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## **Lesser Used Languages**

of the

## **European Union**

**Report of Activities**

**1989-1993**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Europe's Languages

In addition to the official languages of Member States spoken in the European Union, up to 40 million European citizens according to some estimates speak minority or regional languages traditionally used in their territory. For example, Catalan is spoken by some seven million people in Spain, France and Italy (Alghero on Sardinia). Other European languages spoken in the EU include Basque (E, F), Breton (F), Corsican (F), Frisian (NL), Friulan (I), Galician (E), Occitan (F), Ladin (I), Sard (I), Sorbian (D), and Welsh (UK), among others. Irish and Lëtzebuergesch may be added to this list of lesser used European languages despite their status at the level of their respective Member States.

A further category of linguistic communities in a similar position to speakers of minority languages are those who speak the official or majority language of a neighbouring State, but who live in a country where another language predominates. German speakers in Belgium, Denmark, France and Italy are in this position; as are Albanian, Croat, Greek and Slovene speaking communities historically domiciled in Italy. While these languages are not themselves likely to decline, on account of their official status elsewhere, the language and associated cultural heritage of these regions and territories are subject to similar pressures as those of the lesser used languages. In total, over 40 autochthonous regional or minority language communities have been identified.

As well as the territorial languages described above, Gypsy and Yiddish languages, which have been traditionally spoken throughout Europe, are included.

### 1.2 The European Link

Although the precise status and position of the linguistic communities vary enormously, there are a number of common interests and factors which bring together many of these groups across the Union. Some communities have links across Member State borders, such as Basque speakers in Spain and France; others have traditional cultural and historical ties, such as the Celtic language groups in France, Ireland and the UK. While these links are undoubtedly important and may continue to be promoted at the inter-regional level, nearly all of the lesser used language communities have in common a range of deeper interests both in relation to the continued development of their languages and also concerning the realisation of their potential within the European Union.

Many of the language communities face common difficulties: many are located in rural areas, often in peripheral regions, where local economic prospects are a cause for concern; communities may have to cope with a decline in the use of a language, in part due to the increasing influence of a dominant language spoken in their midst. However, the situation

is not always negative: some of the languages have strengthened in recent years where citizens have shown a renewed determination to use and promote their language and, in particular, to pass on their unique cultural heritage to their children.

The European dimension to minority languages was recognised and promoted in the first instance by the European Parliament, which has sought to encourage their use in a variety of domains. Since 1983, the Parliament has secured a modest provision in the budget for projects designed to preserve and promote lesser used languages. This is administered by the Commission and has been used, in particular, to establish cross-border or pan-European contacts and to encourage the exchange of experience between linguistic communities.

The entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 marks a new phase in the development of Europe, particularly in relation to the relevance of the Union to the citizen. The Treaty specifically underlines the importance of the diversity of European cultures and enshrines into law the principle that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizen.

The unification of Germany in October 1990 brought an additional linguistic community, the Sorb speakers of Lusatia, into the EU.

### 1.3 Initiatives in the European Parliament

The impetus for action in this field has come from the European Parliament, which has passed a series of motions and resolutions since 1979 calling for measures to be taken to benefit regional or minority language communities<sup>1</sup>. A further report and draft resolution<sup>2</sup> was undertaken within the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media which appointed Mr Killilea MEP as rapporteur. This report has been drawn up in the light of the Council of Europe's *Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, and it includes a synopsis of the current position of linguistic minorities in the EU which was compiled following a survey of public authorities undertaken by the rapporteur.

At the same time, a report and draft resolution on the *Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Groups*<sup>3</sup>, which contains a draft Charter, was drawn up by Mr Von Stauffenberg MEP, acting as rapporteur in the Committee on Legal Affairs and Citizen's Rights. It was subsequently taken over by Mr Alber MEP, but again the Parliament has yet to vote in plenary on the draft

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<sup>1</sup> Following motions passed in 1979 and 1980, the EP voted three resolutions: Resolution on a Community charter of regional languages and cultures and on a charter of rights of ethnic minorities (Arté I, 16.x.1981), OJ No. C 287, 9.x.1981; Resolution on measures in favour of minority languages and cultures (Arté II, 11.ii.1983), OJ No. C 68, 14.iii.1983, p103; Resolution on the languages and cultures of regional and ethnic minorities in the European Community (Kuljpers, 30.x.1987) OJ No. C 318, 30.x.1987.

<sup>2</sup> PE201.863/RE1

<sup>3</sup> PE 204.838

Resolution. The draft Charter includes provisions on the right to use an ethnic language<sup>4</sup> and education in the ethnic language<sup>5</sup>.

The *Parliamentary Intergroup on Minority Languages* has continued to meet during plenary sessions to discuss the key issues of the Alber Report, the Killilea Report, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, and provision for lesser used languages in the budget.

## 1.4 Budget Line

The budget line in favour of actions to promote or support the less widespread languages and cultures of the Union has been included a result of continued support in the European Parliament. The amounts have risen from 100.000 ecu in 1983 to 3.500.000 ecu in 1994 as shown in the table below.

year

83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94
0.1	0.2	0.34	0.68	0.86	1.0	1.0	1.1	2.0	2.5	3.5	3.5

mecu

In spite of the increases, the total of 3.5 mecu in 1993 and 1994 remains modest, and demand continues to outstrip the funds available: the number of applications for grants has risen to the extent that by 1993 the Commission was able to approve over 180 projects.

