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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER

**Report on the implementation of Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a
European strategy for multilingualism (2008/C 320/01)**

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Council of the European Union invited the Commission to report, by mid-2011, on the implementation of its Resolution of 21 November 2008, in cooperation with the Member States and placing special emphasis on examples of good practice.

This document provides a summary of the main initiatives taken and of progress made in the areas mentioned in the Council Resolution.

2. **STRENGTHENED PROMOTION OF LIFELONG LANGUAGE LEARNING**

An ability to communicate in foreign languages provides better opportunities for mobility and employability, enhances EU's competitiveness and trade opportunities in a globalised world and fosters social inclusion and active citizenship. Communication in foreign languages is therefore recognised as one of the eight key competences of the Commission's lifelong learning policy.

(a) One of the main obstacles to improved language learning has traditionally been the absence of objective and comparable data on the effectiveness of education systems in equipping students with the competences they need.[1] To address this problem, the European Commission launched the *European survey on language competences*[2], to test the proficiency of lower secondary students in listening, reading and writing the two European languages most widely taught in each country. The first data was collected in Spring 2011 in 14 countries.

(b) Every year, the Commission spends approximately €50 million on language-related activities through its Lifelong Learning Programme: multilateral projects promoting language awareness and access to language learning resources, the development and dissemination of language learning and language testing materials, multilateral networks and accompanying measures under Key Activity 2, as well as language courses and mobility measures in Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig.

Most of the projects supported by Key Activity 2 focus on CLIL (content and language integrated learning), language learning for disabled people, the use of new technologies and social media for language learning, teaching foreign languages to illiterate adults, subtitling, languages for business, multilingualism and intercultural dialogue, early language learning or European regional and minority languages. Another major focus is the promotion of greater variety in the languages taught at school.

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[1] Eurostat publishes annual data on language learning in schools by educational level (source: UOE data collection). These can be found on the Eurostat website (http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/education/data/database). Data on self-perceived language skills of the adult population 25-64 years old are also available (source: *Adult Education Survey*). A *Statistics in Focus* entitled 'More students study foreign languages in Europe but perception of skill levels differ significantly' (issue nr. 49/2010) was published in September 2010 on the occasion of the European Day of Languages (http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/product?code=KS-SF-10-049&mode=view).

[2] http://www.surveylang.org/.

Several of the projects funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme promoted the adoption of a European approach to the training of language teachers.

Mobility is both a precondition for, and a result of, language learning and is supported by the various components of the Lifelong Learning Programme. By way of example, 22 countries organised 326 *Erasmus Intensive Language Courses* for 5 208 students in the 2008/09 academic year, for a total cost of €1.57 million [3].

(c) The Commission also established a *group of national experts on early language learning* working through the Open Method of Coordination. Based on the exchange of experiences within this group, in June 2011 the Commission published the Policy Handbook *Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable*[4].

This handbook is addressed to EU institutions, national authorities, curriculum developers and practitioners in the field of pre-primary education and contains references to examples of good practice. The guidelines stress the importance of combining language awareness and language learning, of adapting teaching methods to the age of children and of measuring the success of the system without burdening children with formal testing. The benefits identified range from openness, awareness of diversity and mutual respect to better cognitive abilities, increased self-respect, as well as better control of the mother tongue, communication and problem solving skills.

(d) Language competences acquired outside formal education can be an important part of an individual's language portfolio. Cedefop's *European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning*[5], published in 2009, accordingly take communication and linguistic competences into account.

3. EMPLOYABILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

Language competences can boost an individual's employment and career opportunities as well as the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to operate successfully in international markets. Formal and non-formal language education should equip students and workers with the language competences required by employers and by the market. Language skills of second/third generation immigrants are another reservoir of competence to be tapped and enhanced.

