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PART 1/2

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**  
*Accompanying the document*

**Proposal for a Council Recommendation**

**on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages**

{COM(2018) 272 final}

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Challenges and opportunities for education and training systems in teaching languages.....	6
2.1 Language competences in the Union.....	6
2.2 Language teaching and learning in compulsory education and before .....	8
2.3 Increasing diversity in European schools .....	10
2.4 Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes .....	11
3. Results from the stakeholder consultation .....	13
4. Language awareness in schools.....	15
4.1 Multilingualism in schools and recognition of prior knowledge.....	15
4.2 The language learning continuum .....	17
4.3 A whole school approach to learning languages .....	19
4.4 Diversity of the language uptake in schools .....	23
5. Rethinking language teaching and learning – breaking down the silos of language learning .....	24
5.1 Language competence as a transversal element across the curricula .....	24
5.2 Bilingual models in education .....	25
5.3 Efficient and innovative teaching practices / pedagogies.....	27
5.4 Digital tools and language learning .....	30
6 Supporting teaching staff for a comprehensive language approach.....	33
6.1 Linguistic-sensitive teaching .....	33
6.2 Teacher education.....	34
6.3 Mobility for increased language competence and intercultural awareness .....	35
7. Monitoring.....	37
7.1 Key Data on Language Learning in Europe .....	37
7.2 The European Survey on Language Competences .....	37
7.3 Comparability between national language tests .....	38
7.4 International assessment, evaluation and comparison .....	39

## 1. Introduction

In the European Council Conclusions of 14 December 2017, Heads of State and Government reiterated the ambition of "*enhancing the learning of languages, so that more young people will speak at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue.*"

Language competences are indispensable for mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding across borders. Furthermore, the co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the European Union's aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project. Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared inheritance.

The European Union has long promoted language learning across Europe. In March 2002, the Barcelona European Council linked this aspiration to the need to create "a competitive economy based on knowledge" and pleaded for further action "to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching of at least two foreign languages from a very early age"<sup>1</sup>.

The arguments supporting ambitious education policies with regard to foreign languages are plentiful and have been laid down in various Commission policy documents<sup>2</sup>:

- For individuals, learning languages creates personal and professional opportunities, especially as EU citizenship guarantees freedom of movement.
- For society, it fosters cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion.
- For companies, workers with language and intercultural competences are a vital resource for helping businesses succeed and grow in global markets.

Nevertheless, the provision of opportunities to learn foreign languages has not automatically led to better linguistic competences. The European Survey on Language Competences (2012)<sup>3</sup>, which provided the first-ever European scale comparison of the foreign language proficiency of pupils in secondary education, revealed, on average, a low level of competence. Only 42% of the tested pupils overall reached the level of independent user in the first foreign language, and merely a quarter of pupils did so in the second foreign language. This means that after several years of studying a language in school, a majority of young Europeans cannot have a simple conversation in the languages they have studied.

Latest data<sup>4</sup> also show that:

- 97% of all young Europeans study English as a first foreign language;
- learning a second language is not compulsory in all countries;
- foreign languages other than EN, FR, DE or ES are rarely studied;
- VET students learn fewer foreign languages than their counterparts in general education.

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<sup>1</sup> Presidency conclusions, Barcelona European Council, 15-16 March 2002: [http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download\\_en/barcelona\\_european\\_council.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/barcelona_european_council.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Commission Communication on 'Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment', COM(2008) 566 final: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0566:FIN:EN:PDF> ; Language competences for employability, mobility and growth, SWD(2012)372: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012SC0372&from=EN>

<sup>3</sup> The European Survey on Language Competences was conducted in 2011. Its findings were published in June 2012. [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/executive-summary-eslc\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/executive-summary-eslc_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> European Commission/Eurydice (2017), Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL\\_2017\\_internet.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf)

A more ambitious approach is needed to actually enhance language competence among young people. In May 2014, Council conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences<sup>5</sup> highlighted that the level of language skills of many young people in Europe could be improved and that, despite some progress in recent decades, there is still considerable variation across countries in terms of access to language learning. Furthermore, the Commission communication on "School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life" in 2017<sup>6</sup> encourages schools to embrace linguistic and cultural diversity across their school population as this orientation has a positive effect on all children's ability to learn.

Based on existing experiences, key elements for change have been identified:

- To improve language competences, focus needs to be on learning outcomes. Attention should move from the mere provision of language teaching and learning, to assessing how competent young people are to use their language competences in practice.
- Schools will benefit from broadening the scope of their language teaching. The first foreign language of pupils in Europe is usually English. With Europe being a multilingual continent, learning additional European languages is important. At the same time, schools need to be aware of the linguistic diversity in their pupil population, offering them opportunities to create language-rich learning environments where multilingualism can flourish and the language of schooling can be adequately supported.

This Staff Working Document complements the Council Recommendation "A comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning" which highlights the development of language-aware schools as part of a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning.

Language aware schools:

- have a positive attitude towards linguistic diversity and language learning;
- know which languages are present in their school even if these languages are not part of the curricula;
- integrate language learning across the curriculum and support children's entire linguistic repertoire;
- support pupil mobility and use digital tools to their full potential to enhance language learning and boost motivation;
- support teachers of other subjects than modern languages to gain language awareness and knowledge about language didactics.

This Staff Working Document provides relevant evidence concerning this approach and points to further sources of information. Where possible it presents existing good practice examples. It is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the challenges and opportunities in language teaching and learning today;
- Chapter 3 provides a short overview of the results of the public consultation on the proposed recommendation;

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<sup>5</sup> Council Conclusions of 20 May 2014: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9513-2014-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Commission Communication on School development and excellent teaching for a great start in life, COM/2017/0248 final: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2017%3A248%3AFIN>

- Chapter 4 presents the concept of language awareness in schools and showcases first experiences with some of its principles;
- Chapter 5 looks at better ways to integrate language learning into the curriculum, breaking down the silos;
- Chapter 6 focuses on the necessary support for teachers and trainers;
- Chapter 7 addresses the crucial question of monitoring and sets out some options for further work in this area.

**Glossary** established by the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages:

***First language:*** language variety (-ies) acquired in early childhood (approximately before the age of two or three years) in which the human language faculty was first acquired. This term is preferred to *mother tongue*, which is often inaccurate as the first language is not necessarily that of the mother alone.

***Linguistic repertoire*** (or *language repertoire*, or *plurilingual repertoire*): group of language varieties (first language, regional language, languages learned at school or in visits abroad), mastered by the same speaker, to different degrees of proficiency and for different uses. This individual repertoire changes over the course of an individual's lifespan (acquisition of new languages, "forgetting" languages learned).

***Multilingual*** (see also *plurilingual*): used to describe the situation in a geographical area where several language varieties are employed; speakers in this geographical area may not be proficient in each of the different varieties represented.

