In support of plurilingual people living in multilingual societies:
Policies and frameworks of European language education

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Abstract

This article focuses on current European language education policy. It reviews relevant policy documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe. It also refers to the range of tools offered by the two intergovernmental organisations in support of linguistic diversity in contemporary European societies and the development of plurilingual abilities of their citizens.

Key words: language policy, Council of Europe, plurilingualism, education

Résumé

Cet article traite des politiques linguistiques éducatives européennes, et passe en revue les documents de l'Union européenne et du Conseil de l'Europe pertinents à ces politiques. Il se réfère également à la gamme d'outils offerts par les deux organisations intergouvernementales à l'appui de la diversité linguistique dans les sociétés européennes contemporaines et le développement des capacités plurilingues de leurs citoyens.

Mots-clés : politiques linguistiques, Conseil de l'Europe, plurilinguisme, éducation

Introduction

The increased mobility of people and the globalisation of social and economic processes stimulated by rapid innovations in communication technology create new challenges for educational systems in Europe, such as the reality of progressively more multilingual[1] and multicultural classrooms, the need for

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[1] Multilingualism refers to the co-existence of different languages in a given society.

compatibility between educational systems and qualifications, and the use of mobile media. These challenges call for the urgent development and implementation of new quality approaches to European education in general, and language education in particular (policy-making, teacher education, learning, teaching, and assessment).

A new concept of education is required to meet the needs of plurilingual people[2] living in increasingly multilingual societies of contemporary Europe. It needs to be based on inclusive[3] plurilingual and intercultural approaches constituting a pedagogy integrating the needs of all learners. This pedagogy represents a broad vision of educational provision. It reaches beyond the foreign language classroom and impacts on all areas of formal and informal learning at all levels and stages in life.

Inclusive plurilingual and intercultural pedagogy provides learners with opportunities to develop their language knowledge, skills and attitudes as their linguistic repertory. In practical terms, this will enable them to use several languages at different levels of competence by finding a recognised place for all their linguistic abilities. Building and living in an integrated society, contributing to cross-border interaction and international collaboration are the ultimate aims of quality education for all learners.

"Quality education for plurilingual people living in multilingual societies" (Graz Declaration on Language Education, 2010)

On 7 January 2010, in Graz, Austria, the INGO–Professional Network Forum on language education was founded at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe (CE). The first ever meeting of its kind brought together eight renowned international associations working in this area, all of which had signed bilateral cooperation agreements with the ECML. Representatives of the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, the Multilingualism Policy Unit of the European Commission, and the Canadian institutional ECML partner, the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa (OLBI), also participated in the meeting,[4]

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[2]Plurilingualism "refers to the repertoire [. . .] of language which many individuals use, and is therefore the opposite of monolingualism [. . .] Thus in some multilingual areas some individuals may be monolingual and some may be plurilingual" (Council of Europe 2007:7).

[3]Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as "based on the right of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives. [. . .] The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion" (www.unesco.org/en/inclusive-education).

[4]Through this first forum the Centre seeks to further intensify its links with professional bodies working in language education and to create synergies between or-

Henry Widdowson (Vienna University) provided comments from the perspective of an independent expert in the field. The one-day event enabled the Forum partners to gain a better understanding of the working context and the respective competences of the associations, all of which deal with different aspects of policy, research and practice in language education. The meeting also enabled them to identify and become more aware of the shared concerns and overlapping expertise within the Professional Network Forum.

After lively discussions on the key challenges facing language education today and on suitable areas for common action, the Forum members unanimously agreed to seek opportunities for further cooperation. The Graz Declaration 2010, summarized below, is a direct result of this meeting, represents an overview of issues raised in the discussions, and provides the basis for the creation of this new Forum, as well as for the activities to be undertaken by it.[5] The members of the Professional Network Forum agreed that growing linguistic and cultural diversity in modern European societies should not be viewed as an obstacle or a "problem", but rather as an asset and a potential benefit to society. Underlining the right of all learners to an unrestricted and fair lifelong access to good quality education they pointed at the importance of language competences that provide the necessary basis for such access. All Forum participants were in agreement that the provision of support in developing adequate language abilities should take into account, make use of, and build further on the learner's existing language competences by including the learners' "own" languages, especially if they are minority or migrant languages, as they are important features in their successful integration into the world of learning and help them in becoming self-confident and responsible members of society. At the same time, the learner should seek and be offered sufficient support to develop the skills required for his or her educational career in a given context. Members of the network stressed the fact that learners with low

ganisations with similar aims. The modalities for ongoing cooperation have already been defined in bilateral cooperation agreements signed between the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) and the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), the World Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV), the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), the International Certificate Conference (ICC), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), the European Association for Language Testing in Europe (EALTA) and the Conseil européen pour les langues/European Language Council (CEL/ELC).

