



Language Policy

Policy Forum

Global approaches to plurilingual education

Strasbourg, 28-29 June 2004

SUMMARY REPORT

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[J.C. Beacco and M. Byram, Programme Advisers to the Language Policy Division, are thanked for their help in drafting this report.](#)

Purpose

The Language Policy Division organised in June 2004 a Policy Forum in Strasbourg in the context of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention and as a continuation of work begun at the [Conference](#) of 2002 on *Languages, Diversity Citizenship: policies for plurilingualism in Europe*. The purpose of the Forum was to present to Member states the opportunity to make known and analyse their policy priorities with respect to language education and to consider future directions for the Council of Europe.

Overview

The Forum dealt with:

- recent policy developments at international level
- the policy implications of possible convergences between education in ‘mother tongues’, ‘national languages’, and ‘foreign languages’
- new initiatives with respect to increased transparency in assessment and standards
- the fundamental issues to be included in a new draft document of the Council of Europe on current trends and future perspectives in language education policy.

In the first phase the Forum considered concrete examples of innovative approaches to the promotion of plurilingual education in institutional, regional and national contexts. These dealt with the opportunities of benefiting from the multilingual potential already existing in society, and with encouraging the development of plurilingualism in education systems.

The Forum then turned to international developments in language education policy and the discussion of a Council of Europe document (prepared in the context of the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention), focused on current trends and future perspectives in language education policy, and on future programmes of the Council of Europe.

The third phase of the Forum involved analysis of the policy implications of new and existing instruments of the Council of Europe concerned with assessment and the establishment of standards, in particular the recent *Manual for Relating Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (and related material).

The Forum considered on the emerging question of global approaches to language education, and thus on the broadening of the focus of the Council of Europe beyond ‘foreign language’ education to include ‘mother tongues’ and the ‘national / official language’. Particular attention was paid to eliciting the views of participants on this theme and its implications for policy, curricula and the assessment of language competences.

Finally, participants were able to obtain an overview of the first results of initiatives started at the Conference in 2002, in particular the activity Language Education Policy Profiles, from the experience already acquired in several countries.

1. OPENING

1.1 Opening address by Gabriele Mazza, Director of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education, Directorate General IV

Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you in such numbers to the Policy Forum, which is an opportunity to explore the major issues in language education policy at a particularly appropriate time in the history of the Council of Europe. We celebrate the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention this year and it is opportune to take stock of what the Convention has enabled us to achieve, and to look at the new challenges in Europe.

The Convention has shown itself to be a flexible instrument for practical and effective international co-operation in the fields of culture, education, youth and sport. Programmes in education have covered a range of key areas in general and Higher Education over five decades in response to the priorities set by member states. Today these priorities include education for democratic citizenship and human rights, education for the prevention of crimes against humanity, history teaching – a sensitive subject in certain political contexts, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, violence in schools, education for minorities, Roma/Gypsies, as well as education legislation, policies and strategies for education reform – and, of course, language education.

Indeed, language education has been a key element in our education programmes since 1957 and the explicit reference to co-operation in language teaching in the European Cultural Convention (article 2) was quite an achievement at that time. The fact that languages projects have continued without interruption for almost 5 decades, and have continued to grow in importance, is in itself remarkable. Their impact has ensured that the Education Committee, now the Steering Committee for Education, has repeatedly identified them as a particularly successful example of the benefits of a long-term programme of international co-operation.

The sharing of expertise and practical results arising from the language projects in Strasbourg in the past decades is a tribute to your commitment to the fundamental values and policies of the Council of Europe. This commitment has more recently been reinforced and extended through the setting up and steady growth in membership of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz.

The Council's concepts and instruments have been hugely influential in promoting new approaches to language teaching, and more recently in establishing common reference points for coherence and transparency in language education and qualifications. Our instruments and various initiatives have two main goals - the promotion of linguistic diversity in Europe and more diversified language learning in our education systems a basis for developing plurilingualism. We have elaborated tools and implemented clearly-focused projects for these purposes. We must, nonetheless, continue to intensify our efforts to ensure that language programmes at the Council of Europe can make an even greater contribution to the wider political goals of the Organisation.

Looking to future political developments, we have two major events in 2005 which will impact on our work in education, and consequently in languages: the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and

Government of the Council of Europe, and the European Year of Citizenship through Education.

Together they will highlight the contribution of education to the overall goals of the Council of Europe - human rights, pluralist democracy, rule of law - and the pursuit of social inclusion and equal opportunities. While the preparations for the Summit remain to be finalised, it is reasonable to anticipate that it will include the development of education policies for active democratic citizenship, social cohesion, the management of diversity, including linguistic diversity, and improved intercultural understanding. These issues are, and will need to remain, at the centre of our language education programmes.

