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POLICY DEPARTMENT
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**RESEARCH FOR CULT COMMITTEE
- EUROPEAN STRATEGY ON
MULTILINGUALISM - POLICY AND
IMPLEMENTATION AT THE EU
LEVEL**

STUDY



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CULTURE AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

Multilingualism is at the heart of the European Union. The aim of this paper is to review the work done at EU level regarding the European Strategy on Multilingualism, focusing especially on progress made after 2011. The paper presents a number of policy developments and initiatives which have been put in place, and encourages Member States to address the need for improving language learning outcomes by exploiting the wide array of financial and advisory support provided by the European Commission.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AES** Adult Education Survey
- ALTE** Association of Language Testers in Europe
- CEFR** Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- CLIL** Content and Language Integrated Learning
- DG EAC** Directorate-General for Education and Culture
- DG EMPL** Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- DGT** Directorate General for Translation
- ECHO** European Community Humanitarian Office
- ECML** European Centre for Modern Languages
- EDL** European Day of Languages
- EILC** European Indicator on Language Competence
- ELL** European Language Label
- ERDF** European Regional Development Fund
- ESF** European Social Fund
- ESLC** European Survey on Language Competences
- ET 2020** Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020
- EU** European Union
- EVS** European Voluntary Service
- EYL** European Year of Languages
- FP** Framework Programme
- ICT** Information and Communication Technology
- ICT-REV** Use of ICT in support of language learning and teaching

- IEA** International Energy Agency
- LLP** Lifelong Learning Programme
- OECD** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- OLS** Online Linguistic Support
- OMC** Open Method of Coordination
- PISA** Programme for International Student Assessment
- RELANG** Relating language curricula, tests and examinations to the CEFR
- RMLs** Regional and minority languages
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- VET** Vocational Education and Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and aim

Multilingualism and the development of European citizens' linguistic abilities are at the heart of the EU's mission. As a reflection of this, in 2002 the European Council met in Barcelona and invited Member States "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age" and "the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator by 2003". This has been commonly known as the Barcelona goal of the "mother tongue +2".

As a follow up to the Barcelona goal, in 2008 the Council of the European Union adopted the *Resolution on a European Strategy for Multilingualism* inviting the European Commission and Member States to promote multilingualism as a tool to enhance social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, the competitiveness of the European economy, and citizens' mobility, employability and lifelong language learning. Additionally, the European Strategy for Multilingualism also called for further promotion of EU languages across the world and specific funding to translate European works so they can be disseminated more meaningfully across the EU and the world. The 2008 Council's resolution was followed by a similar resolution by the European Parliament in 2009, and in 2011 the European Commission provided an account on the implementation of the strategy. The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of how the European Strategy on Multilingualism has been further implemented since 2011, and to offer a set of recommendations which could potentially help shape future EU language policies.

Findings

In 2012 the results of the *European Survey on Language Competences* (ESLC) were published by the European Commission. The survey was intended to measure secondary school students' competences in their first and second foreign languages from across a sample of Member States, in the hope of collecting reliable data on the development of language skills across Europe. The results showed that European students' level in their first and second foreign languages were not in line with policy expectations, and presented a hugely diverse picture of language education across Member States.

In light of these results, in May 2014 the Council Conclusions on Multilingualism and the Development of Language Competences invited the Commission to assess the feasibility of using national data on language competences to monitor progress towards the "mother tongue +2" goal, to collect EU data on the number of students at secondary education studying a third language, and to strengthen their cooperation with the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria. The Council also urged Member States to continue benefitting from the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to exchange best practices about different strategies to enhance the quality and effectiveness of language education.

As a response to these Council Conclusions, the European Commission conducted a number of studies, particularly to gain a better picture of the language testing panorama across Member States (Eurydice 2015) and to assess the possibility of monitoring progress in language competences by using data collected through national language testing systems (European Commission 2015). The results from these studies offered again an extremely varied picture and highlighted the difficulties of comparing extracted data from across

Member States without considering the very complex and unique characteristics of each national language education system.

With the constraints imposed by the principle of subsidiarity and by higher-level current European priorities, the European Commission has been working for the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity through the tools they have at their disposal. For several decades, the European Commission has been offering funding to support initiatives regarding multilingualism and language learning across Member States. This funding can be accessed through a wide variety of mechanisms, ensuring that European citizens in all age, geographical and social groups can benefit from these language learning opportunities. The European Commission has also been exploiting the funding available to collaborate closely with Member States through the Open Method of Coordination, ensuring in this way the relevance of their work and a larger impact on national language policies. Similarly, the European Commission has produced a wide array of studies, materials and resources to support more effective language learning and teaching and the promotion of linguistic diversity across Member States, reacting quickly to the socio-economic challenges such as those presented by the recent immigration crisis. Following partly from the 2014 Council Conclusions, the European Commission has also continued and strengthened its collaboration with the Council of Europe's ECML. Through this collaboration agreement, EU funding is now available to support the running of ECML workshops across EU Member States and help teachers and policy makers develop better policies and practices in language teaching and learning at national level.

Despite all these efforts, there still remain a large percentage of European citizens who do not have sufficient language skills, and evidence shows that this is likely to have an impact on both their personal and professional opportunities. For this reason, it is essential to ensure the sustainable impact of all the initiatives which have been carried out and which are currently being implemented. European Institutions and Member States need to keep collaborating towards the creation of language-friendly environments where technology could help raise standards in language education by enabling much more efficient learning and assessment outside of the traditional classroom setting. The conclusions that the European Commission offered at the European Day of Languages event in 2015 provide a set of very helpful measures which, embedded with technology, could effectively help bring about the type of systemic change needed to improve the quality of language education across Europe. Last but not least, the European Commission needs to remain empowered both politically and financially to keep coordinating these activities with Member States and working together towards the successful implementation at national level of current and future EU-level language policies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Multilingualism and the development of European citizens' linguistic abilities are at the heart of the European Union's (EU) mission. As stated in Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU "shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced".

As part of this commitment, in 2002 the European Council invited Member States "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age" and "the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator by 2003". As a follow up from this, the European Commission proposed an Action Plan to promote language learning and linguistic diversity (2004–2006). Shortly afterwards, in 2005, the European Commission also suggested creating a *European Indicator of Language Competence* and *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, which were both endorsed by the European Parliament in its respective resolutions.

A few years later, in 2008, the Council of the European Union adopted the Resolution on a European Strategy for Multilingualism, inviting the European Commission and Member States to:

- 1. Promote multilingualism with a view to strengthening social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and European construction:** raise awareness about the benefits of language learning and linguistic diversity, and offer migrants the opportunity to learn the language of the host country as a key aspect of successful social integration and employability.
- 2. Strengthen lifelong language learning:** provide citizens from an early age with diverse and high-quality opportunities to learn other languages and cultures; promote language learning throughout the lifespan; encourage learning of European languages through innovative tools such as technology, distance learning or intercomprehension; promote the use of recognised tools for the assessment of languages, such as the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); ensure the appropriate training of teachers, including enhancing their language competences; and support teacher mobility across Europe through established funding mechanisms as well as other initiatives such as the European Language Label to encourage the creation of effective 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:** offer opportunities to learn a wide range of languages to facilitate access to new markets around the world; consider the key role of languages in the career development of employees; provide job-specific language courses in further vocational training and adult education; and exploit the linguistic competences of citizens with migrant backgrounds to enhance intercultural dialogue and economic competitiveness.
- 4. Promote 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:** provide more accessible information to society and to European professionals in particular about funding opportunities for translation; coordinate and increase the support provided for translation; increase the quality and offer of training courses in translation, as well as the information about translation careers provided to target groups; support multilingual terminological databases to facilitate

the work of translators and interpreters; and encourage the development of language technologies, especially in the field of translation and interpretation.

5. **Promote EU languages across the world:** strengthen cooperation between Member States and their cultural institutions and other representative institutions in third countries; exploit the potential of European languages to develop cultural and economic dialogue with the rest of the world; and enhance cooperation with other national and international institutions working in the field of language education and linguistic and cultural diversity, particularly UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

The 2008 Council resolution was followed by a similar resolution by the European Parliament in 2009, and in 2011 the European Commission provided an account of the actions taken at EU level towards the implementation of the strategy.

The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of how the European Strategy on Multilingualism has been followed up at EU-level since 2011. As part of this task, the following objectives were set out:

- Provide an overview of EU-level policies related to the European Strategy on Multilingualism, highlighting the level of implementation, impact and possible gaps.
- Include EU-level policies intended to support initiatives within the Member States to enhance knowledge of foreign languages.
- Provide an overview, as far as available evidence permits, of how language competences within the EU member states have evolved in the past decade in relation to the "mother tongue+2" goal.
- Indicate the limits of available evidence and make recommendations for any desirable improvement in data collection.

