

The Magazine

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN EUROPE

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Europe unties tongues



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Education and culture
at a glance



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Multilingual Europeans

As the European Commissioner from Luxembourg, I attach particular importance to the subject of languages. Indeed, finding a native of Luxembourg who is not interested in languages would be no easy task, as we are immersed in foreign languages from childhood. In addition to our mother tongue, Luxemburgish, at school we learn those of our German- and French-speaking neighbours, along with English. The Grand Duchy also has large Italian and Portuguese communities. We are especially well equipped to live in a multilingual society. Languages are important for all European citizens and multilingualism offers great opportunities; it would therefore be very satisfying to see as many Europeans as possible benefit from it.

The European Union comprises many different countries, communities and language groups. It is vital for us to be able to understand one another in the shared area we are building. It is equally crucial to preserve each and every one's identity and the diversity of Europe.

That is where languages come into play. Learning other languages encourages us to be more receptive to other people and to understand other cultures: essential skills in a world threatened by racism and xenophobia. What is more, mastery of several languages is crucial for Europe's economic competitiveness, permitting better intercultural communication with our trading partners. Finally, breaking down language barriers is a necessity if we hope to give students and workers greater mobility throughout the Union.



Viviane Reding,
Member of the European
Commission responsible
for education and culture

Encouraging communication and mutual understanding, while safeguarding diversity and identity are the two principles at the heart of the European Union's action in the area of language learning. They are reflected in the action plan for promoting language learning and linguistic diversity adopted at my initiative by the European Commission on 24 July 2003, particularly in one of its key objectives: as general practice, the teaching of at least two foreign languages to children at a very early age. The aim is to enable all citizens to communicate in two foreign languages. It is an ambitious objective, but multilingualism is an opportunity we cannot pass up!



Mother tongue plus two foreign languages



The European Union has adopted an ambitious aim for its education and training policy: to enable all Europeans to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue. But just what do we all stand to gain by learning foreign languages?



The desire to communicate with others often arises during holidays abroad (see box on page 6) and this can evolve into an interest in learning about different cultures in greater depth. Studying a foreign language, moreover, can pave the way to the rediscovery of one's mother tongue.

Getting a taste for it

Although it holds great promise for multilingualism, the 'mother tongue plus two' solution might also appear hard to implement. Learning one language is complicated enough, so surely learning two must be even more so. Yet all the multilingual people you meet will tell you the same thing: the first step is the hardest. Once the first foreign language has been mastered, learning the second is easier and the third still easier than the second. How can that be? Learning a language requires acquisition techniques that are very different from those used for other academic subjects such as history, maths or biology. Learning a first foreign language involves mastering these specific techniques, and it is the combination of the two efforts – new learning techniques and a new language – that creates an initial difficulty. By contrast, for the second foreign language, the learning techniques have already been acquired and the learner now has to focus only on the new language; thus the task is easier.

As well as this intellectual enrichment, many people have a more pragmatic motivation: to improve their professional situation. The process of European integration launched more than half a century ago has considerably speeded up trade between European Union Member States. Companies clearly need people capable of communicating in their clients' languages and this means that multilingualism has become an undeniable strength – if not a vital qualification – in the job market.

The limits of a lingua franca

It makes sense to learn one foreign language, but why two? Wouldn't it be enough for everyone to learn one widely used language, a lingua franca, such as English? This is where it is important to be aware of the link between language and culture. True mutual understanding and deep appreciation of another culture require dialogue in the local language. If the foreign language being learned is a lingua franca – usually English, the link between language and culture is lacking. The lingua franca does not equip the speaker to deal with all country-specific situations. For instance, an Italian can be recruited in Germany for a job that requires mastery of English alone. However, he will have to know German if he hopes both to become an integral part of the company, in which his fellow workers communicate in German, and to feel at ease in everyday life in German society.

Another factor favouring multilingualism in Europe is the phenomenon of multilingual comprehension. Most of the languages spoken in Europe stem from three common linguistic trunks. Once a given foreign language has been mastered, comprehension of other languages from the same family is easier. A French speaker who has learnt Spanish, for example, will understand Italian or Portuguese more easily. Multilingual comprehension is part and parcel of the approach to develop techniques that facilitate language learning.

What exactly is meant by speaking two foreign languages? Should we expect to see a generation of perfectly trilingual or even quadrilingual Europeans? The idea behind the goal of 'mother tongue plus two' is, above all, to enable Europeans to communicate – to understand and make themselves understood – in two foreign languages to facilitate exchanges of all kinds.

Furthermore, English is not necessarily the priority lingua franca for everyone. In many cases, the language of the neighbouring country is more important. The linguistic diversity of Europe means that no single solution will ever fit every situation.

Did you know that...?

Russian is the main foreign language in five European countries: Lithuania (83 % of the population speaks Russian), Latvia (59 %), Estonia (53 %), Poland (around 30 %) and Bulgaria (21 %) (*). The first four will become European Union Member States in 2004.

(* Source: Eurobarometer 55, October 2001. See Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb55/eb55_en.pdf



Everyone can be multilingual

Who stands the best chance of becoming multilingual? Clearly young people have most opportunities, since school in the broad sense provides the main learning period in life. But it is not the only one. On the contrary, it is possible to learn new languages throughout life provided the learner is motivated. More and more businesses, to mention just the sphere of work, offer free or low-cost language classes to their employees, or give them time off to take courses at language institutes.

Many times and places throughout life are suitable for learning languages and, equally, numerous methods and resources exist. The teacher/learner relationship remains the main reference point, whether the learner is a young person or an adult, and whether the class is at school, in an adult evening course or in a company — but this relationship is continually in flux. Learning a language, more than any other subject, requires the active participation of the learner. The teacher's role is to arouse interest, provide stimulation, encouragement, advice, guidance, evaluation and correction rather than simply to pass on knowledge from a 'transmitter', the teacher, to a 'receiver', the pupil. Methodologies and teaching materials are growing ever richer, and learners and teachers alike can make use of the wealth of resources available through multimedia and on the Internet.

Even so, other frameworks exist for learning languages in addition to the teacher/learner relationship. Self-teaching is one example. It allows those lacking the time or means to go, or return, to school to teach themselves with the aid of varied teaching tools. The information and communication technologies are extremely useful in this respect. More and more methods and resources are becoming available on CD-ROM, and the range of languages covered is expanding.

Finally, there is total immersion. There is nothing like a stay in a foreign country for acquiring the foundations of a language or perfecting one's skills, especially if it is combined with some of the above methods. The more means used, the greater the chances of success.

The European Union's role

And how does the European Union fit into the picture? How can it help us become multilingual? Education and training are mainly organised independently by the Member States. Every country has its own rules, sets up its own systems and devotes what it sees as the appropriate resources to education and training. However, those working in this field run up against similar problems across Europe, so there is a need for strategies and policies at European level. That is what lies behind European Union intervention. Since the creation of the first Lingua programme in 1990, the European Union has constantly encouraged the exchange of best practice and information, promoted the development of innovative teaching methods, and facilitated teacher and student mobility. The new action plan for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity, adopted on 24 July 2003 (see page 8), extends and builds on this approach.

The day-to-day linguistic diversity of European institutions

In everything that directly affects the life of European citizens, the European Union scrupulously abides by the principle of linguistic diversity. Legislative measures adopted by the EU are thus translated into all the official languages, and debates in the European Parliament are interpreted systematically into the other languages. It is no surprise, therefore, to learn that the European Commission employs more than 1 500 full-time linguists (translators and

interpreters) or that the European Parliament's interpreting service has some 240 permanent interpreters and the equivalent of just over 360 full-time translators. An impressive team, and one that costs much less than might be imagined. The bill paid by taxpayers to guarantee linguistic diversity in the running of the European institutions is equivalent to the price of one cup of coffee per year per citizen.

Milestones in European Union action in support of languages



July 2003: The European Commission adopts the communication entitled, 'Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: Action plan 2004–06'.

March 2002: The Heads of State or Government of the European Union, meeting in Barcelona, instruct the European Commission to pursue its actions to promote basic language skills, particularly through the teaching of at least two foreign languages to children at a very early age.

