should be useful both as a common basis for the exchange of information among practitioners and as a basis for critical reflection by practitioners on their current practice and the options open to them.

In order to fulfill its functions, the Framework should be *comprehensive, transparent* and *coherent*. By 'comprehensive' is meant that the Common European Framework should attempt to specify as full a range of language knowledge, skills and use as possible (without of course attempting to forecast a priori all possible uses of language in all situations - an impossible task), and that all users should be able to describe their objectives, etc., by reference to it. The CEFR should differentiate the various dimensions in which language proficiency is described, bearing in mind that the development of communicative proficiency involves other dimensions than the strictly linguistic (e.g. sociocultural awareness, imaginative experience, affective relations, learning to learn, etc.). The CEFR should also provide a series of reference points (levels or steps) by which progress in learning can be calibrated. By 'transparent' is meant

that information must be clearly formulated and explicit, available and readily comprehensible to users. By 'coherent' is meant that the description is free from internal contradictions. with a harmonious relation among their components.

It was also agreed that the Framework should be flexible, open, dynamic and non-dogmatic, since the aim was not to prescribe how languages should be learnt, taught and assessed, but to raise awareness, stimulate reflection and improve communication among practitioners of all kinds and persuasions as to what they actually do. As such, it is not definitive, set in tablets of stone, but can be expected to evolve further as our knowledge and experience expand. On the other hand, of course, one of the reasons why the profession has welcomed the proposal is the generally perceived need for a agreed and accepted framework for the calibration of qualifications as a contribution to European professional and educational mobility. Clearly, as with any kind of standard practice, this requires some degree of stability.

On the recommendation of the Symposium, a working party was set up by the Project Group. Under its supervision, an authoring group (D. Coste, B. North, J. Sheils and J.L.M. Trim) produced a Draft Framework, which following an extensive field consultation in 1996, in which detailed questionnaires were sent out to some 2 000 experts as well as involving member governments, NGOs and the European Union, was substantially amended.

In its revised form (Draft 2), the CEFR provided:

- a) a descriptive scheme, presenting and exemplifying the parameters and categories needed to describe, first, what a language user has to do in order to communicate in its situational context, then the role of the texts, which carry the message from producer to receiver, then the underlying competences which enable a language user to perform acts of communication and finally the strategies which enable the language user to bring those competences to bear in action;
- b) a survey of approaches to language learning and teaching, providing options for users to consider in relation to their existing practice;
- c) a set of scales for describing proficiency in language use, both globally and in relation to the categories of the descriptive scheme at a series of levels;
- d) a discussion of the issues raised for curricular design in different educational contexts, with particular reference to the development of **plurilingualism** in the learner, and for the assessment of language proficiency and achievement.

The descriptive scheme provided descriptive categories for:

- 1) the context of language use in terms of:
  - a) the locations, institutions, personal roles, objects, events, operations and texts which characterise situations which arise in the domains (personal, public, occupational and educational) in which social life is organised;
  - b) the external conditions and constraints under which users communicate;
  - c) the mental context of the communicating parties;
- 2) communicative tasks and purposes, not only practical transactions but also playful and aesthetic uses;
- 3) themes: the topics which provide the content of particular acts of communication;
- 4) language activities and strategies, classified as a) productive, oral or written; b) receptive, oral or written; c) interactive (e.g. conversation), in which the participants alternate – and indeed often overlap - as producer(s) and receiver(s), d) mediating in which the user acts simply as a channel of communication between two or more persons who for one reason or

another cannot communicate directly. Strategies are the means exploited by the language user to mobilise and balance his or her resources, to activate skills and procedures in order to maximise the effectiveness of the language activities: reception, production, interaction and mediation;

- 5) language processes: the actual sequence of skilled activities carried out by language users in planning, executing and monitoring their speaking, listening, reading and writing. This section also covers concomitant practical actions and paralinguistic actions (gesture, etc.);
- 6) texts: this section deals with media and text-types, as well as the nature and role of texts in relation to use.
- 7) the user/learner's competences: the ability of human beings to communicate depends upon their having developed the necessary competences (knowledge, skills, etc.). Whilst all human competences may be drawn upon in one way or another in the course of communication, CEFR distinguishes between those of a general character and those more closely related to language. General competences include a) 'declarative' knowledge of the physical world, society and culture, b) practical and intercultural skills and know-how, c) personality factors such as attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles and psychological type, d) general linguistic and cultural awareness together with learning skills and heuristics.

Communicative language competences include: a) linguistic competence, i.e. knowledge of and skill in using the formal resources from which well-formed meaningful texts may be assembled and formulated. They embrace lexical, phonological, morphological and syntactic elements, categories, classes, structures, processes and relations, and the relation of form and meaning (semantics), b) sociolinguistic competence, covering markers of social relations, politeness conventions, popular sayings, register differences, dialect and accent as social markers, c) pragmatic competences, including knowledge and control of discourse structure, language functions (as in *Threshold Level*) and interactional schemata.

Scaling and levels. This chapter discusses the issues involved in adding a 'vertical' dimension to the Framework and proposes descriptors for language proficiency at an ascending series of levels. A branching system is presented, allowing planners to subdivide learners into more homogeneous groups according to need. For most purposes, a series of 6 relatively broad levels appears adequate. Scales are provided for overall proficiency and also, so far as is practicable, for those particular activities, processes and competences set out in the descriptive scheme. In these cases, the relevant scale is juxtaposed to the activity or competence concerned.

The processes of language learning and teaching. Following the presentation of the descriptive scheme, this chapter asks: a) in what ways the learner comes to be able to carry out the tasks, activities and processes and build up the competences required for language communication, and b) how teachers, assisted by the various support services, can facilitate the process. After considering issues of principle, the chapter sets out methodological options for learning and teaching in relation to the descriptive scheme, dealing also with the role of teachers, including questions of the management of learning and attitudes to errors and mistakes.

Linguistic diversification and the curriculum. This section of the CEFR reflects the move away from 'all-or-nothing' approaches to language learning and explores the implications of accepting plurilingualism (an overall communicative competence within which varying degrees and directions of competence in a number of languages interact) as the overarching objective of language learning. The detailed description of the many components of language makes it easier to plan for partial competences rather than all-round proficiency, in the light of the needs, motivations, characteristics and prior experience of learners and of the available



resources. A number of possible scenarios for language teaching in different educational environments are suggested. The European Language Portfolio provides a means of stimulating, recording and valorising the development of plurilingual competences.