## 1.5 Maastricht Treaty

The *Maastricht Treaty on European Union*<sup>6</sup>, which will affect almost every Union activity, is likely to influence action taken in relation to minority languages. The Treaty extends the competence of the Union to cover culture<sup>7</sup> and includes an article on education<sup>8</sup> which makes reference to the need to promote the learning of languages. The Maastricht Treaty also underlines the importance for the European Union to assure the continued diversity of

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<sup>4</sup> Article 9

<sup>5</sup> Article 10

<sup>6</sup> Treaty on European Union, signed 7.ii.1992, entered into force 1.xi.1993.

<sup>7</sup> Article 128

<sup>8</sup> Article 126

European cultures<sup>9</sup>. This principle is reinforced by the rule on subsidiarity which is written into the Treaty<sup>10</sup> and which applies to all Community activity where competence is shared between the Community and the Member States.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.6 EU Education Policy

Turning to the internal policies of the European Union, several practical measures have been taken in the area of minority languages and cultures. The Council and the Ministers of Education have made provision for educational projects benefitting migrant workers' children, including those from outside the Union<sup>12</sup>. In particular, attention is given to teaching children their mother tongue and culture. These initiatives were supplemented in 1989 with a Resolution on *School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children*<sup>13</sup> which has led to projects including the production of didactic materials in Gypsy languages.

Also in 1989, the *Lingua Programme*<sup>14</sup> was established with the aim of promoting the teaching of foreign languages for international communication. The languages within Lingua are the working languages of the EU<sup>15</sup> and Irish (which is both the first official language of Ireland and an EU Treaty language), and Lëtzebuergesch, which is referred to in the Lingua Decision as "a language spoken throughout the territory of Luxembourg"<sup>16</sup>. These two languages were included within Lingua on account of their official status at the level of the respective Member States; no other lesser used language is included.

Under the *Erasmus* higher education programme, while no specific provision is made for lesser used languages, a number of relevant projects and networks have been set up, for example in the areas of Catalan and Welsh studies. Building on these developments in the educational domain, the *Socrates* education programme, which will supersede both *Lingua* and *Erasmus*, leaves the way open to include minority language projects in appropriate cases.

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<sup>9</sup> Article 128

<sup>10</sup> Articles A and 3b

<sup>11</sup> For further discussion of the Maastricht Treaty, see Chapter 3: Conclusion

<sup>12</sup> Resolution comprising an action programme in the field of education, OJ No C 34, 14.ii.1976; Resolution comprising an action programme in favour of migrant workers and members of their families, OJ No C 38, 19.ii.1976; Declaration of 1.ii.1978, R/1832/777 (SOC 173)

<sup>13</sup> Resolution of 22.v.1989, Official Journal, 89/C 153/02, pp81-82

<sup>14</sup> Council Decision of 28.vi.1989, Establishing a Programme to Promote Foreign Language Competence in the European Community (*Lingua*), 89/489/EEC, Official Journal, 19.8.89, No L 239/24-32

<sup>15</sup> Danish, German, English, Spanish, French, Greek, Italian, Dutch, Portuguese. (Five of these languages are spoken by autochthonous minority communities in certain Member States: Danish-D; German-Dk,B,F,I; French-I; Greek-I; Dutch-F.)

<sup>16</sup> Lingua Decision, *ibid.* preamble, 11th *Whereas* clause.

## 1.7 EU Cultural Policy

In the cultural field, the Council and the Ministers for Culture meeting in 1992 considered a Commission communication on prospects for action in the cultural sphere and underlined that Union action should respect national and regional diversity<sup>17</sup>. In particular, the Council and the Ministers took note of Union support for translation, especially translations from European languages which are less frequently used. The Economic and Social Committee, commenting on the same Commission communication, also underlined the need to respect the national, regional and local characteristics of cultural actions<sup>18</sup>.

For the European Parliament's response to the Commission communication, a report was prepared by Mr Barzanti MEP, in the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media<sup>19</sup>. The Barzanti report re-iterated the importance of diversity and, with reference to European pluralism, underlined the need to defend less widely used languages. This point was also highlighted in the context of aid for translations.

In 1991, prior to the Barzanti Report, the Parliament had addressed the need to promote the theatre in the Union in a Resolution which expressly mentioned the desirability of granting aid to works by representatives of cultural minorities<sup>20</sup>.

## 1.8 European Charter

Within Europe as a whole, the foremost development in recent years has been the adoption in 1992 by the Council of Europe of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*<sup>21</sup>. This document sets out objectives for signatory States in relation to language encouragement and promotion, covering a range of domains of language use. The following summary appeared in *Contact-Bulletin*<sup>22</sup>:

"The charter is a comprehensive document. Part II deals with objectives and principles. All states signing the convention must accept Part II. Part III relates to measures to promote the use of regional or minority languages in public life. It deals in some considerable detail with education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural

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<sup>17</sup> Conclusions of the Council and the Ministers for Culture meeting within the Council on guidelines for Community cultural action (COM(92)149), Bull. EC 11-1992, 1.3.245.

<sup>18</sup> Economic and Social Committee Opinion, 22.x.1992, Bull. EC 10-1992, 1.3.186.