February 2002: The European Union Ministers for Education and Youth adopt a detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of education and training systems in Europe. The programme explicitly mentions foreign-language proficiency as one of the basic skills all European citizens should acquire.

Who speaks what in Europe?

'Mother tongue plus two' is a praiseworthy objective. But to measure the distance that separates the European Union from this target, Europeans' current language skills need to be assessed. This was the exercise carried out by the *Eurobarometer* ⁽¹⁾, 'Europeans and languages', published in February 2001 by the European Commission ⁽²⁾ for the launch of the European Year of Languages in 2001.

The first observation is that more than 50 % of Europeans speak a foreign language (53 % of those polled) and 26 % say they can speak two. English is the most widely used foreign language (41 % of those interviewed), ahead of French (19 %), German (10 %), Spanish (7 %) and Italian (3 %).

Age and level of education have a major impact on language skills. The youngest categories (aged 15 to 24) and those with the highest level of education contain the highest numbers of multilingual people.

Knowing and practising

Knowing a language is one thing, but practising it is quite another. Only 14 % of Europeans who know at least one foreign language practise it for an hour or more a day. This rises to 29 % if the reference period is lengthened to a week. Occasional use, during trips abroad or with foreign visitors, is the most frequently cited example of language practice (35 % of those polled).

In what circumstances are foreign languages most used? For holidays abroad (47 %), which come well ahead of watching films or television or listening to the radio (22.5 %), and for communicating at work (21.1 %). Similarly, when asked what motivates them to learn a foreign language, Europeans again mention holidays (47 % of respondents) ahead of personal satisfaction (37 %), with work once again in last place (26 %).



At present, the European Union has 11 official languages ⁽¹⁾ that correspond roughly ⁽²⁾ to those of its Member States. With the accession of 10 new Member States ⁽³⁾ in May 2004, the number of official languages will rise to 20 ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ In alphabetical order: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

⁽²⁾ Irish and Luxembourgish, while official languages at national level, do not have official language status at EU level.

⁽³⁾ In alphabetical order: Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

⁽⁴⁾ The new languages will be, in alphabetical order: Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Slovak and Slovene.

2001: European Year of Languages, organised jointly by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Hundreds of projects are carried out and events held in the four corners of Europe.

March 2000: The Heads of State or Government of the European Union, meeting in Luxembourg, set an ambitious goal for the Union: to become the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy by the end of the decade.

1995: Start-up of the Socrates (education) and Leonardo da Vinci (training) programmes, which include languages in all their actions.

November 1995: In its White Paper on education and training entitled 'Teaching and learning in the knowledge society', the European Commission identifies mastery of foreign languages as one of the priorities of its education and training policy.

1990: The European Union launches the first Lingua programme, focusing on language learning.

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School, the main learning venue

Where do multilingual people acquire their language skills? Most Europeans learned or improved their foreign languages at secondary school (59.1 % for the first foreign language — with primary school accounting for another 16.9 % — and 55.9 % for the second), ahead of foreign holidays (19.8 and 23.6 % respectively). The role of secondary school slips for the third foreign language (39.6 %), with holidays abroad (29.9 %) and self-study (15.9 %) picking up the slack.

⁽¹⁾ In December 2000, 16 000 EU citizens aged over 15 were surveyed.

⁽²⁾ *Eurobarometer report 54*, 'Europeans and languages', is available in its complete version in French from the Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/ebs_147_fr.pdf. A summary in English is also available from the Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/eb/ebs_147_summ_en.pdf



An ambitious **plan** for **languages**

At the end of July 2003, the European Commission tabled an action plan for promoting language learning and linguistic diversity. *The Magazine* takes a look at its objectives, methodology and the instruments it will mobilise.

Adopted by the European Commission on 24 July 2003, the action plan (2004–06) to promote language learning and linguistic diversity is based on the experience of the existing programmes run by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture ⁽¹⁾. Its two largest programmes, Socrates (education) and Leonardo da Vinci (training), already provide annual support of some EUR 30 million for language learning. The plan takes into account the results of the Commission's wide-ranging consultation with the other European institutions, national ministries concerned, a wide range of civil society organisations, and the general public.

The action plan also builds on the results of flagship actions such as the European Year of Languages, sponsored by the European Union and the Council of Europe in 2001 ⁽²⁾. Without requiring the mobilisation of important additional financial resources, the action plan is based on the idea of making better use of existing instruments.

The plan pursues the following main objectives.

- Europeans must be encouraged to learn **at least two languages** in addition to their mother tongue.
- Language learning is a **lifelong activity**. It begins at a very early age, continues in education and training systems and is prolonged through adult education.
- The range of languages taught must include regional and minority languages as a means of **promoting diversity**.
- Schools must attach more importance to language courses, and the **training and recruitment of language teachers** must be given particular attention.
- **Innovation** needs to be encouraged, in terms of both methodology – such as the teaching of other content in a foreign language (EMILE) ⁽³⁾ – and technology, particularly the use of the Internet and multimedia.
- The **assessment** of language skills must be based on reliable criteria shared by all the European countries.
- There is a need to create an **environment conducive to learning**, by boosting the number of learning venues, making better use of resources (such as greater use of multilingual persons' skills), and promoting the wide use of subtitles on television and in the cinema.

The plan's proposed implementing measures cover all the EU's language-related activities, primarily through the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Amongst them are:

- greater use of **language assistants**, particularly in primary schools;
- funding of transnational projects to develop language-teaching **materials** for pre-school and primary schools;
- support for school projects based on **integrated learning** of a subject matter and a language;
- the creation of an Internet information **portal** for professionals and the general public on training opportunities, the advantages of knowing more than one language, etc. (to be launched in 2006);
- better information campaigns for language teachers on European **mobility schemes** supported by Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci;
- the organisation of a **European conference in 2006 on the recruitment** of foreign language teachers;
- support for the publication in 2004 of the **status of regional and minority languages** in the Union (update of the *Euromosaic* ⁽⁴⁾ report);
- the development in 2005 and 2006 of a European **language skills indicator**;
- the inclusion from 2004 of multilingualism as a subject eligible for European Union support under **town-twinning projects**.

For the full text of the action plan, see the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/doc/official/keydoc/actlang/act_lang_en.pdf

⁽¹⁾ See diagram on back cover.

⁽²⁾ For more information, see the Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/actions/year2001_en.html

⁽³⁾ See also page 15.

⁽⁴⁾ Internet: <http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic>

Dovetailing national and European policies

School is the prime place for learning foreign languages. And since education is first and foremost the prerogative of each State, it is useful to take a look at national language learning policies to see how well they chime in with the European Union's objectives.

In a recent study on the evolution of national policies since 1974 ⁽¹⁾, the Eurydice network ⁽²⁾ used two essential measurement criteria: (1) the compulsory nature of the teaching ⁽³⁾ of two foreign languages; (2) the level in the education system at which this teaching begins.

Four situations emerged regarding the compulsory nature of language learning.

- Pupils have to learn at least two foreign languages ⁽⁴⁾ during the period of compulsory school attendance.
- The learning of two languages is not compulsory but is possible, with the first foreign language being compulsory in most cases.
- Learning two foreign languages is possible or compulsory only at the upper secondary level.
- The obligation or opportunity for learning two foreign languages is provided for only in flexible programmes developed by each school.

As far as the duration of language teaching is concerned, the general trend is towards more years of compulsory language teaching and starting at a younger age. This trend in favour of multilingualism became more marked between 1984 and 2001, the last reference year of the study. The analysis concludes that 'most national policies for the organisation of foreign language teaching are thus clearly moving in the direction of the recommendations made at European level'.

(1) *La place des langues étrangères dans le parcours scolaire en Europe*, Nathalie Baidak, Eurydice network. See also: *Key data on education in Europe, 2002*, European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, available on the Eurydice website. Internet: <http://www.eurydice.org>
 (2) Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, is one of the pillars established in 1980 by the European Commission and the Member States to facilitate cooperation amongst education stakeholders through better understanding of one another's systems and policies. Eurydice became part of Socrates, the Community action programme in the field of education, in 1995.
 (3) The survey covers pre-school, primary and general secondary education, excluding vocational education.
 (4) For a period of at least one year.