Assessment. This chapter defines and discusses different types of assessment in terms of thirteen polarities (e.g. achievement/proficiency, formative/summative, etc.) and the relation of assessment to scales of language proficiency. The use of the descriptive scheme as a resource for the development and/or description of assessment tools is briefly discussed. Finally, questions of feasibility are raised – a workable system cannot be too complicated – and alternative metasegments are presented.

This Second Draft, together with the Report of a working group on the feasibility and possible formats for a European Language Portfolio, was submitted to the Conference *'Language learning for a New Europe'* for its consideration, along with a series of *User guides*. These had a dual function: to deal with aspects of provision specific to a particular class of user, and to assist such users (e.g. educational administrators, adult education providers, inspectors, examiners, textbook writers, teacher trainers, teachers and learners) to make effective use of the Framework in their particular sphere of activity. The Conference, in welcoming the setting up of a new medium-term project, called upon the CDCC to: 'further refine and develop the *Common European Framework* by conducting pilot applications of the Framework and the associated User Guides in a balanced sample of countries, involving different types of user institutions and levels of education, with a view to their further revision and subsequent general introduction.

Subsequently, the Authoring Group made some changes, mostly of a presentational nature, to the Draft, which was then published simultaneously in English and French by Cambridge University Press and Didier respectively, in 2001, to coincide with the opening of the European Year of Languages. The various user guides were consolidated into a single Guide, in which a general guide for all users was followed by chapters contributed by prominent specialists in the various fields of use. Pilot applications were organised in the following member states: and regions: Poland, Catalonia, UK, Finland, Ireland, Norway, France, Germany and Switzerland, as well as in connection with the DIALANG project and ALTE, both of whose 'Can Do' statements had been appended to the publication of the CEFR. A volume of Case Studies was edited by Alderson and published by the Council of Europe in 2002.

The *Framework* has had a remarkably strong impact on language teaching and examining across Europe and more widely. Its detailed analysis of language use and language competence has made an invaluable contribution to teacher training in many countries. The document, in whole or in part, has been translated into over 30 languages. Furthermore, the prospect of bringing systems of qualification in different countries into a well-defined relation to each other, which proved premature in 1977, has turned out to be timely in a Europe of intensified educational and vocational mobility. Not only the out-of-school systems (ALTE, DIALANG, ICC, Eurocentres, Goethe Institut, CIEP, among others), but also a number of national school examination systems have moved to situate the qualifications they offer on the CEFR 6-level grid, and have accepted the level descriptors as benchmarks. However, the descriptors themselves are of necessity brief and employ wordings that are susceptible of some breadth of interpretation ('simple', 'basic', 'most' etc.). It became clear that some guidelines would be useful to authorities wishing to relate their language examinations to the CEFR. The Secretariat therefore set up a working party to elaborate a *Manual on Relating Examinations to the "Common European framework of Reference for Languages" Preliminary pilot version*, which would assist, but not in any way coerce, its users. A draft of the manual has been produced and is being piloted.

Up-to-date information on developments relating to CEFR can be found on the Language Policy Division's website: [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang).

**The European Language Portfolio** was also discussed by the Rüschtikon Symposium in 1991 and given qualified approval by the representatives of national authorities there. They recommended that the CDCC should 'set up a working party to consider possible forms and functions of a "European Language Portfolio" to be issued under its aegis and held by individuals, in which they may record their cumulative experience and qualifications in modern languages'. The Portfolio proposal was closely related to the Council's promotion of language diversification. Here there was a certain distinction between the approach of the Council from that of the European Union, which advocated the learning of two Union languages in addition to the mother tongue. The Council adopted the objective of *plurilingualism*. The concept is explained in CEFR:

'Plurilingualism' differs from 'multilingualism', the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society. Multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or of encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication. The plurilingual approach goes beyond this and emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. For instance, partners may switch from one language or dialect to another, exploiting the ability of each to express themselves in one language and to understand the other. A person may call upon the knowledge of a number of languages to make sense of a text, written or even spoken, in a previously 'unknown' language, recognising words from a common international store in a new guise, etc. Those with some knowledge, even slight, may use it to help those with none to communicate by mediating between individuals with no common language. In the absence of a mediator, such individuals may nevertheless achieve some degree of communication by bringing the whole of their linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression in different languages or dialects, exploiting paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.) and radically simplifying their use of language.

'From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence. Furthermore, once it is recognised that language learning is a lifelong task, the development of a young person's motivation, skill and confidence in facing new language experience out of school comes to be of central importance. The responsibilities of educational authorities, qualifying examining bodies and teachers cannot simply be confined to the attainment of a given level of proficiency in a particular language at a particular moment in time, important though that undoubtedly is.

'The full implications of such a paradigm shift have yet to be worked out and translated into action. The recent developments in the Council of Europe's language programme have been designed to produce tools for use by all members of the language teaching profession in the promotion of plurilingualism. In particular, The European Language Portfolio (ELP) provides a format in which language learning and intercultural experiences of the most diverse kinds can be

recorded and formally recognised. For this purpose, CEFR not only provides a scaling of overall language proficiency in a given language, but also a breakdown of language use and language competences which will make it easier for practitioners to specify objectives and describe achievements of the most diverse kinds in accordance with the varying needs, characteristics and resources of learners.’

The Framework and the Portfolio were thus not separate projects, but aspects of a coherent, integrated programme. ELP aimed to contribute to democratic European citizenship and the vocational and educational mobility of citizens by creating an instrument to motivate, record and give value to lifelong, diversified language learning, giving information in an internationally transparent manner. The Symposium recommended that the Portfolio should consist of three parts:

- a *Passport*, recording formal qualifications as well as the holder’s own assessment of his or her language proficiency, based usually on the self-evaluation grid in CEFR.
- a *Language Biography*, describing language proficiency (using guided self-assessment) and all significant language and cultural experiences in as wide a range of language as possible;
- a *Dossier*, containing samples of the learner’s own work (e.g. projects, stories, reports on visits and exchanges, etc.)