They provide an opportunity for educators to work closely together in developing cross-curricular programmes where languages are an important element, but one element among others. In practice this means that we must try to decompartmentalise education disciplines, at least partially. Teachers of the national language and mother tongues, of geography and history, civic education and foreign languages, for example, might work together in a concerted way on the intercultural and European dimensions of education.

This Forum points us in this direction, as it addresses global approaches to language education, and therefore possible convergences between the different kinds of languages.

A more transversal approach to key values and issues has the potential to transform education, including language education, from what is too often wrongly perceived as a technical operation, into what is clearly a political action. We are faced with issues relating to national identity and other forms of identity, such as cultural and religious, as well as issues of social and political inclusion. In this perspective language education no longer seems quite so utilitarian, but more values-driven. Plurilingualism is therefore a policy goal to be developed as a value that is necessary for living together peacefully, inclusively and productively in our multicultural societies.

We need to address these policy issues in a broad European perspective, sharing experiences and expertise among member states, and developing complementary actions with our partners in the European Union and other international instances.

We also need to share experiences with those from other continents. It is gratifying, therefore, to note that, in addition to the key actors at national and European level, representatives from outside Europe are also present at this Forum.

I welcome the representative of the European Commission with which we have been co-operating closely in specific areas. I am pleased that our co-operation in languages with UNESCO is being renewed, and our co-operation beyond Europe is developing in new areas, as witnessed by the presence of the President of the African Academy of Languages, as well as a representative of the language profession in Japan. I note also that INGOs are well represented, including Eurocentres and ALTE which have consultative status with the Council of Europe.

Of course we do not always have to go far to find examples of good practice in language education policy and I wish to thank the Recteur de l'Académie d'Alsace for joining us this morning.

I take this opportunity to greet a highly valued friend of the Council of Europe, Dr John Trim, former Director of its Modern Languages Projects, whose remarkable contribution to our work

over several decades we gratefully acknowledge. We are very pleased that you could join us for this event organised in the context of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Cultural Convention.

Finally, as we look to the future of language education at this Forum, it is useful to remind ourselves that education is a key area of state intervention, often the largest single budget item, with up to 15% typically aggregate for developed countries.

It is estimated that anything from 5% to 15% of this may be spent on foreign language teaching alone. If we add to this the considerable amount spent on teaching the official national language, then a global approach linking both kinds of languages means that language educators can be expected to make a very significant contribution to the development of the individual. The language profession has therefore a unique position in our education systems.

I would like to thank you in advance for your contribution to the debate on the policy issues in this Forum, which indeed takes place at an ideal time in our deliberations on programmes that will help us deliver a clear and effective response to the new challenges for education. I wish you a successful and enjoyable Forum.

Thank you.

1.2. Opening address by Joseph Sheils, Head of the Language Policy Division

[...] The Forum is an opportunity both to review what is happening, and to consult countries on what else might be done by the Language Policy Division in the future.

In looking ahead, we are acutely conscious of the political importance of issues related to diversity, democratic citizenship and social inclusion in our societies, and which we need to address specifically within the broader political framework. We will have an opportunity to explore these issues in discussing future work in the latter part of the Forum.

Diversification in the range of languages offered in the curriculum remains a strategic objective in our work, and while there is general agreement on the principle in member states, we all realise that there is still much to do in the future if policies for plurilingualism are to become a reality. The issue is very much on our agenda, and in the course of this Forum we will hear some examples of concrete policies for diversification in language learning.

As a *particular* focus at this event, we wish to explore the possibilities for a global, holistic approach to plurilingual education. While different presenters will no doubt wish to address issues and initiatives with which they are particularly concerned in promoting plurilingualism, we have a special interest in exploring, at least in a preliminary way, possible convergences between different languages in education – not only between foreign languages or minority languages, for example, but also between these and national/official languages and mother tongue languages. We would like to take further the policy implications of a more holistic approach.

2. GLOBAL APPROACHES TO PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION: EXAMPLES

The themes of plurilingualism and plurilingual education was the focus of interest in the conference of November 2002 (*see [Conference Report](#) “Languages, Diversity, Citizenship: Policies for plurilingualism in Europe”*), and the purpose of this session was to create a link with this issue and to attempt to specify with the aid of concrete examples from different national contexts how plurilingual education can be realised in practice and how it can be implemented in contexts both favourable (with a high multilingual potential) and less favourable (with a strong monolingual tradition in education).