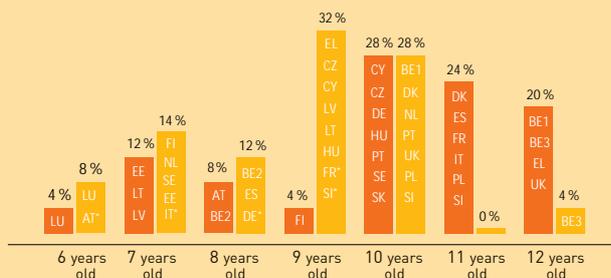
Key

1984

2001

- AT = Austria
- BE = Belgium
- CY = Cyprus
- CZ = Czech Republic
- DE = Germany
- DK = Denmark
- EE = Estonia
- EL = Greece
- ES = Spain
- FI = Finland
- FR = France
- HU = Hungary
- IT = Italy
- LT = Lithuania
- LV = Latvia
- LU = Luxembourg
- PL = Poland
- PT = Portugal
- SI = Slovakia
- SL = Slovenia
- SV = Sweden
- NL = Netherlands
- UK = United Kingdom

Age at which the mandatory teaching of the first foreign language starts, for the years 1984 and 2001



From 1984 to 2001, the age of compulsory first foreign language teaching was lowered in Europe. Indeed, more and more countries now feature as teaching foreign languages to the lowest age levels. Far more countries appear on the left side of the table (the lowest age levels) in 2001 than in 1984.

Duration of the mandatory teaching of the first foreign language, for the years 1984 and 2001



The length of time devoted to foreign language learning increased throughout Europe. There are many more countries on the right part of the table (language learning for nine years or more) in 2001 than in 1984.

NB:

- In the countries marked with an asterisk, longer term teaching is being extended (already referred in the table).
- Malta is not represented in this table since data are only available for 2001.
- The United Kingdom is represented only by Scotland since there are no comparable data for the other countries.
- The three Belgian communities are represented by: B1 (French-speaking Community), B2 (Brussels Region – German-speaking Community) and B3 (Flemish-speaking Community).

Seven language aficionados

To give a clearer picture of language learning and linguistic diversity, *The Magazine* decided to tell the stories of seven Europeans, all of whom have a special relationship with languages. The first, German student Markus Fees, enjoyed direct support from one of the programmes managed by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Another three, Martine Verjans, a Belgian university assistant; Markus Warasin, Italian representative of a non-governmental organisation; and Egle Sleinotiene, a Lithuanian in charge of a language teaching centre, also receive European Union support through an organisation, but pass the benefits on to others through education, training or by defending certain interests. Sylvia Elmes, an English schoolteacher, has had no financial support, but the quality of her project to raise European

awareness and introduce children to foreign languages and cultures was recognised by a European award. The sixth, Amanda Ellerton, an English journalist specialising in European affairs, tells us of her struggle as a hearing-impaired person passionate about languages. The seventh, Paola Deffendi, an Italian schoolteacher, uses an innovative method by which she herself learned English with her young pupils.



NAME: Sylvia Elmes
AGE: 61
NATIONALITY: English
PROFESSION: Teacher
MOTHER TONGUE: English
OTHER LANGUAGES: German, Italian, Spanish, French
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Durham (United Kingdom)

Languages and youngsters: A vehicle for citizenship

Sylvia Elmes has been a primary school teacher for 41 years. Today she is the director of an infant and primary school, where she gives a weekly lesson on preparing for European citizenship, with languages playing a key role. The project, known as 'European awareness, citizenship preparation', was awarded the European Label for innovative initiatives in language teaching and learning (see box).

? What do your lessons on preparing for European citizenship entail?

For the last 12 years, I have given a weekly 40-minute lesson to the first-year primary classes. The idea is to prepare them to become citizens of tomorrow's world. We deal with such subjects as culture, identity, traditions and food. We chat in French, German, Italian and Spanish. I teach them practical words and phrases that will help them communicate in everyday life, such as: 'hello', 'what's your name?', 'where do you live?' or 'how old are you?':

? What prompted you to take this initiative?

My experience of life in Africa, Germany and France gave me the opportunity to get to know different cultures. On the strength of those experiences, I think the way to prepare young people to be responsible citizens of the world, particularly in Europe, involves becoming familiar with languages at a very early age. Personally, I feel more European than British. And languages are essential for communicating amongst Europeans, for studying, getting a firm foothold on the job market, and so on.

? In practice, how do you teach your lessons?

Children learn by playing, so the lessons have to be amusing and short. I work with different materials: a story from a given country (Pinocchio for Italy, or Hansel and Gretel for Germany), a song, a flag for learning colours, and so on. After the new year holiday, we collect post office or fire brigade calendars and learn the names of the days and months. I also take the children on regular trips to the supermarket to discover the foods of different countries: Belgian beer, French cheese, Italian spaghetti. They learn to work out the information on the labels and at the same time discover different taste experiences.

A project awarded the European Label

The project entitled 'European awareness, citizenship preparation', was awarded the European Label for innovative initiatives in language teaching and learning. The label is 'intended to highlight and reward local or national innovative initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning' [1]. It concerns all levels of education and training from pre-school to adult education. Schools awarded the label can display it on their premises and in their promotional material.

Awarded by juries in each Member State, the label is based on criteria established at European level and supplemented by national criteria. To be eligible, projects must be comprehensive (all actors must be included in defining needs and methods to meet those needs), generate added value, provide motivation for participants, be original and creative, involve a European dimension and be transferable (adaptable to other contexts).

Since being launched on a large scale [2] in 1999, the label has been awarded to 400 projects throughout the European Union and in the future Member States, applicant countries and countries belonging to the European Economic Area [3].

For further information on the European Label, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages/actions/language_label_en.html

[1] Report on the implementation of the European Label for innovative projects in language teaching and learning, 1999-2001, p. 1, Brussels, December 2002.

[2] The European Label began with a pilot phase in 1998.

[3] Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Did you know that...?

From 2000 to 2002, the Socrates programme funded 1 601 joint language projects involving 58 500 pupils and 6 500 teachers; 2 440 language assistants' posts; and 16 563 continuing training grants for language teachers.



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? How do the children react to this way of teaching?

They say: 'It's fantastic!' When we visit the supermarket, they are wide-eyed and eager to smell the fish or the vegetables we have learned about, or even to take different foods home to taste them. They are doing something both practical and playful, so the approach to languages is very spontaneous and very natural.

? Do your pupils have direct contact with children from other cultures?

In June every year, we take the children to northern France, where we spend four nights in a hotel. Our pupils meet children from other schools in France. We have also visited the European Parliament in Brussels. I think visits to foreign countries are essential.





Senior managers bank on intercultural communication



NAME: Martine Verjans
AGE: 46
NATIONALITY: Belgian
PROFESSION: Teacher of business French
MOTHER TONGUE: Dutch
OTHER LANGUAGES: French, Spanish, English
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Hasselt (Belgium)



A former teacher, Martine Verjans ⁽¹⁾ is the mainspring of the Leomep-Multi – Plurilingua ⁽²⁾ project. This self-teaching methodology enables senior managers both to boost their language skills and to understand the cultural context in which languages evolve.

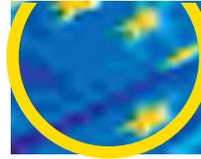
European senior managerial staff now have access to a self-teaching method tailor-made for their foreign language communication needs, called 'Intercultural communication for (technical) managerial staff – Plurilingua'. A consortium of 17 partners from seven European countries, under the leadership of Limburgs Universitair Centrum ⁽³⁾ (Limburg University Centre), in Belgium, has developed a battery of 18 self-teaching modules from seven source languages (Dutch, English, French, German, Hungarian, Polish and Spanish) into three target languages (Dutch, French and German). Based in large measure on information and communication technologies (CD-ROMs and an Internet environment), the Plurilingua method helps its users to improve their language skills and understand the cultural context of the language they are learning.