<sup>19</sup> Barzanti Report, European Parliament, Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media, PE201.819, Resolution passed 21.1.1993, on the Commission communication 'New prospects for Community cultural action', COM(92)149.

<sup>20</sup> Parliament resolution on the promotion of the theatre and music in the EC, 25.x.1991, Bull. EC 10-1991, 1.2.199.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Europe, European Treaty Series 148, Strasbourg 5.x.1992, ISBN 92 871 2210 5

<sup>22</sup> Vol.9, no.2, Autumn 1992, Contact-Bulletin, a periodical published by the *European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages*, Dublin (editions in DE, EN, FR, IT).

activities and facilities, economic and social life, and trans-frontier exchanges. Attempting, as it does, to cover a wide range of quite different language situations, the text of the convention offers a number of options to the contracting parties. In respect of each language specified at the time of ratification, the contracting state will undertake to apply a minimum of 35 paragraphs or sub-paragraphs [out of almost 100] from Part III of the convention. These must include at least three each from the articles which relate to education and cultural activities and facilities."

By June 1994, 13 states had signed the Charter, including five member states of the European Union, and one country, Norway, had lodged its instrument of ratification with the Council of Europe.

## 1.9 Minority Rights

There has been an important series of developments in relation to human rights which have a bearing on minority languages and cultures. In the United Nations, the General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*<sup>23</sup> in 1992. In addition to reasserting the basic human rights of minorities, such as the right to equal treatment and freedom from discrimination, the Declaration requires States to take measures to promote, *inter alia*, language teaching, cultural expression and educational provision<sup>24</sup>. States are also encouraged to cooperate and exchange information and experiences in dealing with minority issues<sup>25</sup>.

The changes in central and eastern Europe in the 1990s and the growth in ethnic tension, which has led to war and conflict in a few of the former communist states, have focussed attention on the need to defend the basic human rights of minorities, including linguistic minorities. A lead was taken by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in 1990 when the heads of State or Government adopted the *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*<sup>26</sup> which specifically provides that cultural and linguistic minorities should be protected without discrimination and in full equality before the law. In addition, the Charter requires that conditions for the promotion of linguistic identity should be created. At the Luxembourg European Council in 1991, the EU heads of State or Government issued a *Declaration on Human Rights*<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* Article 4.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* Article 6.

<sup>26</sup> CSCE, Paris, 21.xi.1990, signed by the heads of State or Government and the President of the Commission.

<sup>27</sup> Luxembourg European Council, 28-29.vi.1991, Annex V Declaration of Human Rights, Bull. EC 6-1991, page 18.



which laid down that the protection of minorities was a precondition for democracy and underlined the importance of respect for cultural identity and the need to uphold the rights of members of minorities. This was put into practice in 1992, when the Council determined<sup>28</sup> that an article containing an explicit reference to respect for democratic principles and human rights should be included in the Europe Agreements being negotiated with Romania and Bulgaria<sup>29</sup>. Inclusion of an article to this effect, which is of course as binding on the EU as it is on the third State, is now standard practice for the negotiation of all trade and cooperation and association agreements with third countries.

The Union and Member States have taken the opportunity in other fora to reaffirm their commitment to the rights of minorities, including linguistic minority communities<sup>30</sup>. Most recently, in Vienna in October 1993, the Council of Europe convened its first Summit of all the 32 heads of State or Government in order to agree the (October) *Vienna Declaration<sup>31</sup> on Human Rights* which contains a *Protocol on National Minorities*. This requires the States to allow members of national minorities to develop their culture, religion, traditions and customs, and to use their language in private and public. The agreement also provides that, subject to certain conditions, members of national minorities should be able to use their language in communication with public authorities. The Commission, which was represented at the summit, fully supported the Vienna Declaration and underlined its desire to create closer links between the EU and the Council of Europe, leading to the eventual accession of the EU to the wider European body<sup>32</sup>.

The European Parliament has also been active in the area of provision for minority groups in the context of the human rights debate<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Council Statement, 11.IV.1992, Bull. EC 5-1992, 1.2.12-13.

<sup>29</sup> Article 6 of the Europe Agreement for Romania (proposed 21.XII.92) reads: *Respect for the democratic principles and human rights established by the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a new Europe, as well as the principles of market economy, inspire the domestic and external policies of the Parties and constitute essential elements of the present association.* Article 6 of the proposed Agreement with Bulgaria is in similar (though not identical) terms.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. *Declaration on Human Rights, Democracy and Development*, Council and Member States, May 1993, Bull. EC 5-1993, 1.3.41; EPC preparations for *Second UN World Conference on Human Rights*, Vienna, 14-25.VI.1993; the (June) *Vienna Declaration and Action Programme*, June 1993, covers the situation of minorities and indigenous peoples.

<sup>31</sup> *Vienna Declaration*, Council of Europe Summit, 9.X.1993, SUM(93)2.

<sup>32</sup> Intervention by Hans van den Broek, Commissioner for External Political Relations, at the Council of Europe summit, 8-9.X.1993, Vienna.

<sup>33</sup> E.g. EP Resolution on human rights, 9.VI.1991, which called for the Union to ensure respect for human rights both outside the EC and within the Member States; EP Resolution on human rights, 12.IX.1991, OJ C 240 16.9.1991, which *inter alia*, called for a European bill of rights and for the Commission to be given a mandate to negotiate Union accession to the European Convention on Human Rights; EP Resolution on respect for human rights in the EC, 11.III.1993, OJ C 115 28.4.1993. See also *Alber Report* above.