Four cases were presented:

In *Alsace*, a number of languages co-exist within the region and along its borders; the education system reflects the multilingual environment of this border region;

[Speech](#) (French): **Gerald. Chaix**, Recteur de l’Académie d’Alsace

In *Norway*, English – taught from an early age – is the leading foreign language, but there is a growing awareness of the need to learn other languages; the education system is responding with proposals for a second language and new ideas for the curriculum;

[Speech](#): **Jorunn Berntzen**, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway

In *Hungary* there is one dominant language, Hungarian, with strong public demand for English as a foreign language; trials are being undertaken in schools with a view to diversifying the range of languages offered and encouraging learners to look beyond English;

Tas Szebedi, Headteacher of Városmajor School, Budapest, Hungary (no text available)

In many countries, *university* students feel a need to broaden their linguistic repertoire; university language courses are adapting to new requirements.

[Presentation](#) (PowerPoint): **Wolfgang. Mackiewicz**, European Language Council

This plenary provided:

- firstly illustrations of how education systems can profit from favourable conditions where several languages and language varieties/dialects are present.
- secondly, illustrations of how in less favourable contexts, learners can be strongly encouraged and helped to become plurilingual, and in particular go beyond simply learning English as the only foreign language.

3. POLICY PERSPECTIVES AT EUROPEAN LEVEL AND BEYOND

3.1. Draft Council of Europe Document: [Plurilingual Education in Europe](#)

Daniel Coste presented a brief overview of the evolution of the current programme of the Language Policy Division which led, within the framework of this Forum, to the production of the document which contributes to the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention. He noted that after its creation in 1949, the Member states were able to put into action the founding principles and to continuously introduce new initiatives. In the 1960s, these were focused on applied linguistics, on the development of spoken language as the purpose of teaching, and on the democratisation of equal access to foreign language education. In the following phase, under the guidance of John Trim and Antonietta de Vigili, the emphasis was increasingly placed on plurality in a number of forms such as:

- the recognition of plurality and therefore of the equality of treatment of all languages, the Threshold Levels emphasising that every language is worthy of description, thus making the Threshold Levels more than pedagogical instruments
- the diversity of languages, which necessitates diverse treatment of them in educational policies
- the desire to diversify language teaching as a principle of activity to be carried out at policy level and no longer at a didactic/technical level
- a global approach to plurality which is the central theme of the [Guide for the Development of Language Education Policy in Europe](#) and of the current Forum

Consideration must therefore be given to ways of striking the necessary balance in order to manage the potential conflicts between the equal status of languages and the need to differentiate between them.

There then followed contributions from representatives of other intergovernmental organisations which are currently developing approaches to the promotion of language teaching and diversification in the context of their role in the implementation of human rights and democracy.

As was seen at the conference of 2002, there is notable convergence in the principles presented with respect to languages, language teaching and their role in societies, by Organisations with different histories, statuses and modes of work. This synergy is to be welcomed in the face of ideologies which value languages only for the world of work and lead to monolingualism as the most economic solution.

3.2 European Commission

Paul Holdsworth, Deputy Head of Language Policy Unit, mentions some of the issues upon which European Commission and the European Union Member States are likely to be working in the field of language policy over the next few years, and highlights some which he thinks are particularly relevant to the discussions.

Issues:

- Common aims
- Common problems
- Funding programmes

- 'Education and Training 2010'
- The Action Plan 'Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity'

His conclusion “We are in the process of building a common home founded on the equal interchange of ideas and traditions and the mutual acceptance of peoples with different histories, but a common future. It is now more important than ever that citizens have the skills - and attitudes - necessary to understand one another, and communicate with one another”.

Speech

3.3 UNESCO

Linda King (*Chief a.i. Section for Education for Peace and Human Rights*) presents the UNESCO position in regard to plurilingual education and the Dakar Framework for action, exemplifying the case of Guatemala

UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

Presentation (PowerPoint)

3.4 The African Academy of Languages

Adama Samassekou, *President of the African Academy of Languages*, gave a presentation, which was divided into three parts:

- a presentation introducing the African Academy of Languages, including the linguistic situation in Africa, the background to the setting up of the Academy, its vision and its role;
- the approach taken to the issue of plurilingualism in Africa, based on a case study of bilingual teaching methodology and the wider concept of hierarchised functional multilingualism;
- the new prospects for international co-operation opened up by a united effort to promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

Complete speech (French)

Conclusion

As was seen at the Conference of 2002, there is notable convergence in the principles presented with respect to languages, language teaching and their role in societies, by Organisations with different missions, histories and modes of work. This synergy is to be welcomed in the face of ideologies which value languages only for the world of work and lead to monolingualism as the most economic solution.