In the context of these objectives, the five questions which the paper seeks to address through the approach taken are as follows:

1. Language policies belong to the competence of the EU Member States; however, provide short overview of the tools at the EU disposal (political statements, financial commitments).
2. Provide an overview of existing EU financial support for multilingualism and linguistic diversity.
3. The current mainstream EU funding approach is favouring the acquisition of bigger EU languages. Shall this be maintained or is a revision, and in what respect, to be recommended?
4. How can EU funding meet the needs of multilingualism at regional level, facilitating intercultural dialogue and creating bridges between communities?
5. How can EU funding better meet the needs of stakeholders (schools, language training centres, local communities, employers, etc.)?

The research undertaken was based on a perspective that looked at the recent developments (since 2011) within the wider historical context, and in light of evolving issues related to multilingualism, not just in Europe but around the world. The chronological organisation of the paper and the focus on evolving contextual factors spanning 25 years are central to the way the brief was addressed and in the way the objectives were fulfilled. This should be born in mind when considering the conclusions and recommendations.

While the work presented in this paper is grounded in desk research relating to the various programmes and initiatives, it is also based on personal and institutional involvement with

many of the issues over the period noted above. This should also be taken into consideration throughout the paper.

2. SETTING THE SCENE: POLICY CONTEXT

The background to the discussion in this paper is provided by developments in Europe between 1989 and 2007. These developments included:

- EU enlargement with the increase in diversity that this brought about;
- the movement of people across the continent and the increase of migration into EU countries from outside the community for work, refugee or asylum purposes;
- the high level strategies developed since the Lisbon European Council in 2000 in light of globalisation, employability challenges and the need for greater economic competitiveness.

With these main developments in mind, the EU had to look carefully at the role that languages play within the European cultural and economic milieu. The EU was facing a major challenge: the need to maintain diversity and respect for many different languages and cultures, while at the same time aiming at greater coherence and the setting of European standards and benchmarks.

These concerns had traditionally been addressed by the Council of Europe starting in the late 1940s, but the changing political and economic realities meant that the EU also had to work more closely with Member States on the same issues. By the early 2000s, there was some evidence that Europe-wide policies and actions had started to have an impact in the area of language education. Some examples of these initiatives include:

- the European Year of Languages (EYL), which was launched in 2001, and the influence of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) and its associated “toolkit”, which was first presented at that time;
- the need to encourage increased language learning (following the “mother tongue + 2” initiative), which has been reflected in some national educational systems;
- the 2004-2006 Action Plan produced by the European Commission to promote language learning and linguistic diversity led to greater funding opportunities for projects in relation to language learning;
- language ability started playing an increasing role in decisions made in granting admission to Member States for migration or in granting citizenship through naturalisation processes, and as a result the importance of language assessment for these purposes has increased;
- the requirement for an “indicator” related to language standards has meant that there is a growing focus on outcomes of learning, rather than for example, the number of hours in the curriculum.

It is important at this stage to remember the EU’s role regarding education. Education has never been a main focus of EU policy. According to the principle of *subsidiarity*, every Member State retains full responsibility for the content of teaching and the organisation of its own education system. Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states:

The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The European Commission has traditionally promoted this cooperation among Member States either through action programmes, which offered funding for especially relevant projects, or more recently through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). These two tools are described in the following two subsections.

2.1. EU action programmes to promote language learning

Since the early 1990s, there have been many EU action programmes which have focused either on languages or on education in the wider sense. One of the European Commission's first actions to develop its objectives in language education was the Lingua Action, funded under the first phase of the Socrates programme, and which then led to the well-known Lingua Programme. The Lingua Programme was designed to fulfil three main objectives:

- encourage and support *linguistic diversity* throughout the Union;
- contribute to an improvement in the quality of language teaching and learning;
- promote access to *lifelong language learning* opportunities appropriate to each individual's needs.

The Lingua Action was further divided into two parts, corresponding to different sub-objectives. Lingua 1 was intended to raise citizens' awareness of the Union's multilingual wealth, to encourage people to learn languages throughout their lifetime, to improve access to foreign language learning resources across Europe, and to develop and disseminate innovative techniques and good practices in language teaching. Lingua 2 aimed to ensure that a sufficiently wide range of language learning tools is available to language learners.

It is worth noting that these were all priority areas which were shared with the Council of Europe, which had been involved in a modern languages programme for many years. This convergence of aims was recognised in 2001 when there was joint management of the European Year of Languages, and subsequently the EU adopted the CEFR and European Language Portfolio as "tools" within its Action Plan. The EU now celebrates an Annual European Day of Languages on 26 September.

It was decided that implementation of the detailed work programme would require the development of appropriate monitoring tools, and among these tools, *indicators and benchmarks* were seen as essential:

Indicators should ... not be considered only in their capacity for measuring progress. Indicators should function mainly as a basis for a constructive dialogue and exchange between Member States as a tool to understand the reasons for differences in performance, so that other countries can learn from policy practices adopted by the most successful countries. Therefore, indicators can be used as an instrument for stimulating the exchange of good experience and new ways of thinking about policy approaches. Using indicators as a vehicle for the exchange of best practice within the European Union is even more relevant when considering that a number of Member States are already achieving world-best performances in a number of objective areas, whereas others are faced with serious challenges.

2.2. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC)

The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) was established as an additional tool for the EU to promote cooperation between Member States in a variety of areas which fall under the principle of subsidiarity, including education. According to the European Commission, the OMC provided "*orientation towards common outcomes or objectives in a given policy area*";

and was an instrument for identifying "*good policy practice from among the grand reservoir of diverse policy approaches in the European area*".

In other words, the OMC is:

... a soft-law approach in sensitive policy areas where Member States do not want to cede power to the EU, but agree that mutual learning processes at international level can inspire better legislation at national level.

... a way of bringing international peer pressure to bear on national reform processes, and of increasing momentum in processes of mutual accountability.

... particularly important in cases where reforms that are deemed necessary cannot garner enough public support.

The Lisbon European Council in 2000 opened a new avenue for this collaboration with implications for education in general and for languages specifically. The overall objective of the Lisbon Strategy was drawn up to make the European knowledge economy the most dynamic and competitive in the world by 2010, with greater *social cohesion* and *more and better jobs* as a result.

The growing importance of languages and education within the Lisbon Strategy meant that the European Commission had to not only develop action plans to implement the education and training strategy, but also coordinate the OMC to increase the reach of these plans and to monitor the progress made. The focus on languages and multilingualism was also reflected in the structure of the European Commission. By the mid-2000s, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) had a dedicated unit to deal specifically with Multilingualism Policy. The action plans for language were coordinated by this unit.

In order to ensure maximum benefit from the OMC, the European Commission has now been working for several years in close cooperation with expert groups who provide advice on the work of the European Commission and whose task is to advise the European Commission on the use of indicators and benchmarks. Some of these groups and their work is discussed further in Section 5 below.

3. TOWARDS THE “MOTHER TONGUE + 2 GOAL”: MAIN EU-LEVEL INITIATIVES TO MONITOR LANGUAGE COMPETENCES

3.1. European Indicator on Language Competence

In March 2002, the Heads of State or Government of all EU Member States signed the Barcelona Conclusions of the European Council where they agreed that all European citizens should be taught two languages besides their mother tongue. An aspiration which was first set out in the European Commission's 1995/1996 White Paper, the Barcelona goal of “mother tongue + 2” has led most of the EU-level and national policies aimed at monitoring and promoting the development of language competences across Member States.

As a result of these conclusions, which included an explicit call for “the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator in 2003”, in 2005 the European Commission proposed the introduction of a European Indicator on Language Competence (EILC), which was approved by the European Parliament in 2006. The establishment of the European Indicator on Language Competences required the regular collection of reliable data to monitor progress in the development of language skills among EU citizens.

At this time, there was a pressing need to identify a short-term and a longer-term strategy for the development of indicators in education, especially those regarding languages:

... the need for the development of new indicators is particularly urgent in the area of key competences and... within this area, learning to learn and foreign language skills are to be considered absolute priorities.

Hence, new indicators and new methodological approaches were to be developed, building on the work carried out in these areas by Eurostat, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), International Energy Agency (IEA), Eurydice and other organisations. It was emphasised that these indicators should take into account the specificity of European cultures and of different education and training systems, as well as the precise policy objectives that had to be monitored within the limits set by Article 165 and Article 166 of the European Treaty.