## 2. COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

In 1992-93 the European Commission's Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth, which funds activities relating to minority languages and cultures, needed to take stock of the direction of policy in this area. Two matters required immediate attention. Firstly, much of the data relating to lesser used language communities is unreliable and better comparative information is needed concerning the social, economic, educational and linguistic situation of these communities. Secondly, a summary and assessment of the activities funded by the Commission over the four years 1989-1993, which had been requested by the European Parliament, was needed.

### 2.1 "Euromosaic" Study

The first objective was to update information and data relating to the languages. In 1984 the Commission had published a major study on the condition of the lesser used languages, entitled *The Linguistic Minorities in Countries Belonging to the European Community*<sup>34</sup> and this was followed up in 1990 by publication of a survey<sup>35</sup> of the position of linguistic minorities in the three more recently joined Member States, Greece, Spain, and Portugal.

However, after ten years had elapsed since the original data had been gathered, a further study was clearly needed. Information was required both on the basic data relating to the number of speakers and the use of the languages in various domains (home, school, work, public administration, commerce, media and cultural activities, etc.), and to assess the socio-linguistic vitality of a language, that is whether the language or linguistic community is in a state of decline, revival or stability. In addition, the study would need to look at factors which influence the growth or decline of the languages, such as their perceived status; socio-economic factors; degree of urbanisation and peripheralisation; and the consequences of interaction or contact between two languages.

Following a call for tender<sup>36</sup>, the contract was awarded to a consortium of experts in linguistics and socio-linguistics representing four of the leading European institutes in this area: *Fédération des Foyers Ruraux, Paris; Institut*

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<sup>34</sup> Summary Report, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma; Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 1990, ISBN (EN) 92-825-5850-9; (FR) 92-825-6480; (IT) 92-825-5851.

<sup>35</sup> Linguistic Minorities In the European Economic Community: Spain, Portugal, Greece, Summary of the Report, Miquel Siguan, University of Barcelona; Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (1990), ISBN (EN) 92-826-0375-X; (FR) 92-826-0376-1; (ES) 92-826-0376-8.

<sup>36</sup> O.J. No C 291/9, 7.xi.92

*Sociolingüística Catalana, Barcelona; Onderzoekscentrum Meertaligheid, Brussel; and Research Centre Wales, Bangor, who came together under the title Euromosaic.*

The researchers are in the process of collating data from official sources, publications, studies, consultations with experts, and interviews with community leaders. A series of highly detailed questionnaires have been devised and translated with a view to securing comparable data across the EU. In addition, a limited number of empirical surveys are being undertaken in selected regions.

The report is planned to be completed in the first half of 1994 and the conclusions will include policy recommendations to continue to promote European linguistic diversity.

## 2.2 Reports on Activities Funded by the Commission

The Commission has managed the annual budget line<sup>37</sup> in favour of less widespread languages and cultures indigenous to the European Union since 1983. In 1990 a report which covered the period 1983-1989, published<sup>38</sup> by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages<sup>39</sup>, contained a number of recommendations, some of which have since been acted upon. In particular, the Commission has increased its support for projects in the areas of education, information networking, the media and cultural events. In addition, the development of the European Bureau has continued to receive Commission support and an information office has been established in Brussels.

The report also contained a number of general observations on the potential to include action in favour of minority languages within other policies, namely education, training, information, culture, regional development, agriculture, and fisheries. In some respects this has occurred; particularly in the cultural field; and in so far as policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy, contribute to the economic well-being of regional communities, they will help to underpin the security of the linguistic groups. However, specific policy initiatives need coherent aims and must be based on sound data, a needs analysis, consultation, and a proper assessment of costs and benefits. The institution of parallel programmes for linguistic minorities may not be effective and a more 'organic' approach whereby projects are funded on merit within general programmes, as is the case within *Erasmus*, may be the most appropriate way forward. In

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<sup>37</sup> Budget line B3.1006; managed by the European Commission's Task Force for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth

<sup>38</sup> Community Activity in Favour of Lesser Used Languages and Cultures 1983-1989, Lucien Jacoby, European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, Dublin, (1990); (DE; EN; FR; IT) ISBN 1 870675 04 5

<sup>39</sup> The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages is an independent body registered as a company in Ireland.

approach whereby projects are funded on merit within general programmes, as is the case within *Erasmus*, may be the most appropriate way forward. In addition, since the Bureau's report was written, the Maastricht Treaty has entered into force and new Commission initiatives must have regard to the principle of subsidiarity.

The report laid considerable emphasis on the desirability of supporting multi-annual projects. However, there remains a technical difficulty here in that, since the budget for lesser used languages is voted each year by the Parliament and by the Council, and therefore there is the possibility that the budget may *not* be renewed, the Commission is prevented in law from agreeing to finance projects for more than a year at a time. Of course, the Commission may finance one year's project in the anticipation that the project will continue for several years, but it would be irresponsible to give project organisers the impression that funding commitments were assured for subsequent years. As long as the legal base for action in this area remains the annual budget, the 12-month rule will continue to apply.