4. SETTING AND IMPLEMENTING STANDARDS: SOME POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTRUMENTS

4.1 Potential and Policy implications of Council of Europe instruments: Jean-Claude Beacco

This session set out to present or review existing instruments (the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*, the European Language *Portfolio* (ELP) and others in preparation (the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*, the *Reference descriptions* for national or regional languages, the *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*).

The Language Policy Division works by means of *instruments*, rather than simply identifying and publicising “good practices” that serve as outstanding model examples of political or educational principles. These instruments are common frameworks for action, which can be implemented in a variety of ways depending on the context, within a single field of activity. They represent a halfway point between political principles and practical measures claimed to derive from the latter. They can be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and added value, but also in terms of their “fidelity” to the abstract yet immediate principles of social cohesion and the active exercise of democratic citizenship.

There is consequently a tendency to use them as technical tools or as instruments aimed primarily at achieving common educational goals.

As a result, the Framework is too often regarded as simply setting out scales of competence, whereas its primary purpose was to foster plurilingualism (chapter 8). Although the Portfolio, particularly the biography section, is a key component in active, participatory education, it is nevertheless a means of promoting linguistic diversity for learners and classes. The *Guide* and Profiles, which represent one way of implementing it, serve not to envisage solutions to all the problems faced by education systems, but rather to put into perspective their management of plurilingual education, depending on their resources and history. These instruments are designed for practical action, but are harnessed to the promotion of values.

4.2 Policy implications of Council of Europe instruments viewed from a national perspective: Francis Goullier

The rapid adoption of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the *European Language Portfolio* by a large number of member states show that these tools meet real needs in terms of making language teaching more effective, assessing pupils’ and students’ levels of competence and reaffirming the communicative dimension of such teaching.

The adoption of these tools raises a number of issues, however, with major political implications:

- The international dimension of language teaching/learning now also extends to its design and assessment. It is consequently possible to talk about shared responsibility when it comes to defining teaching content in relation to the levels in the *Framework* and grading language qualifications. The question of shared responsibility for developing assessment itself is even being raised here and there.

- In a national context, is it possible coherently to adopt just part, or certain aspects, of these tools? This issue is of particular relevance in relation to the concept of plurilingualism. The definition given in the *Framework* raises questions about the place and role of different languages in the education system. It calls for the introduction of the concept of partial competencies and the recognition of all competencies, including those acquired out of school.
- This view of plurilingualism ultimately embraces the use and learning of all languages, including, therefore, mother tongues and languages of instruction. Could learners really be asked to think globally about their language learning while disregarding situations as fundamental to their experience as the learning of their mother tongue(s) and language(s) of instruction? The approach taken in the *Framework* and the *ELP* have the potential to push back the limits within which discussion of modern language learning had hitherto been confined in most national contexts.

All of these questions challenge representations that are firmly established in people's minds. Indeed, one innovative aspect was the linking of these various issues by the *Framework* and above all the *ELP*, which adopt the learner's perspective and included all the situations he or she encountered. These tools could provide didactic and pedagogical answers that would gradually lead to the formulation of highly political questions relating to additional ways of embracing all languages in the context of plurilingual education and training.

5. CONSULTATION ON CONVERGENCES IN EDUCATION (WORKING GROUPS)

The aim of this session was to consult participants on possible convergences between different branches of language education, for instance between those of national/official languages and foreign languages. The dissemination of the *Framework* and the functional/communicative direction taken in teaching certain national languages made it possible to envisage convergences in terms of aims and objectives, syllabuses and organisation of curricula, teaching methodologies, forms of assessment and teacher training,...Such convergences appeared to satisfy the requirement for coherent language teaching/learning and holistic management of speakers' plurilingual competence.

The groups were invited to draw on their own practical experience in responding to these issues.

5.1 Synthesis of Group work, by Michael Byram

In the answer to the question as to whether there is a case for convergences between foreign languages and mother tongues or national/official languages, the main conclusion from the working groups was that this could be done in principle. In other words the answer was 'yes in principle'.

This affirmative response was supported by the notion that there could be mutual benefit between, on the one hand, foreign languages and, on the other, mother tongues and national/official languages:

- on the one hand foreign languages could benefit from an injection of a humanist/educational purpose into their aims and objectives, such as is considered to be fundamental to mother tongue/national language teaching

- on the other hand mother-tongue teaching could benefit from the focus on communication and communication skills and competences which are fundamental to the aims and objectives of foreign language teaching.