***Plurilingual*** (*competence*): capacity to successively acquire and use different competences in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions. The central purpose of plurilingual education is to develop this competence.

***Plurilingual education:*** manner of teaching, not necessarily restricted to language teaching, which aims to raise awareness of each individual's language *repertoire*, to emphasise its worth and to extend this repertoire by teaching lesser used or unfamiliar languages. Plurilingual education also aims to increase understanding of the social and cultural value of *linguistic diversity* in order to ensure *linguistic goodwill* and to develop *intercultural competence*.

This Glossary is available on the Conbat+ Project Website:  
<http://conbat.ecml.at/Resources/Glossary/tabid/266/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

NB: The European Union has opted to extend the term *multilingual* to cover also

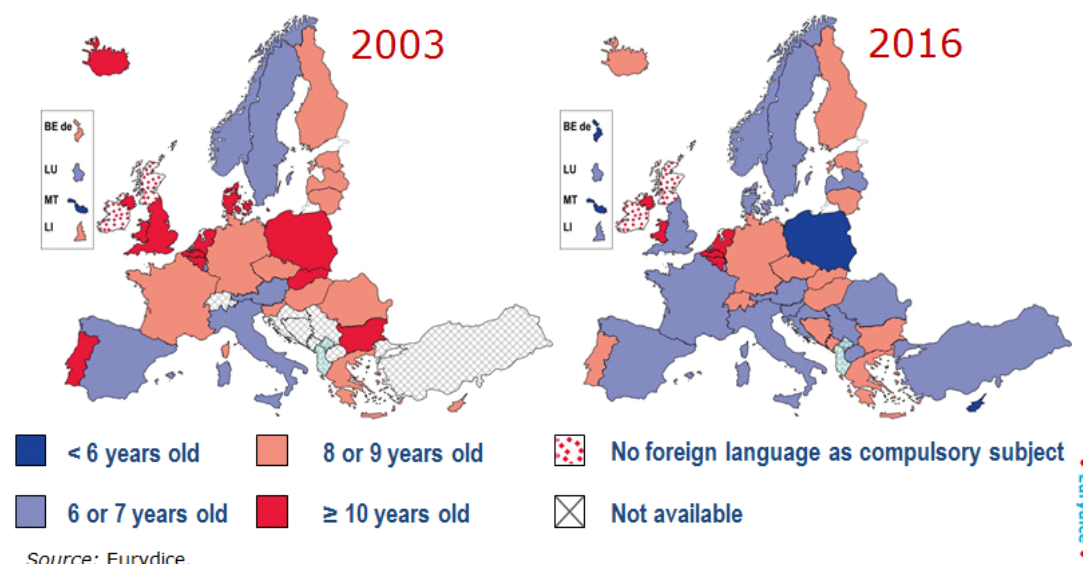
## 2. Challenges and opportunities for education and training systems in teaching languages

### 2.1 Language competences in the Union

Public opinion supports EU policies in the field of language learning, as confirmed by the most recent opinion poll, the 2012 Eurobarometer: 77% of respondents believe that “improving language skills should be a policy priority” and 72% agree that “everyone in the EU should be able to speak more than one language in addition to their mother tongue<sup>7</sup>.” More than eight out of ten respondents consider that languages could be useful for themselves and almost all agree that they might be useful for the future of their children.

The 2017 edition of the Eurydice Key Data on teaching languages in school in Europe<sup>8</sup> looked at the provision of language learning in Europe. It becomes obvious that the position of the second foreign language within the curriculum is still rather weak in many countries. According to this Eurydice study, the starting age for the first foreign language, which is English apart from very few exceptions, has gone down considerably over the past 15 years and most primary school children now begin learning English before the age of 8.

### Earlier starting age (1st foreign language)



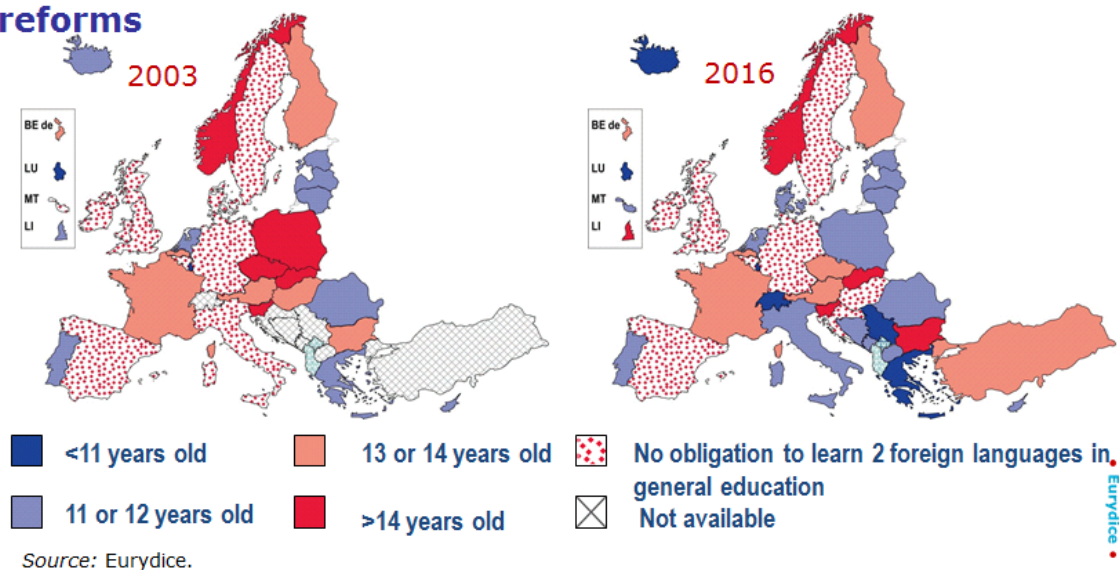
The picture is more varied for the second foreign language taught in school. Some countries have introduced a compulsory second foreign language at primary or lower secondary level, but with the possibility to drop it after 1-3 years. Other countries have dropped the second foreign language as a compulsory subject, although it is still an entitlement. This situation is found in all grades of lower secondary education in Spain, Croatia, Slovenia, Sweden and Norway. Statistics show that, in Spain, Croatia and Slovenia, about half of the students in lower secondary education study two foreign languages. In Sweden and Norway, this percentage amounts to 77.9 % and 71.9 % respectively. More detailed data derived from the

<sup>7</sup> Europeans and their languages – special Eurobarometer report summary 2012: [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_386\\_sum\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_sum_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> European Commission/Eurydice (2017), Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL\\_2017\\_internet.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf)

Eurydice Key Data report on Teaching Languages at School is displayed and explained in the Annex to this Staff Working Document.