Leading the initiative is Martine Verjans, a former secondary school teacher, who switched to business-oriented training. 'I studied the Romance languages', she explains, 'and then taught for five years at the secondary level but decided that I had other aspirations. I wanted to widen my horizons.'

In 1984, an assistant's post (teaching, research and services) became vacant in the Management Faculty at Limburg University Centre and Martine Verjans was hired.

'The Management Faculty is linked to the world of business through academic research, teaching and services', Martine Verjans continues. 'With its organisation of in-company training courses for Management Faculty students, our team learnt of a number of complaints about the linguistic deficiencies of technical executives. I therefore undertook systematic research to see whether this observation could be generalised, only to realise that the project needed to be expanded to have a European perspective.'

And in stepped the Leonardo da Vinci programme with co-funding for the Plurilingua project. The first prototype was made available in 2000. Since then, another 17 modules have been developed with German, Belgian, Hungarian, Spanish, French and Irish partners. 'What is original about the project is that it is based on representative empirical research aimed at providing a comparative analysis of the real foreign language needs and communication problems of senior managers in four Member States. The methodology and the content of the teaching material were based on these detailed communication profiles, which guarantees the reliability of the 18 multimedia learning modules,' explains Martine Verjans.



Leonardo da Vinci at a glance

The Leonardo da Vinci programme, now in its second phase (2000–06), aims to implement a European Union vocational training policy based on and supplementing the actions of Member States. It assists public and private vocational training bodies working in an international partnership: training centres, universities, businesses, chambers of commerce, etc.

The mastery of foreign languages is now a key skill in an increasingly demanding labour market. The activities of the Leonardo da Vinci programme therefore include the language dimension. Leonardo subsidises multinational projects aiming to develop new methodologies and aids for language teaching and the assessment of businesses' language needs. It also supports numerous mobility projects.

To learn more about Leonardo da Vinci, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/leonardo_en.html



Did you know that...?

From the beginning of 2000 to the end of 2002, the Leonardo da Vinci programme funded 750 continuing training periods abroad for foreign language teachers and 56 projects for the development of language learning tools for vocational training, especially for use in the workplace.

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Originally designed for technical managerial staff, the target public of the Plurilingua project has been widened. 'Communication problems in a foreign language are identical in large measure for all managerial staff, whether technical or not, and certainly for those assigned to the more commercial functions,' suggests Martine Verjans. 'The enlargement of the target public was only natural.' Not only was the target public expanded, but the choice of languages is also being increased. By 2005, another 11 language combinations will be added, with Polish and English being added as target languages and Slovak and Czech as source languages.

For more information on the Plurilingua project, see the Internet: <http://www.plurilingua.com/>

(¹) Assisted by Anouk Gelan.

(²) The project itself is entitled 'Leonardo's multilingual engineers project – Multicultural communication in Europe (Leomep-Multi): For greater transparency, the site has been named Plurilingua.

(³) More specifically, the Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics Research Group.

Killing ^{two} _{two} birds with one stone



NAME: Markus Fees
AGE: 23
NATIONALITY: German
PROFESSION: Economics student
MOTHER TONGUE: German
OTHER LANGUAGES: English, French, a little Czech
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Berlin (Germany)

An economics student at Bamberg University in Germany, Markus Fees spent six months in Prague

under the Erasmus action of the Socrates programme. His goals were to learn the basics of the language and culture, and to look into career possibilities in the Czech Republic.

? **What language skills did you have before you participated in the Erasmus exchange in Prague? How did you prepare for the exchange?**

I studied English and French at school. But I only did three years of French so my knowledge of that language is pretty limited. When I enrolled at Bamberg University, I wanted to learn a language other than those Germans usually choose to study. There is a section of the university dedicated to central European languages: Russian, Polish and so on. I was interested in Czech, which is less commonplace.

? **You lived in Prague from September 2002 to May 2003. What did you learn from this experience?**

It was fantastic because I met people from other countries and other cultures, who spoke different languages. These experiences were very intense and enriching. I made new friends from just about all over Europe. And I realised what the term 'national mentality' can mean. What counts the most for me is that I became more sensitive to other cultures. As one of my friends puts it, 'an Erasmus year can really change your personality.'

? **What types of courses did you have in Prague and in which languages were they taught?**

I had courses in philosophy, political science and economics, taught in English. There was also a Czech language course, also taught in English. Learning Czech is not easy: it's a difficult language but it makes life simpler when you are in the Czech Republic. This first experience has made me want to improve my skills and to try to master the language.

? **What motivated you to choose this destination and this language?**

When the Czech Republic becomes a member of the European Union, trade between the Czechs and Germans will increase. So will career opportunities. The countries of central Europe are our neighbours, but few Germans master any of their languages. What's more, Prague is a wonderful place!

Did you know that...?

Between 2000 and 2002,
3 632 higher education students
took intensive language preparation
courses in lesser used and lesser
taught languages, thanks to Socrates'
financing.



More than a million Erasmus students

Markus Fees is one of more than a million students who have already received support from Erasmus, the higher education branch of the Socrates programme. Launched in 1987, Erasmus aims to 'improve the quality and the European dimension of higher education'. It does so by various means: encouraging cooperation between universities, promoting European mobility of students and professors and defending transparency and academic recognition of studies and qualifications in the European Union with a credit transfer system. The Erasmus action offers grants to students for intensive language preparation courses before their stay abroad.

Beneficiaries of the Erasmus action include both universities and 'extra-university' institutions offering higher education or post-graduate courses.

For the period 24 January 2000 to the end of 2006, participation opportunities have been extended to 30 European countries: the 15 Union Member States, the future Member States (Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia), Bulgaria, Romania (applicant countries) and Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

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To read more about Erasmus, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/erasmus/erasmus_en.html

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#22 Europe unties tongues



Combining content and language learning

Spending time in Prague to learn Czech and improving his English in the process, as Markus Fees did, is one example of an experience being shared by lots of learners. More and more educational institutions, at all levels, are offering their students the opportunity to study geography, economics, science and other subjects in a foreign language. The idea is that learning the language is no longer the ultimate aim but rather the means of learning another subject. Since learning that other subject means having to cross the language barrier, mastery of the language concerned is enhanced.

This methodology is known as EMILE (l'enseignement d'une matière par l'intégration d'une langue étrangère, or teaching content through a foreign language). To encourage the adoption of this method, the European Commission has helped set up the 'Euroclit' network of teachers and other stakeholders interested in the teaching of non-language subjects in a foreign language.

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For additional information on the EMILE system, see the Internet:

<http://www.euroclit.net/>

Promoting lesser used languages



NAME: Markus Warasin
AGE: 32
NATIONALITY: Italian
PROFESSION: Secretary General of the European Bureau
for Lesser Used Languages
MOTHER TONGUE: German
OTHER LANGUAGES: Italian, English, French, Spanish
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Brussels (Belgium)

Markus Warasin is the Secretary General of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). Since being set up in 1982, the EBLUL has actively promoted regional and minority languages, particularly through exchanges of information amongst and within language communities.

The European Union has 11 official languages: Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish. Along with these 11, it is estimated that nearly 50 million of the European Union's 370 million citizens speak a regional or minority language (also referred to as 'lesser used languages').

Action at European level

These languages and language communities are part and parcel of Europe's cultural reality and heritage. With the aim of safeguarding this heritage, the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages was created in 1982, at the initiative of the European Parliament. It is 80 % financed by the European Commission. Markus Warasin, Secretary General of the EBLUL and an Italian whose mother tongue is German, explains that the Bureau 'has no political aims. We put equal energy into promoting German in States where it is a minority language, such as Belgium, and languages such as Catalan or Sardinian. Our objective is, on the one hand, to represent the lesser used languages in the European Union institutions and other international organisations, and on the other, to promote information sharing within and about language communities'.

The EBLUL has its General Secretariat in Brussels and an information office in Dublin. Its structure is based on 15 committees in the European Union Member States that gather in Brussels three times a year for a general meeting to take decisions and approve the Bureau's strategy and policies.

The EBLUL's three big projects

The EBLUL is currently focusing on three major projects. An online news agency (Internet: <http://www.eurolang.net>) publishes contributions from 14 journalists on minority languages in Europe.

