High Level Group on Multilingualism

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Why is ML a prominent topic in the EU?

- recent changes and developments in the Union (new Member States, communication in general)
- recognition: diversity is a resource
- multilingualism as a cross-cutting topic: in education, culture, interpretation-translation and publications, citizenship, highly relevant for economic growth
- all EU Member States have practically become multilingual and multicultural societies

< why … prominent topic? >

—> "comprehensiveness": from ML as main topic for education to a view including citizenship and economy

The remit of the **High Level Group on Multilingualism**

Set up by Commission Decision of 20/9/2006

- to "help to provide support and advice in developing initiatives in the field of multilingualism, as well as fresh impetus and ideas for a comprehensive approach to multilingualism in the European Union"
- the Group's task: "to bring about an exchange of ideas, experience and good practice in the field of multilingualism and to make recommendations to the Commission for actions in this domain"

Composition of the High Level Group on Multilingualism

➢ 11 members from 10 EU Member States and Switzerland

➢ Members represented expertise in the following fields
  - linguistics and philology (various specialisations)
  - business
  - the media
  - regional languages
  - sociology
  - translation and interpreting

I. Definition of Multilingualism

"Multilingualism is understood as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis in space and time with more than one language in their day-to-day life. In this context, a language is defined neutrally as a variant which a group ascribes to itself for use as its habitual code of communication (this includes regional languages and dialects, such as sign languages).

Distinctions may be drawn between social, institutional, discursive and individual multilingualism.

Multilingualism is based upon the fundamental human capacity to communicate in a number of languages.

Multilingualism is used to designate a phenomenon embedded in cultural trend and is therefore characterised by significant cultural sensitivity."

II: The most important challenges with respect to the new multilingual situation

- address the issue of multilingualism in a *comprehensive* coherent manner based on research findings and best practices
- preference for English as a *lingua franca* vs. revival of regional or minority languages; emphasis on the world-wide value of specific languages (Bengali, English, Hindi, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish) vs. emphasis on the community value of "small" languages.

III In the eyes of the group, how can we cope with this challenges?

1. Awareness
2. Motivation
3. Languages for Business
4. Media
5. Interpretation and Translation
6. Research

1. Raising awareness

- encourage people to become more open to other people's cultures and outlooks,
- improve cognitive skills and strengthen mother tongue skills, and:
- enable people to take advantage of the freedom to work or study in another Member State
- convince people that knowledge of several languages is an important aspect of sustainable employability

< raising awareness >

- convince people that learning other languages has an intercultural value

- ML supports attention, perception, memory, concentration, concept formation, critical thinking, problem solving, flexibility, and ability to work in teams

< raising awareness >

- education systems should ensure the learning of two languages from primary to the end of secondary education, including vocational training
- Higher education institutions should encourage a continuation of the learning of school languages and / or the learning of further languages

Enhancing motivation

- Motivation has to do with emotional involvement, authentic contexts and realistic goals and with getting things done through using (an)other language(s).

- make the acquisition of languages part of extracurricular and leisure activities

- strengthening learner autonomy

- also target adult learners

- migrants constitute a valuable language resource

< enhancing motivation >

- Projects promoting intercultural dialogue should include an element of multilingualism

- *sustaining motivation* through *<???>* specific methodological approaches such as CLIL, "Learning Across the Curriculum", promotion of learner autonomy, and collaborative learning

- Learning in a practical context: working environments are most prominent in this respect

Languages and the media

- high potential for enhancing motivation
- Internet can provide support for language learning (through websites featuring learning materials, webquest activities, activity books, educational portals, chats etc.)
- Subtitling vs. Dubbing: effective tools for language learning
- Creation of a European public sphere: many Europeans are hardly aware of the EU's political agenda and of the political agendas

< languages and the media >

- "democratic deficit" and the lack of a European identity are the major obstacles to more acceptance of the European project
- Need of European journals, broadcast and TV with European distribution

Languages and business

- ELAN study: a significant amount of business has been lost as a result of lack of language skills
- education institutions have enter into structured dialogue with business organisations in the region
- the linguistic needs: not only which languages but also: for which communicative purposes

< languages and business >

- businesses should offer special incentives to their staff to learn languages
- Education institutions should diversify their offerings (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese and Russian)
- invest in young migrant people and their heritage languages (alongside the local language)
- develop a European label to be awarded to SMEs which achieved export success through exemplary language and culture management

< languages and business >

- apply reporting instruments such as Europass and the Diploma Supplement

- encourage the establishment of regional education-enterprise networks or platforms

- support projects for the exploration of ways in which the linguistic resource available in migrant communities can be further developed with the specific aim of assisting the export effort of enterprises

Interpretation and translation

- New challenges: remote interpreting, outsourcing of translation, the expansion of IT language tools
- more attention to communication with the citizen through novel means (multilingual internet chats, multilingual web-streaming, web translation) and should be comprehensible
- need for the training of the highly qualified interpreters and translators

< interpretation, translation >

- Schools of translation and interpretation should be encouraged to track the careers of their graduates
- for literary translation, continue to fund the translation of European literary works in the Culture 2007-Programm

Research

Four research areas

RA 1: Effectiveness of informal language learning; long-term effects of early language learning

- Language learning and emotion
- Long-term effects of early language learning

RA 2: The Management of multilingualism in Europe in a variety of contexts

- New needs in language mediation in a changing multilingual environment
- Second- and third-generation immigrant speakers of non-European languages
- Receptive multilingualism

< research >

RA 3: Language and social integration

- Comprehensive integration policies and practices
- Interlingual dialogue – new forms and needs

RA 4: Language – identity – political power

- The strengthening of regional and minority languages, and language needs arising from expansion, integration, migration, and globalisation
- Languages as instruments of political power

Not only economic benefits

through multilingualism

enhanced levels in cognitive skills:
- changes in perspective
- empathy
- creative thinking, etc.