The 2004-2006 Action Plan to promote language learning and linguistic diversity presented by the European Commission had already established that the indicator would have to assess all four competences (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and record those skills on the scales of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) – A1 to C2.

The view of the European Commission in 2003 was that:

Language skills are unevenly spread across countries and social groups. The range of foreign languages spoken by Europeans is narrow, being limited mainly to English, French, German, and Spanish. Learning one lingua franca alone is not enough. Every European citizen should have meaningful communicative competence in at least two other languages in addition to his or her mother tongue.

Two indicators had hitherto been used to monitor performance and progress in language learning in schools:

1. Number of pupils in lower/upper secondary education learning foreign languages.

2. Average number of foreign languages learned per pupil in upper secondary education.

These two indicators were useful in addressing the issue cited above, namely in

... encouraging everyone to learn two or, where appropriate, more, languages in addition to their mother tongue.

The data for this monitoring was partly covered by Eurostat data collection on foreign language teaching in schools. However, the ultimate policy objective was that Europeans should have meaningful communicative competence in two community languages other than their mother tongue, and there was an absence of reliable data on the language skills of young people.

The European Commission recognised that the presence of a language in the curriculum could not be taken to mean that pupils have achieved communicative competence in that language by the time of leaving school. The above-mentioned data needed to be complemented by a competence indicator and, to feed this indicator, data had to be gathered in a standard format.

The European Commission judged it necessary to create new language tests, which could then be administered to a sample of language learners in participating countries and the results gathered and analysed centrally. They determined that this would be known as the European Indicator of Language Competence (EILC).

The European Commission indicated that the first stage of development of this indicator, with the help of experts from Member States, had been defined as follows:

- it would involve the development and implementation of a series of tests that should measure language learners' skills in at least two languages other than mother tongue or principal language of instruction;
- tests would be created initially in English, French, Italian, Spanish and German;
- tests would measure skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking and record those skills on the scales of the CEFR;
- tests would be administered at the end of compulsory education.

The European Commission also consulted the Council and put in place plans to ensure that Member States were fully involved during the preparation and implementation of the survey. On the basis of the outcome of the first language survey, the stated aim was to produce a longer-term strategy (5–10 years).

After an open tendering process, in 2008 the SurveyLang consortium (led by Cambridge English Language Assessment and constituted mainly by members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe) started working very closely with the European Commission to collect the data for the first *European Survey on Language Competences* (ESLC). The task was to develop and administer standardised tests to measure the language competences of 15-year-old students from across Member States. This was considered an initial stage of the indicator which would serve to pilot the methodology and instruments before it was implemented more widely to all EU Member States. Partly for this reason, only 16 adjudicated entities from 14 countries participated, and the tests only included measurement of listening, writing and reading skills, with speaking importantly missing from the data collection.

The results of the ESLC showed that:

- results vary widely across educational systems;

- only a minority of European students achieved the level of independent user in the first foreign language;
- results are generally lower for second foreign language;
- in many countries, the proportion of students at a low level of competence in both languages is relatively high;
- English enjoys a special status as a language of international communication.

Furthermore, the results of the ESLC offered a very diverse picture, with countries such as Sweden doing very well in English as the first foreign language, but coming last when looking at their competence in the second foreign languages. Other countries, such as Spain, showed a level of competence in the first foreign language below the European average while they scored above the average when it came to competence in their second foreign language. The main achievements, limitation and conclusions of the ESLC are captured in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - ESLC: main achievements, limitations and conclusions

<p>Achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard evidence on outcomes of language education in a range of European countries • Reliable data collected through standardised exams • Questionnaire data to support and expand findings 	<p>Limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 14 countries • Only two languages per country • Only the foreign languages taught at school • No test of speaking • Ad hoc choice of testing mode: computer- or paper-based • Standard setting to the CEFR done language by language • “One fits all” model (vs European diversity)
<p>Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple and intuitive recipe for success: a language is learned better where motivation is high, where learners perceive it to be useful, and where it is indeed used outside school, for example in communicating over the internet, for watching TV, or travelling on holiday. • Also, the more teachers and students use the language in class, the better it is learned. • Language competences still need to be significantly improved. • Rich potential for peer learning in language policy and learning. • Complex challenges, requiring by-country qualitative analysis, mixed methods approaches. 	

The ESLC showed therefore that EU Member States were still far from reaching the “mother tongue+2” objective. Furthermore, the ESLC was instrumental in revealing the wide diversity of teaching and assessment methods across EU Member States. If meaningful language policies were to be drawn up, these different approaches would need to be considered as part of educational systems deeply embedded in complex social, political and cultural contexts.

3.2. European benchmark on languages

The results of the *European Survey on Language Competences* (ESLC) in 2012 were followed up by the European Commission in their 2012 ‘Rethinking Education’ Communication, where they proposed to establish a European benchmark on language to promote multilingualism across EU Member States and help monitor progress. The benchmark was to include the following two goals to be met by 2020:

- at least 50% of 15 year-olds attain the level of independent user or above of a first foreign language;
- at least 75% of pupils in lower secondary education study at least two foreign languages besides their main language of instruction.

The first indicator would be monitored by the European Commission through regularly running an extended version of the ESLC, possibly including more Member States, languages and skills tested. Member States who did not want to participate could still contribute by providing results from national examinations, which would need to be reliably compared and aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels used in the ESLC to ensure consistent data at European level.

3.3. Council Conclusions on Multilingualism and the Development of Language Competences

Rather than repeating the survey and creating a European benchmark on languages through the above indicators, the Council of the European Union agreed in May 2014 on the Conclusions on Multilingualism and the Development of Language Competences. The Council invited the European Commission to assess the feasibility of using national data on language competences to monitor progress towards the “mother tongue +2” goal, to collect EU data on the number of students at secondary education studying a third language, and to strengthen their cooperation with the Council of Europe’s European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz (Austria). The Council also urged Member States to continue benefitting from the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to exchange best practices about different strategies to enhance the quality and effectiveness of language education.

Following these Council Conclusions, in 2015 the European Commission completed three separate studies on languages, which were presented at the European Commission’s European Day of Languages event on 25 September in Brussels. These three projects are briefly reviewed here.

3.3.1. *Languages in Secondary Education: An Overview of National Tests in Europe (Eurydice)*

The aim of this report was to provide a comprehensive and detailed picture of all national language tests existing across European Union (EU) Member States. National tests are defined as standardised tests normally developed and administered by the central/top level public authorities. This report included all foreign languages considered as such in national curricula.

The data for the report was collected thanks to national experts and/or the national representatives of the Eurydice Network, which guaranteed the accuracy of the information. The report looked and compared exams based on a number of features, such as test purposes, student population tested (including educational level and grade), language skills included in the test, claims about test alignment to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), and whether exams are marked internally or externally.

The results of this report show an immense diversity in the language assessment systems used across EU Member States. This diversity is evident for all the features explored and presents a clear though complex picture of how embedded teaching and assessment methods are in the broader educational, cultural and socio-political contexts of the different Member States.

3.3.2. *Study on comparability of language testing in Europe (Cambridge English Language Assessment)*

As a complement to the Eurydice study, Cambridge English Language Assessment completed a study on behalf of the European Commission to investigate the potential comparability of national results on language skills. As in the Eurydice study above, this study included national language exams at the end of levels ISCED 2 (lower secondary education) and ISCED 3 (higher secondary education), and covered all 28 EU Member States. The languages included were all languages studied by more than 10% of the students at each ISCED level and in each country.

The data collected for the Eurydice project was partially incorporated into this study, as well as other sources of data necessary to determine whether the language exams used in each country were likely to provide comparable results across Member States. The additional data was collated thanks to the members of the Indicator Expert Group on Multilingualism, coordinated by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) and constituted by representatives from all the EU Member States.

The final report reviewed 133 language examinations through a comparability framework especially designed to compare language tests, and reached similar conclusions to those of the Eurydice report. This study showed that EU Member States are currently reporting the results from their language exams in a wide variety of formats which include in each case different types of information. This would make any comparability of results extremely difficult. Besides, the analysis of the language exams suggests that there exists too much diversity in the purposes, measurement characteristics and interpretation of results across countries. This means that, even if results were reported in the same or similar ways, exams would still not be testing the same constructs nor doing it reliably enough to ensure the faithful and accurate comparison of results across Member States.