## Starting age of the 2nd foreign language: less significant reforms



Even if a second foreign language has been added at lower secondary level, the number of students carrying it over to upper secondary level and including it in their school leaving certificate is in decline, with the effect that there is a decrease in demand for languages at university level, which leads to a lack of qualified teachers of foreign languages. This vicious circle jeopardising language teaching and learning has been reported from several Member States since the latest Key Data report was published and this tendency is on the rise.

The only European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) that has been carried out so far revealed a low level of competence in foreign languages. Only 42% of tested pupils reached the level of ‘independent user’<sup>9</sup> in the first foreign language, and merely a quarter of pupils did so in the second foreign language. This means that after several years of studying at school, the majority of young Europeans are not able to have a simple conversation in the foreign languages they have learned<sup>10</sup>. An additional source of concern is that a considerable percentage of pupils—14% for the first language and 20% for the second—do not even reach the ‘basic user’ level.

The picture emerging from the 2012 Eurobarometer survey, polling the entire EU population, confirms the findings of the ESLC. Almost half of respondents (46%) declare themselves unable to hold a conversation in any language other than their mother tongue, and only one quarter (25%) say that they can hold a conversation in at least two foreign languages.

<sup>9</sup> Levels B1 and B2 of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

<sup>10</sup> In the CEFR, the broad B-level is designated as the level of ‘independent user’, and the broad A-level as the level of ‘basic user’. The former includes the levels B1 and B2. B1 level denotes ‘an independent language user who can deal with straightforward, familiar matters.’ B2 level refers to ‘an independent language user who can express him/herself clearly and effectively.’ The broad A-level includes A1 (‘a basic user who can use very simple language, with support’) and A2 (‘A basic user who can use simple language to communicate on everyday topics’).



Regarding differences between Member States, less than 40% of Eurobarometer respondents in Hungary, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Ireland can hold a conversation in a foreign language, whereas more than 90% can do so in Luxembourg, Latvia, the Netherlands, Malta, Slovenia, Lithuania and Sweden.

Some promising signs of improvement are visible, since the percentage of 15-24 year olds who consider themselves able to hold a conversation in two languages in addition to their mother tongue is more than double the percentage for the ‘over 55’ age group (37% against 17%). Therefore, the generational trends are certainly encouraging.

Yet, it is clear that a significant effort is needed to improve this situation. In spite of the important efforts made by the Member States during the last decade, progress in the field of language teaching and learning has been fairly slow.

## 2.2 Language teaching and learning in compulsory education and before

Pre-school education in general has been the object of increased attention in recent years: with the aim of unlocking children’s potential, in 2009 the EU Education Ministers set a target that by 2020 at least 95 % of children aged between four and the age in which compulsory primary education starts should participate in early childhood education.<sup>11</sup>

In parallel with the work towards this EU benchmark the Commission and the Member States have developed a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care<sup>12</sup>. The Framework emphasises the importance of a scientifically developed and adapted curriculum for the very early years, which lays the foundation for literacy and language development, often catering for more than one language.

In this context and reflecting the call from the EU Heads of State and Government in 2002 to supply language teaching “from a very early age”, there has also been an increasing interest in early language learning, or creating language awareness among children at pre-school level. Regional and local initiatives have partly been linked to a stimulation of demand by parents who realise that with increasing globalisation the acquisition of languages other than their first language/mother tongue opens their children’s minds and is an asset for their future social and working life. It is also partly a response on the part of mainstream education systems faced with the increasingly challenging task of integrating non-native speakers. Some border regions have promoted initiatives to open up for early introduction to the language of the neighbour country. Reconciling general interest with a wide variety of situations and needs not only raises issues regarding the place of early language learning in the broader education context and strategy, but creates challenges in terms of available opportunities and resources — both in quantitative and qualitative terms — and equitable access. A European Commission-led thematic Working Group developed a policy handbook in 2011, looking at the fundamental challenges and opportunities for language awareness and language learning

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<sup>11</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (‘ET 2020’) (2009/C 119/02), <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:EN:PDF>

<sup>12</sup> European Commission (2014), Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care: Key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf)

in early childhood education and care and presenting a selection of proven good practices at national level<sup>13</sup>.

From 2011 to 2014, the subsequent thematic Working Group on languages in education and training conducted a Country Comparative Analysis<sup>14</sup>, seeking to identify the main challenges in language teaching and learning, which make it difficult for Member States to reach their targets as well as the indicators defined at European level.

The analysis was built on a questionnaire, which provided a comprehensive overview of all available data sources, international, pan-European and EU-wide, checked and completed by Member States authorities. The report analyses the challenges for language teaching and learning in a country-specific context.

The three main challenges, as identified in the report, are the following:

- achieving competency levels of B1 and above, which will be of value in mobility and employment;
- maintaining and building language competences in upper secondary education, when language learning is less likely to be compulsory; and
- a more efficient learning of languages within the curriculum time available.

The analysis shows that some countries have to do better in terms of provision of second foreign language teaching, and most countries have to do more in terms of improving outcomes. Providing language teaching from an earlier age has a positive effect on competences at the end of primary education, provided that teaching and learning is effective.

While many countries have policies and programmes which have been addressing the availability of language learning, other challenges have had less attention, such as: a) drop-out rates in learning languages in secondary education, b) language learning in vocational pathways, c) the more efficient learning of languages within the curriculum time available, and d) raising ambitions without increasing curriculum time. These appear to be key challenges along with the challenge of measuring the impact of policies and initiatives to raise language competences.

The shortage of teachers in some subjects, including modern foreign languages, is mentioned as a challenge in more than half of the European education systems<sup>15</sup> and several Member States have introduced reforms or incentives to tackle shortages of language teachers. These can include scholarships to attract language graduates with other professional experience into teaching or reformed teacher education programmes.

Following the comparative analysis, the Working Group on languages in education and training elaborated a report on how to improve the effectiveness of language learning<sup>16</sup>. The report focused on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and the use of digital tools, whereby both concepts were enlarged to cover a wide spectrum of teaching methods

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<sup>13</sup> European Commission Staff Working Paper (2011): Language learning at pre-primary school level: making it efficient and sustainable, a Policy Handbook, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/early-language-learning-handbook\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/policy/language-policy/documents/early-language-learning-handbook_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> European Commission (2014) - Comparative analysis of languages in education and training, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/lang-eat\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/lang-eat_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice (2018) Teaching careers in Europe: Access, progression and support, [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/news/new-eurydice-publication-teaching-careers-in-europe-access-progression-and-support\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/news/new-eurydice-publication-teaching-careers-in-europe-access-progression-and-support_en)

<sup>16</sup> European Commission (2014) - Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and Computer assisted language learning, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/clil-call\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/clil-call_en.pdf)

and tools. These concepts are used in many schools throughout Europe nowadays, but far from being mainstreamed.