The aim of the Portfolio project was twofold:

- To motivate learners by acknowledging and attesting their language skills at all levels throughout their lives
- To provide a record of the linguistic and cultural skills they have acquired, to be consulted, for example, when they apply to move to a higher level of language learning or seek employment at home or in another country.

The idea of the Portfolio was taken up with enthusiasm in many countries. Separate Portfolios have been developed for young learners, adolescents and adult learners and are now in use in a number of countries and regions. Guides have been published for teachers and teacher trainers (Little and Perclová 2001) and for developers (Schneider and Lenz 2001). However, they do not yet appear to have realised their full potential and show no signs of displacing the single examined language as the basis for school-leaving qualifications. Recent developments concerning the ELP can be found at: [www.coe.int/portfolio](http://www.coe.int/portfolio).

## **8. The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)**

Readers will recall that proposals for an autonomous language centre were put forward in 1962 and again in 1977, but were not pursued. The idea was revived in 1992 following the political developments in central and eastern Europe and the accession of new member states to the European Cultural Convention -. In the course of its policy of outreach, the Austrian Government became aware of the need felt by the new member states for technical assistance in reorienting and reforming the teaching of modern languages. At meetings in Vienna, Bratislava and Krakow representatives of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland put forward a proposal for the establishment of a ‘European Centre for Modern Languages’ to be housed in Graz, Austria. The proposal was for an ‘enlarged partial agreement’, under which the centre would be financed by as many members of the Council of Europe as wished to participate, and be open also to non-members. With the support of The Netherlands and France, the proposal was accepted by the Committee of Ministers, which adopted the Resolution (94) 10 on 8 April 1994, resolving to establish the Centre, to be governed by the appended Statutes. Article 1 of the Statutes defined the functions of the Centre as to:

- provide training for teacher trainers, authors of textbooks and experts in the area of the development of curricula, educational standards and methods of evaluation;
- bring together researchers and educational policy makers from all over Europe;
- facilitate exchanges of information on innovation and research in the field of the learning and teaching of modern languages;
- set up a documentation centre providing specialists and multipliers with a wide range of teaching aids and with the results of research.

The eight founding members were Austria, France, Greece, Liechtenstein, Malta, The Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland. The Centre was initially set up for a trial period of three years. The Centre commenced operation in March 1995 with a seminar on ‘Integrating spoken skills in the foreign language classroom, with participants from 20 countries. In December 1995, it held its first Annual Colloquy, which set out the Centre’s priority objectives at that time, focusing on:

- autonomous learning and training in the area of modern languages;
- implementation of information and communication technologies, and the promotion of “learning to learn” and lifelong education;
- interculturality and authenticity;
- teacher training and development and curriculum reform;
- dissemination of good practices in workshop management and delivery, dissemination of results and management of effective networking and follow-up activities.

In the following years, the Centre built up its *modus operandi* to include the following pattern of activities:

- specific decentralised activities (workshops, etc.) for countries with urgent needs: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, etc;
- approximately fifteen international workshops in Graz;
- jointly financed workshops –in Graz or elsewhere – and hosted workshops in partnership with other institutions;
- colloquies and conferences, by invitation only, on key themes;
- studies on specific themes related to the workshops or the colloquies/conferences;
- research projects;
- ad hoc consultations or meetings of experts;
- preparatory, follow-up and network meetings, organised to ensure that teachers and trainers have access to practical tools to help them apply and disseminate good practices.

On 2 July 1998, the Committee of Ministers adopted Resolution(98)11, establishing the Centre on a permanent basis and defining its role as:

- the implementation of language policies
- the promotion of innovative approaches to the learning and teaching of modern languages

Its strategic objectives were then defined as:

- to focus on the practice of the learning and teaching of modern languages;
- to promote dialogue and exchange among the various actors in the field;
- to train multipliers;
- to support programme-related networks and research projects.

Up-to-date information on the activities of the ECML can be found at [www.ecml.at](http://www.ecml.at).

## 9. Conclusion

So, it is now over fifty years since the signature of the European Cultural Convention first set out the promotion of language learning as an aspect of the Council of Europe's mission to improve European understanding and co-operation. We have seen how a progressive approach to language learning, teaching and assessment was first pioneered by a small group of applied linguists. We have seen how those ideas came to be accepted by educational authorities, teacher trainers, media course conductors, textbook writers and language testers, thus forming a powerful consensus, leading to profound and lasting reform to the benefit of classroom teachers and learners on the largest scale. We have seen how the twin aims of better communication and the material enrichment through cultural and linguistic diversity have been constantly pursued over a period of time long enough for reform to take effect. We have seen the development and spreading use of such concrete tools as the threshold level specifications for 25 languages, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* translated into over 30 languages and the *European Language Portfolio* in a number of forms for different age groups in many languages. We have seen the deepening and strengthening of basic concepts, like communication, democratic citizenship and plurilingualism.

All these things have been achieved because of the steady long-term support given by the CDCC and its committees to a very small but dedicated Secretariat, especially Sven Nord, Antonietta de Vigili and Joe Sheils, ably assisted by Philia Thalgott and Johanna Panthier... They have been able, because of the conviction carried by the ideas involved, to secure the co-operation of national ministers and regional authorities as well as of powerful institutions in adult education, who have believed their own best interests to be served by joining in the European enterprise. Above all, achievement has been brought about by the enthusiastic collaboration of a very large number of the leaders of thought in the language-teaching profession in all countries. This has ensured that the European bodies whose co-operation is essential to real progress, the European Commission and the European Centre for Modern Languages, realised at last after two false starts, have shared the same basic aims, values and beliefs.

As to the future, much still remains to be done before the aims which the Council of Europe has so long pursued are finally realised. But the commitment of the profession is as strong as ever. Our task is to convince the teachers and learners themselves to want to communicate across our inherited linguistic and cultural boundaries, with respect for each other's distinctive identity. That is the ultimate test. If we pass it, we shall live in a happier world.

## Appendix

*Language learning for European citizenship*: Final report of the Project Group. (1989-1997), Strasbourg: Council of Europe

### Appendix A : DEVELOPMENTS IN MEMBER STATES

In April 1996, members representing member governments on the Project Group were asked for information on 'ways in which the present Council of Europe Project *Language learning for European citizenship* has contributed to the promotion of language teaching/learning in their country'. The replies, from 26 member states, attest to the profound practical impact of the Project's work upon language learning and teaching across the continent.