Despite these mutual benefits, it was argued in some of the groups that there may be difficulties in practice:

- in some contexts, traditions and historical reasons might lead to substantial resistance; parents, for example, might offer resistance to the idea of convergence in these two areas
- there are inevitably substantial administrative and disciplinary boundaries which need to be overcome and again, in some contexts this would be difficult
- there are also disciplinary boundaries between teachers of foreign languages and teachers of mother tongues and national/official languages, boundaries which are also to be found within teacher education.

In particular the methods used in communicative language teaching may not be considered appropriate for other languages.

On the other hand, in other contexts curriculum reforms are taking place and this is the moment to seize the opportunity to bring together these two areas of language education.

Against this background of an affirmation in principle, and an awareness of potential problems in practice, the working groups then considered ways in which the ideas of convergence could be taken forward:

the Language Education Policy Profile process recently introduced by the Council of Europe has already proved to be a useful way of promoting the idea of convergence; there is none the less a need for follow-up from the Council of Europe in order to encourage the move from principle to practice

- the European Language Portfolio is another means by which the relationships between languages can be made evident and brought into the consciousness of learners and teachers
- there are already existing cases of good practice, often to be found in bilingual/border regions, and it would be important to document these, for example by producing a book of case studies
- it is important to consider grass-roots initiatives and to encourage ways of bringing these to the notice of the education system as a whole, a bottom-up approach to innovation
- given the significance of school principals as key deciders on matters of curriculum design in practice, perhaps within a broader framework set out by national authorities, it is important to develop and provide a programme of in-service training for principals to ensure a full understanding of convergence and the benefits which arise from it
- given the significance of support from teacher education for innovation of this kind, it would be important to create a profile of the ideal language teacher, someone able to break through the boundary between foreign languages and mother tongues and national/official languages

- in order to overcome boundaries between languages in learners' minds, there should be continuing emphasis upon the notion of learning to learn, the ability to see relationships between languages, and between the ways in which languages are learnt and developed.

Finally, the working groups considered some issues which need further discussion:

- whether there might be a need for a scheme of defined levels of competence in mother tongue and/or national/official languages parallel to the scheme in the *Common European Framework*, for foreign languages
- how different teaching methods in foreign languages and other languages can be reconciled and find some common ground, whilst allowing for difference in teaching where appropriate
- whether there can, and should, be convergence in matters of methods of assessment.

In short, the working groups appeared to be favourably disposed to the notion of convergence, and to the suggestion that the Council of Europe should pursue the issue, perhaps focusing upon some of the ideas suggested above.

5.2 Individual group reports

The full texts of the individual reports from each of the 4 working groups are set out below (hyperlinks) in the languages in which they were given by the Rapporteurs, who are thanked for their contributions.

[5.2.1 Working Group 1](#)

Chair: F. Goullier – *Rapporteur:* C. Truchot

[5.2.2 Working Group 2](#)

Chair : A. Dobson – *Rapporteur:* C. Söderberg

[5.2.3 Working Group 3](#)

Chair: G. Gaillard – *Rapporteur:* H. Ebke

[5.2.4 Working Group 4](#)

Chair: P. Brown – *Rapporteur:* P. Caffrey

6. INFORMATION SESSION ON THE MANUAL FOR RELATING EXAMINATIONS TO THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg is publishing a pilot edition of a [Manual for relating language examinations to the CEFR](#) in order to assist member states, national and international providers of examinations in relating their certificates and diplomas to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

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

The Manual aims to:

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

Presentation: Brian North, Switzerland (PowerPoint)

7. ROUND TABLE: ANALYSING AND DEVELOPING NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICIES

This session took the form of a round table bringing together representatives of member states involved in the Language Education Policy [Profile](#) process or having completed that process. The representatives of Hungary (G. Boldizsár), Norway (J. Berntzen), Slovenia (Z. Godunc), Cyprus (C. Markou) and Lithuania (S. Skapiene) took part in these discussions.

Given that the *Profile* process has not reached the same point in these different countries, it is understandable that the participants did not have the same experience of it. Nonetheless, they all showed that they were able to grasp the spirit in which this protocol for joint analysis is implemented, and to identify its actual or potential benefits for their countries.

It was noted that the *Language Education Policy Profile* was offered to member states by the Council of Europe for the purpose of taking the time to review language education policies; decision-makers were well aware that such policies were often developed in a hurry. It does not involve an audit or external evaluation aimed at providing solutions deemed to be inherently better than others, but rather a European co-operation project designed to disseminate good practices in this field and to strengthen the consensus around the linguistic dimensions of democratic values. This is reflected in the very composition of the expert groups, which are set up specifically for each *Profile* and include, as far as possible, colleagues who have previously worked on their own countries' *Profiles*.