### 2.3 Increasing diversity in European schools

The increased mobility between EU countries and the rising number of third country migrants and refugees coming to the EU in recent years have contributed to greater (linguistic) diversity in European classrooms.

The Commission supports EU Member States in integrating newly arrived migrants through its Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals. The Action Plan states that education and training should be seen as “*the most powerful tools for integration*”<sup>17</sup>, and that actions should be aimed at removing all barriers for the full participation of pupils with a migrant background. One of the most important barriers for the successful integration of migrants into education and training is their language competence<sup>18</sup>.

Multilingual schools are not a new feature of Europe's diverse and complex linguistic landscape. They operate in many different contexts: international schools for expat communities; schools providing instruction in regional, minority or indigenous languages; or schools having opted for a degree of bilingual education, where another language is partly used for instruction, common for example in border regions and more recently often with the objective of teaching English.

Increasingly, the focus has been shifting towards schools welcoming large numbers of newcomers who arrive as immigrants or refugees. This category of multilingual schools and classrooms are places where learners have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, where they speak one language at home and another language at school, where teachers and pupils do not share a common language or cultural background, where some or all of the pupils are learning the language of schooling as a second language.

On 1 January 2016, the EU's population was estimated at 510.3 million. At that point, the share of young people aged 0 to 14 years old made up 15.6% of the EU-28's population<sup>19</sup>. According to data from the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015, more than one in ten 15-year-olds in European schools are first and second-generation migrants – with first-generation migrants representing a share of 4.8% of the PISA student cohort, and second-generation migrants (i.e. students who were born in the country of assessment with both parents being foreign-born) a share of 6.5%<sup>20</sup>.

The very same PISA 2015 data reveal that an average of around one in ten (9%) of 15-year old learners speak a different language at home than the language of schooling across EU

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<sup>17</sup>Commission Communication on an Action Plan for the Integration of third country nationals, COM(2016) 377: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> European Commission (2017) - Joint Working Group seminar on the integration of migrants, Brussels, 28 March 2017: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/2017-report-migrant-integration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/2017-report-migrant-integration_en.pdf)

<sup>19</sup>Eurostat statistics explained: Population structure and ageing, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population\\_structure\\_and\\_ageing](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing)

<sup>20</sup> European Commission (2016) - Pisa 2015: EU performance and initial conclusions regarding education policies in Europe, [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/pisa-2015-eu-policy-note\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/pisa-2015-eu-policy-note_en.pdf)

Member States<sup>21</sup>. There are, however, large differences between Member States; in Poland (0.9%) and Hungary (1.8%), less than two in every one hundred pupils speak a different language at home, while between 10% and 22% of pupils do so in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Cyprus, Austria and Sweden.

In societies where the share of young people is decreasing rapidly – in 2014, the share of 15-year-olds accounted for 15.6% of the total EU population, down from 18.6% in 1994<sup>22</sup> – and diversity is only expected to increase, it has become more important than ever to tap into the potential of migrants to prepare for the skill needs of tomorrow. This can be done by investing in language support measures for newly arrived migrant pupils today, to increase their opportunities to access and succeed in mainstream education.

The Eurydice Key Data on language teaching at school in Europe has looked at the provision of language support measures for newly arrived migrants in school. The Eurydice Brief based on the Key Data<sup>23</sup> concludes that this increasing level of school multilingualism brings new challenges while at the same time reinforcing more long-lasting ones, namely the issues of diversity and inclusiveness. However, the report also recalls that the existence of schools with diverse linguistic competences provides opportunities to reflect on education policies.

## 2.4 Mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes

The mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes was submitted by the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 31 January 2018<sup>24</sup>. The results of the evaluation will be used to feed into the impact assessment for the successor Erasmus+ programme and to improve the implementation of the current programme until 2020.

The Erasmus+ evaluation offer interesting insights on learners' motivation to take part in mobility. Evidence suggests overall that while differences are found from one sector to another, the need for improving foreign language skills is cross-cutting. The predecessor programmes and Erasmus+ share a number of specific objectives that remained common to both periods. Over both programming periods specific emphasis has been put on foreign language learning, specifically for learners. Practitioners do not rate the need to increase foreign language skills quite as highly.

The evaluation also identified that insufficient or lack of foreign language skills among both learners and trainers/practitioners as important factors that limit the access of hard-to-reach groups to transnational activities, particularly in adult learning and VET sectors. In case of VET, it has been highlighted that the lack of (adequate) knowledge of a foreign language can be a considerable obstacle for students who are linguistically neglected. This is particularly relevant in cases where vocational schools do not place sufficient emphasis on learning foreign languages and require less from their students in this respect.

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<sup>21</sup> European Commission/Eurydice (2017), Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL\\_2017\\_internet.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Eurostat (2015) - What it means to be young in the European Union. Eurostat news release 67/2015, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-press-releases/-/1-16042015-AP>

<sup>23</sup> European Commission/Eurydice (2017), Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL\\_2017\\_internet.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/FR/TXT/?uri=COM:2018:50:FIN>

The Online Linguistic Support (OLS) was introduced with the Erasmus+ programme to help mobility participants improve their knowledge of the language in which they use abroad, so that they can make the most out of this experience. It comprises a set of language assessments as well as online language courses, including interactive massive open online courses (MOOC's) and tutoring sessions.

Analysis of the OLS-data shows that nearly half of the learners who took part in OLS have increased their score by at least 5%. However, acquisition of a foreign language, as any other competence development, is not a linear process. Progress tends to be quicker at first, followed by a plateau and very gradual improvements. The analysis of the data from the OLS of pre-post foreign language skills underlines the notable differences between sectors and that these differences appear to be mostly linked to the entry level of learners.

It is therefore not surprising that in terms of foreign language competence development those learners who have lower entry levels see more substantial improvements during mobility than those with higher levels of competence when entering the programme. Given that the number of learners with low entry levels is highest in the area of vocational education and training, mobility in these sectors makes a stronger contribution to foreign language skills development than in higher education, where the entry levels are higher. In the vocational sector, the share of students with low level of proficiency declines substantially during the while the improvements at higher levels are modest.

### 3. Results from the stakeholder consultation

The Recommendation draws on relevant elements from the stakeholder consultation on the language related aspects of the Key Competencies Recommendation. Regarding language competences, the online consultation, position papers and consultation meetings/conferences underlined the need to respond to competence demands in literacy, languages and communication in today's multilingual and culturally diverse societies, in a more integrated manner. Two key points in particular have been taken into consideration.

- Input papers and statements during consultation events pointed to the ambiguity of the concepts of "mother tongue" and "foreign language" in view of increased mobility, migration, and bi- or multilingualism in families across Europe. Participants also stressed that multilingualism and cultural diversity were important issues that should be considered in the new reference framework.
- Stronger focus should be put on literacy and on language development overall. This may include taking a broader perspective of what currently constitutes competence in languages, considering specialised or academic language or developments in digital communication.