**Albania** reported that participation in seminars and workshops had resulted in a) measures to improve existing programmes at different levels in different languages, b) the introduction of English and French into primary education, c) the introduction of German as a first foreign language in secondary education d) the depoliticisation of textbooks and projects for new textbooks and teachers' guides, e) the setting up of a teacher-training and advisory network, f) foreign language curriculum development projects.

**Austria** reported that all aspects of the current intensified promotion of modern-language learning and teaching by the Ministry of Education had benefited from contact with the Project. These included a) development of a specific syllabus for second and third foreign languages, b) an increase in the number of languages offered within a joint syllabus framework now under development c) teaching of English and a second foreign language in primary education (6 - 10) d) increasing use of a foreign language as medium of instruction in subject teaching, e) inter-cultural learning as a cross-curricular theme, f) use of information technology. 'Particularly helpful were the new-style workshops and interaction networks offered for FLL at the primary level, for bilingual education and for language and cultural awareness. In addition, Austria hosted two workshops (14 and 8B), which gave a great number of Austrian experts an opportunity to intensify their professional contacts with colleagues from all over Europe and to enrich our own developments with experiences gained in other European countries'. Austria has also co-founded and housed the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, the work of which has benefited greatly from the expertise developed in the Strasbourg-based Project.

**Belarus** reported that participation in Council of Europe workshops and seminars had made a good contribution to the practical work of professors engaged in a) curricular reforms in accordance with communicative principles with a strong cultural component, b) textbook and audio-visual materials development and c) teacher training

**Belgium** (French community) reported that Threshold Level specifications remained the indispensable basis for curriculum development and textbook design and welcomed the Framework development as a basis for all aspects of future policy. **All** inspectors responsible for initial and in-service teacher training had benefited from workshop participation and professional contacts with foreign experts. J. Sheils: *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* was in constant use in teacher training. The adoption of the communicative approach, notional/functional objectives and the wider use of authentic materials were all a direct result of the Project work. Evaluation and certification of language competence drew heavily on van Ek's model. The Portfolio was awaited "with impatience". The teaching of Spanish had particularly benefited from the workshops held.

Similar conclusions are reported by the Flemish Community. Since 1980, under the influence of the Council of Europe, the communicative approach had been adopted in syllabuses successively for English, French, Spanish and German. Initial and in-service training had been strongly influenced, despite university led resistance especially in French, where the grammar/translation

method was strongly entrenched. A similar progress and resistance had been found in textbook design as well as in assessment and certification.

**Bulgaria** reported an energetic programme of reform and development within the framework of the Project: a) the introduction of early language learning (from 6/7) in a number of schools, b) a second foreign language in **all** secondary schools, c) curricular development underway for lower- and upper-secondary education d) a programme for the training and introduction of teacher trainers (alongside inspectors as heretofore), e) new textbooks now ready for lower secondary and in preparation for upper secondary, f) new intermediate examinations for bilingual schools, g) new school-leaving exams to qualify students for university-level teaching through the medium of French. Following syllabus harmonisation, qualified Bulgarian students would have access to certain universities in France, Switzerland and Belgium. g) the establishment of a number of teacher information centres.

**Cyprus** reported that the Project had influenced the teaching of languages, particularly English, in the following domains: a) the introduction of the use of computers in the teaching of English and the upgrading of programmes to include multimedia applications, b) the impact of the workshop held in Cyprus regarding materials evaluations, selection and production on the teaching of Greek as well as English, French and German, c) teacher training programmes for the promotion of student autonomy, with the establishment of a self-access centre, d) new Lyceum curricula, incorporating such transversal aims as: the European dimension and communication and social skills, involving dialogue and tolerance, e) a new textbook for Greek as a foreign language and the development of a Greek Threshold Level jointly with a Greek Ministry of Education Centre set up in Thessaloniki

**Estonia** reports that the Soest seminar for new member states was of 'great importance and use', leading to the series of three Baltic Seminars on curriculum development, testing and assessment, teacher training and textbook writing as well as an Estonian national seminar on VOLL. A Threshold Level for Estonian was approaching completion following three 'very fruitful' meetings with Council of Europe experts. Participation in workshops and in Graz seminars had been invaluable in developing professional expertise and international contact. Ten foreign language centres had been set up all over Estonia and many Council of Europe publications were used there for training teachers. The Draft Common European Framework had already been used in national curriculum development and widely publicised. The Report concluded: 'All the participants in the Council of Europe workshops from Estonia have stressed in their reports and during their seminars and presentations the fact that, in comparison with other seminars they have been to, the level of organising the seminars and the level of experts have been extremely high. The experts have been very well prepared'. The participants had also stressed the value of follow-up work that is 'usually done and encouraged'.

**Finland** reported that it 'has benefited greatly from the consistent and persistent work that the Council of Europe has supported and co-ordinated in the field of foreign languages'. In particular, the Report cited as examples of the application of the Project's principles and findings a) a pilot project in 20 municipalities to develop and diversify language teaching, including its methodology and assessment, b) the preparation of a Finnish version of the Common European Framework, c) the formulation and practical implementation of new curricula written in the 1990s for all schools in all school sectors, d) new National Foreign Language Certificates for nine languages in adult education (requiring Parliament to pass a new law) e) a national experiment 1990-94 leading to the reform of language teaching, evaluation and assessment in all school sector education to place greater emphasis on oral skills, f) developments in teacher education and training, including national workshops and seminars as well as the publication of standard manuals, based on Finland's experience in organising two workshops and sending participants to the others, g) textbook and course development, h) currently, a new project was beginning to specify the goals

and content of language teaching and the planning of a text book for the most important languages in the comprehensive schools, drawing upon the Common European Framework.

**France** reported that the Project's priority themes corresponded to the major concerns of those responsible for language teaching at all levels. Acceptance of the communicative approach and of the need for specified functional objectives was spreading from English to other languages and informing the curricular reform then under way. Other concepts developed by the Council of Europe, notably a) the differential development of receptive and productive skills, b) the use of compensatory strategies, c) the recognition of 'learning to learn' as an explicit educational objective, d) the role of scaling in evaluation, were making steady headway in educational thinking and planning. The diversification of language provision was official policy, but difficult to achieve given the strong demand for English. Technology and the acceptance of partial competences as an objective for second and third foreign language might offer a solution. The dissemination of the results of Council of Europe work remained very restricted and slowed down its influence on curricular innovation.

