

LANGUAGE RICH EUROPE

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES



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FOREWORD

Through Language Rich Europe (LRE) we have aimed to promote greater co-operation between policy makers and practitioners in Europe in developing good policies and practices for multilingualism. Such policies will ensure that languages and cultural exchange continue to be promoted and encouraged at school, university and in social and economic life. We believe that this is essential if Europeans of all ages are to develop a broader international outlook and if Europe as a whole is to position itself successfully to do business with the world's emerging economic powers in the 21st century.

This closing report was commissioned by the British Council to provide an overview of the European and local recommendations that came out of LRE and in the likelihood that new opportunities can be found for the further development of what has already been achieved. Authored by Lid King, Director, the Languages Company and the project's Exploitation Partner, the report provides a fresh look at the multitude of outputs generated by LRE. In a concise way, we are guided to a clear understanding of the project's recommendations for Europe and the responses of European agencies. It also shows the interrelation between local recommendations, both national and regional, the result of fruitful, close collaboration of over 30 project partners over three years.

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1 WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE RICH EUROPE PROJECT?

Language Rich Europe is a network funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. It was co-ordinated by the British Council which also made a significant financial contribution and elicited the support of sponsors¹. Probably more important than this financial and organisational underpinning, however, was the fact that the British Council, traditionally associated with its global support for British culture and the English language was taking a lead on a project which was unequivocally promoting multilingualism within Europe. The Language Rich Europe partnership involved 20 countries and three regions and in addition to the British Council offices it brought together over 30 partners – cultural agencies such as Instituto Camões and the Goethe-Institut, universities, and research and information centres. A particular role was played by Tilburg University whose colleagues developed and co-ordinated the Europe-wide research which was published in 19 languages in *Language Rich Europe: Trends in Policies and Practices for Multilingualism in Europe*.²

Products and processes

This Language Rich Europe publication, and its supporting website – www.language-rich.eu – are major outcomes of the network which will continue to inform policy, research and curriculum development on multilingualism. Of equal importance have been the processes – information gathering, discussion and debate, dissemination – which led to those outcomes. They also have a life of their own and will continue in different ways at European, national and also regional and city level, even after the formal end of the funded project in March 2013. It is in order to capture some of that process and its main conclusions that we offer this final overview of what has been achieved and where we might be heading for the rest of the decade.

This short review is based on a wealth of material produced by this 'document rich' project. This includes the original country reports and research first published in the consultation drafts of the Language Rich Europe *Trends in Policies and Practices* document and contained in the final version, as well as the detailed reports of the 21 launches and 54 workshops which were carried out nationally and regionally in order to consider this core document from both national and European perspectives. It also takes into account the discussions at the Language Rich Europe London Conference that took place at the British Academy in December 2012, the Final Conference that took place in March 2013 in Brussels at the European Economic and Social Committee and the final reports/action proposals from each partner. Key project documents are available at www.language-rich.eu

An ambitious approach

The original idea of Language Rich Europe was to produce a kind of indicator of *Multilingual-ness*. To what extent were the aspirations of the European idea – the 'unity in diversity' of the European Union or the vision of languages as a 'source of mutual enrichment and understanding' of the Council of Europe – reflected in the actual practices of states and societies and citizens? To that end an analysis was made of the main documents – treaties, protocols, frameworks – which have over time contributed to multilingualism as a policy.

¹ Rosetta Stone. Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press

² Cambridge University Press, November 2012

Table – Some key elements of European language policy

European Union		Council of Europe	
1980s Incentive measures for multilingualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages - Erasmus - Lingua 	1950s–1990s Supporting languages for all (democratic citizenship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unit credit scheme - Guidance on Communicative Language Teaching - Workshops – ICT, Autonomy, exchanges - Establishment of ECML in Graz
1990s Co-operation and support for mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maastricht Treaty (1992) 	1990s Regional and minority languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) - Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995)
1995–2004 Supporting the 'knowledge society'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White Paper – Towards the Learning Society - Lisbon Strategy - Barcelona Council 	1995–2004 Intercultural communication Plurilingualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
2001 Coherence, awareness raising, information European year of languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Language Label - Eurobarometer 	2001 Coherence, awareness raising, information European year of languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEFR - European Language Portfolio
2000s Promoting mobility as a right Supporting quality in language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action Plan (2003) - Increased support through funded programmes 	2000s Planning, curricular development, assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CEFR - European Language Portfolio development
2005 Growth/social cohesion/ individual fulfilment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Framework Strategy for Multilingualism - Action Plan 	2003–11 Language policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language Education Policy Profiles in 15 countries or regions
2007 Diversity an asset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multilingualism Commissioner - Lifelong Learning Programme - Communication – an 'Asset and shared commitment' (2008) 	2005 Languages of schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conferences and Reports

Using the key European documentation as a framework, the LRE research team developed 260 questions on the policy and practice of multilingualism. These were divided across eight 'domains' (five broad ones with education also sub-divided into four areas):

- Official documents and databases
- Pre-primary education
- Primary education
- Secondary education
- Further and higher education
- Audiovisual media and press
- Public services and spaces
- Business

The responses to these key questions were analysed in order to develop an overview of the situation in each of the participating countries and regions. These were complemented in each case by a country report written by local experts. The questions themselves provide a useful tool for self-assessment of, for example, a city or a company in relation to languages. When analysed by national experts they also provided a picture of the extent to which multilingualism is integrated into national, regional, or indeed local authority or company policy.

