



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
National and Kapodistrian
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European Perspectives in Language Teaching, Learning, Assessment

Language learning and teaching in Europe

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Member States in the European Union

- The EU was not always as big as it is today. When European countries started to cooperate (economically) in 1951, only Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands participated.
- Over time, more and more countries decided to join. The union reached its current size of **28 member countries** with the accession of Croatia on 1 July 2013.



Languages in the European Union

- 28 Member States.
- 24 Official languages.
- Over 450,000,000 citizens.
- Over 80 languages.
- Over 60 regional or minority languages in 138 different language communities.



Chronology of important decisions (1/4)

- 1989: the LINGUA Programme was introduced.
- 1995: the White Book on “Teaching and Learning”.
- 1995-2006: Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci I-II were introduced and implemented.



Chronology of important decisions (2/4)

- 2001: the European Year of Languages was celebrated.
- **2002: the 1+2 decision was made (signed by all heads of state in the EU).**
- 2003: an action plan for common goals related to education and languages was announced and it was then implemented during 2004-2006.



Actions (2004-2006) (1/2)

- Conference: “regional” and “minority” languages in education.
- Study and Conference on Early Language Learning.
- Inventory of language certification systems.
- Study: economic effects of poor language skills.



Actions (2004-2006) (2/2)

- More language assistants in primary schools.
- Encourage take-up of teacher training actions.
- Dedicated Web Portal.
- High-level languages group.



Conclusions

- Multilingualism is a core value in Europe: it is what makes Europe unique and contributes to its richness.
- Learning languages provides people with many benefits: career possibilities, deeper understanding of one's own and others' cultures.
- Learning languages can be accessible.



Chronology of important decisions (3/4)

- 2012: EUROSTAT and EUROBAROMETER provided significant comparable data
- 2007-2013: The “Life Long Learning Programme” was launched and a variety of important programmes for language learning were carried out and several important studies giving comparable data were funded, including:
 - European Survey of Language Competence,
 - Language Rich Europe,
 - the Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism of the EC.



Chronology of important decisions (4/4)

- 2014-2020: Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes.



The Life Long Learning Programme (1/2)

- **Integrated Programme:**
 - Comenius (school education).
 - Erasmus (higher education and training).
 - Leonardo da Vinci (Initial and continuing VET).
 - Grundtvig (Adult education).



The Life Long Learning Programme (2/2)

- **Transversal programme:**
 - 4 key activities: Policy development; Language learning (KAL); ICT; Dissemination.
- **Jean Monnet programme:**
 - 3 key activities: Jean Monnet Action; European Institutions; European Associations.



LLL Programme: Main Generic actions

- Individual mobility.
- Partnerships.
- Projects and networks.
- Accompanying measures.



Key Activity Languages (1/2)

Proposals: Multilateral projects:

- developing materials for language awareness and languages to primary and pre-primary learners, especially for less widely and less taught languages.
- targeting the acquisition of competence in languages which reinforce European competitiveness in a global context (e.g. Chinese, Hindi, Arabic, Russian, Japanese).



Key Activity Languages (2/2)

Proposals > Multilateral projects:

- developing and/or promoting methodologies to motivate language learners;
- promoting multilingual comprehension between languages;
- addressing regional and minority languages.



Accompanying Measures

- Information and publicity campaigns.
- Linguistic Competence Indicator.
- European Language Label.
- Conferences, studies.



New plans resulting from LLL programme

- Benchmark for languages.
- Erasmus Plus.
- Working with the Council of Europe.
- Working with the ECML.
- Promoting language learning inside and outside schools.



Language learning in the EU

Why learn languages?

- communication: to work, study, travel, trade, fun.
- understanding: tolerance, solidarity, openness to other cultures.

Languages should be viewed as a basic ‘skill’ for all European citizens.



Key messages (1/2)

- Learning English (as a 'lingua franca') alone is not enough.
- Mother tongue and two other languages for every citizen.
- Lifelong language learning.
- Meaningful communicative competence (not necessarily native speaker level).



Key messages (2/2)

- Multilingualism is a core value in Europe: it is what makes Europe unique and contributes to its richness.
- Learning languages provides people with many benefits: career possibilities, deeper understanding of one's own and others' cultures.
- Learning languages can be accessible.



Languages in the school curriculum (1/2)

- European pupils are generally between 6 and 9 years old when they start learning a foreign language.
- In Belgium, Spain and a few other countries pupils are even younger as they are taught a foreign language in pre-primary education from the age of 3.



Foreign languages in primary education

- While foreign languages are increasingly compulsory subjects in the primary curriculum, the time allocated to them (as a proportion of the total taught time) is not significantly increased than what it was before.
- In the countries where the number of hours to be spent on particular subjects is determined at central level, the time spent in learning foreign languages is only 10% than what it was in the past.