**Germany** reported that the work carried out in the framework of the Project had contributed in many ways, both directly and indirectly, to the promotion of language teaching across the country. The organisation of a number of workshops by Germany and the sending of participants to others had served to consolidate a national consensus among German experts, who had also been stimulated by new ideas from abroad. In particular, the workshops on primary education and bilingual education had inspired a good number of studies and projects in Germany. The Agreement of 7 October 1995 of the Ministers of Education in the German Länder on the principles to be followed in foreign language education showed a strong influence of the Project, which would also be drawn upon by the committee of experts charged with formulating practical proposals for its implementation. Curriculum design as well as the development of textbook materials also showed the influence, often indirect, of the Project's concepts. The 'new-style' workshops also represented a valuable innovation in international co-operation, as did the networks resulting from them.

**Greece** reported that 'the work done in the Council of Europe Project *Language teaching/learning for European Citizenship* had had a considerable impact on foreign language teaching in Greece at various levels'. In particular, the Report cited: a) a new Unified 6-year Curriculum for English, spanning the three years of upper primary and the first three years of lower-secondary education. This was the first time that a foreign language, seen as a subject which contributes fully to the overall development of the child, had taken its place among other subjects taught in the Primary Sector, b) a second compulsory foreign language had been introduced into both the Lower and upper Secondary Sector (Gymnasium) and curricula developed for French, German and Italian (under way). The curriculum for English had also undergone revision. In the Secondary Technical/Vocational sector, new curricula had come into effect in 1995 to meet the needs of students in general language (1st and 2nd years) and in 16 specialised areas of vocational language (3rd year), c) in consequence, special measures had been taken for teacher education and training, especially in the primary and vocational sectors and in the use of new technologies, d) textbook and course development had been pursued in support of the new programmes in the Primary and Vocational Sectors e) 33 Centres for European Languages (CEL) had been established in all parts of Greece to i) offer additional teaching to advanced pupils, ii) meet needs for teaching in **any** language, iii) offer teaching and certification in Greek as a foreign language, iv) offer self-access facilities including the use of new technologies, v) to engage in national and international networking.

**Ireland** reported that work on cultural awareness had influenced the new foreign language syllabus and hence textbook content as well as teacher education and training. Means of testing the cultural component in national examinations were being developed. Ireland regarded the



Project as 'one of the fields in which the Council of Europe has a distinguished record and also a considerable degree of expertise'.

**Italy** reported that the role of the Project and of its international workshops (new and old style) had been of great importance for the growth of the quality of its national in-service training courses for FL teachers. Italy had organised one workshop and sent participants to those held abroad. The Report detailed the benefits produced:

- acquisition of a better intercultural consciousness;
- better use of the target language and metalanguage;
- development of a co-operative attitude in working with partners from other countries;
- development of a more coherent approach to the choice and use of research ways and means;
- development of adequate competences in implementing and monitoring co-operative projects;
- coherent experimentation of the material produced in common;
- more coherent evaluation of the work in progress and better dissemination of the final results.

By various dissemination channels, teacher attitudes have gradually changed. Teachers have become more and more interested in the active and autonomous participation of their students in the teaching/learning process and more prepared to change their methods of teaching and assessment to further the development of the students' cognitive and effective capacities. The Common European Framework was already contributing to the reform of in-service training curricula and was being adopted on an experimental basis by a number of Universities, including Rome, for initial teacher education. It corresponded well with *Educazione Linguistica*, a major subject in secondary school curricula since the 1970's. Italy also acknowledged the role of the successive Council of Europe Modern Languages Projects in supporting the introduction of a second foreign language into State secondary schools and of one foreign language in State primary schools

**Latvia** spoke of 'the enormous work that has been done to assist us in so many ways'. Action plans drawn up following the Soest seminar had been partly realised in that national policy in respect of both foreign and second language teaching and learning had been revised and new 'Standards' developed to replace the previous curricula, leaving greater responsibility to schools. After piloting in schools, the Standards were being revised for publication. Ideas emerging from the new-style workshops and the three regional Baltic seminars (one of which was hosted by Latvia) had been most beneficial in all spheres of language teaching, assessment and teacher training. They had been published in a series of methodological recommendation booklets for teachers of English, French and German. Teacher supply was a serious problem, adding urgency to teacher training and re-qualification measures (e.g. 'fast track' as discussed at workshops 15 A and B). Training curricula had been strongly influenced by workshop findings. Advice had also been valuable for the updating of textbooks and other teaching materials and for the production of new textbooks (in a number of cases following workshop participation). The national examination project *Year 12* had benefited from testing expertise supplied by the Council of Europe.

Of particular significance was the Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe for the Integration of Populations of Foreign Origin in Latvia. Fruitful contacts with the Council of Europe experts enabled the Naturalisation Board to start functioning as a state administrative institution with a service in accordance with European Standards. Assistance included: seminars, workshops and study visits to the Netherlands, Finland, United Kingdom and Switzerland for Naturalisation Board staff as well as the development of an improved testing model based on the communication requirements of citizens in the state language.

**Lithuania** reported that the programme of support for new member states had been 'very important and productive for our education' The Soest seminar 'gave us the possibility to get

acquainted with recent developments in the new member states and stimulated better understanding and co-operation among Baltic states in particular'. Lithuania had participated in the three Baltic Regional Seminars, hosting the second. In all thirty Lithuanians participated. Sixteen also took part in the new-style workshops, acting as multipliers on their return by giving reports to seminars and publishing materials in the specialist press. Curriculum development for English, French and German had been based on Threshold Level 1990, alongside J. Sheils: *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom*, the Lithuanian translation of which had played an important role in changing teaching/learning approaches not only concerning foreign languages but Lithuanian language also'.

