

# FINAL REPORT

## SYNTHESIS REPORT

### SECTION TWO

#### PROPOSALS FOR NEW ORIENTATION AND NEW ACTIVITIES

Part II Section 2 of the Final Report is a synthesis of the final sections of the National Reports, headed "Measures to be taken to satisfy the needs identified". It draws on a synthesis report prepared for the Stockholm Conference by Martin Forstner, Vice-President of C.I.U.T.I.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The national experts on the Scientific Committee were advised to consider the new measures under three headings:

- measures to be taken in the areas of initial and in-service language teacher training
- measures to be taken in universities (outside the area of teacher training)
- measures to be taken in non-university institutions of higher education (outside the area of teacher training)

Under each heading they were to consider the measures with regard to three different levels of responsibility: institutions, regional and national authorities and the European Union. This structure was chosen so as to enable readers more easily to compare the measures proposed by the various rapporteurs. In the event, things did not quite work out that way. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by institutions of higher education differs from one Member State to another. This means that measures that in one State are within the responsibility of the institutions may, in the case of another State, well be within the responsibility of the regional or national authorities. Generally, there is less overlap between the institutions and the regional and national authorities on the one hand and the European Union on the other.

Such information is, of course, of value once attempts are made to put the measures proposed into practice. In the context of this report, however, it is more important to identify and spell out the measures proposed by the rapporteurs than to state in each case whose responsibility is at stake.

#### 2. LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

##### 2.1 Initial training

*Measures to bring education and training into line with professional needs*

Most rapporteurs share the opinion that the programmes currently offered fall far short of the professional requirements and that a fundamental re-orientation is needed to meet the challenge of a multi-lingual and multi-cultural Europe.

In this context a number of experts propose projects like the following.

(i) A survey of language teachers at primary and secondary level to determine their evaluation of their initial training, their perception of their needs in in-service training and their perception of their needs in the area of higher degrees (Denmark and Ireland; cf. also Belgium).

(ii) A review of existing provision in education and training with specific reference to the needs of language teachers, including initial training, in-service provision and higher degrees (Denmark and Ireland).

Projects like these could be conducted at either regional or national or at European level.

As was explained in Part II,1 of this Report, the experts themselves have fairly clear ideas of what the needs of language teachers are and where the main thrust in the respective programmes should be, and they urge institutions and authorities thoroughly to revise existing programmes, giving priority to linguistic and transcultural competence, applied linguistics and language teaching methodology.

What some experts seem to have in mind is a core curriculum for language teacher education and training in the European Union guaranteeing a common core of knowledge and skills required of all language teachers.

#### *Measures to guarantee acceptable levels of linguistic competence*

(i) Introduction of compulsory language entrance tests at the beginning of programmes.

(ii) Introduction of intensive pre-study language modules for languages not currently taught at school. Provision of remedial language courses in cases where schools fail to provide a sufficiently high level of proficiency.

(iii) Introduction of an obligatory study-related stay abroad (3-10 months) as part of the programmes (study abroad or language assistantship). Related to this is the proposal that mobility programmes should give priority to students following courses leading to a language teaching qualification. In this context a number of rapporteurs point out that more funds will be needed to support study abroad.

(iv) Agreement among those responsible on a minimum acceptable level of linguistic competence to be required of all future language teachers at the end of their training and introduction of language examinations designed to test this competence.

#### *Measures to promote the diversity of language provision at school level*

(i) Changes in regional or national regulations concerning language teaching at school level to allow the teaching of all the EU languages, including the less widely used and less widely taught languages.

(ii) Introduction of degree programmes in all EU languages hitherto not represented in the school curriculum so as to allow students to obtain teaching qualifications in these languages. Additional funds will have to be made available for this. It is, however, felt to be unrealistic to expect all universities to offer the full range of language programmes, and a division of labour is called for in this respect. A number of rapporteurs also consider the possibility of enabling students to study a minority language in the target language country if appropriate courses are not available in their home country.

