



**CONSEIL EUROPEEN POUR LES LANGUES /
EUROPEAN LANGUAGE COUNCIL (CEL/ELC)**

Policy Statement

(December 2014)

The Conseil Européen pour les Langues/ European Language Council (CEL/ELC) has established itself over the past 18 years as a key contributor to the development of language policy in Europe. It speaks on behalf of the whole area of languages in higher education and promotes the importance of language diversity and multilingualism throughout Europe.

The Council recognises that the new social and political context in Europe has created new needs and demands in social, professional and educational terms. It believes that language providers have a vital role in identifying these needs and a clear responsibility to develop new approaches to language education, especially in higher education.

We call on our members and stakeholders to participate in developing new ways to articulate the importance of language competences and language diversity in the changing international environment. And we call on them to develop new tools and resources that will enable future generations of students to thrive in a multilingual world.

The new context has arisen from large-scale changes to the social, political and economic environment. The continuing economic crisis has led policy makers across Europe to prioritise actions, including actions in education, that are expected to contribute to jobs and growth. The continuing large-scale movement of people within and into Europe has dramatically changed the social, cultural, and linguistic fabric of many countries, particularly in major cities. Among other things, these developments have increased the concern for national security and the protection of national, regional, and local identities.

Language issues are deeply woven into this changing environment, contributing to European and international cooperation as well as to competition and contention. All European countries are now experiencing a sharp increase in language diversity, which brings both threats and opportunities. They are seeing a decline in literacy and high-level language skills in any language among their citizens. And in higher education, the rapid growth of internationalisation is transforming education and research. Traditional language policies are not well adapted to deal with these changes at national or institutional level.

Representing languages in European higher education in the widest sense, the CEL/ELC recognises the importance of languages in the new economic and political situation and is beginning to identify

the new challenges and needs that have emerged. It does not believe that there are easy solutions to meeting these challenges and needs. It does not believe that increased use of English will meet more than a limited range of needs, and it is concerned that a reliance on English will leave European citizens seriously disadvantaged in working and living in the new international environment. This applies to higher education as much as to other areas of life.

Bearing in mind these considerations, the CEL/ELC Board decided to devote the 2014 Annual Forum to the question of 'what language policy for Europe?' Discussion at the Forum has focused on the importance of recognising the new needs for languages – in language use, language professions, language learning and assessment - and the need for increased awareness among leaders and policy makers in European states and in HE institutions. It also identified the need to raise awareness and commitment at policy level in EU institutions and the Council of Europe.

The CEL/ELC has established four Special Interest Groups to examine aspects of the new context. These will bring forward recommendations for policy changes and will identify areas where further work is needed to understand the context, to make policy recommendations and to develop tools and resources that can help to address emerging needs. We call on our members to contribute to this important work of reflection and policy development, and to make every effort to enable the value of languages to be recognised and supported at European, national, regional and institutional levels.