[5]For the full text of the Declaration and more information on the Forum: http://www.ecml.at/home/professionalnetworkforum/tabid/137/language/en_GB/default.aspx, accessed March 10, 2011.

socio-economic status, special needs, and those whose linguistic or cultural background may disadvantage them in the educational system require special attention and support for the development of the language abilities necessary for their educational success. In conclusion, the Forum participants called for a modification in approach, moving from the teaching and learning of languages as separate, unrelated and thus isolated (school) subjects towards providing coherent support for the lifelong development of transversal, individual strategies for deploying available linguistic resources purposefully, thus making efficient use of one's own range of language competences.

The findings and proposals of the Graz Forum were adopted as a rationale for the conceptual work on the call for submissions for the next medium-term programme of activities (2012–15) approved by the Governing Board of the European Centre for Modern Languages and entitled "Learning through languages: Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education" (European Centre for Modern Languages, 2011, section 4.1).

Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: The policy of the European Union

Today's European societies are facing rapid change due to globalisation, internationalisation, and technological advances. The increasing mobility of Europeans — currently 10 million people in the European Union (EU) work in other member states — is an important sign of this change. The EU has now 500 million citizens, 27 member states, 3 alphabets and 23 EU official languages, some of them with a worldwide coverage. Some 60 other languages are also part of the EU heritage and are spoken in specific regions or by specific groups. Immigrants have brought a wide range of languages with them: it is estimated that at least 175 nationalities are now living within the EU's borders (European Commission, 2008b).

In its initial action plan on promoting language learning and linguistic diversity (European Commission, 2003) the European Commission stated that language skills play a key role in ensuring the social, cultural, and economic integration of Europe. Publishing the strategy for multilingualism (European Commission, 2005) the Commission reaffirmed the value of linguistic diversity and revealed the need for a broader policy to promote multilingualism. Among the proposals put forward by a Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue set up at the initiative of the EC a suggestion was made that, beside mother tongue, citizens can choose a language of communication and a "personal adoptive language" depending on their needs, interests and family background (European Commission, 2007). The role played by languages in business was subject for another expertise (European Commission, 2008c). In the Council of the European Union Resolution on a European strategy for mul-

tilingualism (EU 2008a) the member states have been requested to:

- promote multilingualism with a view to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and European construction;
- strengthen lifelong language learning;
- better promote multilingualism as a factor in the European economy's competitiveness and people's mobility and employability;
- promote the linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue by stepping up assistance for translation; and
- promote EU languages across the world.

In another document, published in 2008, multilingualism is called an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (European Commission, 2008b). In a "Green Paper" presented that year, migration and mobility are discussed as both challenges and opportunities for EU education systems (European Commission, 2008d) with issues related to handling linguistically diverse classrooms identified as areas of specific concern.

The role of the Council of Europe in the international context

The Council of Europe aims at maintaining and enhancing linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and promoting learning and use of languages as a means to support intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and democratic citizenship, and as an important economic asset in a modern knowledge-based society. The Council of Europe's efforts in this respect are best illustrated by the development of reference documents and tools such as the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP), and such policy instruments as the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity"* (Council of Europe 2008a), and *Recommendation (2008)7 on the use of the CEFR and the promotion of plurilingualism.*

The Council of Europe promotes strongly the notion of plurilingualism — an individual ability to develop competences in and use more than one language — as an important human value. In the Council's work, adequate development of language competences is viewed as a pre-requisite for unrestricted and fair access to good quality education, which, in turn, constitutes the necessary basis for ensuring social cohesion, promoting democratic citizenship, fostering intercultural dialogue and managing migration — priorities specified by the 2005 Warsaw Summit aimed at building a more humane and inclusive Europe.