The second project, 'Partnership for diversity', promotes actions by the different relevant authorities to simplify the daily life of local minorities, for example through the translation of street names, the preparation of lists of doctors speaking different languages or adaptation of the education system to the linguistic context. 'The diversity of languages is spreading in a growing number of regions in Europe,' continues Markus Warasin. 'Every year we hold a major conference at which each State – represented by local authorities, mayors, etc. – is invited to present the languages spoken by its population and to propose adaptations leading to better consideration of linguistic diversity. Many of these people later join our organisation and work on certain projects.'

Finally, the lingualia.net site and portal, currently under construction, will provide links in different fields (arts, politics, tourism, etc.) for the public concerned, serving as a specialist online search engine.

In addition to these three projects, the EBLUL puts out various publications and has a specialist documentation centre.

Contact

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Did you know that...?

In the European Union, Sami (or Lapp) is the mother tongue of around 100 000 people living in the northern regions of Finland and Sweden. Sami belongs to the Finno-Ugrian language group.

Regional and minority languages: landmarks

The definition of regional and minority languages used at European level corresponds to that set out in Article 1 of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. These are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population, and different from the official language(s) of that State. Regional or minority languages do not include dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants.

This definition covers different situations:

- languages specific to a region, whether the region is situated wholly or partially in one or more Member States (e.g. Breton in France, Basque in Spain and France, or Luxemburgish in Luxembourg);
- languages spoken by a minority in a State, but which are official languages in another State (e.g. German in Belgium or Swedish in Finland);
- non-territorial languages, such as those of Roma or Jewish populations (e.g. Romany and Yiddish).



A fundamental right

Respect for linguistic and cultural diversity is one of the foundations of the European Union. It is enshrined in Article 22 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (1), which states: 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.'

Since the early 1980s, with the tabling of a number of proposals on regional languages and cultures, the European Parliament has passed a raft of resolutions in support of lesser used languages. The Arfé Resolution of 16 October 1981 represents the symbolic first step of this policy, followed two years later by Parliament's allocation of a specific budget for the promotion and safeguarding of regional and minority languages aimed at developing a Community policy to that end. Since then, a European Parliament Minority Languages Intergroup has been set up and meets regularly to review initiatives. On 4 September this year, the European Parliament adopted a report by Michl Ebner calling on the European Commission to study the feasibility of creating a European agency for linguistic diversity and language learning.

The 1982 creation of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages constituted an essential step forward in the effort to safeguard and promote these languages. It is one of the most active bodies at European level. It works in close cooperation with the Mercator network of information on minority languages and cultures, financed in large measure by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Up until 2000, a project fund was allocated to exchanges and experiences on the ground.

The promotion of regional and minority languages was also the focus of various projects and activities held in 2001 during the European Year of Languages, organised by the European Union and the Council of Europe. Finally, as part of its new language strategy, the European Commission is recommending the integration of regional or minority language issues into all European Union policies related to language learning and the promotion of linguistic diversity.

(1) For more on the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, see the Internet: <http://db.consilium.eu.int/df/default.asp?lang=en>

A gift for languages



NAME: Amanda Ellerton
AGE: 45
NATIONALITY: English
PROFESSION: Journalist/Editor
MOTHER TONGUE: English
OTHER LANGUAGES: French, Spanish and German
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Brussels (Belgium)

At age five, Amanda Ellerton learned she had a genetic illness that would cause her to lose her hearing. Her struggle to become a journalist was paved with difficulty. She gives us a first-hand account.

German as my second language. After that, I went on to do a doctorate at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium. The courses were taught in French, but the students represented 22 nationalities.

'I totally understand the problems of the deaf and hearing impaired. I have been severely deaf since childhood and have had to struggle ceaselessly to hear others and to communicate: at school, at university and in 20 years of working as a journalist, translator and editor. Having to communicate in different languages added further difficulties. With the help and patience of my family circle, though, I was able to beat the odds. People with impaired hearing or any other disability can have the same opportunities as so-called normal people.

My qualifications helped me to find a job as a journalist in Brussels. In my work, my handicap forced me to learn all sorts of ways to cope: copying notes from journalists seated next to me at press conferences or setting the interpreting earphones at maximum volume.

My approach to the problem was nonetheless different from that of most deaf and hearing impaired people, such as Bitema project participants (see opposite). I decided from the beginning to live and work with non-disabled people. So there was no question of using sign language: no one in my family knew it and only a few friends and family members would have been willing to learn it with me. So I struggled on, helped by lip-reading and writing, and constantly changing hearing aids up until the day I had to face the facts: even with the most powerful hearing aid, I could hear only very distorted sounds.

But every cloud has a silver lining. Modern technology came to my rescue and I now have a bionic ear. After waiting 13 years for a cochlear implant, I finally had the operation in October 2001. A whole new challenge then emerged: learning to listen and hear normally and to recognise speech. Although I'm English, I did this rehabilitation course in French. In a matter of months I had made tremendous progress. At the beginning I could only make out one of every three syllables and could manage to point to a drawing of a cat or squirrel, but before long I was able to recite, while looking at my feet, a full page of *Le Petit Prince* read by my teacher. The language barrier was still real for French accents and silent consonants, but in the end I managed to overcome it.'

In learning languages, I had a lot of help from my mother, who speaks French, English and even Hindi. She and neighbours, who were teachers, encouraged me to learn Latin and French first, followed by Spanish.

After finishing school, I looked into programmes at several universities offering modern languages and before starting university, I worked as an *au pair* in Vienna to improve my German, and then in France and in Spain. I was admitted to European Studies and Modern Languages at Manchester University (UMIST), spending my third year in France teaching English. I earned a degree in French and European Studies, with



Bitema: bilingual teaching methods for the deaf

Bitema is an educational project financed by the Socrates programme (Grundtvig action, adult education) being implemented by four countries. It aims to help the deaf and hearing impaired to develop the skills needed to access the labour market and become socially integrated. The target group is deaf adults aged between 18 and 40 in Denmark, France, Slovenia and Iceland who have not managed to break the 'sound barrier' at school and therefore lack qualifications. Many have deficient language skills and have not been able to complete sufficient schooling to allow them to find a decent job.

Starting in October 2001 and extending until the end of 2004, teachers from the four countries are developing innovative teaching methods to help their students get the same information as others, but in their own language. The teachers are managing four pilot projects designed to improve teaching methods by taking advantage of the vast resources and possibilities offered by information and communication technologies. A special tool — the 'Educational management tool' — is at the heart of the teachers' project. With it, they can teach classes on Internet sites, using both writing and sign language. Indeed, visual language is a real necessity for deaf students, who learn with the help of videos, three-dimensional animations, video telephone and Internet chats. Transnational networks have also been created by the teachers and amongst the students who have met at regular seminars.

In 2002, a second pilot project focused on distance learning in the participating institutions, all of which offer courses and vocational adaptation to the target group. The partners thus hope to enable their students to take advantage of distance education.

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Hocus and Lotus: make-believe for early learning



NAME: Paola Deffendi
AGE: 45
NATIONALITY: Italian
PROFESSION: Pre-school teacher
MOTHER TONGUE: Italian
OTHER LANGUAGES: English
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Fiumicello (Italy)



✎ Gestures, body movements and facial expressions are important tools in the method developed by the University La Sapienza. They transform the teacher into a magician who leads the children into an imaginary world.

A pre-school teacher in Italy, Paola Deffendi, was won over by an innovative method for teaching foreign languages to very young children. Thanks to *The Adventures of Hocus and Lotus*, she and her pupils have made impressive progress in English.

'Before my experience with *The Adventures of Hocus and Lotus*, I did not speak a word of English. Today, I teach the basics of English to very young children thanks to this method.' Paola Deffendi's encounter with the Hocus and Lotus project dates back to 1997. As a teacher at the Carlo Collodi pre-school in Monfalcone, she met Traute Taeschner, the project promoter (1), who was looking for teachers interested in experimenting with this innovative method for teaching very young learners (aged three to eight).