Of course such an approach can be seen as simplistic and it can have its limitations. Although it is relatively straightforward to map publicly documented and reported issues such as educational provision – for example, starting age, teacher qualifications, languages offered – this information does not necessarily tell us much about actual implementation or indeed about actual performance (outcomes). Outside compulsory education it is much harder to provide a comprehensive picture of reality based on a rather small sample of universities. When it comes to companies and urban centres the task is even more daunting. There is undoubtedly an element of chance and subjectivism in such analyses.

Perhaps inevitably such shortcomings gave rise to some criticism that the country reviews were incomplete or one sided:

There was general agreement that the report provided a useful snapshot of multilingualism in the French context but could not be considered totally representative given the relatively small data sampling size... There was recognition that some of the questions were difficult to apply to the French legislative context, specifically concerning signature of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages... There is a need to diversify the sampling to include a larger number of cities and sectors to ensure that the data is more representative. A larger number of business sectors should also be included in future profiles.

(FRANCE – September workshop report)

Because this was a dynamic network, far from being a problem such critical discussions actually became part of the process of analysis. One consequence was that the original idea of comparative indicators was modified. In any case the dangers of crude comparisons between jurisdictions – league tables, for example – were well understood as something not conducive to real understanding and change, not least because they were politically 'difficult'. Instead the different criteria (indicators) were used more for self-analysis, mutual discussion of challenges and priorities and exchange of ideas:

There are interesting correlations between countries that are quite far apart but have struggles with similar linguistic landscapes; this gives you a broader perspective, European dimension.

(Researcher quoted by external evaluator)

An important strength of Language Rich Europe was its decision to embrace the element of subjectivism, rather than see it as an obstacle. Instead of claiming to have carried out a rigorously scientific analysis, the Language Rich Europe findings were presented as an overview of various indicators of multilingualism for discussion and debate among key players and stakeholders. They were also supplemented with the expert overviews of the state of the nations (and regions) which could provide all important context to the specific issues reflected in the list of indicators. This led to an extremely rich series of national debates – some still ongoing – which resulted in both national and international (European) proposals for further action. During 2012, 21 launch events took place across Europe and these were followed by 54 national workshops, whose conclusions fed into the international London conference in December 2012 and the final conference in Brussels in March 2013.

A potent methodology

As a number of the participants observed, Language Rich Europe was also characterised by ambition. Not content to record what was easy to measure (school provision, qualifications, for example) it also boldly went to places which are more difficult to encapsulate, such as the contribution of the media, public spaces and employers. Given the interactive nature of the process this seems completely justifiable, and something which needs to be built upon in the future.

The broader focus beyond education is very important; it has not been done much.

(Educationalist)

If we are really to understand the realities of diverse and multilingual Europe we need to go beyond the proclamations and decisions of policy makers – whether European, national, regional or local – and to understand how these aspirations (or sometimes blockages) are reflected in the real lives of real citizens. By extending its remit from policy and educational provision to media, urban spaces and employment, this is exactly what Language Rich Europe began to do.

Despite any shortcomings in the range of data acquired, this provides the basis for a more comprehensive view of European multilingualism – in practice rather than simply in theory. This innovative approach – examining languages **in use** rather than simply analysing policies and frameworks – was commented on both by partners and by many stakeholders:

We should study more the data in education, in society and in particular deep research on the city.

(University researcher)

We specially plan to focus more on the domain of business in the future; we have planned to organise a seminar on languages for jobs.

(Policy maker)

The final publication itself comments on this approach as follows:

We believe that the findings presented here go beyond the current state of our knowledge with regard to language policies and practices in Europe from four different perspectives:

- the high number of participating European countries and regions – 25
- the spectrum of chosen language varieties in the constellation of languages in Europe – foreign, regional or minority, immigrant and national languages
- the range of chosen language domains within and beyond education to include business, public services and spaces in cities and media
- the publication and dissemination of the outcomes, in 20 languages.

Of particular value are the second and third of these elements – the range of languages and domains – and this is something that we would like to see developed more in future surveys and data collections.

2 TOP DOWN OR BOTTOM UP? LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL, GLOBAL

So what are the conclusions of Language Rich Europe, and what kind of future do they suggest for the multilingual European dream?

As often, the answer to the question could depend on one's perspective. For another challenging aspect of the project was the fact that it sought to combine local (city level), regional, national and European perspectives and so to discover potentially different answers to the question of what the future might hold. Although we began with an analysis of policy at European level, this provided not so much clear cut answers, as a framework for discussion and debate. The most interesting data was unearthed in the more subjective realities of citizens' lives – at work, in education and in their leisure time. Here the model varied depending on national and local factors, on history, culture and economics.

To take one obvious example, there seem to be rather different emphases between the discourse of older (especially Western) members of the European Union and the newer (in some cases non-member) more Eastern countries. In the former case, national priorities are clearly affirmed, often without much reference to European policies, whereas in the East, there is a much greater tendency towards seeing the European frameworks as a way of modernising or validating national initiatives.