Language education plays an important role in pursuing all these goals. Programmes of intergovernmental co-operation in the field of language education have been carried out by the Council of Europe for over fifty years now. The focus on effective communication skills, characteristic of projects leading to the development of "Threshold Level" specifications for a number of languages in the 1970s and driven by increasing opportunities for interaction and mobility in Europe in the 1980s, is still important, but increasing emphasis is now placed on addressing the new challenges to social cohesion and integration brought about in the 1990s, a period that witnessed the rapid enlargement of the Council of Europe, and subsequently of the European Union. Language skills are seen as essential to enable individuals to benefit from opportunities in employment and mobility, but they are also necessary for active participation in the social and political life of the multilingual societies which make up today's Europe. The priority which the Council of Europe accords to education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue in the 21st century is reflected in the educational goal of enabling citizens living in multilingual European societies to interact in a number of languages across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The task for policy makers is however to ensure the harmonious development of learners' plurilingual competence through a coherent, transversal and integrated approach to language education that takes into account all the languages in learners' plurilingual repertoire and their respective functions. This includes promoting learners' consciousness of the value and the functionality of their existing language repertoires and potential to develop and adapt those repertoires to changing circumstances.

There are several arguments in favour of such an approach. A good summary of these is given by Lo Bianco who identifies six dimensions of the plurilingual resource: intellectual, cultural, economic, social, citizenship and rights.[6] According to him, a community, a nation, or a larger collective which invests in all its languages is likely to see enhanced intellectual and academic achievement of all children, enriched cultural activities in all arts fields, greatly increased possibilities for trade and investment, heightened capacity to compete in the knowledge economy, improved social services, greater opportunities for participation in public life, and better conditions to combat prejudice, promote tolerance and mutual understanding (Lo Bianco, 2001).

Policy documents in support of plurilingual education

The important role the Council of Europe attaches to language education has, over the last decade, led to the adoption of a number of resolutions and recommendations. The most important are:

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[6]For a discussion on the value of languages see also McPake and Tinsley (2007).

- *Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers on Modern Languages* (Council of Europe, 1998)

  emphasizing intercultural communication and plurilingualism as key policy goals and proposing concrete measures for each educational sector and for initial and in-service teacher education. The Appendix to this recommendation specifies comprehensively, for each educational sector, the way plurilingualism may be established as an overarching aim in a coherent concept of language education in all the member states of the Council of Europe. All of the proposed measures are as valid for additional language learning as for "foreign" language learning, and the list provides a good starting point for discussion of an inclusive vision of language learning in a linguistically diverse society.

- *Recommendation 1383 (1998) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on Linguistic Diversification*

  stating that "Europe's linguistic diversity is a precious cultural asset that must be preserved and protected" and that "there should therefore be more variety in modern language teaching in the Council of Europe member states; this should result in the acquisition not only of English but also of other European and world languages by all European citizens, in parallel with the mastery of their own national and, where appropriate, regional language";

- *Recommendation 1539 (2001) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the European Year of Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001a)

  calling upon the Member States to "maintain and develop further the Council of Europe's language policy initiatives for promoting plurilingualism, cultural diversity and understanding among peoples and nations" and to "encourage all Europeans to acquire a certain ability to communicate in several languages, for example by promoting diversified novel approaches adapted to individual needs [. . .]";

- *Recommendation Rec (2005) 3 of the Committee of Ministers on teaching neighbouring languages in border regions* (Council of Europe, 2005)

  urging the governments of Member States "to apply the principles of plurilingual education, in particular by establishing conditions that enable teaching institutions in border regions at all levels to safeguard or, if need be, introduce the teaching and use of the languages of their neighbouring countries, together with the teaching of these countries' cultures, which are closely bound up with language teaching"; and

- *Recommendation No. R (2008) 7 of the Committee of Ministers on the use of the CEFR and the promotion of plurilingualism* (Council of Europe, 2008b)

  outlining general principles and measures to be implemented by authorities responsible for language education at national, regional and local level as well as specific measures aimed at policy making, curriculum and textbook development, teacher training, and assessment.

These recommendations form the basic set of principles for a coherent approach to language education that seeks to enhance and develop the linguistic repertoires of social agents, as education for awareness of language diversity and intercultural communication.

Language education instruments in support of plurilingual education

Four documents developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe are of particular significance here. They may be used as a set of instruments for the implementation of the proposed principles and measures with regard to plurilingual and intercultural education.

Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education

The aim of the *Guide* (Beacco and Byram, 2007) is to offer an analytical instrument which can serve as a reference document for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching policies to promote plurilingualism and diversification in a planned manner so that decisions are coherently linked. The *Guide* does not promote any particular language education policy but attempts to identify the challenges and possible responses in the light of common principles. The *Guide* conceives of plurilingualism as one competence, encompassing — potentially — several languages, "a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact". In this fluid and cumulative model of linguistic competence, all languages encountered by the learner have an important role to play, both in enhancing the learner's overall competence and enabling her or him to participate fully in social and cultural encounters in a wide range of contexts. Each language and its associated social and cultural spheres are unique, but none can be defined, *a priori*, as more significant than another.

*The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages:
Learning, teaching, assessment*

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of
Europe, 2001b) includes a descriptive scheme of language use and learning and
scales of proficiency for the different parameters of this scheme. The compre-
hensive descriptive scheme is a tool for reflecting on what is involved not only
in language use, but also in language learning and teaching. The *CEFR* provides
a common basis and a common language for the elaboration of syllabuses, cur-
riculum guidelines, textbooks, teacher-training programmes, and for relating
examinations to one another. It allows the different partners involved in plan-
ning and delivering language provision and in assessing language progress and
proficiency, to co-ordinate and situate their efforts.

The description is based on an action-oriented approach to language learn-
ing and use. It provides six ascending levels of proficiency with specific out-
comes — a compendium of descriptors of language proficiency (proficiency
implying not only the knowledge of a language, but also the degree of skill in
using it). These descriptors were developed scientifically and take the form of a
descriptor bank that can be added to, updated and edited to meet present and fu-
ture needs. It is in effect a common reference tool across languages (the *CEFR*
is non-language specific) and is widely used in developing coherence in provi-
sion across different languages. It is also used in policy making as a means of
ensuring coherence and transparency through the different sectors or stages in
language education. Many countries have used the publication of the Frame-
work to stimulate curriculum and examination reforms in different educational
sectors. The Framework is both a guide to producing sophisticated and rigor-
ous models of learning and teaching related to use, and also an increasingly
well-understood guarantee of standardised proficiency to outsiders. Possible
avenues for working with the *CEFR* and the European Language Portfolio in
the Canadian context have been outlined in a recent publication of the Council
of Ministers of Education CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, 2010).

The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The *European Language Portfolio* (Council of Europe, 2001c) is a document
in which those who are learning or have learned any language — whether at
school or outside school — can record and reflect on their language learning
and cultural experiences. It is the property of the learner. In the *Portfolio*, all
competence is valued, regardless of whether it is gained inside or outside for-
mal education. It is linked to the *Common European Framework of Reference
for Languages*.

The *Portfolio* contains a Language Passport which its owner regularly up-

dates. A grid is provided where his/her language competences can be described according to common criteria accepted throughout Europe and which can serve as a complement to customary certificates. The document also contains a detailed Language Biography describing the owner's experiences in each language and which is designed to guide the learner in planning and assessing progress. Finally, there is a Dossier where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences.

The *Portfolio* aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way. The instruments contained in the *Portfolio* help learners to take stock of the levels of competence they have reached in their learning of one or several foreign languages in order to enable them to inform others in a detailed and internationally comparable manner. There are many occasions to present an up-to-date *Language Portfolio*: for example, a transfer to another school, change to a higher educational sector, the beginning of a language course, a meeting with a careers advisor, or an application for a new post. In these cases the *Portfolio* is addressed to persons involved in making decisions of importance to the owner. A learner may also be interested in having such documentation for him-/herself.[7]

The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters

The *Autobiography* (Council of Europe, 2009) is a document developed within a general framework of language education, education about religious diversity and education for democratic citizenship. It is a tool to foster respect for diversity, dialogue and social inclusion. With its emphasis on critical analysis of users' intercultural experiences, it complements other Council of Europe tools such as the *European Language Portfolio*; and like the *Portfolio*, it is the property of the learner, who can choose what information she or he wishes to share and what she or he prefers to keep private. The *Autobiography* invites users to reflect critically upon their own memorable intercultural experiences, and helps them to analyse them in retrospect and in the light of the most defining aspects of each encounter. An intercultural encounter can be an experience between people from different countries, but it can also be an experience with individuals from other cultural backgrounds in the same country — for example, from other regional, linguistic, ethnic, or religious backgrounds. Therefore, the *Autobiography* aims to promote respect for diversity both nationally and across borders.