Following a series of expert panels on language learning in the context of the Key Competences Council Recommendation Review, the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture organised a dedicated stakeholder meeting early February 2018. The broad concept for a forthcoming Recommendation on improved language learning was discussed with representatives from some 60 civil society or academic organisations and key stakeholders, and around 20 representatives from Ministries of Education in Member States.

The consultation meeting confirmed overall the importance of a comprehensive approach to language learning in Europe. Several speakers raised the point that there was limited progress since 2002 and a recommendation would need to propose initiatives that have the potential to actually improve language learning.

Language strategies at the level of the school could have potential as schools find themselves in very different situations and have different needs in addressing languages (border regions, number of students with migrant background, minority languages, bilingual regions, specific trade contexts, etc.).

In addition, the following points were addressed:

- Pedagogies should be learner-centred and foster learner autonomy;
- There is a need to create learning environments in which languages can flourish such as language-aware schools;
- Demand and motivation for language learning need to be supported;
- Support for teachers and school leaders was raised many times; teacher preparation and education were seen as the key issues in order to change perceptions and improve language learning in Europe;
- Support multilingual classroom and pay attention to the specific situation of children with migration or minority background;

- Assessment of language competence needs to be reconsidered as it can contribute to better learning, especially when taking the multilingualism of children into account;
- Recognition of prior learning and knowledge of languages that are not in the curricula should be supported; Support the diversity of the language offer in schools, going beyond English
- Foster partnerships with the informal and non-formal sector and involve parents;
- Promote CLIL (content and language integrated learning) and the use of digital tools;
- Focus on equity; all students should be given the opportunity to learn languages, including students in Vocational Education and Training;
- Continue the cooperation with the Council of Europe, and its European Centre for Modern Languages<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup>The mission of the European Centre for Modern Language is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to help Europeans learn languages more efficiently.

#### 4. Language awareness in schools

The Recommendation introduces the concept of 'language awareness' as an element that can be embedded into school culture. This concept goes beyond existing practices in promoting language learning at school.

The focus of the Recommendation is improving the learning of modern languages in schools, so that more young people in Europe are able to acquire – in addition to the language of schooling – academic language proficiency in at least one other European language and independent user proficiency in an additional language before the end of upper secondary education. This objective should go hand in hand with enhancing overall language competence, meaning first and foremost supporting the language of schooling, and also mother tongue education or bilingualism, for some specific situations where children grow up with two or more languages.

Language awareness in schools implies embracing an overarching approach to languages: teaching the language of schooling and supporting literacy and language development across the curricula, supporting the learning of ethnic-minority mother tongue(s), the teaching and learning of various other languages (including also dead languages and sign languages).

A comprehensive strategy incorporating language awareness is based on an analysis of all languages existing in school and starting with all the other languages and prior knowledge that children bring to school, and which are different from the language of schooling and/ or the official language(s) of the country/ region.

It also means, for teachers and school leaders, having knowledge about languages and being aware of how children's use of language and the school's attitudes to language interact to affect learning. It equally implies awareness on how all these elements interact and interlink in schools, including challenging preconceived ideas about languages can be challenges.

##### 4.1 Multilingualism in schools and recognition of prior knowledge

A positive attitude towards linguistic diversity is indispensable for creating a language-friendly and language-aware school environment. In these environments, learning and using multiple languages is perceived as a richness and a resource. The importance of language learning, and of the educational, cognitive, social, intercultural, professional and economic benefits of the wider use of languages needs to be discussed and encouraged in schools.

Research findings suggest that a positive attitude towards diversity and valuing the unique linguistic background of each child promotes academic success and boosts self-confidence<sup>26</sup>. In addition, failing to value or even devaluing pupils' culture and language, however, can have a negative impact on their overall learning achievement, motivation and well-being<sup>27</sup>.

Encouraging learners to make use of and develop their full linguistic repertoire, i.e. their home language(s), language of schooling and any other language(s) they might speak, have benefits beyond communication alone. Several clinical studies have shown positive effects of

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<sup>26</sup> Sierens, S. van Avermaet, P. (2013), 'Language diversity in education: evolving from multilingual education to functional multilingual learning'. In: Little, D.; Leung, C.; Van Avermaet, P., *Managing diversity in Education: languages, policies and pedagogies*. Bristol, Buffalo, Toronto

<sup>27</sup> Benson, C; Elorza, I. (2015), 'Multilingual education for all (MEFA): Empowering non-dominant languages and cultures through multilingual curricular development'. *The Sage handbook of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment*



multilingualism on cognitive control of behaviour, attention control and social cognition<sup>28</sup>. These health benefits of language learning exist not only for bilinguals from birth, but also for people who became bilingual later in life<sup>29</sup>.

### 'Wise words' – European Language Label<sup>30</sup> Award, Denmark, 2017

Recent research suggests that multilingualism is one of the best ways to keep the brain alert. You will be better at multitasking and remembering and a better language user when you know and make use of multiple languages. This is the basic premise of the campaign 'Wise words'<sup>31</sup> aiming at informing pupils, parents and teachers about the good of having many languages and giving recognition to the linguistic resources of multilingual pupils. In the campaign, awarded with the European Language Label in 2017, pupils tell their own experiences of being multilingual, and the challenges and opportunities it provides in a school and educational context.

Acknowledging the linguistic diversity of schools can include the incorporation of languages taught in schools, but also other learner's home languages, for example through display of signs and notices. **Schools can create physical and symbolic spaces for different languages that children use and learn.** Languages can be not only reflected in the curriculum and teaching practices, but are also 'heard and seen' literally in schools.

**DivEd**<sup>32</sup> is one of several projects funded by the Finnish Ministry of Culture in response to changes in the Finnish national curriculum adopted in 2014, specifically in the areas of language awareness and cultural responsiveness. Formed by a partnership among the Universities of Turku, Tampere, Oulu, Lapland and Åbo Akademi (Swedish), as well as two Universities of Applied Science – DIAK in Helsinki and HAMK in Hämeenlinna, DivEd is also collaborating with advisory partners from other universities in Europe, the U.S. and Canada. The partnership seeks to understand how to prepare all teachers to work in the linguistically and culturally diverse world they live in.

DivEd's goals are to:

- Develop / increase culturally sustaining and linguistically responsive pedagogy in Finland;
- Increase awareness among teacher educators working with pre-service teachers;
- Be a catalyst for changes in teacher education curricula;
- Increase awareness and provide specific strategies to in-service teachers.