Generally the audience accepted the LRE report with high interest and agreement. For many people it was particularly interesting to see the similarities in language policy of other European countries and Ukraine (many trends in Lithuania and Ukraine are quite similar). It was generally agreed that this is a good basis for further research in the language policy and practice areas...

...(the) focus of interest was in modern trends in the system of education of European countries, successful practices and lessons learnt.

(UKRAINE Workshop discussion)

Understandably, also, the three main representatives of regional languages – Catalonia, Friesland and Wales – had specific priorities for the defence and promotion of lesser used languages, or 'non hegemonic' languages as the Welsh colleagues described them.

Raising awareness of why Welsh and other languages are useful is key. Also letting people know where to turn for support in developing languages strategies.

(WALES Workshop discussion)

There is some reflection of these concerns in the conclusions of the countries in the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Romania, for example):

It was felt that a discussion is necessary along the lines of (a) definition of...(minority) languages; (b) opening access to them across linguistic identities; and (c) the potential role of national and regional communities in supporting those languages... As well as a 'minority language', Turkish can be viewed as a 'neighbouring language' or as a 'foreign language'. In this case, the study of Turkish could be seen as of wider interest, including economic, to more learners.

(BULGARIA workshop discussion)

However, it is probably fair to say that for many countries priorities were more about the interrelations between national languages – in particular the impact of English – and the relatively newer phenomenon of immigrant languages.

There was general consensus that the diversity of languages in the population was not appreciated in the school setting... making it difficult for pupils to relate language learning in school to a broader social context.

(FRANCE workshop discussion)

Issues discussed on education: The number of languages taught at school, and language diversity (which does not reflect reality). English taking over foreign language education everywhere.

(SPAIN workshop discussion)

We consider some of these national and regional divergences in greater detail in Section 4. It is, however, salient to ask whether such divergence undermines the relevance of the Language Rich Europe conclusions. Are they to be seen as – at best – a collection of different opinions circling around a number of key challenges and never therefore to be resolved except at local or national level? Or on the other hand might it not be possible to find some level of unity in this divergence?

In the first place, as we shall see, there was also a significant degree of convergence in the views developed over two years: so much so that the partners were able to agree ten high level proposals to publish in the final conference. Perhaps even more interesting in respect of the process involved, was that even where there was difference, there could also be agreement. To take the rather knotty example of regional/minority/immigrant languages and their relationship to national languages and major languages of communication, whereas the specific interrelation between language groups and priorities for action are seen differently in (say) London (UK), Leeuwarden (Friesland, Netherlands) and Iași (Romania), the principles which guide any action can still be shared ones. The existence of a varied ‘bottom up’ experience may even help that process by enriching it and guarding us against simplistic (‘hegemonistic’) conclusions. The experience of each city in promoting its own multilingualism can also be of help to the others. That also is a strength of Language Rich Europe.

3 EUROPEAN CONVERGENCE – THE TEN RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite some levels of ambiguity and despite the many understandable variations of emphasis across Europe, the Language Rich Europe project did nonetheless demonstrate a perhaps surprising commonality of concern about the policy and practice of multilingualism in Europe. We will set out some of the national variations in Section 4. Here we explain how it was possible to build on this rich local and national analysis and to derive from it ten agreed recommendations at European level.

Policy statements

As we have seen, the participants in *Language Rich Europe* (including the many stakeholders and identified experts) generally agreed that in terms of data, the survey provides a solid basis, but that in some areas more research is required. For example, the public services and spaces surveys and business questionnaires were not necessarily based on a representative sample. This highlights a general demand for more reliable data – on languages, on policies and on provision. Information is available in relation to languages in education, for example, in the regular Eurostat reports on language teaching, and this may need greater dissemination and publicity. There is, however, a strong case for more systematic data collection about languages as they are actually used in society as a basis for future planning. And there is a case for harmonising European statistics on language diversity as a long-term ambition at the European level. Despite its limitations the LRE data makes an important contribution in this respect, but more information is needed across the domains at the European level if we are to create coherent policies.

It was also reported that largely because of massively increased mobility, but also because of the particular position of English as a language learned, the interrelationships between languages – ‘national’, ‘mother tongue’, ‘foreign’, ‘minority’ – had changed since the 1990s and that a new conceptualisation of this was required. The current model assumes progression towards greater multilingualism through the acquisition of one or two new languages rather than through the development of intercultural competence involving different levels and uses of language.

It is also considered of central importance that all learners be given the support they need to master the language(s) of schooling, to acquire the academic competence that is essential for knowledge building and school success.

Recommendation 1

Steps should be taken to increase current knowledge about the languages spoken and used in different communities and countries throughout Europe, and on the relationships between languages; for example, through data on translations. An initial survey of existing census data should be compiled and relevant authorities should be encouraged to carry out further census/survey work in this area.

Recommendation 2

The European Commission’s trilingual formula of ‘mother tongue plus two’ should be updated and further developed. For many citizens ‘mother tongue’ is no longer the same as the national language. The particular position of English also means that in practice most citizens will learn English plus one, so it is rarely any ‘two’. A useful development of the formula could include the clear articulation of a linguistic profile.