'I was doubly motivated. Personally, I had not had the opportunity to learn a foreign language, either at school or in my career. This was a chance to learn English and I did not hesitate,' explains Paola Deffendi. 'At the same time, I have always considered learning a foreign language at an early age to be fundamental. It did not take me long to identify the advantages of this method. Its effectiveness became obvious with experience. The children's progress was impressive and their parents were delighted with the results. I just had to carry on with it.'

Learning a foreign language as a mother tongue

The Adventures of Hocus and Lotus is a method based on a simple but brilliant principle: the early learning of a second language must be based on the same mechanisms as those used to learn the mother tongue. The child's acquisition of the first sounds, words and sentences is not limited to the oral (or written) devouring of a lexical and grammatical corpus that then has to be reproduced as accurately as possible. It is based on an emotional relationship between the child and the adult, on the pressing need to communicate and on mutual understanding. It makes use of both gestures and words and is nurtured with repetition.

Alongside these vital – but often neglected – elements of learning, the Hocus and Lotus method adds the use of make-believe and play. These are what enable the children and their teachers to get the necessary distance from their mother tongue, to tell themselves: 'We are entering a different world where a foreign language is the only one that can be used.' The vehicles for this make-believe are two 'dinocrocs' (half-dinosaur, half-crocodile) named Hocus and Lotus, whose adventures are shared by the children and their teachers. While these adventures are magical, they nonetheless reflect the realities and concerns of children to allow better identification.





Lingua:

Socrates' flagship action in the field of languages

The project, *The Adventures of Hocus and Lotus*, was funded mainly by the European Union under the Lingua action for the period 1995 to 1999. Lingua, for the period 2000 to 2006 supports the activities of different Socrates programme actions (primarily Erasmus, Comenius and Grundtvig) in the field of promoting language teaching and learning.

The Lingua action is intended to:

- encourage and promote linguistic diversity in the European Union;
- help improve the quality of language teaching and learning;
- facilitate access to lifelong learning opportunities suited to each learner's needs.

The Lingua action has two sections covering different sub-objectives.

Lingua 1 aims to:

- increase public awareness of the Union's multilingual wealth;
- encourage citizens to learn languages throughout their life-time and facilitate access to learning resources in Europe;
- develop and disseminate innovative techniques and best practice in language teaching.

Lingua 2 is intended to make available a sufficiently wide range of language learning tools to language learners.

For further information on Lingua, see the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/lingua/index_en.html



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#22 Europe unites tongues

The basic method is reinforced by a number of teaching materials: brochures on the methodology for teachers and parents, a set of stories relating the adventures of the two dinocrocs (18 in all), cassette recordings telling the stories of Hocus and Lotus in songs, and cartoon video cassettes of the stories.

The creators of the method recommend a daily Hocus and Lotus session. 'Each module lasts around a half-hour,' explains Paola Deffendi. 'We begin by using gestures and play-acting the episode. The children act out the different characters present in the scenario. We then watch the illustrated story together. Afterwards, we sing songs and end with a more formal exercise.'

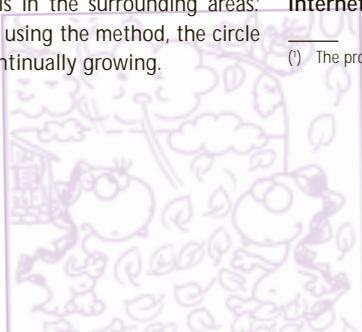
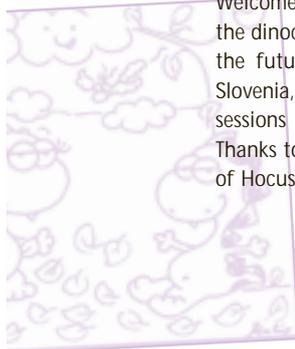
While Paola Deffendi has opted for English, the teaching material also exists in French, German and Italian. It is currently being extended to Danish, Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish. Welcomed warmly by scores of teachers in the European Union, the dinocrocs did not wait for enlargement to win the hearts of the future Member States. 'I have contact with teachers in Slovenia, where Italian is spoken in certain regions. I also organise sessions in certain primary schools in the surrounding areas.' Thanks to the enthusiasm of those using the method, the circle of Hocus and Lotus followers is continually growing.

Did you know that...?

Under the European Union Youth programme, the European Voluntary Service offers informal intercultural learning opportunities to some 2 800 young people a year in the form of transnational voluntary projects.

For more information on Hocus and Lotus, see the Internet: http://www.hocus-lotus.edu/pagine/chi_siamo.html

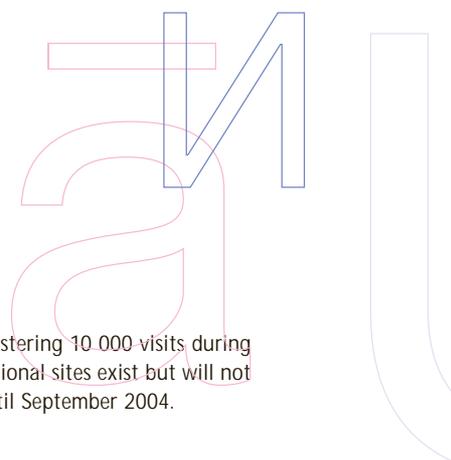
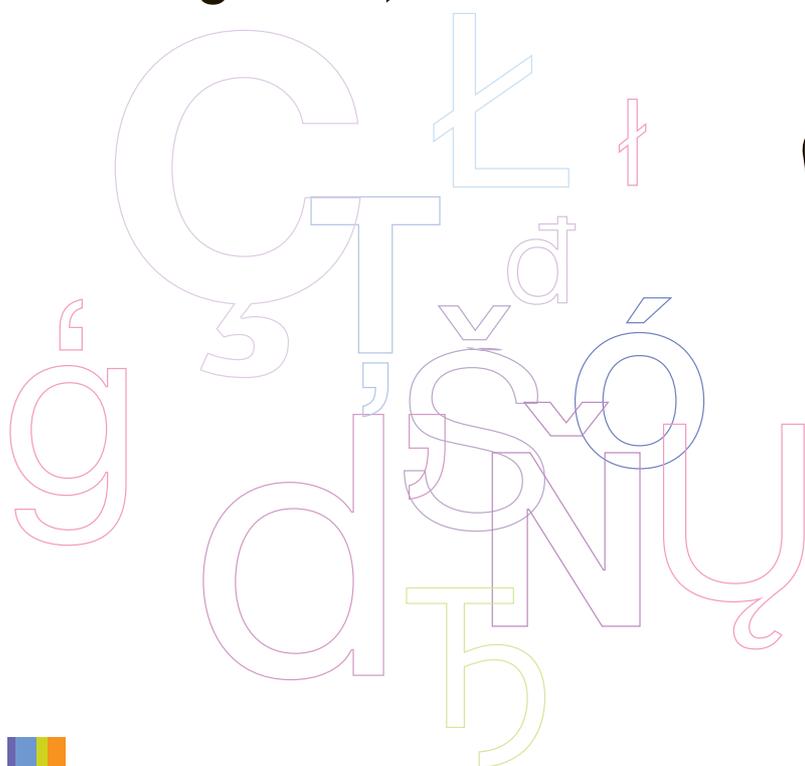
(*) The project was launched by the University of Rome, La Sapienza.



Internet resources for less widely used languages, such as **Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Slovakian**



NAME: Egle Sleinotiene
AGE: 50
NATIONALITY: Lithuanian
PROFESSION: Director of the Public Service Language Centre in Vilnius
MOTHER TONGUE: Lithuanian
OTHER LANGUAGES: English, Russian, Polish and German
MAIN PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Vilnius (Lithuania)



A philologist by training, Egle Sleinotiene is one of the founders of Euro Languages Net. This project aims to make available to the public online resources in support of the learning of lesser used languages.

Are you interested in learning Polish or Estonian but do not have a clue where to turn? Would you like to find information on English–Hungarian dictionaries? Are you looking for a self-teaching method for Finnish? Do you need answers to your questions on the Internet? The Euro Languages Net came into being in 2001 precisely to help with situations like these.