These goals will be addressed through two major strands targeted at initial teacher preparation and in-service teachers. Community Ambassadors – one from each university – will identify and work with

<sup>28</sup> Kovacs, A.M, Mehler, J. (2009), Cognition gains in 7-month-old bilingual infants. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106 (16):6556-6560, Bialystock, E. (1999), Cognitive complexity and attentional control in the bilingual mind, *Child Development*, 70(3)

<sup>29</sup> Vega-Mendoza, M., West, H., Sorace, A., Bak, T.H. (2015), The impact of late, non-balanced bilingualism on cognitive performance, *Cognition*, 137

<sup>30</sup> The European Language Label (ELL) is awarded annually or biannually to especially relevant projects that promote excellence and innovation in language education and help raise awareness of multilingualism issues in the wider society. An initiative of the European Commission since 1995, the ELL is implemented by Erasmus+ National Agencies in Member States, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/initiatives/language-label\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/education/initiatives/language-label_en)

<sup>31</sup> Project website (available in Danish only) - [www.grocaspersen.dk](http://www.grocaspersen.dk)

<sup>32</sup> Project website (available in English and Finnish) - <http://dived.fi/what-is-dived/>

several target schools in their corresponding municipalities to do needs analyses and provide professional development. In addition, individual teachers in each area will be engaged in Action Research regarding their own development as linguistically and culturally responsive educators.

A school with a high degree of language awareness considers all languages important for learning and building knowledge. As a consequence, **the prior learning and knowledge of languages, which are not part of the curricula, can be formally recognised and can be added to school-leaving certificates.** Currently, not all languages in Europe provide access to recognised qualifications. Dina Mehmedbegovic<sup>33</sup> has shown that 'hierarchies of languages', i.e. the ranking of languages in which a small number of selected languages are considered high status, desirable to learn and 'to have', while a larger number of languages are not seen as an asset and have a very low value status, are detrimental to language learning.

As part of the **Irish new strategy "Languages connect"**, students who are EU citizens may take their language as a non-curricular subject at school-leaving certificate level, where it is not available as a curricular language. Students usually prepare for these examinations privately, sometimes with the help of complementary languages schools which in some cases are supported by national embassies.

#### 4.2 The language learning continuum

Language awareness also means that language learning is regarded as a **dynamic process and a continuum** – the acquisition of the first language/ mother tongue and its different registers and styles continues and is deeply interlinked with the learning of other languages, in different levels of proficiency, corresponding to one's circumstances, needs and interests. This is the main reason why strategies need to focus on strengthening the overall language competences of learners. A child cannot, for example, have good results in learning modern foreign languages unless there is already a good level of proficiency in mother tongue/ first language competence.

This idea is well explained by **Jim Cummins's theory on the "interdependence or iceberg hypothesis"**<sup>34</sup>. Proficiencies which developed in one language are transferable to another, provided there is sufficient exposure to both languages and sufficient motivation to learn. For example, people only learn once how to read and afterwards this competence is transferred from one language to another. This Common Underlying Proficiency model signifies that proficiencies involving more complex tasks (such as literacy, content learning, abstract thinking and problem-solving) are common across languages, as it can be seen in Figure 1 below.

<sup>33</sup> Mehmedbegovic, D. (2016) - What every educator needs to know about cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Moving towards 'language hierarchy free' policy and practice, Discussion Paper for the European Commission Second Thematic Panel on languages and literacy: Enhancing communicative competences in school, 26-27 September 2016 available at [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/benefits-bilingualism-dina-medmedbegovic\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/benefits-bilingualism-dina-medmedbegovic_en.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Cummins, J. (1981), 'The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students'. In: California State Department of Education (ed.), Schooling and Language Minority Students. A Theoretical Framework. Los Angeles: California State Department of Education

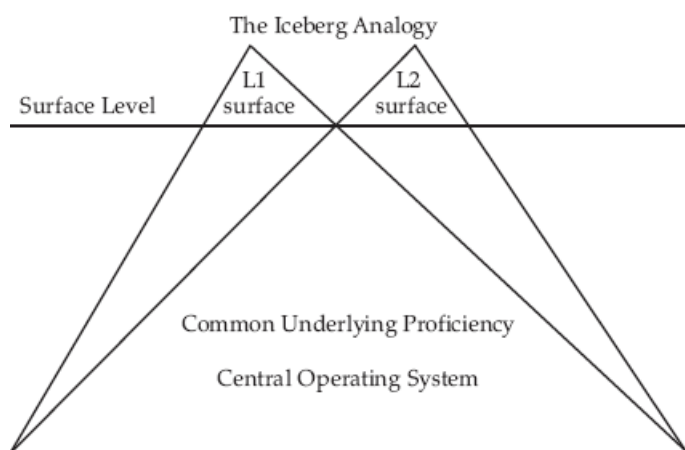


Figure: Iceberg analogy for language learning, adapted from Cummins (1981)

The fundamental principles of multilingual education are based on this theory: learning different languages reinforce each other. The different languages taught in school relate to each other and strengthen the overall language competence of the learner. This means for example, in the case of children who speak another language at home than **the language of schooling, the home language forms a resource for the learning of the school language.**

In the same line, Cummins also distinguished two different types of language development<sup>35</sup>:

- Conversational language, also called “basic interpersonal communication skills”, meaning the language necessary for everyday life, including conversation with friends or informal interactions;
- Formal academic level, or “cognitive academic language proficiency”, meaning the language necessary to understand and discuss content in the classroom, which is more cognitively challenging.

According to this theory, **teachers need to understand the differences between the spoken language and its rules (“basic interpersonal communication skills”), which are usually the first skills developed in both home and school languages, and the academic language of the school (“cognitive academic language proficiency”),** a more abstract set of skills which need to be cultivated so that pupils can think, read, write and learn all of the content of the curriculum. The characteristics of written language are important for academic language proficiency, though the two types of language are not mutually exclusive. For sound language education, development of both types of language should ideally occur in both/all languages, which requires a systematic approach and time.

The practical implementation of this theory suggests that attention is paid to the continuity of language learning as a crucial element for the academic language development of pupils. This means that language learning needs to be smooth and uninterrupted vertically - from early childhood to entering the labour market - as well as horizontally - ensuring that in formal and

<sup>35</sup> Cummins, J. (1979). "Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters". Working Papers on Bilingualism

non-formal education actors work together as partners to develop a comprehensive learning approach.

Researchers distinguish three dimensions of continuity of language learning: biographical continuity, thematic continuity and plurilingual continuity<sup>36</sup>. Biographical continuity means not only that educational institutions should follow each other in a vertical perspective, for example from pre-primary to primary to secondary education, but also that there should be cooperation between different educational environments where a child participates in each particular phase. Thematic continuity implies coordinated and reflected exposure to academic language skills and knowledge across content areas and subjects, as well as the use of consistent materials and guidelines for language-sensitive content across and within disciplines. Plurilingual continuity ensures that students' plurilingual skills and competences are taken into account and used for the extension and consolidation of their linguistic repertoire, including the acquisition of the academic register.

