



Observatoire Européen du Plurilinguisme

– Assises Européennes du Plurilinguisme –



Final general communiqué

Communiqué for the topic « Education »

Communiqué for the topic “Politics”

Communiqué for the topic “Culture”

Communiqué for the topic “Economy and society”

Final general communiqué

The 4th European Conference on Plurilingualism took place in Brussels at the European Economic and Social Committee on 18 and 19 May 2016 around the general topic “Plurilingualism and creativity”.

Whatever the trend to standardise communication by means of a single language, the world is multilingual and the benefits of plurilingualism are unique in the cognitive, relational, social and economic fields.

The dominant theme of the Conference was creativity, not only because creativity is intrinsically linked to language, but also because it is through “creativity” that we can meet the many challenges posed by diversity in the political, economical and social, educational and cultural fields.

From this perspective the linguistic issues have thus been examined in the institutions and political systems, and in the educational, economical and cultural fields. In these four thematic areas, the Conference has identified key ideas leading to as many recommendations intended for the European authorities and the rulers of the member States, and more generally to the civil society actors.

On the political level, there is no democracy if the populations cannot be addressed in their own language : this is a fundamental responsibility of the rulers and primarily of the European institutions.

On the cultural level, monolingualism kills cultures and oppresses individuals, whereas plurilingualism is a source of enrichment and progress.

On the economical level, plurilingualism is a reservoir of productivity and long-term development and on the social level, plurilingualism gives meaning and favours dialogue and mutual understanding.

On the education level, plurilingualism is the basis guaranteeing long-term cohesion of Europe and allowing the citizens personal and relational fulfilment.

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These ideas need to be translated into concrete steps :

Education

1. Prefer plurilingual and cross-cultural education so as to reinforce the ability to learn languages throughout life.
2. Revive the model 1+2 (2 languages besides the teaching language) adopted in 2002 at the Barcelona European Council to improve the language proficiency of Europeans.
3. Apply the model 1+2 from nursery school to further education.
4. Diversify the teaching of languages by learning at school a language other than English or by promoting two foreign languages in primary school.
5. Oppose an unrestrained counter-productive anglicisation in higher education, and develop in universities plurilingualism which is the only way to guarantee the development of the diversity of cultures, the respect of differences and democracy.
6. Make it impossible for English to replace the local language in higher education, research and scientific publications. If other languages are used, it should be in a plurilingual context excluding the hegemony of a single language.
7. Act with the scientific institutions so that plurilingualism is taken into account as a strategy.

Politics

8. Better explain the negative consequences of monolingualism (and the benefits of plurilingualism) on the political and social levels.
9. Diversify the actual use of languages in the European Commission and all the European institutions and their agencies.
10. Choose integral multilingualism on the platform europa.eu (website of the European institutions) and make it a communication tool with citizens.
11. Encourage cooperation between linguistic areas in Europe to elaborate strategies so as to protect and promote linguistic diversity at an international level.
12. Outline language policies in Europe in the double dimension of a right to the language of the welcoming country and the learning of the languages of migrants.
13. Develop a sectoral policy to support media for a plurilingual technological innovation on the internet.

Culture

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14. Create a prize for non-European authors (writers, scientists or translators) who have made a major contribution to European culture.
15. Allow the European publishers to receive special grants for translation (between European languages or to a European language).
16. Support the publication of bilingual translations because they respect plurilingualism and help learning.

Economy and society

17. Reinforce the idea that languages are a central factor of efficiency in international management.
18. Enlarge the linguistic, cultural and managerial dimension to all the management trainings.
19. Act with certification bodies to include the linguistic, cultural and managerial dimensions in the training frameworks.
20. Support a plurilingual view in all the managerial trainings including the engineering trainings.

Communiqué for « Education » Plurilingualism in education

The issue of languages is crucial in the field of education and research because the decisions taken today will have mid-term and long-term structuring effects in two of the key sectors of our modern globalised societies, namely the future of their youth and the production of knowledge necessary to their cultural and economical development. Yet it must be noted that nowadays linguistic policies are implemented in the educational system, from nursery school to higher education, without any real reflection, generally in the direction of an hegemony of English. It is therefore urgent to take stock of the current situation and to think about what kind of future we wish. The European Conference on Plurilingualism wishes to contribute to this debate and more particularly its second topic “Education, higher education and research”.

This topic has been divided into five round tables.

The first round table, entitled “*Taking into account language and cultural plurality in education and training*”, showed by the contributions of many researchers practising at all levels that the great variety of languages and cultures present in the European educational structures cannot be ignored and that it is important to acknowledge and value it so as to make it an asset for the pupils’ school success, and thus for their future social success. The gain would not be individual only but also social, it would reinforce the ties within Europe. **This is why the European Conference on Plurilingualism wishes that the diversity of languages be taken into account within the educational system.**

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For the linguistic diversification to become real, it should be integrated into the educational pathways proposed by the European educational systems and into teachers' trainings. **The Conference is in favour of a pathway that would include several languages as early as primary schools, with continued learning into secondary school and higher education.**

But how can “*Plurilingualism in training*” become a reality ?” This was the topic of the third round table. Several approaches are possible, from classical teaching of language awareness to cross-cultural learning at school or outside school, to online courses or cross-comprehension techniques that rely on previous knowledge in one language to learn others of the same linguistic family, for example the Romance, Slavonic or Germanic languages. **The Conference is in favour of a diversity of educational approaches in the learning of languages.**