(iii) Course and exam regulations should be made more flexible. Students studying towards a language teaching qualification should be allowed to and indeed encouraged to study two languages to degree level. They should be further encouraged to combine a majority and a minority language.

(iv) Students studying towards a language teaching qualification should be encouraged to learn another foreign language in addition to their major language(s). Regional and national authorities should allow qualified language teachers to teach languages for which they do not hold a teaching qualification provided they have the minimum linguistic competence required. Such additional qualifications should be regarded as bonus points in the recruitment of language teachers.

(v) Linguistic diversity at school level implies that for a number of languages the teaching and learning objectives will normally be limited to receptive skills. Future language teachers should, therefore, be made familiar with methods of teaching receptive skills.

(vi) The new technologies are felt by some rapporteurs to provide particular opportunities for the teaching and learning of the minority languages -- just as they seem to have great potential for intercultural communication and self-study in general, and institutions are urged to make appropriate provision in this area.

The importance attached to language teaching methodology and applied linguistics in language teacher education and training leads a number of experts to call for renewed and concerted research efforts in these areas. The departments concerned should increase recruitment to postgraduate study in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology, and language teachers should have the opportunity to study on these post-graduate programmes.

## **2.2 In-service teacher training**

Here the experts hardly go beyond what was listed in II,1 under "new needs".

(i) Language teachers should have guaranteed access to in-service training once a year.

(ii) Those responsible for in-service training should co-operate at a European level, opening up opportunities for teachers to attend courses abroad. Mobility programmes should be extended to in-service training.

(iii) Just as language teachers should have the opportunity to follow post-graduate programmes, language teacher mobility should be given renewed attention. Teachers should be encouraged to spend a period of time in a minority language country, where they would have the opportunity to learn the national language to a level of proficiency required of language teachers.

## **2.3 Measures within the responsibility of the European Union**

All the experts look to the European Union for support in the continuation and expansion of student and staff mobility, including the mobility of language teachers in school education. They also see a special role for the European Union in the introduction of the new media to the areas of language teaching and learning and in-service training.

More significantly, however, a number of experts propose measures designed to help bring about the improvement and innovation in language teacher education and training deemed necessary in view of the new professional and social linguistic needs.

(i) The EU should support inter-university co-operation in language teacher education and training, particularly in joint curriculum development.

(ii) The European Commission should help set up a project or projects intended to thrash out recommendations for the content and even structure of language teacher education and training and for minimum acceptable levels of attainment.

The experts seem to believe that entrenched attitudes in institutions and regional or national authorities can best be overcome by initiatives which are the result of European cooperative efforts and which are seen to have the support of the European Union. Linked to this is the expectation that initiatives like the ones mentioned above would further the recognition of study abroad and of language teaching qualifications throughout the European Union and, thereby, promote the mobility of both language teacher trainees and language teachers.

### **3. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN UNIVERSITIES (OUTSIDE THE AREA OF TEACHER TRAINING)**

#### **3.1 Traditional language degree programmes (incl. postgraduate studies)**

##### **Undergraduate programmes**

While the experts tacitly or explicitly express the opinion that in modern language programmes the link between study and professional life will continue to be a less direct one than in other subject areas, they recognise that students following these courses have to be equipped with skills and knowledge that will be of use to them in professional life. A number of experts suggest that, at national level, working groups should be convened, bringing together representatives of the institutions, the regional and/or national authorities and professional organisations to consider the question of new professional opportunities for modern language graduates.

Among the concrete measures proposed by the experts themselves are the following.

(i) The teaching, learning and testing of linguistic competence should be a key element in modern language programmes. To this end, the following measures are proposed:

- special entrance exams
- intensive pre-study courses in languages not normally available at school
- an obligatory study period abroad
- increased availability of modern technology and the development of its use in language programmes
- the development of language proficiency test methods - initially at national, ultimately European level

(ii) Introduction of "intercultural communication" into language programmes

(iii) In countries where language programmes are normally offered as single courses, introduction of courses combining the study of two languages, one of them preferably a less widely used language.