(a) With a view to achieving a better match between the language competences of people entering the labour market and the expectations of employers, the Commission set up the thematic working group *Languages for Jobs*. Working in the framework of the Education and Training 2020 Open Method of Coordination, national experts analysed examples of good practice, identified priority areas for action and

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[3] http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc/stat/report0809.pdf .
[4] The study will be published here http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/library/doc3413_en.htm.
[5] http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/4054_en.pdf.

coordination and produced a set of proposals on how to enhance the role of languages in improving the chances of finding employment. [6]

(b) In September 2009 the Commission established a *Business Platform for Multilingualism* bringing together representatives of professional associations, social partners, trade promotion organisations, higher education and vocational training institutions. The Platform discussed how to promote language learning for competitiveness and employability and how to develop services and tools to help companies and individuals improve professional performance through effective language strategies. The Platform's report was published in June 2011[7]. 'Languages for Business' was also the theme of the main event organised by the Commission in Brussels to celebrate the European Day of Languages in 2010[8].

(c) *Structural funds* are also used to finance training in foreign languages aimed, among other things, at improving employability, enabling workers to understand security rules, developing the tourism sector or upgrading the skills of civil servants. Training in the language of the host country is also funded to encourage the integration of immigrants and their families.

(d) To complement the work of the OMC group, in 2010 the Commission set up the *Languages for SMEs* Working Platform, made up of several European stakeholder organisations. This platform created an on-line portal providing an interactive forum to help companies increase their trade through language skills. [9]

The platform produced the *Report on Language Management Strategies and Best Practice in European SMEs*, which was published in June 2011[10].

(e) The Commission provides financial support to the *CELAN Network for the Promotion of Language Strategies for Competitiveness and Employability*[11], a project submitted by the Languages for SMEs Platform to map the linguistic needs of companies and employees and to assess to what extent these needs are being met in different sectors and Member States.

(f) In May 2009, the Commission organised a round table with entrepreneurs and representatives of SMEs on practical tools to help small companies work better with languages.

(g) An information campaign centred on the *Language guide for European Business: Successful Communication in your International Trade*[12] was launched in June 2011 to disseminate the practical recommendations of the Guide. The campaign involved a

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[6] The report will be published here http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/library/doc3413_en.htm.
[7] The report will be published here http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/library/doc3413_en.htm.
[8] See http://ec.europa.eu/news/culture/100924_1_en.htm.
[9] http://projects.tipik.eu/sme-wiki/about-platform.
[10] To be published on the 'Languages mean business' website.
[11] http://celan-project.blogspot.com/.
[12] To be published on the 'Languages mean business' website.

dedicated website *Languages mean business*[13], a short video, multilingual brochures, information for the specialised press and special events.

(h) To promote greater use of languages and language management strategies in international trade, the Commission launched the PIMLICO project (*Promoting, Implementing, Mapping Language and Intercultural Communication Strategies in Organisations and Companies*). This project identified the top performing international SMEs in each country and examined their language strategies.

(i) A better understanding of the language industries is being developed. A study on 'The Size of the Language Industry in the EU' estimated the value of the industry in the EU to be some 8.4 billion euros in 2008, with a fast growth potential.

4. PROMOTING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, SOCIAL COHESION AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Increasing mobility within the EU and from other countries means that the many languages spoken in Europe come into daily contact. Language learning is essential to foster inclusion and dialogue, mutual respect and social cohesion.

(a) In October 2009 the Commission established a *Civil Society Platform to promote multilingualism for intercultural dialogue* with organisations representing cultural and language institutes, the media, literary translators, terminologists, entities working in adult education and vocational training, artists, publishers and other stakeholders.

(b) In June 2011 the Platform produced a set of proposals[14] addressed to EU institutions, Member States and regional and local authorities focusing on language policy and planning, linguistic diversity and social inclusion, languages in education, translation and terminology. Special emphasis is placed on the need to support regional and minority languages through the Lifelong Learning Programme and to step up measures aimed at integrating migrants.

