

COUNCIL RESOLUTION**of 21 November 2008****on a European strategy for multilingualism**

(2008/C 320/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

REFERRING TO:

1. the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning ⁽¹⁾, which stressed that the knowledge of languages is one of the basic skills each citizen needs in order to take part effectively in the European knowledge society and therefore facilitates both integration into society and social cohesion;
2. the conclusions of the European Council meeting in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002, which called for further action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching two foreign languages to all from a very early age ⁽²⁾;
3. Decision No 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 December 2006 concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) ⁽³⁾;
4. the Council conclusions of 19 May 2006 on the European Indicator of Language Competence ⁽⁴⁾, which reaffirmed that foreign language skills, as well as helping to foster mutual understanding between peoples, are a prerequisite for a mobile workforce and contribute to the competitiveness of the European Union economy;
5. the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on the Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010 ⁽⁵⁾, which point up the cultural dimension of multilingualism and in particular its role in access to culture and its contribution to creativity;
6. the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences, which acknowledge the role of language learning and translation in the acquisition of intercultural competences;
7. the Council conclusions of 22 May 2008 on multilingualism, which, *inter alia*, invite the Commission to draw up proposals by the end of 2008 for a comprehensive policy framework on multilingualism.

WELCOMING:

- the Commission communication of 18 September 2008 entitled ‘*Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*’ ⁽⁶⁾.

TAKING NOTE OF:

- the Commission Green Paper of 3 July 2008 entitled ‘*Migration and Mobility: Challenges and opportunities for EU education systems*’ ⁽⁷⁾,

and in the light of the proceedings of the convention on multilingualism held in Paris on 26 September 2008.

CONSIDERS THAT:

- linguistic and cultural diversity is part and parcel of the European identity; it is at once a shared heritage, a wealth, a challenge and an asset for Europe,
- multilingualism is a major cross-cutting theme encompassing the social, cultural, economic and therefore educational spheres,
- the promotion of less widely used European languages represents an important contribution to multilingualism,
- significant efforts should still be made to promote language learning and to value the cultural aspects of linguistic diversity at all levels of education and training, while also improving information on the variety of European languages and their dissemination across the world,
- multilingualism is also of particular significance in promoting cultural diversity, *inter alia* in the field of media and content online, and intercultural dialogue within Europe and with the other regions of the world; translation, on account of the links it establishes between languages and cultures and the broad access it provides to works and ideas, plays a special role in this process,
- linguistic diversity within Europe constitutes an added value for the development of economic and cultural relations between the European Union and the rest of the world,
- multilingualism contributes to developing creativity by allowing access to other ways of thinking, interpreting the world and expressing the imagination.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES AND THE COMMISSION, WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE AND IN FULL ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

1. Promote multilingualism with a view to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and European construction

- (a) increase awareness of the benefits of language diversity and language learning among members of the public and in particular young people undergoing initial training in both general and vocational education;
- (b) provide teaching of the language of the host country for migrants, especially young people, as an essential element for successful integration and employability, while respecting the languages of their countries of origin.

2. Strengthen lifelong language learning

- (a) endeavour to provide young people, from the earliest age and continuing beyond general education into vocational and higher education, with a diverse and high-quality supply of language and culture education options enabling them to master at least two foreign languages, which is a factor of integration in a knowledge-based society;
- (b) make efforts to promote the acquisition and regular updating of language skills for all, in formal, non-formal and informal contexts;
- (c) endeavour to broaden the selection of languages taught at different levels of education — including recognised languages which are less widely used, so as to enable pupils to choose on the basis of considerations such as personal interests or geographical situation;
- (d)

encourage the learning and dissemination of European languages, by making use of innovative tools such as digital communication technology and distance learning and approaches such as those based on the intercomprehension of related languages;

- (e) promote learner assessment on the basis of recognised tools — such as the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the Europass Language Passport — and, where appropriate, the European Indicator of Language Competence;
- (f) devote particular attention to the further training of language teachers and to enhancing the language competences of teachers in general, in order to promote the teaching of non-linguistic subjects in foreign languages (CLIL — Content and Language Integrated Learning);
- (g) foster European mobility and exchanges among language teachers, with the aim that as many as possible should have spent a period of time in a country where the language they teach is spoken;
- (h) use the Lifelong Learning Programme and relevant national schemes to provide all target groups — in particular young people in training and teachers — with mobility opportunities which can help them improve their language skills, and initiatives such as the European Language Label to develop learning and teaching materials for languages.