Recommendation 3

Every child and adult should have the right to learn the official language of his/her country of residence to the level of academic fluency. Authorities should remove any major obstacles; for example, by providing free additional support.

Education

Despite some of the different emphases across the continent which are described above, there was in fact a remarkable level of common concern in relation to languages education. Many partners reported their concerns about:

■ The role of English

English is the most widely chosen language learned in school. A number of countries reported this as something which was becoming a substitute for multilingualism and which undermined diversity. There were also concerns expressed about the loss of domains for even established national languages as a result of the influence of English in higher studies, especially postgraduate.

■ Standards

The level of achievement in school language learning is a widely expressed concern, in particular for languages other than English. Very much related to this concern was the frequently articulated demand for further and improved training of language teachers.

■ Coherence

Many education systems are struggling to create coherence and continuity across all phases of language learning from primary to university, and between the different languages taught and the learning of the national language. There is also an identified disconnection between school and home/community learning. Although specific actions to address this issue are likely to take place at national level, there is, nevertheless, a place for further reflection and guidance at European level.

■ 'Immigrant' languages

Most countries reported a failure to support or value what some described as the 'gold mine' of immigrant languages. At a time when the need for an ever wider range of language skills is needed, this linguistic capital is generally neglected. In many countries a lack of understanding about teaching the national language to newcomers is also reported. The second class status of immigrant languages also arose in relation to issues of identity and social cohesion.

Recommendation 4

The particular position of English in Europe should be explicitly acknowledged, in order to propose a new model for the co-existence of languages in Europe. This would have implications for policy formulations, in particular the key objective of 'mother tongue plus 2'. It would also encourage more research and development work on the ways in which the position of English could be used to promote and support multi/plurilingualism rather than to undermine it. Finally it would mean that European funding streams, for example, the successor to the Lifelong Learning Programme, would prioritise support for languages other than English.

Recommendation 5

A priority of the new programmes should be to enable and encourage the mobility and further training of language teachers across Europe – there should be a specific 'Erasmus for teachers'. Linked to this, national governments should be encouraged to co-operate through mutual training provisions, the exchange of teachers, trainers and educators; and the removal of barriers to employment for teachers from other member states. Only such a level of co-operation will meet the needs of a multilingual Europe.

Recommendation 6

Research is needed at European level on the factors which favour both good language learning and the development of the plurilingual citizen, taking account of existing linguistic needs and capabilities and both in-school practice and informal learning in the community. The 2012 European Survey on Language Competences should be expanded and extended to address these questions and develop guidelines to inform national practice.

Recommendation 7

'Migrant,' 'immigrant,' 'community' languages should be explicitly recognised through appropriate instruments at European level. They should be eligible for more funding support in national and European policies. The offer of languages other than the national language(s) should be adapted so that all students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to learn the languages of their community, from pre-primary to university education. Where in-school support is not possible for less commonly spoken languages, education authorities should provide financial support for language learning outside of school and find ways to recognise the value of all these languages in the daily life of the school. Language skills should be developed for more inclusive societies and teaching should reflect the diversity of the student population.

Media and press

The LRE network reported considerable variation across the cities surveyed. However, the reality of multilingualism means that provision of diverse languages in the press and audiovisual media is largely market driven. Where there is demand for a wide range of linguistic and cultural products they are made available. They are available to some degree in every urban centre surveyed. The development of online – and relatively low cost – media has encouraged this tendency.

Some questions for national jurisdictions include the predominance of dubbing in some countries, although it seems unlikely that legislation could have much impact here as in many, if not all, cases this also reflects a cultural preference. Generally 'linguists' prefer subtitling to enable people to experience the real language, but if people prefer otherwise, this becomes a tricky issue to resolve. There is, however, a possible role at European level for the international organisations to take a lead in this area.

At national level there is also some evidence of resistance to the use of state funded television and radio for broadcasts of certain minority languages, for example, Turkish.

Recommendation 8

In their audiovisual and language policies and support, European-level institutions should opt for subtitling rather than dubbing as the best means to promote the language competences of citizens and officials in Europe.

Public Services and Spaces

This was not a major area for discussion or reporting. It is also likely to be a national rather than European concern. In general there was considerable variation in the provision of multilingual services and information across the cities surveyed. In many cases, the multilingualism was symbolic rather than actually functional and useful.

Recommendation 9

Good practice in multilingual communication modes (use of translation, interpretation, technology-assisted communication) should be researched and disseminated, using existing networks such as Eurocities. The European Capital of Culture programme should include criteria relating to communication for multi/plurilingual populations.

Business

Most countries reported an ambivalent attitude from business. This involved a stated commitment to multilingualism (mainly competence in English which was regarded as the main business language), but overall a lack of strategy, monitoring or rewards for language skills. In some countries the domination of English, for example in computer manuals, was described as demoralising. The current EU position that *multilingualism = profitability* does not seem to be reflected in the practice of the companies surveyed, where English is seen as essential and most other languages (beyond the national language) as an optional extra.

Recommendation 10

We should reassess the ways in which multilingualism increases trade and profitability. Research is needed into how successful companies actually engage in successful business exchanges across languages and cultures from an economic and sociological perspective rather than with a solely linguistic bias. This should provide case studies and practical guidance on negotiating the multilingual marketplace both for businesses and employees.

