

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

A dialogue among key European
stakeholders:

EUA, EURASHE, ENQA, ESU and ELC





... proficiency in English is de facto part of any internationalisation strategy for learners, teachers and institutions (...)

(...) multilingualism is a significant European asset: it is highly valued by international students and should be encouraged in teaching and research throughout the higher education curriculum.

European Commission (2013)



THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES IN THE EHEA

- Multilingualism is seen as part of the European dimension of the Bologna Process – which has led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area (monitored by the BFUG).
- The question is how Higher Education Institutions – each in their own context - can embrace the concept of multilingualism as well as the unique position of English in a meaningful way.

IN EUROPE TODAY ... / IN A GLOBAL WORLD ...

- All HE graduates need to be proficient in more languages in order for them to study and work professionally in multilingual settings.
- This also applies to those whose L1 is English.
- There are roughly two groups of students/ graduates:
 - The language experts to be.
 - **The non-language students and graduates.**



THE TASK FORCE ... REPRESENTATIVES FROM

- European University Association (EUA)
- European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE)
- European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
- European Students Union (ESU)
- European Language Council (ELC)

TASK FORCE AIMS

- To identify and discuss key linguistic and intercultural skills and competences that would be considered essential for the European graduates and their employability;
- To recommend actions to be taken in order to ensure that students at European HEIs are given the opportunity to develop these skills and competences in the course of their studies.

KEY COMPETENCES AND SKILLS

- This will be discussed under three headings:
 - The role of English in Higher Education.
 - Learning and teaching through another language than one's first language, that is, through a second (L2) or third (L3) language.
 - Linguistic and cultural competences and skills essential for European graduates and their employability.



THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- English is the medium of instruction in a rising number of study programmes – 7,000+ programmes spread unevenly across Europe (outside the UK and Ireland).
- For the vast majority of lecturers and students teaching and learning through English, is T/L through their L2/L3.
- Without special measures, students do not necessarily improve their English while studying through English.

LEARNING AND TEACHING THROUGH L2/L3

- Without special measures, students do not necessarily improve their L2/L3 while studying through their L2/L3.
- What about the lecturers who also teach through their L2/L3?
- How can the teaching and learning processes be scaffolded to the benefit of students as well as their lecturers?



LINGUISTIC AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES & SKILLS

- The employability of graduates depends on a number of factors, among which adequate language and intercultural communication skills are only a part.
- The importance of these skills and competences are closely linked to the context and content of a given job function.
- Language learning AND learning to learn.

WHAT WILL THE TASK FORCE DO?

- Produce a report w/recommendations that builds on
 - Existing reports as well as the outcomes of current and recently completed projects launched from within the ELC.
 - The *Bologna With Student Eyes* and other reports that are currently being prepared for the ministerial meeting in May 2015 – the continued Bologna Process.



IMPORTANT POINTS & KEY MESSAGES (1)

- If it is to be endorsed by the organisations represented in the TF, the report and its key messages must speak to stakeholders outside the languages community:
 - Non-language professionals.
 - Higher education decision makers / leadership teams.
 - The quality assurance organisations.
 - The student unions.



IMPORTANT POINTS & KEY MESSAGES (2)

- The associations involved agree that there are burning issues that need to be addressed and are prepared to continue this dialogue towards a set of joint recommendations.
- The ELC has managed to (re-)open an important dialogue with the four key associations in European higher education.