(iv) Extension of the range of languages offered as degree courses to include the less widely taught and less widely used European languages.

(v) Development of receptive language skills modules for the less widely used and less widely taught languages. Language students should be encouraged to do these in addition to their language majors. Such modules should have a marked intercultural profile.

### **Postgraduate programmes**

A number of experts advocate increased recruitment to PhD programmes in the area of languages. Among the recommendations are the following.

- (i) Introduction of taught postgraduate programmes.
- (ii) Greater internationalisation of postgraduate studies.
- (iii) Increased postgraduate student mobility leading to the setting up of European graduate schools. The experts feel that the European authorities should play a major role in such initiatives.

### **3.2 'Alternative' programmes**

A number of experts - notably those from Spain, Finland, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden - advocate the introduction of alternative interdisciplinary degree programmes outside the context of the Arts degree, similar to the European studies and area studies programmes set up in the United Kingdom and Applied Language Studies programmes offered, for example, in France and the United Kingdom. Again, the study of two languages is deemed desirable.

Three proposals worth reporting are made in this context.

- (i) Alternative programmes should also be offered at postgraduate level (Finland).
- (ii) The non-language components of such courses should at least partly be taught in the foreign language. For this foreign experts should be brought in, be it through staff mobility programmes, be it through appropriate work contracts (France).
- (iii) Where the setting up and running of alternative programmes exceeds the expertise available in individual institutions, institutions in different Member States should consider the possibility of jointly designing and offering such programmes.

### **3.3 The training of translators and interpreters**

A large number of experts call for the introduction of specialised programmes for the training of translators and interpreters. Three points stand out in this context.

- (i) The training of translators and interpreters should be professionalised.
- (ii) The training of translators and interpreters should include the whole range of European languages (and, by implication, of non-European languages).
- (iii) Translation studies should also be offered at postgraduate level.

The experts seem reluctant to formulate specific curricular recommendations. It is certainly not by chance that the expert from Ireland calls for the setting up of a body to advise on the professionalisation of the profession of translator - and, one would like to add, of interpreter - in her

country and the development of a framework for the professionalisation of translation (and interpreting) at European level.

### **3.4 Research**

All the experts seem to be worried that language studies might degenerate into mere language teaching, and they all emphasise the need for teaching to be properly underpinned by research. What sets their pleas for a proper regard for research apart from the general claim about the overriding importance of research prevalent in academia is the fact that the experts are also concerned about the quality of research. For them, research is linked to the central role of language in the creation of Europe; they see research in language studies primarily as applied research. Some of the experts would like to see a coherent national and, maybe, European research policy. It is in this context that the Irish expert calls for a study of the need for research in the area of modern languages.

Among the concrete proposals for research projects made by the experts are studies and surveys of the state of affairs in a number of areas of language studies and of the professional and social needs relevant to language studies. Also, the learning and teaching of languages are felt to be valid fields of research. In general, the experts call for a Europeanization of postgraduate studies and research.

### **3.5 Language provision for students of other disciplines**

In the section on new needs, it was pointed out that all the experts see a need for quantitative and qualitative improvement in this field -- a need which most institutions will be unable to satisfy unless substantially increased funding is made available for this purpose. However, a number of experts also stress the importance of establishing what current provision there is and what the linguistic needs of non-language students are. It is clear that students will need languages in at least three areas: study at home, study abroad, and professional life - ignoring, for a moment, the more general needs emanating from their being citizens of a multi-lingual Europe. What is not so clear is to what extent these students need specialised language provision oriented towards their field of study and/or their future professions.

Among the measures proposed for a radical improvement in provision are the following.

(i) All non-language students should be given the opportunity to acquire a good working knowledge in two, possibly more than two foreign languages. To this end, language options should be introduced into all non-language degree programmes. A number of experts go even further demanding the integration of language study into all non-language degree programmes.

(ii) Non-language students should be given credits for successfully completed language work.