The proposals include direct support for endangered languages, integration of intercultural competencies in language teaching, exchange of best practice, better recognition and working conditions for literary translators and support for the development of language and translation technologies and infrastructures.

Members of the Platform launched a new project in 2011 called *Poliglotti4.eu*[15]. It aims to create a permanent forum for dialogue between the European Commission and civil society on the different aspects of multilingualism policy.

(c) To increase awareness of the advantages of language learning and linguistic diversity, the Commission has set up a *web portal* in 22 languages[16]. It has launched

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[13] Definitive link here (http://wcmcom-ec-europa-eu-wip.wcm3vue.cec.eu.int:8080/languages/languages-mean-business/index_en.htm).

[14] The Policy recommendations will be published here http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/library/doc3413_en.htm.

[15] http://www.eunic-brussels.eu/asp/dyn/detailed_1.asp?lang=en&dyndoc_id=69&trsldoc_id=.

[16] http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages.

a number of other activities, too, such as the *Languages through lenses* video clip competition[17], *Languages through Microphones* (the 2009 edition of the *European Radio Day*)[18], the successful *Piccolingo* action for early language learning[19] and the *TongueStories* competition[20].

(d) The special needs of children from a migrant or minority background are addressed in several of the proven orientations presented in the Policy Handbook *Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable* (*see* Section 2(c) above). These young pupils need extra assistance to ensure that a proper balance is achieved between the language spoken at home and the main language of instruction at school.

(e) The Commission also published Eurydice research on *Integrating Immigrant Children into Schools in Europe*[21] (April 2009). This publication examines the measures adopted by Member States to foster communication with immigrant families and the teaching of heritage languages to immigrant children.

5. CONTRIBUTION OF, AND SUPPORT FOR, THE TRANSLATION PROFESSION

In a multilingual society the need for professional translation services is steadily increasing. This goes beyond the linguistic services provided by the translation and interpretation departments of the EU institutions, giving a key contribution to the implementation of EU policies.

The Commission plays a central role in promoting quality training for professional translators and the development of new tools in response to the growing needs of the language industry.

(a) With the help of funds from the *Lifelong Learning Programme,* the Commission stepped up its efforts to improve the quality of translator training through the *European Masters in Translation Network*, which now includes 54 university programmes from 19 Member States[22]. To raise awareness among secondary school pupils of the importance of translation, it increased the number of participants in the *Juvenes Translatores* contest (over 1 300 in 2010)[23].

(b) Translators, terminologists and other language professionals can find a choice of useful tools and reference materials on the Commission's multilingual portal *Translation and drafting resources*[24]. A terminology database *IATE* (*Interactive Terminology for Europe)* is accessible on the Internet to European institutions' staff and to external users all over the world, including the public at large. A dedicated

[17] http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/video/lenses_en.htm.
[18] http://www.radiodayofeuropeancultures.org/. .
[19] http://piccolingo.europa.eu/.
[20] http://www.tonguestories.eu/.
[21] http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/101EN.pdf. .
[22] http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/network/index_en.htm.
[23] http://ec.europa.eu/translatores/index_en.htm.
[24] http://ec.europa.eu/translation/index_en.htm. .

web platform has also been created to collect and share information on the expanding language industry of the EU[25].

(c) The Commission's *Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development* has funded a large number of projects in the field of human language technology, including assistance for the deaf and hard of hearing. Special emphasis is laid on machine translation, automation of terminology and online multilingual services. [26]

(d) To promote subtitling as a means of encouraging language learning, the Commission organised the conference *Subtitling for Better Understanding*[27].

6.   THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF MULTILINGUALISM

European languages with worldwide coverage can help foster cultural and economic dialogue with third countries. Besides, the challenge of multilingualism concerns not only the European Union, but every country in the world. It is of particular relevance for the EU relationships with the countries that share the European perspective, notably in the framework of the accession negotiations.