3.3.3. *Languages and employability (Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning – CRELL)*

There has been a long-standing assumption about the need of language skills for higher employability. This report aimed to provide some statistical evidence on this respect and demonstrate whether there is actually an empirical relationship between foreign language skills and likelihood of being employed. The data used for this report is from the Adult Education Survey (AES 2011), and includes the two most widely-known languages in each of the following 25 Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

The results from this study provide statistical information about the number of languages known by adults and their proficiency level in each of the relevant languages depending on the country. Furthermore, the study shows that in most Member States there is a positive correlation between the employment rates of 25–64 year-old adults, and how multilingual they are i.e. how many languages they know and to what level of proficiency. This is

especially the case if the languages are the two most widely-known languages in that specific country, and even when respondents had very basic proficiency in these languages.

Despite the clear predominance of English as the most widely-known and useful language for employment purposes, the report ends, like the previous two reports, highlighting the large diversity observed in the data from the different Member States and the need to consider any generalisations at a European level as tentative rather than definitive. Most importantly, this study provided some much-needed evidence about the relationship between employment rates and language competences.

3.3.4. “United in diversity”: Steps forward for more efficient language learning across Europe

Following the presentation of these three studies at the annual European Day of Languages 2015 event in Brussels, the European Commission announced the suggested way forward for the promotion of multilingualism across Europe. First of all, they highlighted the importance of the new data to confirm long standing popular assumptions about the importance of languages for the integration in the job market, and about the multidimensional complexity of assessing language competences at EU level. They also suggested a number of actions which could help ensure the sustainable and effective improvement of European’s language skills in the long term:

- Member States learning from each other and trying to adapt successful practices to their own contexts;
- modernising current teaching and assessment systems to ensure learning outcomes are those required by our fast-changing, diverse and ever more globalised societies, addressing the needs of both local and European labour markets;
- emphasising the need to implement efficient measures of formative assessment throughout the educational system rather than focusing on summative assessment (i.e. exams) at the end of certain educational stages;
- increasing the offer and diversity of language learning opportunities across all Member States;
- improving the quality of language teaching by modernising the curricula, incorporating innovative pedagogical approaches, and ensuring initial and in-service training of language teachers appropriately to prepare them to face these challenges;
- promoting a more extensive and intensive use of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), not only as part of the assessment methods but also as the rationale behind any language education system in Europe.

The following sections in this paper provide a brief overview of some of the most representative examples of initiatives organised at EU-level to promote multilingualism and language learning, as well as the main funding mechanisms to support these initiatives. Some of these initiatives were conducted as a follow-up to the above conclusions, although most of them cover the period between 2011 and 2016.

4. FUNDING FOR THE PROMOTION OF MULTILINGUALISM AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

4.1. Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2013)

Between 2007 and 2013, the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) was the main EU funding programme in the fields of education and training. With a budget of nearly €7 billion, the aim was to enable European citizens to engage in stimulating learning opportunities throughout their lives and across Europe. The LLP was divided into four sectorial sub programmes and four transversal programmes, which was intended to ensure the reach and impact of the funding.

The **sectorial sub programmes** focused on the different stages of education and training, and included the well-known exchange and funding programmes Comenius (for schools), Erasmus (for higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (for vocational education and training), and Grundtvig (for adult education). The Erasmus student exchange programme was by far the most popular, with almost three million students taking part between 1987 and 2013 and over 4,000 institutions from 33 countries participated in this programme.

Although the main aim these sub programmes was to facilitate cooperation and exchanges of students and staff between educational institutions across Europe, the development of language skills was also promoted as an essential tool to enable communication between participants of these exchanges. Languages were particularly important in the case of Comenius and Erasmus exchanges, where additional funding was offered to encourage students to learn the language of the host country when this is a less widely used and taught language. In 1996 the Erasmus Intensive Language Courses were launched, and offered an introduction to the language and culture of the host country. The popularity of these courses kept increasing throughout the duration of the LLP, with a total of 42,400 students attending one of the 439 Intensive Language Courses which were organised between 2007 and 2013.

The four **transversal programmes** were intended to complement the sectorial sub programmes and focused on cooperation in transversal areas which would be relevant for more than one sub programme. The four transversal programmes were organised around four Key Activities: (1) policy cooperation and innovation, (2) languages, (3) information and communication technologies, and (4) dissemination and exploitation of results.

Key Activity 2 recognised the importance of linguistic diversity and language learning to ensure that European citizens have better professional and personal opportunities throughout their lives. The aim of this key activity was to raise awareness of this importance not only among students and educational staff but also in the wider society. This activity included the funding of:

- Multilateral Networks to help develop language policies;
- Accompanying Measures to promote and disseminate the results of other language projects;
- Multilateral Projects to raise awareness of the importance of languages, to facilitate access to language learning resources, and/or to create and disseminate language learning, teaching and testing materials.

Within the Key Activity 2: Languages, a total of 27 Multilateral Networks, 16 Accompanying Measures and 149 Multilateral projects were funded between 2007 and 2013. A brochure prepared by Directorate- General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) is available online

with an overview of the most relevant projects which were funded within this Key Activity throughout the duration of the LLP. The projects cover key areas in the promotion of multilingualism such as early language learning, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), special educational needs and languages learning, less widely used and taught languages, information and communication technology (ICT) in language learning, languages and employability and strengthening social inclusion through multilingualism. The brochure is publicly available online:

<http://www.sepie.es/doc/comunicacion/publicaciones/Keyactivity2.pdf>

Some of these projects are particularly relevant to illustrate the growing linguistic diversity across European cities, such as the LUCIDE (Language in Urban Communities – Integration and Diversity for Europe) project. Funded under the Multilateral Networks category, this project aimed to gain a better understanding of how communication occurs in multilingual urban areas across the EU, and describe ways in which linguistic diversity can be exploited to strengthen economic growth and social cohesion.

4.2. Erasmus+ (2014-2020)

Erasmus+ is the new EU flagship funding programme for education, training, youth and sport. Bringing together all the education and training funding strands in the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) – Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig, among others –, Erasmus+ aims to modernise work on education, training and youth across Europe. The funding is partly managed centrally by the European Commission and its Executive Agency in Brussels, and partly decentralised with National Agencies managing the application, delivery and evaluation of the initiatives. National Agencies are overseen by specific government departments which are in turn responsible for the successful implementation of the programme in their countries.

Erasmus+ has a total budget of €14.7 billion for the 7 years of the programme, and it is structured around three Key Actions:

- Key Action 1: Learning mobility of individuals
- Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
- Key Action 3: Support for policy reform

Key Action 1 (around 68% of the budget) still covers student and staff exchanges between institutions, while Key Action 2 (around 28% of the budget) aims to fund projects with long-lasting positive effects on the participating institutions and their policy systems. With only 4.2% of the budget, Key Action 3 is managed centrally almost in its totality by the European Commission to achieve the goals of the European Youth Strategy and of the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), including the management of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) activities.

The Erasmus+ programme guide highlights in the introduction the importance of languages to ensure active participation in European education and training programmes. This importance appears throughout the three Key Actions, each of them presenting different types of initiatives and opportunities to promote multilingualism, linguistic diversity and language learning.

In the case of Key Action 1, the European Commission decided to replace the LLP Erasmus Intensive Language Courses with an **Online Linguistic Support** (OLS) platform. This platform allows students and staff participating in a mobility programme to improve their language skills before and during their stay abroad. On top of the optional language courses, the platform also includes a compulsory assessment of participants' language

competences at the beginning and at the end of their stay abroad. This assessment includes three language skills – listening, reading and writing – which are reported according to CEFR levels. The language tests are currently available in Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish, and with the ambition to progressively include all the EU official languages by 2020. Students whose main language of study, work or volunteering during their stay abroad is not yet available in the OLS receive additional funding for linguistic support on the language of the mobility. Thanks to the OLS, for the first time the European Commission will be able to regularly obtain statistical data about the impact of Erasmus+ on the development of young European's language competences.

So far, the OLS has already proved very popular:

- more than 160,000 students have followed online language courses;
- more than 380,000 students have assessed their language skills;
- it is expected that in 2016 a total of over 66,000 vocational training learners and more than 7,000 Youth European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers will benefit from the OLS.

Considering the reach and impact of this initiative, the budget for the OLS has been increased from €13 to €16 million.

However, the success of the OLS needs to be considered with caution. European students in higher education who have been accepted to go on a mobility programme should have already the language skills necessary to take advantage of this opportunity fully. The OLS cannot compensate for the time lost at lower levels of education on inadequate language teaching and learning.

Within Key Action 2, *Strategic Partnerships in the field of education, training and youth* represent the main source of funding for language-related projects and initiatives. Strategic Partnerships bring a wide array of stakeholders to cooperate in the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices in education and training, as well as encouraging peer-learning activities and exchanges of experience at European level. Strategic Partnerships in the field of language education are welcome, particularly those suggesting innovative practices for teaching and assessment methods, the creation of materials, research and computer-assisted language learning. Strategic Partnerships also offer opportunities for projects for the promotion of regional and minority languages (RMLs).