The completed [Profiles](#) are available on the Language Policy Division's site, together with the national reports, which are an excellent way of explaining one's own education system to other member states. As a working document, the Experts' report is not published, since its main purpose is to serve as a basis for the national Round Table, which could become a permanent forum; the latter set out to identify the main issues to be addressed, which are then discussed in the final document, known as the *National Profile* (see [Guidelines and Procedures](#) DGIVEDU/LANG (2002) 1 Rev. 5)

There was no single reason for requesting a *Profile*: the participants demonstrated in turn that such requests could stem, directly or indirectly, from a specific event (proposed reform, law debated in Parliament, etc.) or simply from a desire to review all aspects of language education policies by compiling the available information in one document. Rather than necessarily producing new information, the *Profile* might create awareness of the need for such information: for instance, an overview of the "private" language market (which supplements what is offered by the state) or of the activities of municipalities and other local and regional authorities, chambers of commerce and cultural associations. All the participants agreed that it

had the immediate effect of highlighting the plurilingual potential of individuals in a given country (the evidence of which had sometimes become blurred) and of showing decision-makers and elected representatives in practical terms that language and communication issues were not technical matters for specialists and teachers, but crucial social issues of relevance to the political sphere.

The most tangible way in which the *Profiles*’ added value was by putting those involved in language policies in the same country in touch with one another, whereas they might hitherto have had little or no contact; the *Profiles* thereby lead to the cross-disciplinary approach that are essential in order to look holistically at plurilingual education designed to promote democratic citizenship. They also provide scope for identifying practical examples of the implementation of plurilingualism, which could serve as models: “year zero” in Hungary (focusing primarily on languages); the opportunity (in Norway) to sit language tests in languages of the pupils’ choice, which were not taught in the education system; study group activities based on self-instruction (Slovenia); “language rooms”, with audio-visual and computer equipment that had the effect of changing teaching practices (Cyprus).

The *Profiles* also help to clarify future priorities (for instance, giving consideration to the languages of immigrant groups) and, above all, to identify specific ways in which more coherent plurilingual education could be developed in a given country (for instance: adopting the *Framework* in respect of teaching curricula), without necessarily entailing costly measures. They also enabled colleagues visiting the countries concerned to convey a better understanding of the relevance to those countries of the European activities for which they were responsible. The participants considered that the *Profiles* did not consist solely of technical exchanges (in respect of curricula, teacher training, the role of school principals with regard to languages, and so on). They also afford an opportunity to create, through public debate, an awareness of the crucial role of languages and of plurilingual education in relation to social issues such as: collective investment in quality education and research; marginalisation of minorities; the development of multiple cultural affiliations that were not set in stone (from island-identity to cross-roads identity); equity and social justice; and the transmission of values such as tolerance and acceptance of differences through intercultural education, which could be provided exceptionally well in the context of language teaching.

[NB: since June 2004, the date on which this Round table was held, the *Profiles* for Slovakia and the Italian region of Lombardy have been launched; the applications by Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland have been approved.]

8. CONSULTATION ON THE DOCUMENT PLURILINGUAL EDUCATION IN EUROPE– 50 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The purpose of this session was to consult participants on the possible future priorities and directions of work of the Language Policy Division. Participants were invited to concentrate on the final part of the draft document and to suggest where the Language Policy Division might place future emphasis. The following issues were identified and participants invited to add others they thought pertinent:

languages and citizenship
languages and identity
languages in intercultural and inter-religious dialogue
languages and migration, and immigrant populations
diversification of language teaching and English

equality of access to languages and standards

8.1 Synthesis of group work, by Daniel Coste

The four groups were clearly interested, active and productive as they focused on part 4 of the document *Plurilingual Education in Europe*. Set out below are their comments concerning, firstly, the six themes suggested in the working document and, secondly, other aspects that one or other of the groups wished to highlight. The individual group reports appear in the second part of this chapter.

