

# THE FRENCH MODERN LANGUAGE POLICY

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*“The polyphony of languages echoes the polyphony of the minds which is at the core of European culture.”*

- Renaud DONEDIEU DE VABRES, French Minister of Culture
  - *Palais Royal, Paris, November 8, 2004*

# THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

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- 2000: Lisbon summit

- 2001:

European Year of Languages

*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*

*European Language Portfolio*

*European Day of Languages* declared an annual event

- From 2001:

The CEFRL and different ELP's have been published in French for students at primary and secondary levels

# FRANCE & INTERNATIONAL SURVEYS

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- 2000-2003: French pupils were assessed in the *PISA*, *PIRLS* and *TIMSS* surveys.
- 2002-2005: *The European Network of Policy Makers for the Evaluation of Education Systems* conducted surveys on skills in English as a second language in 8 European countries. French students showed weaknesses in aural comprehension and writing.

# A GROWING AWARENESS

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- The teaching of languages has to be improved in France
- The sooner a language is taught, the better the students perform.
- Teaching languages at school cannot be limited to teaching communicative skills. It is part of the language teacher's mission to contribute to the students' general education by broadening their cultural references.
- English, no matter its predominance, cannot be dealt with separately in any language policy

# THE NATIONAL CONTEXT: a few key dates

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- 2002-2006: New curricula for all modern languages in France at all levels.
- 2004: National debate on education / *Thélot report*.
- 2005: *Law on guidance and curricula for the future of School and Decree concerning the teaching of modern languages in France* (Adoption of the CEFRL by France).
- 2006: *Note on the renewal of teaching practices for modern languages in France*.
- 2006 (July): Definition of the content of the *Common base of knowledge and skills* for the education for each and everyone in France.

# A CONCERN FOR COHERENCE

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2002-2006  
RENEWED CURRICULA FOR MODERN  
LANGUAGES  
FROM PRIMARY SCHOOL  
TO THE BACCALAURÉAT

APRIL 2005  
LAW ON GUIDANCE  
AND CURRICULA  
FOR THE FUTURE  
OF THE SCHOOL

2005-2008  
A NATIONAL PLAN  
FOR THE RENEWAL OF TEACHING PRACTICES IN  
MODERN LANGUAGES

# THE LAW

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- A **common base of knowledge and skills** which includes “the ability to communicate in at least one language other than the first.”
- A **language committee** in each local educational authority in charge of seeing to the **diversity** and **continuity** of the language offer from primary school to the end of secondary school.

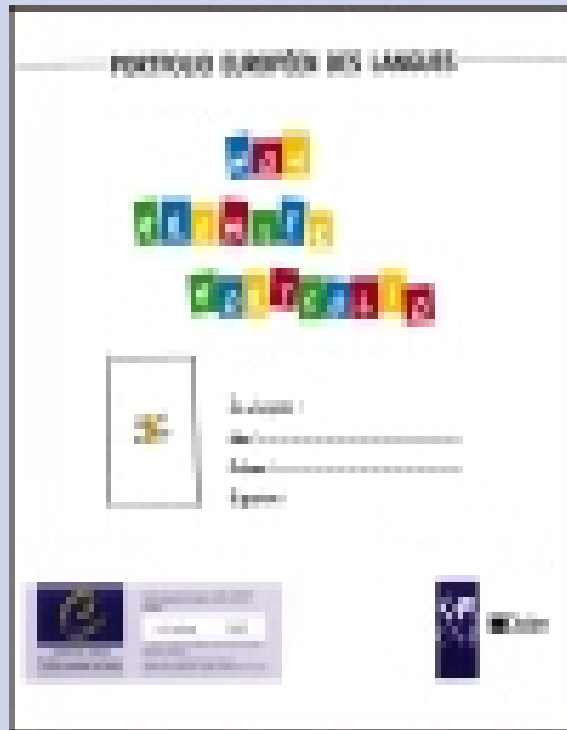
# IN THE WAKE OF THE LAW

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- The first foreign language is taught to all pupils from age 8 (and will be taught from age 7 from 2007).
- The second foreign language will be gradually introduced for all students from 12 (second year of junior school).
- Certifications in cooperation with foreign European assessment bodies will be introduced.
- Creating interfaces between primary and secondary school, general and vocational high-schools.



# THE TWO FRENCH PORTFOLIOS



# THE MINIMUM ATTAINMENT TARGET FOR THE FIRST FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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## ■ **Knowledge:**

- learning about a different culture;
- learning how to use a linguistic code (vocabulary, grammar, spelling and sounds).

## ■ **Skills:** being able to communicate simply but with appropriate language in daily life situations.

## ■ **Attitudes:**

- taking cultural differences into account;
- understanding other ways of thinking and acting;
- going beyond stereotypes.

# ATTAINMENT TARGETS FOR ALL IN FRENCH SCHOOLS

	<i>Modern language n°1</i>	<i>Modern language n°2</i>
<i>End of primary school</i>	<b>A1</b>	
<i>End of compulsory education</i>	<b>B1</b>	<b>A2/B1</b>
<i>End of secondary school</i>	<b>B2</b>	<b>B2</b>

# THE CULTURAL CONTENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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- Language is culture-bound.
- The culture focus gives coherence to language schemes, whatever language is concerned.
- The communicative approach gains from being associated with a cultural approach.