Languages in the school curriculum (2/2)

- Early Language Learning (ELL) – the tendency to offer foreign language learning opportunities from an earlier age than 10 or 20 years ago is evident in many countries which have implemented reforms or pilot projects to bring forward the teaching of foreign languages.
- From 2004/05 to 2009/10, the percentage of pupils enrolled in primary education not learning a foreign language dropped from 32.5 % to 21.8 %.



Foreign languages: time allocated

- In some countries, this percentage is even lower than 10% - it is about 5 %.
- In other countries it is higher.
 - In Croatia it is 11.1 %
 - In Belgium (German-speaking Community) it is 14.3 %
 - In Malta 15.2 %
 - In Luxembourg it is 40.5 %



Teaching languages in compulsory education (1/3)

- In most countries, the curriculum starts to diversify in secondary education. Pupils are invited to select options or to choose between educational pathways that offer different opportunities for foreign language learning.
- In Luxembourg, Iceland and Liechtenstein, students taking some educational pathways must learn up to four languages, which is the highest number of languages observed across Europe.



Teaching languages in compulsory education (2/3)

- In the majority of European countries, learning two foreign languages for at least one year during compulsory education is an obligation for all pupils.
- In England foreign language learning has not been a compulsory subject.



Teaching languages in compulsory education (3/3)

- This compulsory learning starts when pupils are between 10 and 15 years old in most countries. As might be expected, as the second language is introduced later, students will have received significantly less instruction in this subject than in their first language by the time they finish compulsory education.



More data about language learning
and teaching in schools

2012 EUROSTAT data (2009-10) (1/2)

- On average, 60.8 % of students enrolled in lower secondary education in Europe were learning two or more foreign languages. This is an increase of 14.1 percentage points compared to 2004/05.
- In upper secondary education, in most countries, there is a significant difference between the percentage of students learning two or more foreign languages in general education (59.4 %) and in pre-vocational/vocational education (39.4 %).



2012 EUROSTAT data (2009-10) (2/2)

- In all countries, except Denmark, Greece, Iceland and Turkey, some schools give students the opportunity to learn non-language subjects in two different languages (CLIL type provision). For instance, non-language subjects can be taught through a state language and foreign language, or they can be taught through a state language and a regional/minority language.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (1/21)

- In accordance with the EU population, the most widely spoken mother tongue is German (16%), followed by Italian and English (13% each), French (12%), then Spanish and Polish (8% each).
- For the majority of Europeans their mother tongue is one of the official languages of the country in which they reside.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (2/21)

- Just over half of Europeans (54%) are able to hold a conversation in at least one additional language, a quarter (25%) are able to speak at least two additional languages and one in ten (10%) are conversant in at least three.
- Almost all respondents in Luxembourg (98%), Latvia (95%), the Netherlands (94%), Malta (93%), Slovenia and Lithuania (92% each), and Sweden (91%) say that they are able to speak at least one language in addition to their mother tongue.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (3/21)

- Countries showing the most notable increases in the proportion of respondents saying that they are able to speak at least one foreign language well enough to hold a conversation, are Austria (+16 percentage points to 78%), Finland (+6 points to 75%), and Ireland (+6 points to 40%).
- Few countries show a noticeable increase in the proportion of respondents able to speak at least two foreign languages, with the most marked being in Italy (+6 percentage points to 22%) and Ireland (+5 points to 18%).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (4/21)

- Countries where respondents are least likely to be able to speak any foreign language are Hungary (65%), Italy (62%), the UK and Portugal (61% in each), and Ireland (60%).
- The five most widely spoken foreign languages remain English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), Spanish (7%) and Russian (5%).
- At a national level English is the most widely spoken foreign language in 19 of the 25 Member States where it is not an official language (i.e. excluding the UK and Ireland).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (5/21)

- The majority of Europeans who speak English, German, Spanish and Russian as a foreign language believe that they have better than basic skills.
- 44% of Europeans say that they are able to understand at least one foreign language well enough to be able to follow the news on radio or television. English is the most widely understood, with a quarter (25%) of Europeans able to follow radio or television news in the language.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (6/21)

- Europeans are just as likely to be able to read a newspaper or magazine article in a foreign language with just over two fifths (44%) of Europeans saying they can. Again English is the most widespread foreign language, with a similar proportion of Europeans (25%) able to read a newspaper or magazine article in the language.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (7/21)

- Europeans are slightly less likely to say that they understand any foreign language well enough to be able to use it to communicate online (e.g. using email, Twitter, Facebook etc.), with two fifths (39%) saying that they can use at least one foreign language in this way. Again, the most widely cited language is English, with a similar proportion of Europeans (26%) able to communicate online in the language.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (8/21)