**Malta** reported that 'the Council of Europe project: Language Learning for European Citizenship, like previous phases of the Modern Languages Project, has continued to contribute in a very tangible and positive way to the promotion of language teaching and learning in Malta'. In particular, a) the Project had influenced the major curricular innovations in the teaching of Maltese and English at primary level and English, French, Italian and German, (as well as of Spanish and Russian on a limited scale) at secondary level. Under the Project's influence, these reforms had introduced a more learner-centred and communicative approach, giving due importance to spoken language at all levels in both teaching and assessment for certification, b) as a result of the participation of Ministry staff in workshops (including the organisation in Malta of Workshop 13B on *Language and culture awareness in language learning/teaching (L2 and L1) for the development of learner autonomy (age 11 - 18)*), the further development and in-service training of language teachers had been 'illuminated' by experience gained in these workshops, c) multi-skill approaches to language learning had been strengthened in lower secondary education, including craft-oriented Trade Schools, d) recent adoptions of textbooks and courses had reflected the major orientations of the Council of Europe Projects, becoming more communicative and functional in approach and making greater use of different media, e) the Common European Framework was proving of value in Malta's development of its own independent examining and qualifying systems, f) Malta's active participation in all aspects of the Project had resulted in a number of networks, mainly bilateral, giving an international dimension to Maltese education, g) a Threshold level description of the Maltese language was nearing completion, based on the revised model presented in *Threshold Level 1990*.

**Moldova** expressed its great appreciation for the programme of support for new member states in modern-languages curricular development and evaluation and for its contribution to mutual understanding and respect. It considered the priorities to have been well chosen and regretted that its late adhesion to the Cultural Convention had limited the benefit so far received. However, it was proud to have undertaken a number of concrete measures in response to its participation in recent workshops. These included: a) the inauguration of a bilingual *lycée* (French/Romanian) and the elaboration of its curriculum, b) the expansion of bilingual sections, using French and English as vehicles for the teaching of other curricular subjects, c) the organisation of seminars with French teachers on language teaching methodology, d) the dissemination of workshop results by radio and the publication of articles in the specialist press, e) a seminar on 'Reform and restoration of standards in modern languages at university level' to be held shortly.

**The Netherlands** reported a high level of involvement of its institutions and experts in the work of the Project and the strong influence of the Project's work and products on curricular innovation. In particular:

1. Institutions and individual teacher trainers, curriculum and test developers and researchers in the field of modern languages had benefited from the new-style workshop series (of which the Netherlands hosted the first to be held), which had enabled them to establish networks and exchange experiences;
2. Studies such as *Threshold Level 1990* and the Draft Common European Framework of Reference had had a considerable impact in the Netherlands and were likely to continue to be

influential as reforms of the education system at various levels were being implemented. The Dutch National Action Programme for Modern Languages had been written and subsequently implemented by a Task Force chaired by Professor Theo van Els, a long-term supporter of the Council's Projects, whilst Professor J.A. van Ek (co-author of Threshold Level 1990) chaired the committee in charge of formulating objectives for the new core curriculum for modern languages in junior secondary education, introduced in 1993. Since then, a great many new textbooks had appeared, many of which were innovative and reflected the principles of the Council's work. The work of the Committee in charge of the examination syllabus for upper secondary general education had also benefited from exchanges of information and the reform of upper secondary education had received special impetus from the Benelux workshop on curriculum development for modern languages in upper secondary education mentioned above.

3. Dutch experts had been prominent in programmes of support for modern-language development in the new member states. They had often made use of the documents of the Council of Europe and had helped to disseminate the documents and the ideas they contain in those countries. In particular, *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* had been used for seminars and workshops for teachers from the Czech Republic, Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

4. The impact of the work of the Council on policy making was strong, though mediated through the experts concerned (see 2 above). The same applied to its impact on language teaching in schools. Because of the indirect nature of the impact the work of the Council of Europe in The Netherlands 'tends to remain less visible'. More attention might be given to the dissemination of results and the involvement of wider networks of experts.

**Norway** reported that the current Council of Europe Project had influenced language teaching and learning in the following ways:

- new language syllabuses were being produced in connection with the ongoing reform of upper secondary education and the forthcoming reform of primary and lower secondary education. They were largely the work of teachers and experts who had been strongly influenced by Council of Europe language work and had themselves in many cases attended workshops organised by the Council. The new syllabuses showed this influence in that they emphasised the international perspective in language teaching, encouraged learners to see the relevance of foreign language proficiency for the achievement of goals in other subject areas - partly through a more widespread use of interdisciplinary project work and placed increased emphasis on the learner's responsibility for his or her own learning.

- both initial and in-service teacher training in the field of modern languages drew strongly on traditions which had their roots in Council of Europe studies and projects over the last twenty-five years or more, so that it was difficult to distinguish trends specifically related to the current project.

- the implementation of curricular changes in practice was necessarily a long-term process. However, there were clear indications that classrooms were becoming more outward looking. Many classes had established electronic links with classes in other countries and more and more pupils and schools were involved in links and exchanges with schools in other countries (the subject of workshop 18A held in Norway in October 1995).

- the production of new internationally aware syllabuses had stimulated work on new textbooks and teaching aids which placed increased emphasis on information about and respect for other cultural groups both in Norwegian society and in other countries.

**Poland** reported a number of ways in which co-operation within the framework of the Project had been of practical value in its programme for the renewal of language teaching and learning:

- following the Soest seminar, co-operation had been established among Eastern European countries in the field of curriculum design for French as a foreign language. A network had been organised and seminars held in Warsaw and Sofia leading to the improvement of the Polish syllabus for French at secondary level and the promotion of new methods for the classroom teaching of French language and culture.

- a new set of primary and secondary syllabuses for six modern languages had been prepared by a team, the core of which was composed of seven participants in new-style workshops and two in Graz seminars. The Ministry of Education had approved the curricula and the main Polish publishing house had now started corresponding materials development.

- Council of Europe materials and publications had been of great help in developing curricula for initial teacher training at 3-year colleges, 53 of which were established in Poland in 1990. College teachers participating in new-style workshops had presented the teaching methods demonstrated and discussed there to teacher trainees. Moreover, quality control following the first years of operation of the colleges had been facilitated by the exchange of ideas and experience at workshops 15A and B organised respectively in the Czech Republic and Poland, particularly the research and development programme held between 15A and 15B.

- A national in-service teacher-training project had been started in 1995, and was now run by teacher trainers who had gained their know-how at Council of Europe seminars and workshops, as were the 'qualification courses' for non-philological MA holders preparing for work in primary schools. These courses had been organised along the lines of a syllabus prepared with a Council of Europe network.

- Courses on the teaching of foreign languages to young learners, based on practical programmes developed by two participants in new-style workshops were now taught at several philological institutes and teacher training colleges.