## 2.3 Projects 1989-1993

The Commission has supported projects in the fields of research, bilingual education, conferences, festivals and cultural events, media projects, the Mercator information network, publicity initiatives, study visits, and the activities of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

The budget during this period has risen from 1 million ecu to 3.5 million ecu. Despite the increase, the total remains very low - statistically zero in terms of the budget of the European Union - and the range and type of projects funded is correspondingly limited. However, the EU has made useful contributions to initiatives within linguistic communities, and it is recognised in many minority language regions for work which has been supported. Above all, the EU has promoted the more significant of the pan-European projects and hence contributed to the European perspective of the communities affected.

### (a) Research

Over twenty projects, including the *Euromosaic* study and the Mercator network (see below) were supported by the Commission in the period 1989-93. These directly affected thirteen linguistic communities, while some projects were of general application and a number consisted of comparative studies between

regions with a view to seeing how experience could be transferred. The research work divides into four categories:

- a. socio-economic and linguistic studies;
- b. language policy;
- c. socio-cultural studies;
- d. education.

In addition to *Euromosaic* and *Mercator*, two projects are of particular note. One is an innovative project to link linguistics research institutes which are engaged long-term in language use censuses in four language regions: Basque, Irish, Frisian, and Welsh. The aim of the network is to share expertise and to seek to standardise the methodology and questionnaires used in research, and thereby be able to produce comparable data. The second was a project to investigate the development of the European dimension in education in the context of lesser-used languages which resulted in the publication in 1993 of a report, *Citizenship 2000*.

#### *(b) Education*

Education remains the foremost area of activity supported by the Commission. During the period 1989-93 there have been a number of new initiatives in schools and a strengthening of existing projects. In particular, the continued efforts by linguistic communities to promote bilingualism among young children have shown considerable success. There is now a large corpus of experience in this field, notably in regions speaking Basque, Breton, Catalan, Frisian, Irish, and Welsh as well as in the German-speaking minority communities. In Alsace in 1993 a major regional initiative was launched to promote bilingualism in French and German (both *Alsacien* and standard German). This marks one of the more significant developments in European education in recent years and the progress of the plan will be followed with interest. A press conference and presentation, co-sponsored by the *Regional Government of Alsace* and the *European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages*, was held in the European Parliament<sup>40</sup>. At this event the Bureau gave its Brussels launch to an illustrated promotional booklet<sup>41</sup> on bilingual education, aimed at parents, which sets out the rationale behind bilingualism. The booklet deals with the issues relating to bilingualism in an accessible and non-doctrinaire way and also introduces readers to some of the underlying theories and results of research into bilingual education.

One of the seminal conclusions of research into the abilities of bilingual

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<sup>40</sup> European Parliament, Brussels, 21.ix.1993

<sup>41</sup> *The Sound of Europe, Living Languages 1*, S.W. Siencyn, European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, Dublin, 1993, 40pp, ISBN (EN) 90-74851-01-0, (FR) 90-74851-02-9

children, and one which has been known for some time, is that they perform consistently better than monolingual children in data assessment and data manipulation, and in creative and lateral thinking. These are exactly the type of 'problem-solving' skills which have been identified by human resources experts as being required of the current and future workforce in the European Union if it is to retain its economic position in the world. This point was repeatedly underlined in the public debate leading up to the Commission President's 1993 White Paper, *Competitiveness, Growth and Employment*<sup>2</sup>. The acquisition of these skills is not dependent on young children learning any particular languages and is applicable to bilingual children one of whose languages is a minority tongue. A great deal of the research in Europe in this area has been undertaken with bilingual children who speak a minority language. In this respect, one of the few natural advantages which speakers of regional languages may be able to exploit is the inherent motivation within their communities to acquire two mother tongues.

The Commission has contributed to a wide range of innovative projects in the educational domain across the Union. In particular, six communities have benefitted from highly successful pre-school bilingual education projects. At school level, support has been given to both primary and secondary level and teacher-training initiatives across the Union. In one project in France a school undertook an initiative to teach passive language skills in six related languages, including Occitan and Catalan. It is worth noting that initiatives which contain a strong publicity element and actively involve parents and the local community are often extremely successful.

Among educational projects at the adult level, the community-based language strategies should be highlighted. These consist of a range of complementary language initiatives in local schools, businesses, places of work and worship, etc. are undertaken at the same time.

The provision of good teaching materials is one of the most pressing needs for teachers in minority languages. In language classes themselves, teachers ask for materials which reflect modern teaching methodology, and there remains a dearth of materials for teaching other subjects such as Science and Geography through the medium of the languages. For this reason the production of teaching materials, which include student's books, teacher's guides, and cassettes as well as multi-media materials using audio-visual and information technology, remained a priority category for funding under the less widespread languages budget during 1989-93. Projects designed for the Basque and Breton education systems were especially noteworthy.

The Commission has continued to lend moderate support to the research and publication of a range of dictionaries, both for long-term academic projects

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<sup>2</sup> Presented to the European Council, 10-11 December 1993

intended to assist the standardisation of language and for the production of dictionaries intended for everyday use.

### *(c) Conferences*

The Commission has continued to support conferences and meetings between experts and others working in a range of fields which have a bearing on lesser used languages. In many cases, conferences provide an effective way of transferring expertise between linguistic communities. In recent years there has been an increase in interest in the economic issues affecting the lesser used language communities and this has been reflected in the funding programme from the Commission.