#### **'Integrated language education' - University of Hamburg, Germany**

Based on the model of language continuity, the University of Hamburg's **FörMig** Centre of expertise is piloting two inter-regional working groups on 'Integrated language education' and 'Institutional development - building language education networks'.

The two working groups are the offsprings of the original FörMig-project (*Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund, Support for children and young people with migration background*), which was carried out in ten German Länder between 2004 and 2009. They collaborate in order to translate theory into practice and vice versa.

Over time, the University has built up a substantial competence centre for the support of literacy and multilingualism, from early childhood education and care through primary and secondary school education. Building on practical experiences from a group of model schools, the findings have been translated into a full pedagogical programme, with material for teacher education as well as classrooms. All resources are available in German on the University's web site<sup>37</sup>.

Language learning must be supported throughout the education system; however, the foundations are laid in early years. There is ample research evidence that participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is key to support children's language development and support their readiness for schooling<sup>38</sup>.

### **4.3 A whole school approach to learning languages**

A school with a high degree of language awareness will consider the language dimension in all levels of school organisation, teaching and practice. This includes literacy development, foreign language learning, subject teaching, acknowledging other languages brought in by pupils, communication with parents and with the wider school environment, etc. This requires

<sup>36</sup> Gogolin, I.; Dirim, I.; Klinger, T.; Lange, I.; Lengyel, D.; Michael, U.; Neumann, U.; Reich, H.; Roth, H.; Schwippert, K. (2011) - Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen mit Migrationshintergrund FÖRMIG. Bilanz und Perspektiven eines Modellprogramms. Waxmann

<sup>37</sup> University of Hamburg: FÖRMIG Kompetenz-zentrum, <https://www.foermig.uni-hamburg.de/kompetenzzentrum.html>

<sup>38</sup> Siraj-Blatchford, I., Clarke, P. (2000) - Supporting Identity, Diversity And Language In The Early Years, McGraw-Hill Education

close cooperation among the different members of the school community, ideally within a concept of the school as a learning organisation<sup>39</sup> or within a whole school approach<sup>40</sup>.

#### **Example: The CertiLingua Label for Schools**

The CertiLingua Label of Excellence for Plurilingual, European and International competences guides students towards linguistic and cultural pluralism and simultaneously assists them to develop the mobility they will need in shaping their personal and professional lives and for their further education. This excellence label is awarded to pupils in addition to their university entrance diplomas on the condition that they have written and oral command of at least two foreign languages on level B2 of the Common European Framework for Languages, that they have successfully used at least one of these languages as their learning and working language in one or more CLIL courses, and that they have given evidence of their knowledge about Europe and their intercultural ability to act by their participation in a European / international cooperation project.

Any public school from any EU Member State can apply for accreditation as a CertiLingua School with the country's educational authorities on the condition that they provide the learning opportunities necessary for students to fulfil the awarding criteria for the label. Currently, more than 300 schools throughout Europe are participating in this project, teaching accordingly to the principles of CertiLingua<sup>41</sup>.

Similar principles are applied for other networks of schools having adopted a whole school approach to learning languages with the aim of preparing students for mobility and the opportunities offered on the European single market. The European Schools<sup>42</sup> form another successful example. These schools, intended largely for the children of personnel of EU Institutions, are official educational establishments controlled jointly by the governments of the Member States.

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<sup>39</sup> European Commission (2018) - Teachers and school leaders in schools as learning organisations - Guiding Principles for policy development in school education, Report from the ET2020 Working Group Schools 2016-18: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/teachers-school-leaders-wg-0917\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/teachers-school-leaders-wg-0917_en.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> European Commission (2015) - Policy messages on a whole school approach to tackling early school leaving, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/documents/early-leaving-policy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/documents/early-leaving-policy_en.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Certilingua project website: [www.certilingua.net](http://www.certilingua.net)

<sup>42</sup> Principles of the European Schools: <https://www.eursc.eu/Documents/Brochure-en.pdf>

The **PlurCur-project**<sup>43</sup> from the European Centre of Modern Languages (**ECML**) suggests eight factors critical to successfully implementing whole school language curricula:

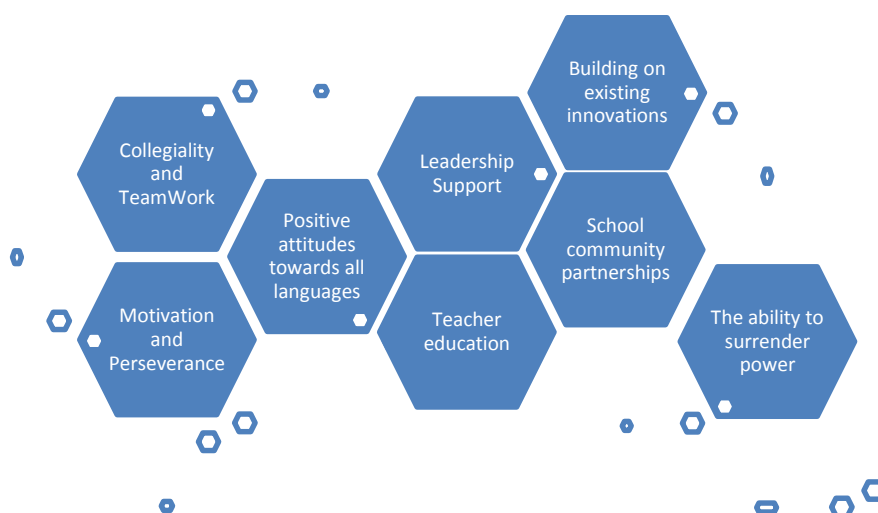


Figure: Key Success factors of whole-school language curricula<sup>44</sup>

Schools cooperate with parents in order to support children's language learning, especially when children grow up with more than one language or use a different language at home than the language of schooling. **Families and community are an important source of pedagogical experience and a part of the learning continuity.** Research demonstrates that, for language learning to be successful, parents' support is necessary, and consequently the way schools cooperate with the parents is crucial for success<sup>45</sup>.

Working together with parents in order to maintain home languages which were not taught in school, has proved highly beneficial in the case of **Scoil Bhríde primary school in Blanchardstown, Dublin**. In this school, 80 per cent of students have a foreign background and speak a total of 51 languages. Principal Deirdre Kirwan<sup>46</sup> developed a strategy for the school, which encourages parents and students to embrace their native linguistic skills alongside English and Irish.

In order to create more engaging learning environments and enrich the uptake of languages, an innovative way for schools is to develop partnerships with language centres/languages

<sup>43</sup> PlurCur Project website: [www.ecml.at/plurcur](http://www.ecml.at/plurcur)

<sup>44</sup> Idem as note 40.