- A new syllabus for English in vocational schools had been prepared and launched at 25 schools participating in the Modernisation of Vocational Education Project now in progress. A new 4-year course for vocational schools was now being developed.

- Ideas presented to the Rüsclikon Symposium and in materials produced in preparation for the Common European Framework had been used in preparing a concept of certification for bank employees in Poland. They also played an important part in the preparation of a syllabus for new school-leaving examinations in secondary education.

- Participants in new-style workshops had also a) prepared a course description and guide for computer literacy programmes in initial teacher training, b) worked on learning strategies and learner autonomy and disseminated the results among teacher trainers and practising teachers, c) promoted cultural awareness at initial teacher education institutions, d) promoted pedagogical exchanges in bilingual schools.

**Portugal** reported that new foreign-language syllabuses had come into force in 1989, taking international trends into account, to deal with the needs of a greatly enlarged and heterogeneous public and prepare for greater European mobility. The influence of the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe was not made explicit in this Report, but could be seen, for example in such features as a) the distinction of linguistic, pragmatic, discursive, strategic and sociocultural components of language competence, b) the specification of content in distinct and significant categories, c) a learner-centred, interactive methodology adapted to: i) the needs, characteristics and motivations of the target audience, ii) the objectives, iii) the content and iv) the personality of the teacher, integrating a range of activities to motivate the communicative acquisition of the foreign language and to develop 'learning to learn', d) the promotion of receptive abilities, notably reading, e) the promotion of direct contact with other languages and cultures, f) the development of linguistic and cultural awareness and identity, g) a balanced development of

cognitive, socio-affective, aesthetic, cultural and psychomotive capacities, h) the development of a structured personality in the pupil through the progressive development of self-confidence, initiative, critical judgement, creativity and a sense of responsibility, i.e. of autonomy. Portugal had participated actively in the Project 'Language learning and European citizenship' by membership of the Project Group, by sending delegates to a certain number of workshops (mainly curriculum developers, textbook writers and teacher trainers) and by responding to the Questionnaire on the Common European Framework. The last of the 'new-style' workshops (18B, on 'the role of educational exchanges in the teaching and learning of modern languages at secondary level') was held in Portugal in December 1996. Portuguese delegates had collaborated actively in the various projects and activities of the Council of Europe and contributed to the dissemination of the results of the work undertaken.

**The Russian Federation** reported on the impact of the work of the Project on the development of language teaching at Moscow State Linguistic University. When developing new curricula and syllabuses for students of different specialities and fields of training requiring several approaches to training technologies, the University had relied on the ideas presented in the materials and documents of the Project. The workshops had been an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of ideas, methodologies and experiences. Workshop sessions and the follow-up materials were beneficial for the development of a number of courses and textbooks designed for students of different levels and specialities. The workshops dealing with culture awareness in language learning and teaching were of particular importance, since this area usually presented a tremendous difficulty in foreign-language acquisition. Following the workshop recommendations, university teachers had elaborated a number of books and other materials to help students become aware of explicit and implicit cultural differences. Culture-oriented individual projects had been set up for students going abroad on exchange programmes and students (18 years old) had researched national stereotypes in British and Russian folk tales. A Project had been conducted on problems of autonomous learning by university language teachers and students. Moscow Linguistic University had co-operated with the Pushkin Institute, with advice from an international consultative group of Russian language experts, in the development of a Threshold Level for Russian, now approaching completion.

**The Slovak Republic** expressed 'the deep gratitude of all education authorities in Slovakia for the work of the Council of Europe Modern Languages Group's experts and the whole staff's work for their contribution to the further development and modernisation of modern-language teaching and learning, which is very highly appreciated and welcome in Slovakia'. Since 1989, the demand for Western European languages had far exceeded what could be met under the conditions of the time by qualified teachers. Innovative approaches and reform of the traditional models of foreign-language teaching and teacher education were under way, with a variety of teacher training and requalification programmes and the introduction of new types of schools, textbooks, teaching methods and forms of assessment and certification. Workshops, study periods and consultative visits organised by the Council of Europe had played an important part in this programme, as had the distribution of Council of Europe publications to education authorities, teacher trainers, teachers and researchers. Those of them who had taken part in the new-style workshops had profited by exchanging ideas and information, comparing methods applied in Slovakia with those used abroad and by taking back news of the latest technical and methodological developments. The results could be seen in a) implementation of the fast-track' (four year) teacher education and training programme, experience of which it was hoped might contribute to innovation and reform of the traditional model, which continued in Faculties of Education and of Philosophy, which also prepared teachers, b) teams charged with curriculum development for English and also for curricula in French and German then under development had made use of CE materials and experience and co-operated closely with other European educational institutions engaged in similar work, c) new examination papers based on new evaluation criteria were being prepared in co-operation with other European experts, using the experience reported at Project workshops, d)

experience with bilingual education was now being evaluated to judge its suitability for wider introduction in national education, e) new textbooks, teaching materials and manuals were being prepared for primary and secondary education by working teams composed of native and foreign experts.

**Slovenia** reported that its accession to the European Cultural Convention in 1993 had been of essential importance to a young country. Slovenia had become involved in almost all the Council of Europe's projects and sub-projects concerning the teaching and learning of foreign and second languages. The current Project 'Language learning for European citizenship' had contributed greatly to the promotion of language teaching/learning in Slovenia. *Waystage 1990* and *Threshold 1990* had been invaluable sources in terms of methodology and structure for the working team set up in 1990 to produce a catalogue of objectives for English language at primary level (up to 15 years of age) and at secondary level (up to 19), despite differences in aim, structure and target group, which required a different treatment. J. Sheils: *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* had greatly influenced the design and content of the English language catalogue for education up to 15 years, published in February 1996. The Soest seminar had been valuable for setting strategic policy objectives. Methodologies presented to the Cyprus workshop on the selection and production of materials had been presented at teacher-training seminars and used in projects for the evaluation of materials. The VOLL workshops had been presented to ESP seminars, bringing about very useful progress in VOLL regarding course design, needs analysis, testing, assessment and evaluation, and materials design, including a course book for hairdressers, now the main teaching material at this specific vocationally-oriented secondary school. In June 1995, Slovenia had organised and hosted workshop 5B on learning/teaching languages in pre-school and primary bilingual contexts, the recommendations of which had already been implemented in the bilingual areas of Slovenia. Results from workshops on information technologies, primary education, bilingual education and learning to learn had all been used for in-service courses and had led to curriculum development and experimental projects. Workshop 15A had provided a basis for further steps in the education and training of future language teachers and had led to closer links between different institutions involved in initial teacher training.