Plurilingualism is an extremely important issue in the building and transmission of knowledge, particularly in the context of “*the globalisation of higher education*” which was the topic of the fourth round table. Restricting international teaching to one or two languages means a great impoverishment in the acquisition and production of knowledge. Rather than promoting monolingual English, it would be best to strengthen the existing international languages and to allow other languages to acquire this international status. **The Conference is in favour of plurilingualism in higher education and research, the only way to guarantee the development of the diversity of cultures, the respect of differences and democracy.**

Then there is the major issue of the “*linguistic policies of universities*”, the topic of the fifth round table. Until now, these policies have depended more on fashion trends than on serious reflection. Many European universities have succeeded in implementing a rich and diversified linguistic policy but difficulties are numerous, at once institutional, administrative, educational and ideological. The necessity to teach and do some research first in the local language must be asserted, so as to maintain the richness and thus the attractivity, then in a variety of languages because scientific creativity is narrowly linked to plurilingualism. English can play the role of a *lingua franca*, but should not be allowed to replace other languages in higher education and research. **The European Conference on Plurilingualism believes that the time has come to create a legal framework that could structure language policies in universities.**

Propositions :

1. Prefer plurilingual and intercultural education so as to reinforce the ability to learn languages throughout life.
2. Revive the model 1+2 (2 languages besides the teaching language) adopted in 2002 at the Barcelona European Council to improve the language proficiency of Europeans.
3. Apply the model 1+2 from nursery school to further education.
4. Diversify the teaching of languages by learning at school a language other than English or by promoting two foreign languages in primary school.



5. Oppose an unrestrained counter-productive anglicisation in higher education, and develop in universities plurilingualism which is the only way to guarantee the development of the diversity of cultures, the respect of differences and democracy.
6. Make it impossible for English to replace the local language in higher education, research and scientific publications. If other languages are used, it should in a plurilingual context excluding the hegemony of a single language.
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Communiqué for « Politics »

Political and institutional plurilingualism and the issue of citizenship

There is a myth according to which the institutions work in all the official languages of Europe, if not mainly in three languages (German, English and French) or in French only (at the European Court of Justice). In reality, the institutions of the European Union work more and more almost exclusively in English. The same applies for most projects financed by the EU where consultants whose mother tongue is not English have to work in English in a non English-speaking country. However, research shows that only a small minority of Europeans have a good knowledge of English. So it is necessary to reconcile the institutions of the European Union with the European citizens and to find solutions reflecting a multilingualism or at least a tri- or pentalingualism. One of the solutions could be to allow the European civil servants or consultants, writers or discussion partners, to write and express themselves in their mother tongue then be translated into two of the three traditional working languages of the European Commission. Another would be a tri- or pentalingualism (German, English and French, or German, English, French, Spanish and Italian) within the European Commission. Indeed, a statistical analysis presupposing that each civil servant masters two or three of the above mentioned languages shows that one or other of these options could to a certain extent function without a translator in work groups of a limited number of persons. What is needed to achieve these objectives is that the political decision-makers and high civil servants be convinced of the virtues underlying multilingualism, such as work quality, the interest of Europe and the cost of monolingualism, very difficult to evaluate.

The existence in Europe of more or less large linguistic areas among which some, for historic reasons, have pushed their limits well beyond the European continent, allow us to be optimistic about the future of plurilingualism. Indeed collaboration between these different areas could turn out to be very interesting and efficient to promote linguistic diversity not only in the European context but also at the world level, especially in fields that cannot be abandoned to a single language as the scientific and technical fields. Besides the development of innovating and plurilingual media, particularly on the internet, could widely contribute to this promotion of linguistic diversity in Europe and in the world.

Propositions :

8. Better explain the negative consequences of monolingualism (and the benefits of plurilingualism) on the political and social levels.

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Communiqué for « Culture »

Europe is not only an economic power, it also has a special cultural influence : its languages such as French, Spanish or English are spoken by hundreds of thousands outside Europe.

The round table “*Cultural ecology and creativity*” has discussed the issue of linguistic and ethno-linguistic diversity in Italy. The aim is to enhance the local linguistic and environmental identities with the creation of a national network of linguistic minorities who propose tourist tours and specialised agri-tourism.

Europe must recover its diversity, after the national constructions of the 19th century that tried to reduce it in favour of “dominant” languages.

The first two round tables discussed literary creation from the angle of multilingualism and of course translation. This means not only a help to creation, but also creativity on the part of the literary translators.

The literary space has always been multilingual. So plurilingualism in literature is not limited to openly plurilingual work : all of them more or less are. They contribute thus to the edification of a world literature.

As for translation, it contributes to this world literature and very often on the initiative of translators. As contact between languages is universal, translation is at the bottom of any comparison between languages and any claim to their equal dignity.

Of course, the creators have had their say, in different languages : Frédéric Dumont’s *Glossolalie* was presented as a cultural show as well as a concert by singers who were Armenian, Italian and Spanish.

Propositions :

14. Create a prize for non-European authors (writers, scientists or translators) who have made a major contribution to European culture.

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Communiqué for « Economy and society »

We are facing a paradox.

If the need for an international language in business cannot be contested, many surveys confirm that this need is far from limited to English. Other international languages exist and have a real economical role. Local languages and the “the neighbour’s language” also have their economical role and cannot be ignored by the companies.

The paradox lies in that, though this need of languages is widely known, it is generally ignored in the managerial and engineering trainings, both as a subject to be taught, language teaching being too often restricted to English only, and ignored as an integral part of management.

Hence the following propositions :

17. Reinforce the idea that languages are a central factor of efficiency in international management.
18. Enlarge the linguistic, cultural and managerial dimension to all the management trainings.
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