3. Better promote multilingualism as a factor in the European economy's competitiveness and people's mobility and employability

- (a) support the provision and learning of a wide range of languages, in order to help enterprises, especially SMEs, to broaden their access to markets — in particular emerging markets — across the world;
- (b) encourage greater account to be taken of language skills in the career development of employees, particularly in small and medium-size enterprises;
- (c) draw on the European Structural Funds, where appropriate, in order to provide job-specific language courses in further vocational training and adult education;
- (d) value and make use of the linguistic competences of citizens with migrant backgrounds, as a means of strengthening both intercultural dialogue and economic competitiveness.

4. Promote the linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue by stepping up assistance for translation, in order to encourage the circulation of works and the dissemination of ideas and knowledge in Europe and across the world

A. In the framework of existing policies and programmes:

- (a) better inform the public, and in particular European professionals, about national and European assistance schemes for the translation of literary, scientific or technical texts, including cultural and creative content online, surtitling of performing art works and subtitling of audiovisual works and films;
- (b) coordinate and increase the assistance provided, within the framework of existing European programmes, for measures to support translation;
- (c)

develop the possibilities for and quality of training in translation and improve information about translation careers and courses given to the relevant target groups (school pupils, university students, enterprises, etc.);

- (d) support the networking of multilingual terminology databases to facilitate the work of translators and interpreters;
- (e) encourage the development of language technologies, in particular in the field of translation and interpretation, firstly by promoting cooperation between the Commission, the Member States, local authorities, research bodies and industry, and secondly by ensuring convergence between research programmes, the identification of areas of application and the deployment of the technologies across all EU languages.

B. Launch a discussion on the relevance and feasibility, in the longer term, of a specific assistance programme for translation able to meet the cultural, technological and professional challenges involved.

5. Promote EU languages across the world

- (a) strengthen cooperation between Member States and between their cultural institutions or other representative bodies in third countries, and promote language partnerships and intercultural dialogue with third countries;
- (b) make best use of the potential of European languages for developing cultural and economic dialogue with the rest of the world and enhancing the role of the EU on the international stage;
- (c) enhance cooperation with both national and international organisations, in particular the Council of Europe and UNESCO, working in the field of language learning and linguistic and cultural diversity.

INVITES THE COMMISSION TO:

1. support Member States in their efforts to achieve the objectives set out in this Resolution, by using the full potential of European cooperation in education, culture and other relevant policy areas;
2. adopt measures, within the context of the new comprehensive policy framework on multilingualism and within the limits of its competences, aimed at taking due account of the linguistic needs of citizens and institutions, paying particular attention to:
 - the relations between the European institutions and the public,
 - the relations between the European institutions and national institutions, and taking particular care to provide information in all official languages and to promote multilingualism on the Commission's websites;
3. report, by mid-2011, on the implementation of this Resolution, in cooperation with the Member States and placing special emphasis on examples of good practice;
4. periodically review the situation with regard to language skills in Europe, in particular on the basis of any existing research carried out by Member States, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and, where appropriate, the European Indicator of Language Competence.

[2](#) SN 100/02, point 44, p. 19.

[3](#) [OJ L 412, 30.12.2006, p. 44.](#)

[4](#) [OJ C 172, 25.7.2006, p. 1.](#)

[5](#) [OJ C 143, 10.6.2008.](#)

[6](#) Doc. 13253/08 + ADD 1 + ADD 2 + ADD 3.

[7](#) Doc. 11631/08 + ADD 1 (COM(2008) 423 final).