Key Action 3 is the only source of funding for the European Commission to undertake any kind of additional work at EU-level beyond what is included in the other two key actions. Section 5 below offers an overview of the activities in which the European Commission has been involved to promote language learning and teaching across Europe, including the work done through the OMC with expert representatives of the Member States.

4.3. Creative Europe

Through Creative Europe, the European Commission's framework programme to support culture and the audio-visual sector, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) offers funding for work in the field of Literary Translation. The aim is to increase the quality and access to European literature by supporting the translation and promotion of literary works into other EU languages. This programme is aimed at publishers and publishing houses, and provides funding for both the translation and the promotion of these works. In 2015, around 500 books were translated thanks to this programme from 35

European languages. Creative Europe also offers funding for a varied set of projects and initiatives which could potentially include languages and multilingualism.

4.4. Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development

Since 1989, the European Commission has offered funding to support the advancement of technological research. Traditionally, the Framework Programmes (FPs) would focus on research and technological development. However, the focus of FP8 – Horizon 2020 – has shifted to research and innovation. The aim is to fund projects which will help speed up economic growth and take great ideas from the labs to the markets. Horizon 2020 is the largest FP ever with almost €80 billion available between 2014 and 2020.

Horizon 2020 offers a simpler structure than previous FPs, reducing the time and energy applicants need to invest in the preparation process and ensuring projects move at a fast pace. The programme is divided in three sections: excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges, and offers multiple opportunities to apply for funding in the field of multilingualism and language learning and teaching.

These are some examples of language-related projects which have been funded within recent FPs or which are currently being funded:

- [*AThEME: Advancing the European Multilingual Experience*](#) (2014–2019);
- [*FREME: Coupling Language and Knowledge via e-Services Ecosystem*](#) (2015–2017);
- [*MULTISIGN: Multilingual Behaviours In Sign Language Users*](#) (2011–2016);
- [*LAPO: Language policy and linguistic justice in the European Union*](#) (2013–2015).

4.5. European Social Fund

The European Social Fund (ESF) is managed by the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) and aims to help EU citizens get better jobs through fairer job opportunities. The ESF provides about €10 billion per year in total. The money is allocated to Member States, who agree with the European Commission on a number of priorities for the 7-year programme. The money is then distributed to beneficiaries who run the different projects and ensure that participants get the most out of the programme.

ESF provides plenty of opportunities to fund projects on multilingualism and language learning, as long as the scope of the project is within the Member States' agreed priorities. Some examples of such projects are:

- [*Odysseus*](#) (2012–2015): helping immigrants in Greece learn about Greek language, culture and history;
- [*Bridge – Berlin Network for the Right to Stay*](#) (2015–2019): helping refugees stay in Germany through language courses and other resources;
- [*Systematic improvement of staff qualification at the Government Office of the Slovak Republic*](#) (2012–2014): helping Slovak civil servants develop their language skills, among other competences.

4.6. European Regional Development Fund

The goal of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is to facilitate economic and social cohesion across the European Union by addressing imbalances between its regions.

There are also a number of projects which have been funded in the field of languages within the ERDF structure between 2007 and 2013, such as:

- [Language Garden: Learning the neighbour's language in kindergarten;](#)
- [EVEIL-3D: Learning foreign languages through immersive virtual reality games;](#)
- [Training cross-border language teachers;](#)
- [Working across borders to enhance language proficiency and job mobility.](#)

4.7. Additional sources of funding

Besides the main sources of funding described above, there exist many additional opportunities to receive EU funding to undertake work in the field of multilingualism and foreign language learning. For example, the Europe for Citizens funding programme, coordinated by the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, also offers support for projects which may exploit languages for European citizenship and democratic participation at EU level.

Maybe more relevant to the current migration situation in Europe is the Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, which the European Commission published as this report was being drafted. According to this Action Plan, the European Commission will acquire 100,000 licences for the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support platform and provide newly arrived third country nationals and refugees with this effective tool for learning the host language. The European Commission also announced in this Action Plan further peer learning events on key policy measures, including assessment of language competences. Funding for these initiatives is likely to occur through a number of previously established mechanisms, as explained in the Action Plan.

5. ENHANCING AND MONITORING LANGUAGE LEARNING IN EUROPE: EU-LEVEL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE MULTILINGUALISM

5.1. OMC Working Groups

Although each EU Member State is fully responsible for their education system, they are likely to share common issues and face similar challenges, such as the skills gap or the integration of technology in education. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is a soft-policy tool which allows the European institutions to empower countries to tackle better the common issues and challenges they encounter.

Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) is the strategic framework that structures this cooperation between Member States and the EU institutions in matters related to education and training. Coordinated by the European Commission, ET 2020 facilitates the exchange of best practices and mutual learning and manages the collection and dissemination of research and practice results which may guide future policy reforms at national level.

Working Groups were first created in 2002 to ensure the successful implementation of ET 2020. They are composed by national experts nominated by each Member State as well as key external experts and stakeholders. Since they were first introduced, there have been either working groups working on different aspects of language education, or more recently have included language education as part of their overarching objectives:

5.1.1. Thematic Working Group on Languages for Jobs (2010–2011)

This group was created by the European Commission with the aim of making policy recommendations to Ministers of Education about how languages could play a key role in increasing the chances of employment. The group met a total of six times, and focused largely on Vocational Education and Training (VET). They completed a number of important tasks such as collecting examples of best practices across Europe, identifying priority areas and suggesting strategic and operational recommendations. Upon conclusion of the working group in 2011, the members presented an independent report *Languages for Jobs – delivering multilingual communication skills for the labour market* with the main conclusions and outcomes of the work done by the group.

5.1.2. Thematic Working Group on Languages in Education and Training (2012–2014)

As a continuation of the Thematic Working Group on Languages for Jobs, in April 2012 the European Commission proposed creating a new Thematic Working Group to focus on Languages in Education and Training. This shift of focus was in line with the Council Conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility (28 November 2011). The new mandate for this group included exploring new approaches to language learning and teaching for mobility and employability throughout the life span in pursue of the “mother tongue + two” goal.

This working group was very active and produced two separate documents which are publicly available online. These documents have had a particularly important impact and they are regularly requested by Member States to use them as reference and guide in their own language teaching and learning contexts:

- Languages in Education and Training: Final Country Comparative Analysis;
- Improving the effectiveness of language learning: Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

Besides these two reports, the working group also carried out two peer learning activities in Helsinki (March 2014) and Graz (May 2014). The outcomes of these peer learning activities are summarised in a separate report (*Languages Working Group Peer Learning Activity Report*).

5.1.3. ET2020 Working Group on Transversal Skills: Languages (2014–2015)

This group focused on three separate sets of transversal skills: entrepreneurship, digital skills and languages, and built on the work completed by the previous working groups in these three areas. Languages were particularly relevant to the main objectives of the Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), namely for:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality (expanding mobility especially to support language learning);
- improving quality and efficiency of education & training (for all citizens to acquire key competences);
- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship (to enable citizens to gain skills needed for employability, foster learning, active citizenship and intercultural dialogue);
- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship (promoting transversal skills, the knowledge triangle and partnerships between enterprises, education and civil society).

5.1.4. ET2020 Working Groups (2016–2018)

The new working groups launched in 2016 have a broader scope and only include languages as part of wider educational issues. For example, the **Working Group on Schools** has as its main mission to promote cooperation among schools to ensure innovation and inclusive education of the highest quality as well as improved external partnerships with external stakeholders. The mandate for this working group includes a reference to “embracing diversity and multilingualism (including in the context of newly arrived migrants)” as one of the issues which the working groups will be contributing to.

Similarly, the **Working Group on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education** (follow-up to the Paris Declaration) aims to highlight the role of education to foster social cohesion, prevent marginalisation and radicalisation. As part of the issues to which this working group will contribute, “facilitating the effective acquisition of the language(s) of instruction and employment by migrants through formal and non-formal learning (Priority Area 2.iii)” seems to be the only reference to languages.

5.2. Other initiatives

Besides the key activities summarised in previous sections, different Directorate-Generals of the European Commission have been working on a number of broader initiatives and studies to support multilingualism and more effective language learning and teaching across Europe.

5.2.1. Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms

Partly due to the immigration crisis, there are growing numbers of schoolchildren across Europe who have a mother tongue different from the main language of instruction (from 1% in Poland to 40% in Luxembourg). Although their knowledge of other languages may be an valuable asset in some cases, evidence shows that migrant children tend to perform

worse in basic skills, partly due to teaching methods which do not take into consideration the specific linguistic and learning needs of these children.