Taken together, these ten recommendations provide a clear perspective – in part consensual and in other parts perhaps more controversial – for the future development of multilingualism at European level. They are complemented by a series of national and regional recommendations and points for further clarification and discussion.

4 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS AND DIVERGENCES – THE NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the strong common themes which provided the basis for the ten European level recommendations, the country and regional reports demonstrated an understandable degree of diversity in terms of priorities and proposals for the future.

There were two main reasons why even strong national recommendations or conclusions were not incorporated in the final ten. Either they were clearly issues for national decision – curricular reform, national campaigns, for example – which by the regulations of subsidiarity would be pointless to raise at European level; or they were issues of particular concern to specific partners in particular circumstances. It may, however, be useful to consider some of these issues and to see how they interrelate with the broader European picture. At the very least this will provide material for further exchange and debate.

Policy issues

■ Lack of a European framework

Perhaps surprisingly, although European policies were the starting point for Language Rich Europe and a matter of considerable debate during the project, they were not greatly in evidence in the national recommendations. One partner (Lithuania) suggested the need to develop a strategy for implementing the ‘mother tongue plus 2’ policy (we discuss this issue in general as a European level recommendation) and a small number called for better use of European standards such as the Common European Framework of Reference (Greece, Ukraine), but most remained solidly national or regional in their discourse. This could of course be considered a positive in the sense that countries may have absorbed a European perspective into a national one without feeling any necessity to explicitly recognise the fact.

The decision-making bodies should consult with the European standards set out in the European Union and Council of Europe documents on multilingualism when developing policies in various spheres where linguistic issues are concerned.

(UKRAINE Recommendation 2)

Link foreign language teaching in public education with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or any other framework which makes language proficiency measurement comparable across Europe.

(GREECE Recommendation 1 – extract)

■ Language Strategies

A number of countries have recent experience of national language strategies (UK/England, France). Others saw this as an urgent current need in order to take forward the multilingual agenda, given the many areas of policy and civil society which are affected by language needs.

(We propose)... A white paper on multilingualism for Romania: concept, baseline study, recommendations, action plans to present to the policy makers at the governmental level...

(ROMANIA Recommendation 1)

■ Lip service to Policy

A linked issue raised by a number of countries was about the lack of implementation of policies which were on the statute book but had little impact in reality. This point was also mentioned in the Language Rich Europe publication (see for example p.12 – Discussion) and from evidence outside Language Rich Europe it seems likely to be a more widespread phenomenon:

...There is a high level of incongruence between national terminologies (and underlying concepts) and the international (European) ones. This makes the applicability of European standards of legislation on multilingual education, on regional and national minorities and on other (ethno-) linguistic communities questionable, as well as comparability and accuracy of monitoring reports leading social and political tension. Hence a concise description of what these terms actually (can) refer to in (international) law is required, by discussing the possible discrepancies and similarities that exist between the levels of international, European, national and regional law and by bringing into account the difficulty of adapting legal frameworks that were initially developed in the (early) second half of the 20th century to the changing social conditions we face now.

(HUNGARY Recommendation 1 – extract)

It was also implied that there was a dichotomy between policy aspirations and the reality on the ground in this area.

(We must)... Explore and implement the most efficient ways to achieve the Barcelona goal of ‘one plus two’ employing data collection, research and analysis on early, intensive, integrated, informal, etc. language learning.

(LITHUANIA Recommendation 3)

■ Language Planning and Language Status

The need for greater clarity was highlighted. This encompasses a large number of related and complex issues which the project uncovered but which need further clarification. As reported in the LRE publication, there are some terminological issues which confuse the relationships between languages: the considerable variation in the ways in which different language types are described and conceived – ‘foreign’, ‘minority’, ‘immigrant’, for example. Indeed these are not clear cut categories, as a given language may be any one of these, depending on context: Turkish, for example, can be ‘foreign’, ‘immigrant’ and a ‘mother tongue’, and the same applies to many languages, even major languages of communication. This was most clearly identified as an important obstacle to understanding by the French colleagues who called for a broader vision of multilingualism, but it also found echoes in other reports:

Language teaching would benefit from a broader vision which builds awareness of the diversity of languages and takes into account the languages spoken by pupils. Plural approaches, including an introduction to languages at primary level, allow pupils’ own language skills to be recognised, albeit symbolically, and neighbouring languages to be taken into account and so on.

(FRANCE Recommendation 1)

As well as the possible confusions in terminology there was much discussion and many suggestions about how to manage the relationship between languages and language types, as these are currently seen as unsatisfactory in many cases. This issue includes the interface between regional languages and state languages, in particular in countries where a regional language was also the national language of another state. Another area of uncertainty concerned the relative status of traditional regional/minority and immigrant languages which could be seen as in competition for resources. In most countries the potential and challenges of immigrant languages linked to the dramatic changes in the economy and mobility in the early 21st century were identified (see European Recommendation 7), and in a number of cases this was noted as a particularly sensitive political challenge given the current economic situation. As the LRE publication itself reported, in many contexts only lip service was paid to support for immigrant languages:

(We must)... Recognise Community languages³ – Europe-wide recognition of our community languages, enshrining them in our curricula and qualifications systems and recognising their social and economic value.