**Sweden**, after pointing out that Sweden had participated actively in earlier Council of Europe projects, and detailing numerous signs of their impact on language learning and teaching in the country, reported that the present Council of Europe project had been of great value in supporting the new Swedish language programme for the ages 6-19 and for municipal adult education. New national syllabuses and national exit criteria had been drawn up in 1992-95 by expert groups, all members of which were familiar with the work carried out in foreign languages by the Council, many having been engaged as animators in different workshops. 'The influence of the extensive work of the Council of Europe within the FL domain is very obvious. The communicative approach is advocated in an articulated way, the ambition being that the pupils acquire tools for coping in and learning about the world. The pupil's awareness of and responsibility for his own learning are highlighted, thus marking the shift from **teaching** to **learning**. There is also a new emphasis on the cultural context and awareness of the student'. Some forty Swedish FL teachers, teacher trainers, researchers and policy makers had participated in the workshop series, thus learning to act as 'agents' for the present language project. In response to an enquiry, they stated that:

- many though not all projects launched at workshop A had been completed and documented. In several cases members from different countries had been able to set up informed networks and conduct exchanges;
- several of the projects had yielded concrete products like teachers' guides, handbooks and videos to be used as in-service training materials;
- to a large extent the workshop participants had become involved afterwards as multipliers in different forms of in-service training e.g. study days, INSET courses, evening meetings

with local language teaching associations, etc. A number of the participants who worked at teacher training colleges had been able to integrate the new experiences and insights into their regular courses for student teachers. In one case, two participants had arranged in-service training for the members of the local school board (politically elected). Quite a few participants had published articles in professional periodicals;

- the overall judgement from the participants was that the present Council of Europe project had been of great professional value. It had also provided invaluable opportunities for intercultural meetings which in many cases had developed into lasting relations, thus contributing to international understanding.

**Ukraine** reported that, although the country was a new member of the Council of Europe with only limited participation in the Modern Languages Project, Ukraine was extremely interested in future co-operation with the Council of Europe in this direction, hoping that such co-operation would help Ukraine to engage in research and development programmes leading to the introduction at all educational levels of methods and materials best suited to enabling different classes and types of students to acquire a foreign-language competence appropriate to their specific needs.

**The United Kingdom** reported that successive Council of Europe projects had had a major influence on the thinking of key players in the field of modern-language teaching and learning and that the ideas from the projects were implicit in most of the developments over the last decade in particular. Project 12 (1982-87) had had a considerable impact and its results had been disseminated through a joint DES/CILT national conference with representatives from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, which took place in April 1988. This conference had produced some 36 recommendations, most of which had been reflected in policy initiatives during the 1990s. The present project had assisted further developments based on those initiatives. Project 12 had been a major influence in shaping the initial thinking behind the design of the National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages which began to be implemented from 1992. The involvement of teachers and teacher trainers in the 'new-style' workshops had informed work on that implementation at regional and national level, for example in cultural awareness and in information technology. Workshops had also supported the development of ideas outside the National Curriculum, not least in the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary education in England, involving a growing network of schools.

The major influence on textbook development by commercial publishers was the National Curriculum and thus, indirectly, partly the work of the Council of Europe. A more direct influence had been that of the Threshold Level specifications upon textbooks for adults, which in the case of English as a foreign language had become a major publishing industry. The publication of 'Threshold Levels' in a range of less commonly taught languages had provided a valuable reference source. The production of a Threshold Level for Welsh had been the product of a very constructive collaboration between colleagues in Wales and Council of Europe consultant experts. The teaching of Welsh had also benefited from the organisation of a new-style workshop at Carmarthen on 'Language teaching at primary level in bilingual settings'. Colleagues from all parts of the UK had played a full part in the series of new-style workshops and many had been chosen as group leaders or animateurs. This activity had been an important part of their individual professional development. As they were all active in national associations, as speakers at national conferences or engaged in various kinds of in-service teacher training, the ideas they had developed through the workshops were passed on to a wider audience (who may be only vaguely aware of the Council of Europe itself). This 'multiplier' effect was valuable, though difficult to quantify precisely.

A number of colleagues from the UK had been involved in the development of the *Common European Framework*. The draft document had been well-received during the consultation and discussions were already under way concerning its potential in teacher training and for curriculum

evaluation. The draft 'European Language Portfolio' was awaited with interest by colleagues in various fields.

Though Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate education systems from England and Wales, the impact of the Project there followed similar lines. There was no Scottish National Curriculum. The content of the curriculum was largely guided by the examination system and current changes to the syllabus for examinations in upper-secondary education had been influenced at an early stage by the work done on the Common European Framework. Scotland had been well involved in the workshops, especially those concerned with the lowering of the starting age for learning a foreign language, the first of which (workshop 4A) was organised and hosted by Scotland. Otherwise, the policy of the Scottish Office had been to nominate participants in positions of influence, such as advisers, development officers, inspectors and teacher trainers so that they could reflect accurately Scottish current thinking and pass on appropriate messages from workshop deliberations and outcomes, for example through visits to individual educational establishments and by the publication of reports. As a result, teachers, pupils and students were now much more aware of the European dimension to their lives than they had been when the Project began.

It will be seen from the above reports that 51 areas are specified confirming the conclusion that all parts of a wide-ranging project were of practical value for at least one member country. Areas mentioned by at least seven countries will give some indication of relative impact, though it must be understood that the lack of a specific mention on the part of a respondent does not mean that there was no impact or influence in that area: Frequently cited areas were: a) curriculum development (24 countries), b) textbooks and course materials (20), c) teacher training (18) d) testing, assessment and certification (15), e) communicative teaching methodology (14), f) primary education (12), g) professional contacts (12), h) student autonomy and learning to learn (11), i) diversification (9), j) information technology (8), k) sociocultural aspects (8), l) information technology (7), m) T-level developments (7). This list demonstrates the extent to which the work on priority sectors and themes met practical national needs.



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