In order to help schools make the best use of these students' linguistic potential, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) commissioned a report under the title *Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms* with a collection of observed best practices from across Member States. The European Commission has also funded the work of Sirius, a policy network to research issues related to language learning in migrant children.

As a follow-up, the DG EAC will work with the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe to develop and disseminate new effective methodologies for language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms. The Commission will also aim to provide resources and support for teachers working with students of mixed linguistic backgrounds as part of their broader strategy to empower teacher and the teaching professions.

5.2.2. Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning (in cooperation with the European Centre for Modern Languages)

Partly thanks to the encouragement in the May 2014 Council Conclusions on Multilingualism, which asked for closer cooperation between the European Commission and the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe, these two institutions renewed their 2013 cooperation agreement. The European Commission would provide funding under Erasmus+ Key Action 3 ('Support for policy reform') for the further implementation of the *RELANG (Relating language curricula, tests and examinations to the CEFR)* and *ICT-REV (Use of ICT in support of language learning and teaching)* projects, two highly-successful projects which the ECML had been offering for some time to their own member states. This cooperation agreement allowed therefore for more workshops to take place in more countries, including EU Member States which are not currently members of the ECML, maximising the reach and benefit of the work carried out within these two projects. The workshops are designed for curriculum developers, teachers, teacher trainers, language testers and examiners, school inspectors and policy makers.

The goal of the *RELANG project* is to help educational authorities relate their language examinations and curricula to the levels of proficiency defined in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This initiative aims to ensure the valid assessment of learners throughout participating states, and the correct reporting and interpretation of exam results according to the CEFR levels in ways which encourage validity and transparency for all stakeholders.

The *ICT-REV project* presents ways in which ICT can be used to enhance language learning and teaching. The aim is to provide tools and specialised training which enables teachers to effectively integrate technology and pedagogy and to deliver quality language education through the use of ICT.

In their third year of cooperation, and partly as a result of the report *Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms* published by the European Commission in 2015, the focus of the agreement shifted slightly. While the *RELANG project* is still being offered, the *ICT-REV project* has now been embedded within a larger project called *Supporting Multilingual Classrooms*. This new project will enable participants to understand better the challenges and opportunities for students with mixed linguistic backgrounds, and explore ways to maximise the learning potential of these students and to bridge the attainment gap between them and the rest of the students.

5.2.3. *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2012*

Part of the Key Data series published regularly by the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency in cooperation with Eurydice and Eurostat, this issue provides a comprehensive overview of existing language education systems in 2010/2011 across 32 European countries (27 Member States plus Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey). The study also includes 61 quantitative and qualitative indicators to better illustrate how language teaching is planned and implemented in each country. The report makes use of four different data sources: Eurydice, Eurostat, the *European Survey on Language Competences* (ESLC) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 international survey. The next *Key Data* issue on languages has been planned for 2017.

5.2.4. *Study on the use of subtitling*

The goal of this study, prepared by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) in 2011, was to explore ways in which subtitling could promote more effective language learning and increase Europeans' level of proficiency in foreign languages. The study includes a sample of 6,000 Europeans from 33 countries who were questioned about their language skills, their viewing habits and their preference for either dubbing or subtitling. The results suggest that subtitling may be a contributor towards more effective language learning and higher motivation and awareness.

5.2.5. *European Language Label*

The European Language Label (ELL) was a project first piloted by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) in 1998 following the recommendations of the 1995 White Paper on Teaching and Learning. The ELL was then extended as an award to especially relevant, innovative and well-run projects that promote excellence in language education and help raise awareness of multilingualism issues in the wider society.

The ELL has evolved over the years and adapted to the different policy priorities in the field of language learning and teaching. The ELL is presently being awarded annually or biannually by the National Agencies of participating countries. In 2014 the European Commission published a selection of some of the most popular projects which had received the ELL between 2006 and 2013.

5.2.6. *Study on Foreign Language Proficiency and Employability*

This study was commissioned by the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) in 2015. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the role that languages play in employability across EU Member States. The study collected a substantial amount of data between June and October 2015 through 845 interviews with employers, surveys with 533 employers, and the review of 3,632 online vacancy notices.

After a comprehensive analysis of the data collected, the study provides an overview of the diversity existing across Member States, economic sectors and job roles regarding the demand for language skills. A substantial percentage of vacancy notices (between one fifth and one quarter) require an advanced level of foreign language skills, in contrast with the level of independent user (B1) which most students aim to achieve by the end of their studies. The level of proficiency required also seems to increase with the level of responsibility of the job. Besides English, knowledge of other languages seems to be also of great importance to employers, particularly knowledge of languages relevant for trade with neighbour countries and large non-English speaking economies. Employers are aware of the current globalisation of national and regional markets, and therefore prefer hiring jobseekers that are already multilingual.

Interestingly, employers seem to describe the level they require in the different languages using informal descriptions of the levels rather than using the widely-known Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) levels. Although some of them rely on external language tests or international experience in the CV to make a judgement about the candidate's language skills, most employers seem to prefer assessing these skills during the job interview. The report calls for further research which can help shed more light into some of the issues discussed so a better evidence base can be developed to inform policy development regarding languages and employability.

5.2.7. Mapping best multilingual business practices in the EU

This study was prepared by the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) in 2011 to provide examples of best practices in the management of multilingualism across different European companies and business contexts. With technology and globalisation opening up markets both within the EU and outside, companies need to incorporate multilingualism and accept it as a rule rather than as a beneficial optional advantage. This report describes how some companies have adopted innovative solutions to deal with multilingualism within their organisations, for example by encouraging intercomprehension between similar languages, encouraging collaborative informal interpretation among colleagues, and using certain technology tools such as machine translations which can then be checked by speakers of those languages. Besides the case studies that this report presents, it also includes a number of recommendations which could help enhance multilingualism across European companies.

5.2.8. Juvenes Translatores

Juvenes Translatores is an annual contest organised by the Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) which was launched in 2007 to promote language learning, multilingualism and translation as a career among secondary school students across Member States. The students are required to translate a 1-page text into any of the other 24 EU official languages (552 translation combinations) with only the support of paper dictionaries. The aim of the contest is to raise awareness about the importance of linguistic diversity and advanced language skills for intercultural dialogue among Europeans. The contest was run for the first time in 2007 and has taken place every year since then, with over 3,000 participants on the last edition.

5.2.9. Studies on Translation and Multilingualism

The Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) has produced a series of publications under the title *Studies on Translation and Multilingualism* exploring different aspects where these two fields overlap or interact. Since 2011, nine such reports were commissioned covering, among other topics, the cost of good vs. poor quality translations, the status of the translation profession in the EU, crowdsourcing, and intellectual property rights.

Two of these reports are particularly interesting for language learning. The first one was produced in 2012 and the title was *Intercomprehension*. The report discusses how this new field of research in applied linguistics is currently being used in society, education and business, and suggests ways in which it could be useful for the European Institutions and to promote multilingualism among European citizens. The second report was published in 2014 and covers the topic of *Translation and language learning*. This study explores the current role of translation (both written and spoken) as part of language education across the EU at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The report includes data collected through a questionnaire completed by almost 1,000 experts and teachers and interviews with over 100 contributors from a selection of seven Member States (Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom) and three comparison countries (Australia, China and the United States). The findings suggest that, even if foreign

language teachers prefer communicative approaches to language teaching, they do not consider translation a communication act. They therefore tend to avoid translation during the learning process and some of them even ban their students from making any reference to their first language, regardless the mental processes of translation their students may be engaging in during the process of learning the foreign language.

5.2.10. Translating Europe Forum and Workshops

The Translating Europe Forum is a yearly event organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation (DGT). It brings together a wide range of translation stakeholders from across Europe, such as universities, students, teachers, freelance translators, researchers, producers of translation tools, national language institutes, translation services in EU Member States, professional associations and translation agencies. The aim is to facilitate dialogue and collaboration with and between the different stakeholders in the translation field, which should in turn contribute to making the world of translation more visible to the wider society, sharing best practices across Europe, cooperating in common projects, and ensuring the development of a diversified and sustainable market for professional translators in Europe. These annual fora provide the space for these stakeholders to meet and discuss topics of common interest such as skills, employability, professionalisation, translation tools, quality issues, etc. With similar goals in mind, DGT also launched the Translating Europe Workshops, which take place throughout the year in several EU countries.