(UK Recommendation 1)

Support and resources (specifically qualified teachers) for first language teaching for children and adults with migrant background should be made available. We recommend more content integrated language teaching at schools and more offers of bilingual classes for children with and without migration background.

(AUSTRIA Recommendation 2)

Another common question which has a range of different manifestations across countries was the impact of the major languages of communication, in particular English, both on the national language and on the multilingual policies of member states. As a number of countries pointed out the use of English can be a challenge for national languages (Denmark), and more generally it can become a substitute for multilingual competence.

Incorporate languages of instruction other than English into the education system.

(DENMARK Recommendation 6)

This particular issue was of course also taken up in the European recommendations (Recommendation 4).

■ Data collection

The reports and recommendations identified significant variations in the amount of data and information available relating for example to educational provision, diversity and languages in use. A number of countries see this as critical in order to establish a more scientific basis for national reform.

Bosnia and Herzegovina lacks official nationwide data collection mechanisms on language diversity. These data collection mechanisms should be introduced if there is to be a realistic insight into the language diversity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Recommendation 1)

This also found a place in the recommendations at European level.

■ Campaigns and persuasion

In some countries the need to persuade both policy makers and key players, in particular the business community, about the importance of languages was also a priority. This was also linked to the need to develop a more strategic approach to multilingualism.

(There is a) need to raise awareness in commercial operators and service providers of why language is useful. Most nations in the world are in fact bilingual or multilingual and being comfortable with this can give an advantage to individuals competing for jobs or developing global opportunities for business.

(WALES Recommendation 3)

³ The common term in the UK for the languages of immigrant communities

Education

One of the findings of the Language Rich Europe study was the relative importance given to formal education, and particularly compulsory education in existing policy provision, compared, for example, to non-formal education or languages in work and society. Not surprisingly then, the project partners appear to have given more attention to these areas than to many others. This is reflected in the number of European recommendations on education (Recommendations 4–7).

A number of other key issues also stand out:

■ The quest for coherence

A number of countries highlighted the need for greater coherence across the phases of education from primary through secondary to higher education, something which was seen as particularly problematic for languages (for example, Estonia, France, Hungary, Romania and Spain):

Steps should be taken by the Spanish authorities regarding the need to create a bridge between the different stages in foreign language learning (primary through secondary and higher education), the solution being threefold: harmonisation of methodology and achievement levels; opportunities to practice receptive skills outside the foreign language classroom (films and television programmes not dubbed into Spanish) and teacher training.

(SPAIN Recommendation 1)

(We need greater) coherence and consistency in language learning and assessment, when moving from one level in the educational system to the next, and also from general education to VET and higher education, followed by lifelong learning.

(ESTONIA Recommendation 1)

A similar lack of coherence and consistency was noted in terms of the separation (both in ascribed importance and in teaching and learning approaches) between languages. Not only are ‘foreign’ languages treated as somehow separate from ‘minority’ languages and ‘national’ languages (the languages of schooling), but even between different major ‘foreign’ languages (English, German, French, Spanish and Russian) there is not necessarily any commonality of approach.

Although this issue is reflected in the European recommendations (Recommendation 6), the development of more coherent language programmes will be carried out at national or regional level.

A greater focus on language learning – language education is cross-curricular and includes the learning of Italian as a mother tongue, Italian for foreigners, other languages and codes. This will ensure a solid background to all further education.

(ITALY Recommendation 1)

■ Curricular and assessment reform

Similarly, reform of the languages curriculum and languages assessment are national rather than European issues, even though these were raised as urgent needs in a number of jurisdictions.

The project has demonstrated that there is still a great lack of knowledge with regard to the teaching of the various languages that exist in Europe. International research must be encouraged to underpin the teaching of foreign, regional/minority and immigrant languages.

(PORTUGAL Recommendation 2)

■ Curricular innovation – CLIL

Related to this concern for the state of the curriculum was an interest in innovation – and in particular in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Given the importance which has been ascribed to CLIL at European level it was perhaps surprising that only relatively few countries and regions saw this as a major priority.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a good way of increasing the quantity of Frisian education without taking time away from other subjects. CLIL is used in the trilingual schools in Friesland (Dutch, Frisian and English used as teaching languages); these schools are a good example of how more pupils can be attracted to bilingual (and trilingual) education.

(FRIESLAND Recommendation 3 – extract)

■ Low take up of languages at school

This priority has a pan-European dimension and also a dimension specific to the Anglophone countries. At European level the concerns relate to the particular role of English and the corresponding decline in the learning of other languages. This is addressed in European Recommendations 2 and 4, and also at national level by proposals such as the Dutch proposal to make a second foreign language compulsory.

Offer a third language besides Dutch and English at all secondary schools in the Netherlands. This could be done via legislation, or by parents asking for a wider language offer in the schools of their children.

(NETHERLANDS Recommendation 2)

In the UK take-up post 14 is seen as a major fault line and a number of strategic and curricular changes are proposed in order to address this.

■ **Lack of attention to the post compulsory phase**

As highlighted in the Language Rich Europe report, relatively little attention was given to the vocational education sector, and only slightly more to higher education. There were arguments for the need for a policy at university level and also proposals to increase language take-up and reassess the role of language teaching in higher education. Possibly this area is one that needs further attention in any subsequent data collection.