The initiative was based on the observation that, while there is a wealth of online resources for English, French or German, there is a shortage for lesser used languages. To bridge the gap, language institutes, universities and training centres from 12 European countries decided to develop an Internet portal targeting learners of Bulgarian, Estonian, Finnish, German (Austrian), Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Slovak.

In practice, the portal plays the role of an educational showcase for the project and a meeting place for the partners, particularly through theme-based exchange forums. It contains references to the 12 national sites, all of which are based on a common architecture. These sites offer various resources: databases of centres offering courses in the languages concerned, distance self-teaching tools, presentation of projects, forums, etc.

That is to say, they will offer resources. Euro Languages Net is still in the development phase. The portal has been up and

running since September 2003, registering 10 000 visits during its first month of operation. The national sites exist but will not offer the full range of resources until September 2004.

Learning a language on the sly

If there is any one person who symbolises the Euro Languages Net project, it is Egle Sleinotiene, its coordinator. This 50-year-old Lithuanian, in charge of the Public Service Language Centre in Vilnius, testifies to the difficulties surrounding the lesser used languages and particularly the impact of political factors on their fate. 'During the Soviet era, no effort whatsoever was made to preserve Lithuanian. On the contrary, Russian tended to be imposed,' she remembers. 'When Lithuania finally became independent again in 1991, at first our reactions were conservative. The safeguarding of Lithuanian was seen first and foremost in the rejection of foreign words. The need for a more innovative and proactive approach gradually emerged. Lithuanian, like the languages of other former Soviet bloc countries that were experiencing the same type of problems, had to be projected more positively, making resources readily available to those who wanted to learn it.' In other words, it was important to abolish as many obstacles to learning as possible.

And Egle knows what it means to have to surmount obstacles to learn a foreign language. Passionate about English from her adolescence, she ran up against the linguistic policy of the time. 'English was not very popular and was not taught at school,' she explains. 'There was very little material available. We had to scrounge around to get books or texts in English outside



Self-assessment ^{for the} self-taught

Lots of Europeans have mastered a language without having any official recognition of their achievement. For the self-taught and those who have experienced non-formal learning, the question of the assessment of their proficiency can be a problem.

Different initiatives have been taken to deal with this issue and tools have been developed for the self-assessment of language skills. One example is the Dialang project. With support from the Lingua action of Socrates, Dialang has developed diagnostic evaluation tests in 14 European languages available on the Internet (it has been up and running in an interactive test phase ⁽¹⁾ for the general public and institutions since the start of 2003).

Coordinated by the Freie Universität Berlin, Dialang has separate tests for oral and written comprehension, written expression, grammatical structures and vocabulary. It covers all levels (from beginners to advanced).

What is innovative about the project is that it is the first major system offering users a genuine diagnosis of their language skills, and giving users the choice of language for test administration and feedback. It also explains how users can improve their proficiency.

Dialang is unique in its range of languages and its coherence: the tests are always anchored in the same proficiency scales,

regardless of the language concerned. The scales are those of the common European framework of reference for languages, adopted and promoted by the Council of Europe.

Useful for learners interested in self-assessment, Dialang will be equally valuable for individuals or organisations (e.g. employers or language centres) needing to measure, at little cost and with methodological consistency, language skills learned non-formally.

Contact

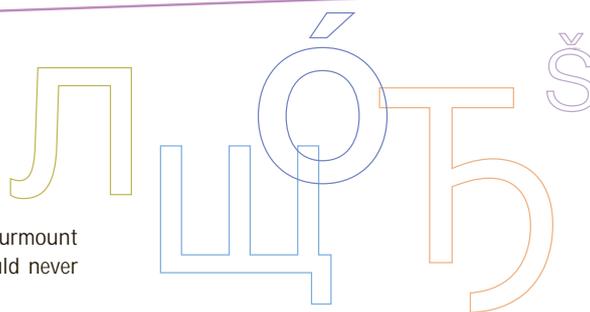
Gillian McLaughlin
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or marketing@dialang.org
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⁽¹⁾ Users are asked to submit their comments via an online interface.

the official networks. Without those efforts to surmount obstacles, I would never have learnt English and would never have become a philologist!

Contact

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The Directorate-General for Education and Culture manages various programmes and actions with a language dimension, as the chart below illustrates



http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/languages_en.html





Education ^{and} culture at a glance

In response to readers' requests, *The Magazine* will now include a four-page insert presenting an overview of the main activities of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. The insert supplements the body of *The Magazine*, which will continue to look in detail at a particular subject.

On the menu for the insert are follow-ups of political issues and programmes, an overview of the campaigns the directorate-general is conducting and a general survey of publications and events in which the Directorate-General for Education and Culture participates.

Pleasant reading!

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The European higher education area expands

Seven new members joined the European higher education area at the conference held in Berlin on 18 and 19 September 2003: Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, the Holy See, Serbia and Montenegro, and Russia. The number of States involved in the process (known as the Bologna process), which aims at establishing a European higher education area, now comes to 40.

The conference, attended by ministers of the 38 countries and by representatives of universities and student organisations, set a list of priorities for the next two years. Among these are the opportunity for students to make use anywhere of grants and loans awarded in any country participating in the Bologna process, and the development of common criteria and methodologies for assessing quality.

For more information, see the Internet:
<http://www.bologna-berlin2003.org>

Erasmus Mundus on the starting block

The financial arrangements for the Erasmus Mundus programme are on the verge of completion. The European Parliament proposed, on 21 October 2003, an increase in the programme budget to EUR 230 million for the period 2004–08. Immediately after Parliament's vote, the Council and Commission, through the Commissioner responsible for education and culture, Viviane Reding, reacted favourably to the proposal. The education and culture ministers now have to approve it formally at their Council on 24 and 25 November.

Erasmus Mundus aims to open European universities and higher education institutes to the entire world. In addition to creating 100 Erasmus Mundus Masters' degree courses, the programme will offer grants to more than 5 000 students from third countries other than EEA/EFTA and applicant countries, and to nearly 10 000 university lecturers.

A new programme to promote eLearning

To promote the effective integration of information and communication technologies into education and training systems in Europe, the European Commission has submitted a proposal to Parliament and the Council for the adoption of an eLearning programme with a budget of EUR 44 million over three years (2004–06) if the Council endorses Parliament's recommendation of 21 October.

Second Comenius Week in November

On the strength of its initial success in 2001, Comenius Week put on a repeat performance from 8 to 14 November 2003. Events were held in the 30 countries involved in the action under the Socrates programme for school education. An exchange of experiences and ideas on the Comenius action also brought together in Brussels pupils aged 10 to 12, teachers and representatives of the European institutions. The exchange featured a debate on language learning and intercultural exchange.

To read more about the week, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/comenius/week03/info_en.html





CULTURE, AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA,
LANGUAGES

Experts meet to discuss violence on television, the Internet and in video games

On 10 September 2003, 20 European experts gathered, at the initiative of Viviane Reding, to provide input to the European Commission's concern for the protection of minors against violence on television, the Internet and in video games.

Psychologists, sociologists, criminologists, educational experts and others exchanged views on the degree and types of violence in the media and its effects on young people; on the respective roles of regulation and self-regulation; and how education could make critical use of the media. The protection of minors against violence is one of the items on the agenda for the review of the 'Television without frontiers' directive.

Parliament calls for full review of the 'Television without frontiers' directive

With its adoption on 8 September 2003 of the report by Roy Perry on the 'Television without frontiers' directive, the European Parliament reiterated the need for a revision of the directive to take account of technological progress and structural changes in the audiovisual market. Members of the European Parliament also recommend a streamlining of existing legal provisions. Effectively, this would mean keeping only the essential principles of the 'Television without frontiers' directive, the eCommerce directive and the directive coordinating certain copyright rules applicable to broadcasting, and consolidating them into a single legal instrument.

Replying to Parliament, Viviane Reding announced that the European Commission would submit to the Council and Parliament at the start of 2004, a communication on the future of audiovisual policy.

The report by Roy Perry is available at the following Internet address:
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?L=EN&OBJID=30370&LEVEL=3&MODE=SIP&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N>



Cinedays — Number two

'To show young people — and the not so young — that European cinema is terrific!' As Viviane Reding put it at the kick-off press conference: this was the objective of the second Cinedays event, held from 10 to 24 October across Europe. To convince the public, an impressive line-up of events was organised: special screenings of films that form part of the European cinematographic heritage, festivals, television programmes, games on the Internet, workshops and various activities.