5.2.11. European Master's in Translation (EMT)

The European Master's in Translation (EMT) is a partnership project between the European Commission and higher-education institutions offering master's level translation programmes. The main aims are to improve the quality of translator training across EU Member States and to ensure there will always be highly-skilled professionals who can then work as translators for the EU institutions. Ultimately, this collaboration seeks to enhance the status of the translation profession in the EU. The EMT project has established a quality label for university translation programmes that meet a number of professional standards and market demands. The list of participating programmes and universities was renewed in June 2014, and the network now consists of 64 universities providing translator-training programmes with this quality label.

5.2.12. Cooperation with universities in the field of conference interpreting

Both the European Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation (SCIC) and the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (DG INTE) work closely with universities to help students of conference interpreting become professional conference interpreters. Activities are free of charge for universities, and include on-site training assistance, virtual master classes and e-learning, participation of experienced staff interpreters in final exams, seminars for course leaders and trainers, expert advice on how to improve their training programmes and the competencies required to access interpreting jobs at the European Institutions, and student visits to experience first-hand what an interpreter's job is like.

The SCiCLOUD is probably one of the most useful resources created to support the training of professional conference interpreters. It consists of a wide-range of digital materials for students to practice their skills with real speeches and improve their interpreting techniques through the expert advice of professional interpreters, which is provided in the form of videos or podcasts.

Finally, there are also a number of grants available for the organisation of post-graduate courses in conference interpreting, cross-border cooperation projects and/or innovative

projects enhancing the quality of conference interpreter training. Study bursaries are also available for a limited number of conference interpreting students. Additionally, SCIC also organises a yearly conference for participants from universities, national governments and European and International Institutions to discuss issues regarding the future of the profession.

5.2.13. MT@EC: the new machine translation system

Moving on from “rule-based” to Statistical Machine Translation technology, the European Commission has been developing since 2010 a new machine translation system called MT@EC. This system is now available in a total of 552 language pairs covering all of the EU official languages, and can be used for free by all EU institutions and agencies (not only translators but also regular members of staff) and for national public administrations in EU Member States. The MT@EC system is also used in the Commission's Internal Market Information System (IMI) and in SOLVIT, the platform to find solutions to problems regarding EU rights.

The MT@EC provides high-quality machine translation quickly and with minimum cost while respecting confidentiality. It has been trained specifically on official EU documents, which means it handles this type of documents better than other machine translation systems. It is intended to provide a quick, general understanding of the text without having to wait for a translation, limiting therefore human translation to those documents which are deemed important. The MT@EC system is a key development since it enables multilingualism across European public services.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As evidenced in this paper, the European Commission has conducted an immense amount of work and research towards the implementation of the European Strategy on Multilingualism, following the requests from the European Council and the European Parliament. In addressing the objectives and questions set out in the introduction, this paper provides a historical overview with a clear focus on EU-level initiatives since 2011. While many efforts had already been invested in the development of multilingualism and language learning before the European Strategy on Multilingualism, it is clear from the above review that the strategy has played a key role in setting the direction of this continued work.

By way of conclusion, this section discusses the five questions listed in the introduction in light of the data collected. In doing so, the following paragraphs frame the questions and objectives of this paper within a wider social, economic and cultural perspective. The discussion also leads to a number of recommendations which could potentially help shape future EU language policies.

Question 1 asked for an overview of the tools at the EU's disposal to influence and shape language education across Member States. As highlighted throughout the paper, the power of the European Commission in the field of education is restricted by the rules associated with the principle of subsidiarity. For this reason, its actions have focused importantly on collaborating with experts and representatives from EU Member States through the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). As a result of this work, there exist numerous policy notes, reports and resources which can be easily accessed by the Member States to ensure the successful transfer of best practices across the EU territory.

Despite all efforts towards common goals in language education, the *European Survey on Language Competences* shows that European secondary school students are still far from the "mother tongue +2" goal, and there is no significant evidence that this situation may have changed greatly between 2011 and 2016. Language teaching and assessment systems across EU Member States are very diverse and, while this diversity should be recognised as part of the richness of the EU, it also makes the comparison of language learning outcomes difficult.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Member States are encouraged to take advantage of the tools that the European Commission has put at their disposal, such as the workshops organised by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) or the different sources of EU funding. All these opportunities are accompanied by detailed instructions and publicly available guidelines which explain how to secure the funding and how to ensure that the benefits of the projects are maximised throughout and after the project life cycle.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

The European Commission is encouraged to highlight and circulate more widely the conclusions presented in September 2015 at the EDL event in Brussels after the presentation of the studies on language testing and languages and employability. These conclusions provide a set of measures that could potentially have a deeper impact on language learning outcomes, encouraging national governments to invest in their own language education systems, increasing the quality and variety of the learning opportunities they offer to their students. In a growingly diverse Europe, the CEFR provides a useful tool for this purpose, especially as

this framework of reference was developed with the aim of helping users make sense of diversity across languages and cultures and in promoting plurilingualism (individual multilingualism).

It is also important to highlight the decreasing visibility of languages within European policy, if compared with the situation a decade ago. Languages have now become a transversal skill which is embedded within broader strategies for social inclusion, economic growth and school education, to name a few. While this approach is likely to have a deeper impact across society, visibility is also to a certain extent diluted among the wider strategies they are embedded into. The transversality of languages also makes it very difficult to measure the overall impact that languages and programmes for the development of language skills are having in any given territory. More importantly, programmes for the enhancement of language education need to focus on the sustainability of the impact they bring about for the wider national and European societies.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

While acknowledging the embeddedness of languages across all spheres of society, and therefore the difficulty of measuring the overall impact of all initiatives in any one given place, Member States are encouraged to ensure in every possible way the sustainability of their programmes for the enhancement of language education.

Question 2 requested an overview of EU financial instruments for the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity, which is covered in Section 4 of this paper and complemented in Section 5 with examples of such activities. Erasmus+, the new EU flagship funding programme for education, training, youth and sport, has replaced the previous Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and has brought together all the education and training funding strands, such as Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig. With a total budget of €14.7 billion for the 7 years of the programme (2014-2020), Erasmus+ aims to modernise work on education, training and youth across Europe. This funding is intended to cover all activities related to education, including language education. Languages play an important role in Erasmus+ as key to ensure active participation in European education and training programmes. All three Key Actions within Erasmus+ offer a wide scope of opportunities to promote multilingualism, linguistic diversity and language learning.

For example, within Key Action 1 – 68% of the budget, devoted to supporting student and staff exchanges – the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) platform provides assessment and training in the language of the host institutions for students and staff in mobility programmes across Europe. Key Action 2 – 28% of the budget – is intended to fund projects with long-lasting positive effects on the participating institutions and their policy systems involving a wide array of stakeholders to cooperate in the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices in education and training, as well as encouraging peer-learning activities and exchanges of experience at European level. These projects can well be in the field of language education and multilingualism, including regional and minority languages (RMLs).

Key Action 3 – only 4.2% of the total Erasmus+ budget – is devoted to central activities organised by the European Commission to achieve the goals of the European Youth Strategy and of the Strategic Framework for Education and Training 2020, including the management of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) activities. This is therefore the only source of funding for the European Commission to truly work at EU level on any matters related to education, and within that language education. Despite this scarce funding, the European Commission has proactively engaged with countries and worked with

them in a number of projects and reports. Some examples of these activities are the OMC working groups with expert representatives of the Member States (described in more detail in subsection 5.1), the report *Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms* (subsection 5.2.1), the European Language Label initiative (subsection 5.2.50), and the on-going cooperation with the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in the framework of *Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning* (subsection 5.2.2).

Beyond the funding provided within Erasmus+, there exist a number of additional sources of EU funding which can be exploited for the promotion of multilingualism and language learning. Creative Europe, the EU framework programme for culture and the audio-visual sector, provides support for work in the field of Literary Translation with the aim to increase the quality and access to European literature by supporting the translation and promotion of literary works into other EU languages. Horizon 2020, the current Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, also provides funding for projects in the field of multilingualism and language learning and teaching. The European Social Fund also provides many opportunities for projects on multilingualism and language learning, as long as the scope of the project is within the Member States' agreed priorities. Similarly, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has also funded in the past few years projects in the field of languages as a way to facilitate economic and social cohesion across the European Union.

Additionally, other Directorate-Generals are also devoting part of their own budgets to the promotion of multilingualism and language learning across Europe. For example, the Directorate-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) published in 2015 a report looking at the relationship between employability and languages. The Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) has also been very active in the promotion of multilingualism. They have published several volumes exploring different issues at the interface between translation, multilingualism and language learning, they hold every year their *Juvenes Translatores* contest to encourage young secondary students to become professional translators, they cooperate with higher-education institutions to provide quality training for future translators within the European Master's in Translation, and every year they organise the Translating Europe Forum and Workshops to encourage dialogue and collaboration with and between the different stakeholders in the translation field. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Interpretation (SCIC) and the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (DG INTE) also work closely with universities to help students of conference interpreting become professional conference interpreters by funding activities such as on-site and virtual training assistance, digital resources, grants and bursaries for universities and students, and an annual conference that brings together universities, national governments and European and International Institutions to discuss issues regarding the future of the profession.