Among the more significant conferences funded by the Commission were the Athens conference on minorities, which was held in 1993 under the auspices of the Council of Europe, and which resulted in the 'Delphi Declaration' on minority rights; the Minority Languages Conferences; and the Euroskoalle Conferences. In total the Commission assisted over 60 meetings, each attended by between 20 and 200 people.

### *(d) Festivals and Cultural Events*

The Commission has supported a diverse programme of live cultural events, such as dramatic works, musicals, and exhibitions. Together with projects in the field of the media, live events are an essential part of a strategy to develop and maintain the vibrancy of linguistic communities. Festivals and cultural events are often planned to coincide with conferences and seminars of a more academic nature.

Two regular international events bring together film and video makers from different regions of the EU. One is the *Celtic Film and Television Festival*, which now includes wider participation than just the Celtic regions. The second is the *Audiovisual Festival for Minority Cultures*. In addition, a series of successful cultural festivals, including dramatic works, have been organised, especially in Occitan and Catalan regions of France.

### *(e) Media Projects*

While the Commission's priorities have tended to remain in the educational and academic spheres, there is a continual demand from linguistic communities to make materials such as films, magazines, books, and cassettes available in their languages. It is argued, with some justification, that one of the most severe threats to the continued development of a language is the lack of available

materials and new works in the language. The Commission has part funded both print and audio-visual media, with the emphasis on the former since these projects tend to be more economically viable and it would not be a sensible distribution of resources to allocate an unbalanced proportion of funds to relatively few films. However, in the case of films, the Commission has been able to make effective contributions to the pre-production costs, pilot programmes, and other 'start-up' costs.

A key project supported by the Commission has been the *Children's Publishing Secretariat* which coordinates the publication of illustrated children's books in a range of languages. The secretariat is also able to liaise between large publishers and those working in lesser used languages and offer guidance and expertise.

Television and radio broadcasting in lesser used languages has been promoted to a limited extent under the budget line.

#### *(f) Information*

One of the more significant developments in recent years has been the establishment of the Mercator information networks, which follows developments and collects information in four key areas relating to lesser-used languages. As with much work in this area, information is often not readily accessible and organisations and many people working in the field do not have experience of international communication. This is especially so in the case of the media in the smaller communities, where many journals are produced on a part-time basis by dedicated volunteers. Notwithstanding their situation, they represent the best available source of information and Mercator has sought to bring together and analyze the available data and place it at the service of researchers and others working in the field.

A number of Member States have, relatively recently, devolved certain administrative functions to a regional level at a time when there is an increasing concern for the diversity of cultures within Europe. As a consequence, there has been a growth in activity within linguistic communities, such as the establishment of minority language medium schools, or the increased funding of television broadcasts. Many developments have come about as a result of legal or even constitutional change and, at the level of human rights, the question of minority rights including those of linguistic minorities, has come to the fore. Mercator has the task of recording and keeping up to date with these changes and following legal and constitutional amendments.

In addition to supporting the Mercator pilot centres, the Commission has assisted a number of individual publicity and information initiatives. Of course, these are not the only information projects as many of the educational, media



and other events supported by the Commission have included a necessary publicity element.

*(g) Study Visits*

The Commission has awarded grants towards the costs of study visits, chiefly for members of one linguistic community to investigate the conditions elsewhere. In general, the visits are confined to educationalists, journalists, and community and youth leaders. An annual study visit programme, now of 85 bursaries is organised by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages.

*(h) European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages*

The *European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages* is an independent organisation which seeks to improve the recognition of lesser-used languages; to raise public awareness; to disseminate information about the languages; and to give advice to the general public and bodies such as the Commission, the European Parliament, Member State and regional Governments, and the Council of Europe. The Bureau is particularly active in the domain of education in promoting language learning.

The governing council consists of representatives from ten Member State committees, which are run on a largely voluntary basis. The headquarters of the Bureau are in Dublin and a documentation centre and press office, the *Brussels Information Centre (BIC)*, has operated in Belgium since 1992. The office holders of the Bureau since 1989 are as follows:

<i>date</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Secretary-General</i>
1989-92	A.V. Chapalain	D. Ó Riagáin
1992-	H. Ó Murchú	D. Ó Riagáin

Within their areas, the Member State committees carry out a considerable number of activities in addition to their contribution to the organisation as a whole. Where there are several linguistic communities, efforts are made to cater for their different needs. The committees are organised in Belgium (*BELKOM*), Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy (*CONFEMILI*), Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The Dublin and Brussels offices are substantially funded under the budget with additional funds coming from the Governments of Ireland and Luxembourg; the Provincial Government of Friesland; the Germanophone and French communities of Belgium; and the Generalitat of Catalunya. Additional contributions are made by numerous bodies and groups for specific events.

## 3. CONCLUSION

### 3.1 A Changing Environment

Over the last decade, considerable changes have taken place in a number of spheres which affect minority language communities in the European Union. At the national level, political moves towards decentralisation, especially in the educational and cultural domains, have resulted in an expansion of activity in respect of a number of minority communities.

At the European level, the completion of the internal market at the end of 1992 will have affected members of linguistic minorities, notably those in communities which have links across the Union's internal borders, such as Basque speakers in Spain and France or German speakers in the Alsace region of France. These communities may be expected to benefit from an increase in cross-border activity where the common language and traditional cultural links can be used to facilitate cross-border trade and other contacts. On the other hand, other linguistic communities, particularly those on the periphery of the Union, may experience greater pressures.