8.1.1 Concerning the various themes suggested

i. Migrants

- All of the groups selected this as a significant theme. It was clear that migration flows – in either direction – now affected most European countries: this was a new development for some countries, and a recurrent one for others.
- Given the diversity of such flows, it is important at least to draw a distinction between migration and other forms of mobility.
- Participants would like the Council of Europe to issue recommendations to the member countries regarding linguistic requirements for (possible) access to citizenship.
- While measures conducive to the reception and integration of migrants and their families need to be incorporated into education policies, it is important that such measures do not also have the effect of reinforcing the initial isolation – and even segregation – of such groups.

ii Languages, minorities and identity

- The groups emphasised the importance of this theme, but it appeared that it was already being addressed at the European level and within countries and regions, and that instruments for analysis and action were widely available; even so, this did not mean that the issues – often hotly debated – had been resolved.
- The case of “minor” national languages could be included under the heading “languages and identity”, even if this seems slightly forced; until very recently, such languages have historically been downgraded and appear to require some form of support, both where they are mother tongues and/or main languages of instruction and where they are second languages for groups from other backgrounds.

iii. National/official languages and foreign languages

- This item was dealt with at length in the report of the groups’ initial discussions. It was a key theme, which had been a major, direct focus of the forum.
- While convergences are desirable, further clarification are needed as to exactly what kinds of convergence are intended (and as to the definition(s) of this term).

- The concept of a “common framework of points of reference” was considered promising, although it too requires further exploration.
- With regard to foreign languages specifically, some participants expressed the hope that once national examinations had been clearly linked to the levels of the *Common European Reference Framework*, they could be officially recognised in other European countries.

iv. Diversification and lingua franca: the case of English

- One of the working groups was concerned that there appeared to be an identification between the term ‘lingua franca’ and English: other languages also play such a role, and it is important to ensure that English is not perceived as being “reduced” to this role alone.
- Even so, the general view was that, as things stood, English is in a markedly dominant position, both in practice and in people’s minds; a clear distinction needs to be made, however, between – in the words of one English-speaking participant – “dominance”, for which provision should be made, and “hegemony”, which should be opposed.
- According to another group, consideration should also be given to the issue of standards for a *lingua franca*. There are some standards relating to recognition of minority and regional languages; what is the situation in respect of a *lingua franca*?
- In any event, it was agreed that, although English as a *lingua franca* might require specific learning approaches, there was indeed a case for not reducing all English teaching to that of a *lingua franca*. While in many countries the dominant position of English hinders genuine diversification (and is even perceived as a threat to the national language), consideration should also be given to diversifying the teaching of English.

v. Intercultural and interreligious relations

Only one group appears to have tackled this theme head-on, emphasising its significance. Does this mean that its significance went without saying for the other groups?

vi. Education for democratic citizenship

- All of the groups agreed that this theme was clearly of major significance for Europe now and in the future. It was generally presented as an issue that ought to be closely linked to the other themes for consideration and action: it was one of the main aims of any convergence between languages and any global approach to plurilingualism.
- Nevertheless, the issue was raised as to whether the expression “democratic citizenship” is in danger of being set in stone as a politically correct, mandatory institutional slogan, and whether it should perhaps be revitalised by adding another goal for plurilingual education: that of democratic citizenship and social cohesion.

8.1.2 Some additions

- As had been suggested to them, the various groups wished to highlight the significance, for future reference, of various issues that were not explicitly included as such among the themes presented in the working document. Those that appear to have been raised most frequently are set out below.

- *A great deal would depend on (the redefinition of) teacher training.* There is a need to develop new language teacher profiles and a new vision for global approaches to plurilingual education, given that language teachers are dealing increasingly with multilingual groups. Is there, then, a need for a European Portfolio for language teachers?
- *Literature should not be overlooked,* not in terms of traditional language teaching methodology and content, but rather in relation to cultures and values, and without attempting to identify a language with the authors who had illustrated it. The instruments developed by the Council of Europe make no reference whatsoever to these aspects of plurilingual education.
- *There is a need for more systematic, wider dissemination of examples of “good practices”* reflecting contemporary approaches to curriculum design, language diversification and educational convergences between different languages. In view of the current situation, and in respect of teacher training, the development of new kinds of teaching materials and textbooks also play a vital role in effecting change.
- The latter was particularly crucial given that, outside circles of advocates and the recommendations of international institutions, there is no shortage of resistance to efforts to promote plurilingualism. For most European parents, the forces of civil society and business leaders, the magic combination is still “national language + command of English”. As with any democratic linguistic policy, it was consequently a matter, following on from the “Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies”, of *devising activities and instruments that would gradually help to shift these prevailing social representations.*

8.2 Individual group reports

The full texts of the individual reports from each of the 4 working groups are set out below (hyperlinks) in the languages in which they were given by the Rapporteurs, who are thanked for their contributions

[8.2.1 Working Group 1](#)

Chair: F. Goullier – Rapporteur: C. Truchot

[8.2.2 Working Group 2](#)

Chair : A. Dobson – Rapporteur: C. Söderberg

[8.2.3 Working Group 3](#)

Chair: G. Gaillard – Rapporteur: H. Ebke

[8.2.4 Working Group 4](#)

Chair: P. Brown – Rapporteur: P. Caffrey

9. A JAPANESE PERSPECTIVE – PROF. S. HASHIMOTO, HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY, JAPAN

It is commonly perceived that the Japanese are poor communicators in foreign languages. They rank low in international English proficiency tests. Generally speaking, Japanese university graduates need an additional two years of intensive study to attain a reasonable ability in English.