Recommendations concerning foreign languages taught at universities

- *Making decision-makers/authorities aware that language is not knowledge, it is a skill, i.e. a tool for gaining knowledge; this distinction is vital in view of the organisation of classes, number of hours, student numbers in groups etc.*
- *Students should have the right to learn at least two languages in the course of their study.*
- *Keeping the status of academic teacher for language teachers; teachers at universities teach specialist language, both in terms of vocabulary, and skills and language functions characteristic for the academic community (special character of the classes rules out outsourcing, which does not work in academic teaching).*

(POLAND Recommendation 2)

Media

Comparatively speaking there were rather few specific recommendations concerning the media, despite the considerable interest in their role – actual and potential. As with the European level recommendations these were perhaps seen as largely outside the scope of policy proposals. Where there were recommendations they fell into two areas – promoting diversity and encouraging multilingualism through subtitling.

■ **Promoting diversity**

It was suggested that this could be done either by means of legal instruments (for example, by making a certain quantity of programmes in a minority language compulsory) or through encouragement (promotional activities such as a ‘Multilingualism week’). This diversity should also cater for deaf and blind people (access issues).

Guaranteeing supply: audiovisual contents have become an excellent way to support both learning and maintenance of languages with less support from the immediate environment, be they regional or minority languages, immigrant languages and foreign languages. Not only do they furnish the audience with real examples of everyday language in all sorts of domains for large numbers of people, but they constitute ideal means to promote intercultural competence and all of that at very low cost. It is therefore our recommendation that authorities ensure that their citizens get easy access to audiovisual products in regional/minority, immigrant and foreign languages. This should be done by:

- *Removing administrative barriers created by international and intranational borders to the free exchange of television channels broadcasting in regional/minority, immigrant and foreign languages.*
- *Actively promoting the broadcasting of products in their original versions.*
- *Actively promoting the exchange of local audiovisual production with other countries in bilateral or multilateral agreements that explicitly include regional/minority languages.*

(CATALONIA Recommendation 3)

■ **Subtitling**

It was generally agreed that subtitling (and so permitting access to the spoken form of another language) was more conducive to language learning than dubbing. This could be proposed at national level. It is also reflected in European Recommendation 8.

Main broadcasters to increase scheduling of foreign films/programmes in original language.*

(GERMANY Recommendation 2)

*not only English

Public services

Although public services and spaces was an important element in the Language Rich Europe analysis, and was specifically discussed at a number of workshops, this did not lead to many specific proposals for action. There were, for example, suggestions about reviewing signage in tourist areas and proposals for conferences and exhibitions on aspects of multilingualism. One interesting recommendation linked the issue of public spaces with the need for better data collection.

More specific data collection on language diversity should be carried out in addition to the national census (done once in ten years), which is the only database currently available. This kind of information should be regularly updated and made available to policy makers both at national and regional level. It would help the local authorities, who have not fully taken advantage so far of their autonomy in introducing language policies in certain fields like public services, streets signs and, in general, initiating events that provide opportunities for different language use and exposure. An example of good practice is the annual celebration of the European Day of Languages which was introduced within the LRE project and has become a tradition for the city of Sofia, involving many national and international partner institutions.

(BULGARIA Recommendation 3)

Business

It was generally agreed that business has an important role to play in support of multilingualism, but many partners recorded concerns about the actual contribution of employers, while appreciating that they have other priorities. The specific proposals for national action were of two kinds:

■ Research and reflection

Understanding better the actual needs of business for language and the ways in which languages are used. This would give us better appreciation of the role that businesses and other employers might realistically be expected to play in support of multilingualism.

- *Explore how mobility of employees between the language regions can be promoted.*
- *Investigate the challenges that companies face concerning their employees' language skills.*

(SWITZERLAND Recommendations 1 and 2)

■ Promotion

Making the case to employers about the importance of languages and the advantages of multilingualism was still seen as an important need in a number of countries (Greece, Italy, Netherlands, UK and Wales).

Employers – Fund a Europe-wide ‘benchmark’, website and database to identify, support and promote employers who use and promote languages in their industry (including community languages).

(UK Recommendation 3)

This brief overview of some of the main concerns of the Language Rich Europe discussions can only give an impression of the wealth of ideas and the range of different practices that were exchanged during the two years of the project. More details can be found in the country reports and the third Annual Report which contains the complete country proposals. What we find striking about these discussions is the extent to which – for all the obvious differences – they have taken place within a common framework of understanding and shared aspirations. Out of so much different experience we have found a great deal on which to agree, and have also been inspired and indeed challenged by different realities and sometimes opposing viewpoints. As well as the claimed ‘richness’ of the project, this also demonstrates the possibilities and the power of ‘unity in diversity’. Whether or not this will have lasting impact is considered in the next and final section.

5 SUSTAINING THE MESSAGE – WHAT STILL HAS TO BE DONE

During the later stages of the project our attention turned inevitably towards the linked issues of how best to use the rich material which had been gathered ('exploitation') and how to maintain and if possible to develop the work in the future ('sustainability'). These are challenges for many if not all funded projects – put simply how do we carry on when the money runs out? The answer usually lies in the strength of what has been produced – in this case in particular the publication and the website – and, critically perhaps, in the continuing strength and enthusiasm of the networks created.