- There is a clear relationship between the order in which a language is mentioned (i.e. perceived fluency) and the frequency with which that language is used. A quarter (24%) of respondents use their first foreign language every day or almost every day, a similar proportion (23%) use it often and the remainder (50%) use it on an occasional basis.
- Around one in ten respondents use their second language every day or nearly every day (8%), with respondents much more likely to use it on an occasional basis only (65%).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (9/21)

- Similarly, only 6% of respondents who speak a third foreign language use it on an ‘everyday’ basis, around one in eight (13%) use it often but not daily, and around seven in ten (69%) use it occasionally.
- Europeans say they regularly use foreign languages when watching films/television or listening to the radio (37%), using the internet (36%) and communicating with friends (35%).
- The most notable changes since 2005 are an increase in the proportion of Europeans who regularly use foreign languages on the internet.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (10/21)

- The majority of Europeans do not describe themselves as active learners of languages. Around a quarter (23%) of Europeans have never learnt a language, while just over two fifths (44%) have not learnt a language recently and do not intend to start.
- Only a minority (14%) have continued learning a language in the last two years; less than one in ten (7%) have started learning a new language in the last two years; and a similar proportion (8%) have not learnt a language recently, but intend to start in the coming year.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (11/21)

- Europeans are most likely to identify working in another country as a key advantage of learning a new language, with three fifths of Europeans (61%) holding this view.
- 88% of Europeans think that knowing languages other than their mother tongue is very useful.
- Two thirds of Europeans (67%) consider English as one of the two most useful languages for themselves.
- Languages perceived as the most useful that come up right after are the following: German (17%), French (16%), Spanish (14%) and Chinese (6%).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (12/21)

- There has been a decrease in the proportion thinking that French is important (-9 percentage points), and in those thinking German is an important language for personal development (-5 points). Europeans are more likely now than they were in 2005 to think that Chinese is an important language (+ 4 points).
- 98% of Europeans consider mastering other foreign languages as useful for the future of their children.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (13/21)

- Among languages perceived as such, French and German are mentioned by 20% of Europeans each, Spanish by 16% and Chinese by 14%. Around four in five Europeans (79%) consider English as one of the most useful languages for the future of the children.
- There has been a decrease (-13 percentage points) since 2005 in the proportion of Europeans thinking that French is important for children to learn for their future and a (-8 points) in the proportion thinking German important for children to learn.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (14/21)

- Whilst the perception that Chinese is a useful language for personal development is slightly more widespread now than in 2005 (+4 percentage points), the perception of its value as an important language for children to learn is significantly more widespread than in 2005 (+12 points).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (15/21)

- Europeans are most likely to say that free lessons would make them significantly more likely to learn or improve skills in a language, mentioned by around three in ten (29%). Around a fifth of Europeans say they would be significantly more likely to learn or improve language skills if they were paid to learn (19%), if they were able to learn it in a country in which it is spoken (18%), and if it improved career prospects (18%).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (16/21)

- The most widely mentioned barrier to learning another language is lack of motivation, with a third (34%) of Europeans saying this discourages them. Around a quarter of Europeans cite lack of time to study properly (28%) and that it is too expensive (25%). A fifth (19%) of Europeans say that not being good at languages discourages them.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (17/21)

- The most widespread method used to learn a foreign language is through lessons at school. Just over two thirds of Europeans (68%) have learnt a foreign language in this way.
- There is a broad consensus among Europeans that everyone in the EU should be able to speak at least one foreign language, with more than four in five (84%) agreeing with this view.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (18/21)

- Europeans, for the most part, support the EU’s vision that EU citizens should be able to speak at least two foreign languages; more than seven in ten (72%) agree that people in the EU should be able to speak more than one language in addition to their mother tongue.
- The majority of Europeans (81%) agree that all languages spoken within the EU should be treated equally. Even if around seven in ten (69%) think that Europeans should be able to speak a common language this view does not extend to believing that any one language should have priority over others.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (19/21)

- Slightly more than half of respondents (53%) agree that EU institutions should adopt a single language when communicating with citizens, whilst more than two in five disapprove of this idea.
- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents think that improving language skills should be a policy priority.
- More than two in five respondents (44%) agree that that they prefer subtitles to dubbing when watching foreign films or TV programmes, but a slightly larger proportion (52%) disagree that they prefer subtitles.



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (20/21)

- Europeans recognise that translation has an important role to play in a wide range of areas across society, most notably in education and learning (76%) and in health and safety (71%). European perceive translation as important while looking for a job (68%), getting news about events in the rest of the world (67%), participating in or getting information about EU activities (60%), accessing public services (59%) or enjoying leisure activities such as TV, films and reading (57%).



Data from Eurobarometer: “Europeans and their Languages” (21/21)

- Just over two in five Europeans (43%) say that translation has an important role to play in their everyday lives, and just under one in six (16%) consider this role to be very important.
- Three in ten Europeans (30%) say that translation plays no role at all in their everyday lives.



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Notes

Note on History of Published Version

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