[...] In contrast to the English boom, however, the status of other modern European languages in Japan is in decline. One reason for this is the raised interest in other Asian languages, but the biggest reason is the de-emphasis on learning a second foreign language at third level.

For this reason, the language policies of the Council of Europe can provide a new model for the teaching of European languages in Japan. Implementing this model could help lead to a revival of language learning, particularly modern European languages, in Japan.

Presentation

10. CLOSING

Closing address by G. Battaini-Dragoni, Director General, Directorate General IV - Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to address you at the close of your Policy Forum. I consider this event to be a valuable contribution, in the specific area of language education, to our current reflection on how the Council of Europe can best guarantee that its objectives and functioning address the challenges that our 800 million citizens face in the new century. We are preparing to examine our priorities and strategic objectives at the highest political level during the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe to be held in Poland next year. At this time we are also using the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention not only to take stock of our achievements, but to plan our response to the new challenges for cultural co-operation in today's Europe.

Education has always played a vital role within the European Cultural Convention in the promotion of the Council's fundamental values and goals. If we are to ensure stable, cohesive and sustainable societies, our programmes in education and culture today need to address two key areas: the management of diversity in our multicultural societies, and social inclusion in our increasingly fragmented societies.

The management of diversity requires that our young people develop openness to and genuine acceptance of cultural, religious, and linguistic differences. Recently the European Ministers of Culture adopted the 'Opatija Declaration', which highlights the importance of managing cultural diversity in order to prevent conflicts and to foster dialogue between different groups and religions. Language learning is clearly an ideal means of introducing awareness of differences and developing intercultural understanding from an early age. Education helps young people in understanding and developing their social identity, and language learning can offer them the opportunity to study and understand better other societies, to develop an acceptance of the different social identities of others, including religious identities.

Here the responsibilities of teachers of different school disciplines converge. Of course identity is a sensitive issue in our societies. We need to plan carefully how teachers of the national languages or mother tongue, who are particularly concerned with issues of national identity, can co-operate with teachers of other languages and other disciplines in developing a sense of plural identity as a basis for openness and tolerance.

The development of policies and practices to ensure that social inclusion becomes a reality represents an equally pressing challenge. We must ensure equal opportunities for access to

resources and to knowledge, and particularly for the more vulnerable groups in our society. The Council of Europe is currently developing an index of social indicators that includes educational factors, and of course language factors are particularly relevant for equal access to quality education. Issues related to skills in the national language or language of instruction are of central importance for success at school, and opportunities for acquiring foreign language skills are a necessity for ALL, if the risk of marginalisation is to be reduced in today's interactive Europe.

Language education policies need to be seen, therefore, as contributing concretely to the reduction of inequalities and polarisations, to the development of openness to the identities of others, and to active participation as responsible citizens in democratic and peaceful societies.

I know that you have been examining a number of policy issues and how to take these forward. I believe that future programmes on language education policies can make a very valuable contribution to our overall programme of activities within the Organisation by focusing on the intercultural dimension in a broad sense, and social inclusion, particularly for more vulnerable groups. Looking at part 4 of the draft document '[Plurilingual Education in Europe](#)', I find a number of very relevant issues. To take one example, I am particularly struck by the reference to groups such as migrants and Roma. It will be important to develop initiatives and actions to support the acquisition of the language skills required for active citizenship and inclusion by these groups. In this context, there are new links to be explored between languages, identities, and citizenship.

In conclusion, I wish to stress that our future work has to be set in the context of the Council of Europe's strategic objective of a Europe without dividing lines based on the commitment to our common values. The forthcoming Summit will further clarify the Council of Europe's goals and activities and will reinforce the Council's position as a key partner within the new European architecture. Our programmes in language education policy must contribute to the pursuit of these goals and this Forum has provided us with a valuable basis for clarifying the contribution of our work in language education policies to this process.

I thank you for your strong commitment to our programmes in Strasbourg and Graz, and look forward to the continuation of our fruitful co-operation with our partners in Europe, and beyond.

Appendix 1: [Programme](#)

Appendix 2: [List of participants](#)