(a) The European Commission has developed the external dimension of multilingualism through partnerships and exchanges of experiences with non-EU countries, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by those European languages which have worldwide coverage.

(b) Following the conference on *Multilingualism and Intercultural Dialogue in Globalisation* organised in New Delhi in December 2008, a *Joint Declaration* on multilingualism was signed in March 2009 between the Commission and the Government of India[28]. In May 2011 a Senior Officials Meeting was organised in the framework of the EU-India policy dialogue on Education and Multilingualism.

(c) In March 2009 the Commission and the Government of China signed a *Joint Declaration* on multilingualism, stating their intention to reinforce cooperation and dialogue in the field of multilingualism[29]. In a conference organised with the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), European and Chinese experts discussed the effects of ICT and innovation, language learning for business and employability, intercultural competences and intercultural dialogue, and the promotion of Chinese in Europe and EU official languages in China. In October 2009 the theme of *Literary translation and publishing in Europe and China* was debated at a round table at the Frankfurt Book Fair.

The EU-China conference on multilingualism *Language learning: an open window to the world* was organised in May 2011.

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25   http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/languageindustry/index_en.htm.
26   For a full list, see http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/language-technologies/portfolio_en.html.
27   See http://ec.europa.eu/polska/news/conferences/documents/programme_subtitling_conference.pdf.
28   http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news3371_en.htm.
29   http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news3371_en.htm.

7.	STUDIES

Multilingualism is a multifaceted issue. Given the specific linguistic situation of each Member State, policy in this field should be based on reliable research which provides factual elements and examines the possible consequences of any measures proposed.

(a)	A number of brochures and studies (on the language industry, on aspects of the translation profession and on lawmaking in a multilingual society) have been launched and published on the Commission's website[30]. In particular, the following three studies relate to specific elements of the 2008 Council Resolution on Multilingualism.

(b)	To assess the potential use and impact of new technologies with respect to formal, non-formal and informal language learning, the Commission launched the *Study on the Impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and New Media on Language Learning*[31] (2009). The recommendations cover several areas: communication, professional development, pedagogical innovation and cross-sectoral initiatives. ICT for language learning is also the theme of a Commission-sponsored conference held annually in Florence[32].

(c)	The Commission explored the possibility of creating a *European prize for literary translation,* developing a number of possible implementation models. The result was the *Feasibility Study on a Literary Translation Prize*[33], published in October 2010.

(d)	The Commission-funded *Study on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity*[34] (July 2009), which is based on a series of case studies from different countries, demonstrates that knowing more than one language has beneficial effects on transversal skills such as thinking, learning, problem solving and communicating.

8.	CONCLUSION

The Commission departments consider that they have duly implemented the mandate received from the Council, promoting cooperation among Member States in the areas indicated and raising awareness of the importance of language competences for ever-closer integration.

This summary of Commission activities in the field of multilingualism will also feed into the Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the 'Education & Training 2020' work programme.

Improved communication through the dismantling of language barriers is important if we are to achieve the Europe 2020 objectives for smart, sustainable and inclusive

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[30]	See http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/publications/index_en.htm.
[31]	See http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/studies/documents/study_impact_ict_new_media_language_learning/final_report_en.pdf	.
[32]	http://www.pixel-online.net/ICT4LL2009/.
[33]	http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/doc4790_en.pdf.
[34]	http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news3653/report_en.pdf.

growth. It figures prominently in the flagship initiatives *Youth on the Move*[35] and *An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*[36].

For a wide-ranging view of the activities undertaken so far, this report will be presented along with the following documents:

- Updated inventory of Community actions in the field of multilingualism

- Policy Handbook 'Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable'

- Report of the OMC Group 'Languages for Jobs'

- Report of the Civil Society Platform to promote multilingualism for intercultural dialogue

- Report of the Business Platform for Multilingualism

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[35] See http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/index_en.htm. .
[36] See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=958.