However, there is a renewed determination at the European level to share the benefits of the internal market with the less prosperous regions of the Union. This takes the form of regional aid, such as support for infrastructure projects, financed out of the structural funds. This aid particularly benefits peripheral areas and the communities living in the priority regions.

In central and eastern Europe, and elsewhere in the world, the EU is playing an increasing role as a promoter of democracy and human rights, including the rights of linguistic minorities. It is clear that in this regard, the Union and its Member States need to be seen to apply the same or higher standards of mutual respect for minority groups at home which they wish to see enforced abroad.

### 3.2 Treaty on European Union

#### *Education and culture*

The forces which have been motivating the agenda for policy developments in the domestic, European and external domains, will have also influenced the drafting of the Treaty on European Union<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, from the point of view of

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<sup>43</sup> Treaty on European Union (TEU), signed at Maastricht 7.ii.92, entered into force 1.xi.93. The TEU contains nineteen articles, Article A, B, C, etc. through to Article S. Article G comprises over 200 amendments to the original Treaty of Rome, which is now called the *Treaty Establishing the European Community* (EC). The articles of the EC Treaty are numbered Article 1, 2, 3, etc. through to Article 248.

linguistic minorities, the provisions of the Treaty contain a number of significant features. The key articles are those on education (Article 126) and culture (Article 128). Article 126 requires that any action in the field of education must fully respect "the responsibility of the Member States for the ... cultural and linguistic diversity"<sup>44</sup> of education systems.

The article on culture itself, Article 128, underlines the need to respect the "national and regional diversity"<sup>45</sup> of Member States. The article provides that, at the European level, cooperation between Member States should be encouraged and, where necessary, specific action can be taken to support and supplement Member State measures in four areas: (i) the dissemination of the culture and history of European peoples; (ii) the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance; (iii) non-commercial cultural exchanges; and (iv) artistic and literary creation<sup>46</sup>. There is a clear and propitious link to the educational domain in this article.

Both the educational and cultural articles require the Union and the Member States to cooperate with third countries and with the Council of Europe and other international institutions in these fields. The Council of Europe has, of course, been particularly active recently in the area of regional or minority languages and the rights of linguistic minorities<sup>47</sup>.

Article 128 on culture contains one further highly significant provision in relation to other European policies (which does not have a corollary in Article 126); The Community is required to "take cultural aspects into account in its actions under other provisions"<sup>48</sup> of the Treaty.

### *Committee of the Regions*

In legislating under both Article 126 (education) and Article 128 (culture), reference will have to be made to the Committee of the Regions, a new body established under the Treaty<sup>49</sup>. The Committee must be consulted by the Council and by the Commission where required by the Treaty. The Committee can also deliver opinions on its own initiative and may be consulted from time to time by the Council or by the Commission where either institution considers

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<sup>44</sup> Article 126(1)

<sup>45</sup> Article 128(1)

<sup>46</sup> Article 128(2)

<sup>47</sup> See Section 1: Introduction

<sup>48</sup> Article 128(4)

<sup>49</sup> Article 198a

it appropriate. The Committee's power, therefore, is that of consultation and its influence will equal the value and integrity of its formal opinions. It is likely that the interests of regional linguistic minorities will be represented within this body.

### *Subsidiarity*

The Treaty on European Union formally incorporates the principle of subsidiarity into European law. This is a principle which has been practised for many years in Member States with a federal structure. The essence of subsidiarity is summed up in the first article of the Treaty<sup>50</sup>, which states that decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the citizen. The main article on subsidiarity is more specific. It provides that in the domains which are not in its exclusive competence, which include education and culture, the Community shall take action:

"only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community".<sup>51</sup>

This principle will clearly inform all Commission actions, including those in relation to minority linguistic communities. Assuming that activities in the minority languages area are likely to remain small-scale, the key element in this definition is that the 'objectives' of the proposed action would be better achieved at the Community level than at the national level. In ordinary language, this provision requires that action at the European level should incorporate a 'European dimension'.

### *Common Foreign and Security Policy*

The Treaty of European Union also provides for the establishment of a common foreign and security policy<sup>52</sup>. The objectives of the foreign policy include the development and consolidation of "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms"<sup>53</sup>. This should be read to include the rights of linguistic and other minorities. Work at the Union level is likely to continue under Article J in relation to minority groups in central and eastern Europe and elsewhere. This will of course build on the measures the Member States and the Union have already taken in the context of the Europe Agreements, Council of Europe

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<sup>50</sup> Article A, TEU

<sup>51</sup> Article 3b

<sup>52</sup> Article J, TEU

<sup>53</sup> Article J.1(2)

action, and within the CSCE.<sup>54</sup>

### *Summary*

There is clearly a common thread between the desire to protect the diversity of European culture on the one hand and the determination to uphold the rights of minorities on the other; and a further link from these ideas to the incorporation of subsidiarity as a guiding principle for policy development. These three concepts - cultural diversity; minority rights; subsidiarity - may be seen as different facets of the same stone, and since they are built into the Maastricht Treaty, these principles are likely to be among the parameters or ground-rules for further European integration.