(iii) Language provision for students of other disciplines should focus on two areas: high-level competence in the "school" languages; the less widely used languages. As for the latter, survival courses as well as courses limited to one or two skills should be introduced.

(iv) Staff charged with the teaching of service courses should have the opportunity to attend in-service training courses.

(v) ERASMUS students should be invited to work as language tutors.

(vi) Working groups should be set up to fix and describe graded levels of linguistic achievement and to develop, for all the Union languages, proficiency tests related to the levels identified. This kind of work, which has already started in a number of Member States, should be conducted at European level.

(vii) Priority should be given to the development of self-access facilities, including the use of modern technology.

(viii) Part of the teaching in non-language programmes should be done in a foreign language, preferably by foreign experts.

(ix) A number of experts believe that one way of improving provision lies in the setting up of language centres in universities. The French expert sees the language centre as a unit having wide-ranging responsibilities -- not only in the area of service courses, but also in research and in providing a service to traditional specialist courses.

### **3.6 Measures within the responsibility of the European Union**

In the previous sections, repeated mention was made of areas where the European Union should lend support and provide orientation. This is a list of the measures and areas mentioned most frequently.

(i) Continued support for student mobility and increased support for staff mobility and joint curriculum development.

(ii) Increased support for European co-operation in the area of research, including postgraduate mobility.

(iii) Support for a survey of the language needs of exchange students coming to a foreign country where they do not speak the language.

(iv) Support for the joint development of language courses.

(v) Support for the joint introduction of distance education and new technologies into regular teaching practices.

## **4. MEASURES TO BE TAKEN IN NON-UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (OUTSIDE THE AREA OF TEACHER TRAINING)**

A majority of experts believe that the quantity and quality of language provision in these institutions is unsatisfactory. Almost all of them consider language study only in relation to non-language subjects and non-linguist professions.

The experts from Germany and Greece, however, also see a role for non-university institutions in preparing students for linguist professions other than teaching. The German report speaks of "training centres for interpreters" - and, presumably, translators as well -, which should pay more attention to the less widely used languages than has hitherto been the case and which should concentrate on the training of experts who can translate or interpret from one or two foreign languages into their mother tongue. One expert (Spain) calls for the introduction of mixed degree programmes combining languages and non-language subjects.

Among the measures advocated by the experts are the following.

- (i) Workshops should be set up and projects conducted to identify the language needs in major professional areas. The European Union should promote the co-operation of senior academic specialists, employers and executive staff of multinational companies.
- (ii) The language programmes offered by these institutions should be directly oriented towards specific professional areas and, wherever possible, integrated into the courses proper.
- (iii) Language programmes should be extended to areas for which they have not normally been provided in the past.
- (iv) The European Union should support the development of new teaching materials geared to the professional needs identified. These materials should be based on proper research.
- (v) Because of the variety of subject areas and professional fields involved, special attention should be given to the integration of self-access and multimedia facilities into the language programmes. The expert from Austria proposes the development of "learning packages" for different levels to be designed and produced by inter-disciplinary working groups.
- (vi) Language programmes should be restructured. In addition to the two hours per week, which seems to be the norm in many cases, intensive courses should be introduced. The language provision should be modularised.
- (vii) The degree or diploma exam should have a language exam as a separate and distinct part.
- (viii) Levels of achievement, assessment criteria and certification should be standardised -- not only at national, but eventually also at European level.
- (ix) European support for co-operation between these institutions should be stepped up.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

As will have become clear, the measures proposed by the national experts vary in character. They do not constitute ready-made action plans. Some of the measures proposed are very concrete and, given enough resources and some good will, could be realised at short notice. Others are more controversial and in danger of becoming topics of endless debates. Others are still rather vague and require further reflection. All the authors agree that in view of the urgent linguistic needs posed by European integration decisive action is required and that such action should, wherever possible, be taken at European level, with the support of the European authorities. Comprehensive European projects of the kind proposed by some of the experts might well be the most promising first step towards much needed improvement and innovation.