Presentation of Conclusions – the response from the European Institutions

Central to all of this of course is the strength of the ideas generated through the project – represented concretely by the ten key recommendations. These were presented to the European organisations – the European Commission and Parliament and the Council of Europe at a one day conference in Brussels in March 2013. Inevitably there were differences of opinion, especially over the 'mother tongue plus 2' formulation which remains dear to some hearts. Overall, though, there was a detectable appreciation of the need to develop and to respond to new challenges, not least because of the current economic crisis. Linked to this was an appreciation of the role that networks such as Language Rich Europe can play in this process. In the words of Commissioner Vassiliou who spoke at the conference:

I read with great interest the main conclusions of your study and recommendations. Several actually coincide with those presented in the most recent Commission document on language competences for employability, mobility and growth – the document was part of the Communication we presented last November on Rethinking Education.⁴

The extent to which we will succeed in influencing this political level depends also on the continuing effectiveness of the networks, both European and national – which have been engendered by the project.

Continuing the debate – maintaining the networks

By March 2013 a loose network of over 1,200 key players had been recruited by Language Rich Europe – people involved in national and local policy making, education, the media and business. Of these some 850 had already signed up to an online 'Experts network' with the intention of continuing to exchange views and to develop thinking about the challenges of multilingualism.

A number of the Language Rich Europe partners, including the British Council and EUNIC have also committed themselves to maintaining and co-ordinating activity on a national and regional basis. Very importantly the project has encouraged the development or strengthening of national networks within individual member states, and in countries as diverse as Poland, the Netherlands, Romania, Ukraine and the UK.

A very good network in the country is formed, they are inspired and ready to work so we could expect good results in Poland.

(European expert)

A concrete example of this is quoted from the Netherlands:

Within the Netherlands, we took the initiative in co-operation with British Council Netherlands to bring forward the LRE outcomes for this country in international perspective to:

- the Ministry of Education
- the National Association of (Foreign) Language Teachers (NAFLT)
- the New Generation Foundation (NGF).

The NAFLT will disseminate the Dutch version of the LRE report amongst members (13 different language sections are involved) in co-operation with British Council Amsterdam. In the autumn of 2013, a special day will be spent on the project, during which the Ministry will be asked to take position as well.

Also the involvement of the NGF is interesting. This NGF exists of highly-educated professionals whose parents came as immigrants to the Netherlands and who want to take a (most welcome and much needed) public voice on this topic. We will organise a full-day master class in the Europa House of the EC in The Hague on 12 April 2013, to start with discussing the LRE outcomes in the context of 'Responding to increasing linguistic diversity in multilingual Europe'... The goal is empowerment of those who are asked to respond and need the background knowledge to do so and act in meaningful ways.

(Report by Guus Extra, Tilburg University, Babylon Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society)

⁴ For the complete speech – www.language-rich.eu/fileadmin/content/pdf/20130305-language-rich-europe-conference_en.pdf

Only time and experience will show, but it is hoped and intended that Language Rich Europe will continue to be a benchmark for further policy, research and implementation measures relating to multilingualism.

As was discussed at the Brussels Conference, we are at a critical moment in history, where on the one hand the European multilingual dream is threatened by the resurgence of nationalism and national chauvinism, yet on the other it can offer solutions, both for greater economic prosperity and social cohesion. The Commissioner put the challenge as follows:

Given the current economic climate, the Commission's multilingualism policy will focus on measures to restore economic growth and full employment in Europe. Languages are a central element of our overall strategy. If we want more mobile students and workers, and businesses that can operate on a European and world scale, we need better language competences – and these must be better targeted to the current and future needs of the labour market. Partnerships between the world of education and the world of work will be essential to forecast those needs and prepare our systems to face them. Increased flexibility in teaching languages, combined with guidance to parents and pupils, will help us better match language supply and demand. If citizens must become more multilingual, public institutions and private enterprises must also learn how to cope with a multilingual society. And of course, if we are serious, we must go beyond preaching multilingualism and prove that it is possible.

Many of the discussions and conclusions of Language Rich Europe address precisely these key issues and challenges. Across Europe we have indeed shown that we can 'learn to cope with a multilingual society' and prove that multilingualism is possible. **Our** challenge now is to transform that understanding into sustainable activity over the longer term which can support the genuine change that is needed, for prosperity, for cohesion and for the future.

The key factors which will permit this to happen are:

■ **The products**

- Ideas
- Publication
- Website
- Indicators
- Examples of good practice

■ **The people**

- Networks and experts
- National campaigns

■ **The partners**

- Continued support and collaboration

On this basis there is every likelihood that new opportunities can be found for further development of what has already been achieved. As was said at the Brussels conference, Europe faces a choice between two cultures – 'between openness and closure, between the challenge of diversity and the attraction of uniformity, between inclusion and exclusion'⁵. Multilingualism – 'Language richness' – may help us in that choice by allowing us to 'reach out to the other without losing a sense of who we are'. The extent to which that happens depends fundamentally on what we do next.

⁵ Hans Sakkers (Utrecht) quoted at the Brussels Conference, and in full in Languages in Europe Towards 2020, London 2010

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