# CULTURAL NOTIONS COMMON TO ALL LANGUAGE CURRICULA

<i>Level</i>	<i>Cultural themes to be studied</i>
<i>Junior school</i>	a) Tradition and Modernity b) Here and There
<i>First year at high school</i>	Living together
<i>Second year at high school</i>	Relations of power
<i>Third year at high school</i>	Relations to the outside world

# A DUAL VIEW OF CULTURE

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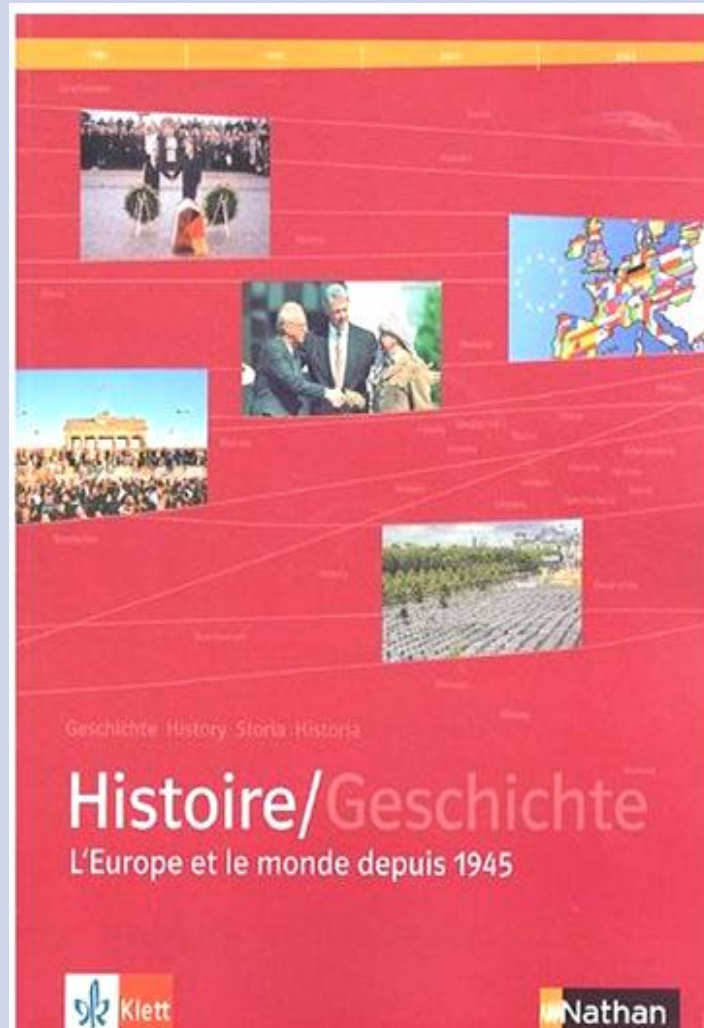
- a body of beliefs and social forms ;
- facts and works of art that are to be transmitted as « heritage culture ».

# CREATING A COMMON LANGUAGE TEACHER CULTURE

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- A common approach with a focus on the link between language and culture;
- A common role in the shaping of a European identity;
- Common attainment targets;
- Common teaching techniques and common assessment practices.

# A FRENCH-GERMAN HISTORY TEXTBOOK for high school students





# EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL SECTIONS

## ■ *European and Eastern sections*

- ✓ created in 1992
- ✓ characteristics: reinforced teaching in a foreign language + non linguistic subject taught in the foreign language (CLIL)
- ✓ certification thanks to a “Euro mention” on the baccalaureate.

## ■ *International sections*

- ✓ created in 1881
- ✓ welcome French and foreign pupils
- ✓ teachers are both French and foreign
- ✓ the curriculum is designed following an agreement between the educational authorities of the two countries concerned.
- ✓ Certification by the OIB.

# PROMOTING NEW EUROPEAN CERTIFICATIONS ALONGSIDE THE FRENCH EXAMS

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- **New Language Certifications** in cooperation with European assessment bodies for some pupils, on a voluntary basis.
- Towards **dual-national certification** at the level of the baccalauréat on the Abibac model.

# TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR RENEWED PRACTICES (1)

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- Focus on aural comprehension and oral production;
- Possibility of creating language groups that are different from class groups;
- Possibility of creating intensive language sessions in the school year.

# TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR RENEWED PRACTISES (2)

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- Smaller language groups at lycée level to develop oral skills;
- Developing access to multimedia resources in all schools;
- Working in closer collaboration with the language assistants;
- Assessing all language skills with relevant criteria in accordance with the CEFR;
- Introducing oral tests in all exams.

# TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY FOR TEACHER TRAINING

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- A bilateral agreement was signed in 2003 between the French director of Higher Education and the British Under Secretary of State for Schools.
  - Creation of a four-week trainee exchange programme for Initial Teacher Training.
  - Agreement on a common assessment instrument to define the competences, skills and expectations for trainees whilst on school placement abroad.

# A BILINGUAL COMMON REFERENCE FRAMEWORK



# CURRENT ISSUES ABOUT THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGES

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- Teachers find it hard to assimilate the theory behind the CEFR. They turn to the ELP's instead.
- The language teachers feel they are torn between international attainment targets and national curricula.

# CURRENT ISSUES: EVALUATION

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- How to assess language skills?
- How to evaluate receptive skills ?
- How to evaluate inter-cultural skills?