The *Autobiography* is designed to be used across the curriculum in school or any other educational context contributing to lifelong learning. Intercultural

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[7]For more information: www.coe.int/portfolio.

experiences can be analysed within disciplines as diverse as language learning, history, geography, religion, citizenship education, etc. The *Autobiography* can also be used as a self-evaluation and development tool.

There are two versions of the *Autobiography*: a version for younger learners, up to around age 11, including those who are not yet able to read and write, and a version suitable for other users in schools and beyond. The *Autobiography* is accompanied by a Facilitator's Guide with details of the rationale, including the underlying model of intercultural competence, and specific guidelines concerning how to use and make the most of this tool.[8]

Virtual Platform of Resources and References for plurilingual and intercultural education

Recently, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe launched a Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education expanding the scope of consideration beyond the domain of foreign modern languages and including classical languages and languages of schooling — learning, teaching and assessment of languages taught as school subjects (majority language such as German in Germany, Swedish in Sweden, etc.) and language competences required for other school subjects — language across curriculum.[9] With this new instrument the Council consequently draws the attention to the needs of the individual learner underlining that access to education and success at school heavily depend on language competences. Some learners may be disadvantaged at school because their competences do not match the school's expectations: children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, children from migrant families, or children whose first language is a regional language. An adequate command of the language(s) of schooling is crucial to success at school and social advancement. A major challenge for today's education systems is then to support learners in acquiring adequate language and intercultural competences which will enable them to develop as strong individuals and operate effectively and successfully as citizens. The Platform offers an open and dynamic resource, with system of definitions, points of reference, descriptions and descriptors, studies and good practices which member states are invited to consult and use in support of their policy to promote equal access to quality education according to their needs, resources and educational culture.

The contribution of the ECML

The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), a Council of Europe Partial Agreement based in Graz, Austria, has been serving the community of

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[8]For more information: www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_EN.asp.

[9]www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/langeduc/le_platformintro_EN.asp.

language education professionals in its 34 member states for over 15 years. This unique intergovernmental centre — integrated within the Council of Europe's Department of Language Education and Policy[10] — offers concrete approaches to dealing with issues and challenges facing Europe's multicultural societies in a period of unparalleled change and mobility. The ECML seeks to make a positive difference to language education in Europe by:

- supporting the implementation of Council of Europe policies;

- advancing the quality of teaching and learning languages;

- promoting innovative approaches; and

- fostering dialogue between language education researchers, practitioners and decision makers.

The ECML has a targeted approach to deal with concrete challenges in European societies. The Centre's successful programmes of activities, such as the Languages for Social Cohesion programme (2004–2007), have comprised more than 50 projects coordinated by international teams of experts and directly involved over six thousand language professionals in Europe and beyond, with the impact reaching as far afield as Canada, Japan and countries in Africa. One of the activities under that programme, the VALEUR project (2004–2007) took as its focus the "additional" languages of Europe. These are defined as all languages in use in contexts where they are not "national", "official", or "dominant" languages. They include "migrant" languages, "regional/minority" languages, sign languages and "non-territorial" languages of diasporas such as Yiddish and Romani. The project team brought together a range of expertise in sociolinguistics and language pedagogy, planning and research from Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the UK. The team took as their starting point Council of Europe policies on plurilingualism and the desirability of promoting linguistic diversity both for individual citizenship and for social cohesion in Europe. The aim was to map provision for additional languages in Europe, in a more systematic and inclusive way than ever before. The team members looked at provision at school level for different languages in different contexts in order to identify good practices to be shared (McPake and Tinsley, 2007).[11]

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[10]Within the Directorate General for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DG IV), this department comprises the Language Policy Division, the Secretariat of the Partial Agreement of the ECML and the Secretariat of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

[11]For the full report of the VALEUR project: www.ecml.at/mtp2/Valeur/html/Valeur_E_Results.htm.

Empowering language professionals is the overarching objective of the 3rd programme of ECML activities to be concluded in 2011. Currently, 23 international project teams established by the Centre are finalizing their work on developing practical approaches and tools for language education which also support the application of language policy instruments developed by the Council's Language Policy Division and the implementation of recommendations related to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Promoting plurilingualism is a key aspect of the ECML's project work. Examples may be provided by three projects currently in progress:

- A key outcome of the project called *CARAP: A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* is the development of a reference framework for pluralistic education approaches, in which reference is made to all languages in the learners' plurilingual repertoires.[12]

- The *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)* (Newby et al., 2007), which has already been translated into several languages, encourages student teachers of languages to reflect about didactic knowledge and skills, while helping them to assess their own didactic competences and enabling them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences during the course of their teacher education.[13]

- The project *MARILLE: Majority language instruction as basis for plurilingual education*, involves analysis of strategies and methods which various countries have adopted for integrating plurilingualism in conventional majority language instruction in secondary schools.[14]

All these projects are equipped with interactive web sites with open access for all those interested in learning about project activities and results.