### **3.3 Activities financed by the Commission**

This report covers a wealth of activities touching some forty-five linguistic communities mainly in the area of education and learning, but also in relation to publishing, film-making, policy-making, research, theatre, musicals, information, and data-processing. While some of the activities represent ambitious Europe-wide projects, such as Mercator and the operations of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, others involve bilateral communication, and others are concerned only with actions in one region. A large proportion of the activities represented here directly affect individuals and illustrate the relevance of the European Community to a diverse cross-section of Europe's citizens.

#### *Priorities for funding*

With the entry into force of the Treaty on European Union, it would be timely to re-examine priorities for Commission funding under the budget line. Firstly, it is clear that the Commission will continue to concentrate funds on actions which promote a European dimension, such as networks, joint action, comparative work, cross-border evaluation, and visits to and reports on activity in other regions. These types of action should lead directly to the transfer of experience and knowledge across regions.

The existing criteria used by the Commission should continue to apply and it would be appropriate, therefore, to reiterate these. Applications for funding are measured against five sets of criteria:

- (a) The project would have a *multiplier effect*: e.g., the project has links with existing projects and initiatives; or the intended beneficiaries are

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<sup>54</sup> See also Section 1

community leaders, trainers, opinion formers, etc.; or the project will have lasting and wide effects in some other way.

- (b) There is a significant *need* for the action: e.g., the proposal concerns a region or local community at a comparative disadvantage.
- (c) The *quality of the proposal* is of a high standard: e.g., the proposal is innovative; the application manifests good preparation and planning and it is clearly presented, especially with regard to the budget statement.
- (d) Effective provision is made for *evaluation and results*: an evaluation phase should usually be included, e.g. by an independent assessor; plans should be in evidence for the results or conclusions to be widely disseminated.
- (e) *Cost*: the proportion and level of funding sought from the Commission is reasonable, appropriate and well justified.

#### *Level of funding*

Only very rarely does the Commission consider 100% funding. A more usual figure is 15-35%, although contributions have ranged from 5% or less for very large projects up to 50% for high-priority areas. As a general guide the proportion of funding from the Commission should be commensurate with the degree to which the project meets the priority criteria above.

### **3.4 Recommendations**

#### *Priority areas*

In considering areas for priority action in the future, the Commission should build on the successes of the past and continually look for new and innovative directions. However, applications may be received in respect of any project which fulfils the priority criteria outlined above. The following outline shows a limited number of fields which deserve particular and continued attention from the Commission in the context of the lesser used languages budget line.

(a) Bilingual and multilingual education (which includes one or more lesser used language), such as research, pilot projects, development of methodology and didactic materials, and teacher training in respect of:

- preschool bilingual education and play-groups;
- multilingual learning initiatives at school (particularly 'passive' skills teaching and language-family teaching);

- development of distance learning strategies for learners of lesser used languages;
  - school-parent cooperation and education information campaigns;
  - integrated, community-based language-promotion and language teaching campaigns and language-use strategies.
- (b) Media and cultural projects involving lesser used languages or cultures
- book co-productions;
  - magazine networks;
  - radio, TV and video co-productions;
  - cultural festivals bringing together groups from different linguistic communities.
- (c) Information centres and networks of people, such as researchers, working on similar topics in linguistic communities across the EU.
- (d) Study visits and exchanges between regions.

### *Joint Projects and Evaluation*

Given the extent of valuable and high quality work being undertaken with Commission support across the European Union, more could be done on the part of project organisers to ensure wider dissemination of the results and benefits of the projects. There are two relatively straightforward ways in which this could be achieved: either the project organisers could arrange for participants from elsewhere in the EU to be included in the management of a project, or a report of the progress and results of the project could be written and distributed to interested people. There are now, through Mercator or the Bureau, sufficient sources for mailing lists of experts to facilitate pan-European contact and organisers could be encouraged to avail of these services in formulating proposals. Obviously, it is not sufficient for project organisers to merely be open to outside involvement; the cooperation must be planned and costed into a proposal from the beginning.

Many of the more innovative projects, particularly pilot projects in the domains of education and the media, currently include evaluation phases. This is a trend which should be encouraged. It should even be possible on occasion to invite an expert from another region of the EU to undertake the evaluation, and so bring outside expertise and experience to bear.

### *Links to other policies*

While this report has concentrated on the activities under the lesser used languages budget line, reference has been made to initiatives already being undertaken within other policies managed by the Commission. These include the work on minority rights in the context of external policy and cultural initiatives which are open to involvement from minority language groups. Another example, in educational policy, is the assistance which has been granted towards the creation of links between university departments working in the lesser used languages field.

An area where further attention could be paid to linguistic groups is in regional policy. As has been noted above, there are many similarities between linguistic groups in the realms of economic conditions, environment, socio-cultural status, and ethno-linguistic vitality, where the feasibility of a distinct policy initiative in respect of the linguistic communities could usefully be examined.

Finally, there is the question of the contribution which linguistic minorities can make to the development of the European Union. For example, there is the practical experience with bilingual education, particularly at the pre-school level, which is more highly developed within some minority language education systems than it is in the State-wide educational framework. In the wider context, the diversity of European culture itself is considerably enriched by the languages and cultures of regional or minority groups and their continued social and economic development will be an important element in further European integration. Action must not be confined to the tourist and heritage industries, which can in fact have a negative impact on the self-esteem and development of communities, but should focus on the needs and potential of the communities themselves. But any initiatives must be based on sound analysis of the data: the next step in this process is to be the production of the *Euromosaic* study.