For further information, see the Internet:
<http://cineuropa.org/cinedays>



Netd@ys in its seventh edition

The 2003 edition of Netd@ys — the seventh — took place across Europe and around the world from 17 to 23 November 2003. This year's theme was 'Dialogue between cultures: discovering — understanding — appreciating'. The event offered an excellent opportunity to put ideas into practice and to build networks.

For more information, see the Internet:
<http://www.netdayseurope.org>

Parliament seeks European legislative measures for regional and lesser used languages

On 4 September 2003, the European Parliament adopted a report drafted by Michl Ebner on enlargement and cultural diversity, which calls on the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference to include 'in provisions relating to EU cultural policy an explicit reference to the promotion of linguistic diversity, including regional and minority languages, as an expression of cultural diversity'. Parliament also recommends the European Commission to conduct a study on the feasibility of establishing a European agency for linguistic diversity and language learning and to set up a multiannual programme for linguistic diversity matched with concrete financial backing for promoting measures for the acceptance of multilingualism.

The report by Michl Ebner is available at the following Internet address:
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?L=EN&OBJID=30525&LEVEL=3&MODE=SIP&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N>



YOUTH, CIVIL SOCIETY AND SPORT

A logo and slogan for the European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004)

'Move your body, stretch your mind' is the slogan of the European Year of Education through Sport, which the European Union will be promoting throughout 2004 in 28 European countries. Viviane Reding unveiled the year's logo and website to the press on 30 October 2003, two months before the launch of this major communications campaign to promote the educational value of sport in Europe.

To read more, see the Internet:
<http://www.eyes-2004.info>

First European Youth Week mobilises thousands across Europe

'Youth in action' was the theme of the first European Youth Week held from 29 September to 5 October 2003 in the 30 countries participating in the European Union Youth programme. The event was a showcase for the progress achieved since the creation of the Youth programme in 2000. The week stressed initiative (voluntary projects abroad), intercultural dialogue and inclusion (particularly of the disabled). It also gave some 150 young people the chance to present in Brussels the 20 projects selected as finalists for the 'Youth in action' award, which was presented to five winners.

For additional information, see the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/youth/youthweek/index_en.html





Euro-Med Youth platform launched in Malta

Some 100 youth organisations converged in Malta to take part in the inauguration of the Euro-Med Youth platform from 17 to 21 September. The platform is intended to create an environment of tolerance and mutual understanding for young people, facilitate the networking of youth organisations, and stimulate the exchange of best practice and promote new projects. With 500 organisations already registered, the platform forms part of the Euro-Med Youth programme, which promotes cooperation among the youth organisations from Euro-Med participant countries, namely the European Union Member States and all the other countries of the Mediterranean basin, with the exception of Libya.

For more information, see the Internet:
<http://www.euromedp.org>

Young people from future Member States and candidate States have high expectations of the European Union

Young people from the 10 accession countries joining the EU on 1 May 2004 ⁽¹⁾, and from the three candidate countries ⁽²⁾, have a way of life and personal aspirations that are roughly similar to those of young people in the European Union of 15. This is the conclusion of a Eurobarometer survey of 10 000 young people held in the spring of 2003. The poll also demonstrates that these young people have higher expectations of society and of the European Union than young people in the current Member States. For the young people from these 13 countries, the European Union means a better future (61 % for the 13 countries; 47 % in the 10 States joining in 2004, compared to 28 % in the European Union of 15). The three main reasons cited are: more job opportunities, freedom of movement in the European Union and a better standard of living thanks to a better economic situation.

To read more, see the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/cceb_en.htm

⁽¹⁾ Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.
⁽²⁾ Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

CALLS FOR PROPOSALS

General call for proposals under the Socrates programme

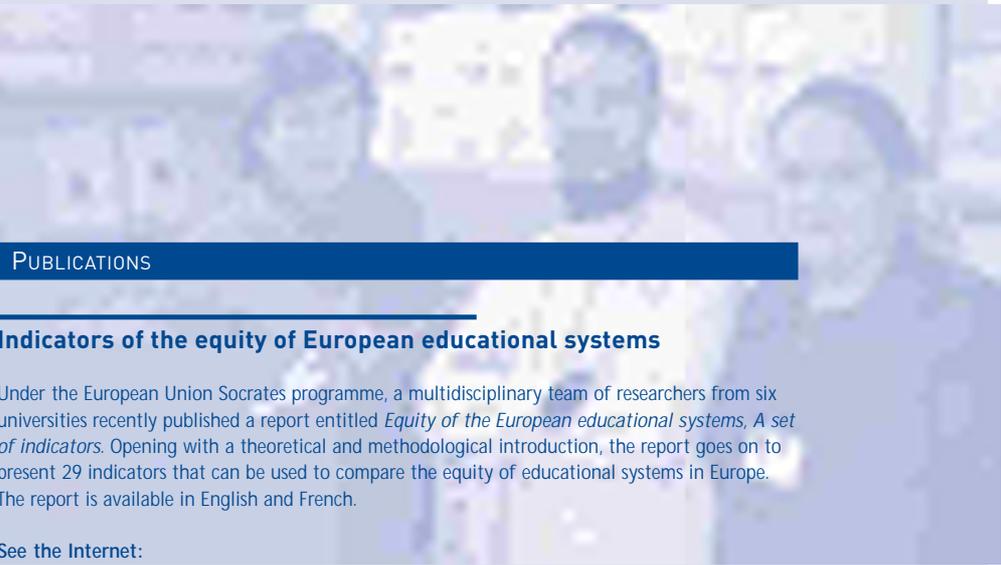
The Socrates programme put out a general call for proposals on 26 July. Deadlines for the submission of tenders range from 1 November 2003 to 1 October 2004, depending on the actions concerned. The project selection procedure will give particular emphasis to lifelong learning, eLearning, education through sport, language learning and the promotion of linguistic diversity.

To learn more, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/download_en.html#call

To consult all the calls for proposals issued by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, see the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/callg_en.html



PUBLICATIONS

Indicators of the equity of European educational systems

Under the European Union Socrates programme, a multidisciplinary team of researchers from six universities recently published a report entitled *Equity of the European educational systems, A set of indicators*. Opening with a theoretical and methodological introduction, the report goes on to present 29 indicators that can be used to compare the equity of educational systems in Europe. The report is available in English and French.

See the Internet:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/observation/equality_en.pdf

Working conditions and pay for teachers in Europe

The Eurydice information network on education in Europe published a report in September entitled 'Working conditions and pay: It is the third in the series, *The teaching profession in Europe: Profile, trends and concerns*. The report, which focuses on general lower secondary education, covers 30 countries and reviews issues such as salaries, in-service training and promotion, the definition of working time and support for teachers in service.

See the Internet:

<http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/KeyTopics3/en/FrameSet3.htm>

Vocational training and European cooperation in higher education

The Directorate-General for Education and Culture recently published two brochures, *Training in Europe* and *Europe by degrees: European cooperation in higher education*. They review the progress made in the last few years in these two fields.

See the Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/eu-coop/en.pdf

For the online catalogue of Education and Culture DG publications, see the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/index_en.html



→ Fairs and exhibitions

In collaboration with the national agencies that implement its programmes, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture will present stands, in January 2004, at the following fairs and exhibitions.



? WHAT	? WHERE	? WHEN	? MORE INFO
BETT	London (UK)	7 to 10 January 2004	http://www.bettshow.co.uk
International Training Fair	Paris (FR)	10 and 11 January 2004	http://www.megasalon.letudiant.fr
Opportunities 2004	Dublin (IE)	16 to 19 January 2004	http://www.fas.ie/
EDUCA 2004	Helsinki (FI)	23 and 24 January 2004	http://www.finnexpo.fi/
MIDEM – International music market	Cannes (FR)	25 to 29 January 2004	http://www.midem.com

→ For more information

Visit

Visit the Education and Culture DG website, on the Internet:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm

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