The European Commission has also been working since 2010 on a new machine translation system called MT@EC which allows all EU institutions and agencies (not only translators but also regular members of staff) as well as national public administrations in EU Member States to obtain fairly accurate machine translations in a total of 552 language pairs covering all of the EU official languages. This new system is a key development since it enables multilingualism across European public services.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

Considering the wide-ranging sources of EU funding for the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity, it might be useful to provide a document which briefly describes all the funding opportunities for language-related activities from across all existing EU funding programmes.

Question 3 argues that current mainstream EU funding is favouring the acquisition of bigger EU languages, and questions whether this trend should be maintained or rather reviewed, and in which ways. Analysis of a wide range of resources and documents indicates that there does not seem to exist evidence to support the first claim. On the contrary, linguistic diversity keeps being recognised as one of the most valued assets of the EU, and the institutions seem fully committed to supporting the learning and teaching of a wide variety of languages.

Erasmus+, the current main funding mechanism for education, offers an Online Linguistic Support (OLS) with language assessment and learning materials for students going on mobility programmes. The OLS is already available in Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish, with the ambition to progressively include all the EU official languages by 2020. Students going to countries with languages not covered by the OLS can still receive additional funding for linguistic support on the language of the mobility. Also within Erasmus+, Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships offers opportunities for projects for the promotion of all languages, including regional and minority languages (RMLs). At a higher level, the *Study on comparability of language testing in Europe* included all the foreign languages studied by more than 10% of the students in secondary education in each Member State, which led to the analysis of exams of “smaller” languages such as Dutch and Swedish. There is also a substantial amount of funding devoted to translation initiatives, including the new machine translation system MT@EC, which has become an essential tool to promote multilingualism across Member States by facilitating the quick and cost-effective understanding of EU documents across all EU official languages.

The role of English as the global lingua franca is also an important consideration in any discussion about multilingualism in Europe. English has become a basic skill internationally and the most popular first foreign language across Europe and beyond. This needs to be acknowledged in policy making; however, while English is necessary within the linguistic mix, it is not sufficient for successful communication in a globalised world. Studies show that other languages also have an important role to play in social integration and employability, especially in light of the recent migration crisis and with the recurrent need of learning additional languages across the lifespan. The patterns observed are, however, very different across Europe, and this calls for careful consideration of the local contexts rather than the application of EU-level policies without regard for the complexity of national or regional settings.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

EU and national policies on multilingualism and linguistic diversity should acknowledge the new role of English as the lingua franca for international communication in Europe and beyond. However, these policies also need to highlight that English on its own is not sufficient for social integration, employability and successful communication in a globalised world. Policies should accept the complexity of this issue and encourage actions targeted to each specific context at a national or regional level.

The EU currently has 24 official languages plus more than 60 indigenous minority or regional languages which are spoken by over 40 million citizens. Additionally, Europe counts on an increasing number of languages spoken by migrant groups across different EU Member States. These languages have not traditionally been given much consideration when discussing linguistic diversity in Europe.

In light of this, the current relevance of the “mother tongue +2” goal needs to be questioned, especially if it is understood as solely including EU official languages (although

this was not explicitly stated in the 2002 Barcelona Conclusions). Language skills remain unevenly spread across countries and social groups. Furthermore, in many parts of the EU the range of languages spoken remains limited. However, in other areas, especially in cities and urban areas, there can be a very wide range of language communities with diverse patterns of usage reflecting social realities that have emerged over the past 20 years. While English is now ubiquitous as the international lingua franca and the preferred foreign language in schooling, the variety of home languages, heritage/community languages and non-European languages of wider communication may coexist in many different configurations. In some countries or regions, this is also reflected in the school curriculum with possibilities to learn languages such as Chinese, rather than the traditional “big” European languages.

Over the past 25 years, the notion of multilingualism has evolved and the reality of language learning and use within a globalised world has become more complex. The “mother tongue+2” goal would need to be reconsidered and maybe a new interpretation needs to be agreed upon which takes into account the varied linguistic profiles of a considerable percentage of the current European population. The concept of *linguistic repertoires* may be more relevant in the current context of increasing linguistic diversity. People may not have an advanced proficiency in two foreign languages, but rather know several languages at differing levels of proficiency depending on the skill, the domain and the purpose of the communicative act.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

In light of recent patterns of mobility and migration, a wider range of languages should be considered as part of the linguistic repertoires of European citizens beyond the 24 EU official languages. These languages should also be incorporated into current and future policies for the promotion of multilingualism.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

The “mother tongue+2” goal should be reconceptualised in light of the new linguistic reality in Europe. Ideally, it should go beyond the 24 official EU languages and acknowledge the role of many other languages which are currently being used across the EU. It should also move away from the idea of advanced proficiency in two foreign languages; instead, European citizens could be encouraged to develop rich linguistic repertoires in which different languages could be known to different levels of proficiency and for different purposes and contexts across their lifespan.

Questions 4 and 5 both relate to how EU funding could better meet the needs of their intended recipients, promoting multilingualism at regional level and reaching all potential stakeholders in society, such as schools, language training centres, local communities and employers. Current EU funding mechanisms have been redefined on the basis of the lessons learnt from previous funding programmes, and have been built around the political and financial priorities set for the EU over the current years. The instructions provided for each of these funding programmes are extremely comprehensive, with extensive references to relevant policy documents and indications on how to apply and secure the funding. Current funding sources offer opportunities for citizens at all levels of society, from school students and teachers to university staff, migrants, workers and companies. Some of these programmes also offer support for multilingualism at a regional level. Such is the case of the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Strategic Partnerships, which welcomes projects involving regional and minority languages (RMLs), and of the Europe for Citizens funding programme, offering support for projects which may exploit languages for European citizenship and democratic participation at EU level.

As a result of the wider reach of EU funding, competition to secure these opportunities has increased over the past decades. This has led to application forms and procedures becoming longer and more complex to ensure that the funding is only allocated to the best project proposals. As a result, many universities and organisations across Europe have appointed specific members of their teams who specialise in preparing proposals for these programmes, increasing therefore their chances of obtaining EU funding. Smaller organisations and schools, on the other hand, can only rely on their regular staff (mainly teachers and administrative personnel) to complete the application process, which seems to prove difficult alongside their other professional commitments. However, this issue varies very much across different regions and sectors, and would be better handled by national authorities who would have a better visibility and understanding of the problems faced in each context.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Member States are encouraged to provide mechanisms to allow smaller organisations and schools which are not currently able to benefit from EU funding to access these opportunities. Taking into consideration their specific cultural and socio-economic context, these mechanisms should ideally raise awareness about the funding opportunities available to these organisations, support them through the stages of securing initial funding, and empower their staff to develop the skills needed to independently access the relevant EU funding programmes in the future.

In conclusion, the role of the European Commission in the field of education is to facilitate cooperation among Member States and to provide policy guidance on common issues. In regards to languages, there is abundant evidence that shows how the European Commission has accomplished this task in a collaborative and efficient manner, working closely with Member States and adapting tools and financial resources to the needs discussed with them. However, implementation of any language policy lies ultimately with national governments, and the European Commission does not have jurisdiction to interfere with these actions.

The European Strategy for Multilingualism has been a useful tool and seems to have driven activities in the field of language learning and linguistic diversity over the past few years. However, this strategy may now need to be reviewed, together with the “mother tongue +2”, to better address the new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since 2008. Such a review should ideally take into consideration the new context created by the increasing migration flows, as well as the suggestions by the European Commission at the EDL event in Brussels in 2015, which encouraged raising the standards of language education systems across Member States.

Technology could become instrumental for this purpose, enabling much more efficient learning and assessment outside of the traditional classroom setting. Learning needs to be also embedded within language-friendly environments where skills in any foreign languages are recognised as an advantage, regardless of whether these are EU languages or not.

The review of initiatives and projects which have been done as a follow-up to the European Strategy on Multilingualism is impressive. It is now important to ensure the effective continuation and dissemination of the extensive work that has already been undertaken in the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. However, this further work should be planned and implemented taking full consideration of the new linguistic reality in Europe. In order to achieve this, the European Commission needs to remain empowered both politically and financially to keep coordinating relevant activities with Member States

and working together towards the successful implementation at national level of current and future EU-level language policies.

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