The next ECML medium-term programme of activities 2012–2015: Focus on the learner

The call for submissions for the next ECML programme of activities 2012–2015, launched in November 2010, is entitled "Learning through languages: promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education". Within the new programme the Centre intends to initiate European cooperation on the implementation of the new concept of plurilingual and intercultural education proposed by international expert groups whose work was coordinated by the Language Policy Division and adopted by the member states of the Council

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[12]More details available at carap.ecml.at.

[13]More details available at epostl2.ecml.at.

[14]More details available at: marille.ecml.at.

of Europe. The proposals for the next programme will seek to draw attention to the fact that access for all learners to good quality education is a precondition for democratic developments in European societies. The learner and the right of all learners to quality education at all levels (as acknowledged by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)7) constitute the focal point of the reference model established for the new ECML programme resulting from several consultation rounds with and subject for adoption by the 34 states-members of the ECML Partial Agreement in October 2010. The end-user and ultimate beneficiary of all activities is the learner whereas projects included in the programme target education and language professionals and stakeholders in society functioning as facilitators of the learning process.[15]

With its international events, conferences and projects involving leading international experts, the ECML is a key European platform for language education contributing to the development of a Europe-wide network of language teachers, administrators and researchers.

Contribution of the Canadian partners to the current programme of the ECML activities: An overview

Canada has permanent observer status at the Council of Europe since 1996. However, for the past thirty years, Canada and its educational institutions have followed closely the work of the Council of Europe in the area of modern languages. Researchers, educators and Canadian experts have participated on a regular basis in various projects and activities of the Council of Europe in the area of language teaching and learning. Conversely, European researchers have been invited on many occasions to participate in conferences, symposiums and workshops organised in Canada.

With the creation of the European Centre for Modern Languages in 1995, cooperation initiatives between Canada and Europe in the area of languages have increased considerably. In fact, it is in this context that, on January 22, 2007, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) and the University of Ottawa, represented by the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), signed a Memorandum on Cooperation and Liaison, with the following objectives:

- increase contacts between the ECML and Canadian language experts, with the long-term aim of creating favourable conditions for full Canadian membership of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the ECML; and

- designate OLBI as a Canadian partner of the ECML in a two-way role:

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[15]For more information visit call.ecml.at.

– disseminate the ECML's work in Canada as a "Contact Point" for the ECML; and
– propose Canadian experts to take part in the ECML projects and project activities.

Within the ECML medium-term programme "*Empowering Language Professionals (2008–2011)*", launched in September 2007, the OLBI identified six projects that were closely related to priority areas of research in Canada, and proposed the candidacy of Canadian experts from various institutions to act as team member or resource persons in the projects.[16] The highly appreciated participation of Canadian experts in the ECML projects contributes to highlight at the international level the Canadian expertise and competencies in language teaching and learning in the specific area of the selected project. Conversely, Canada can greatly benefit from the European methods, strategies and best practices in language education and research in a plurilingual and multicultural environment. The products developed through these projects will in many instances be used in a Canadian context.

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Council of Europe. 1998. *Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers on Modern Languages*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

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[16]Following is the list of the projects identified and of the Canadian participants who were nominated to participate:

a. *Encouraging the culture of evaluation among professionals (ECEP)*: Alister Cumming, Modern Language Centre, University of Toronto, resource person;
b. *The European Language Portfolio in whole-school use (ELP–WSU)*: Marnie Beaudoin, Edmonton Public School Board, resource person;
c. *Developing online teaching skills (DOTS)*: Aline Germain-Rutherford, Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute, University of Ottawa, team member;
d. *Content-based teaching + plurilingual/cultural awareness (ConBaT+)*: Peter MacIntyre, Department of Psychology, Cape Breton University, resource person;
e. *Minority languages, collateral languages and bi-/plurilingual education (EBP–ICI)*: Diane Dagenais, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, resource person; and
f. *Language association and collaborative support (LACS)*: Nicole Thibault, Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), resource person.

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