<sup>45</sup> García, O., Zakharia, Z., Otcu, B. (eds.) (2012) – Bilingual Community Education and Multilingualism: Beyond Heritage Languages in a Global City, Multilingual Matters

<sup>46</sup> Deirdre Kirwan, Cultivating Plurilingual Environments: Opportunities in Pre-school, Primary school and Beyond, in ETBI Newsletter, Spring 2015

laboratories, public libraries, cultural centres or other cultural associations, universities and research centres.

#### **Example from the city of Cologne, Germany**

ZMI, Zentrum für Mehrsprachigkeit und Integration<sup>47</sup> (*the Centre for Multilingualism and Integration*) is built around a cooperative agreement between the City of Cologne, the Regional Government and the University of Cologne to support schools and integrations centres in the area. The project includes projects with individual schools as well as identifying resources to support language learning including supporting the learning of the different mother tongues of students.

Another successful way for schools, in cooperation with their respective municipalities, to foster language learning is to pool resources to create language centres with a larger offer of languages, in order to maintain less spoken languages, and/or languages that are not taught in school.

#### **Sweden: Education of pupils with Swedish as a second language**

In a European Commission study on governance and management policies in school education<sup>48</sup> systems, one of the case studies identified as a good practice and explored in the context of a comprehensive approach is carried out through the national Centre for Swedish as a Second Language<sup>49</sup>. This is a national resource and development centre, commissioned by the Swedish Government. Its main mission is to bridge the gap between research and practice and to support teachers and schools in developing models for teaching Swedish as a second language. It focuses on the learning needs of multilingual pupils and combines expertise on all levels of education, from pre-school to adult education.

Cooperation with businesses in the region or beyond is another way to help increase the understanding of the importance of language competences in working life and making sure that language competences gained effectively support employability.

#### **Eurocatering project<sup>50</sup>**

The Eurocatering project for transnational placement trainees in the catering industry was designed and developed from 2006-2008 under the EU Leonardo da Vinci programme. The aim of the project was developing language learning material for VET students in the area of hospitality.

Eleven EU countries - Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom collaborated on designing and producing a web-based language-training package for trainee kitchen, restaurant and hotel students.

<sup>47</sup> Zentrum für Mehrsprachigkeit und Integration; Köln: <http://zmi-koeln.de/>

<sup>48</sup> European Commission (2017) - Study on governance and management policies in school education, [https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/study-governance-and-management-policies-school-education-systems\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/study-governance-and-management-policies-school-education-systems_en)

<sup>49</sup> The National Centre for Swedish as a second language: <https://www.andrasprak.su.se/english/>

<sup>50</sup> Eurocatering Project Website, <http://www.eurocatering.org>

The training materials were a direct response to the shortfall in the provision of language and cultural preparation for placement students. The training package has been based on the needs identified through surveys/questionnaires submitted by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and trainees in the catering industry, as well as promoters of transnational mobility projects and short-term placement trainees.

The Eurocatering project was awarded the European Language Label in 2011 in several of the participating countries.

#### 4.4 Diversity of the language uptake in schools

The uptake of languages can be different depending on whether a country has two or more state languages, if there are minority or regional languages spoken in the area, if there is a declared interest to promote the learning of the language of a neighbouring country, or if they are taking into account children's background and other languages spoken at home.

##### **Irish strategy for foreign languages in education “Languages connect” (2017 – 2026)<sup>51</sup>**

One goal of the strategy is to diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish. The current offer for modern languages in schools is made of the following languages: French, German, Italian and Spanish in junior cycle, and Arabic, Japanese and Russian are added in senior cycle.

The ambition of the strategy is to diversify further the language offer in schools, mainly because 13% of the school population speaks a language other than English or Irish at home. Key trade languages such as Russian, Portuguese or Chinese are given special attention.

A key point of the strategy, in terms of diversification of the language reserve, is thus the support of home/ heritage languages. Sustaining the language capacity if these speakers will support the growth of language competencies, which is the main aim of the Strategy. The Primary Language Curriculum recognises that “most schools and classrooms include children whose home languages is a language other than English or Irish”, and also that proficiency in their home language contributes to children's development of proficiency in the language of schooling.

**In France, the strategy on ‘langues vivantes’<sup>52</sup>** (modern foreign languages) in schools aims to diversify the offer of languages. The aim is that, by the end of upper secondary education, all pupils are able to communicate in two other languages besides French. The offer of ‘langues vivantes’ in schools includes regional languages spoken on the territory, such as Breton or Occitan.

Besides widely spoken languages such as English, German, Italian and Spanish, other options include:

- Mediterranean classes, where Arab is taught, but also Ancient Greek and Latin;
- A programme for teaching ‘languages and cultures of origin’, based on bilateral cooperation with the following countries: Algeria, Croatia, Spain, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Tunisia and Turkey.

<sup>51</sup> The national Strategy for Foreign Languages in Ireland, 2017, <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/Foreign-Languages-Strategy.html>

<sup>52</sup> Stratégie Langues Vivantes, France 2016, [http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/01\\_-\\_janvier/38/4/DP\\_strategie\\_langues\\_vivantes\\_528384.pdf](http://cache.media.education.gouv.fr/file/01_-_janvier/38/4/DP_strategie_langues_vivantes_528384.pdf)



## 5. Rethinking language teaching and learning – breaking down the silos of language learning

In the "10 trends transforming education as we know it"<sup>53</sup>, presented by the European Political Strategy Centre, trend no 6 is about moving from silos to mash-ups, towards interdisciplinary and technology-powered learning. The paper acknowledges that it is at the intersection of different disciplines that learning and novel insights happen. Multidisciplinary and transversality are critical elements to bridging across silos in order to deal with the uncertainty and complexity of the modern-day challenges and develop innovative solutions<sup>54</sup>.

The same applies to language learning. For long, the teaching of different languages has been conceived in separation neither creating sufficient links between the different languages nor acknowledging the importance of the 'common underlying proficiency'<sup>55</sup> or metalinguistic competences.

The Council of Europe<sup>56</sup> has long argued for the language dimension in all curriculum subjects, stating that "it is no longer appropriated for language education to be conceived narrowly and confined to one or two areas of the curriculum. Instead it needs to be seen as central to every school's mission and culture, and it needs to extend to all subjects in the curriculum."

In addition, many schools and teachers held the view that the learning of different languages stand in competition to each other and mixing languages in teaching and learning was to be discouraged. Examples for bilingual learners include the fact that teaching is typically organised using the 'one teacher one language' or 'one subject one language approach'. Recent evidence has shown that there is no scientific evidence to support the concerns about mixing languages in the classroom<sup>57</sup>.

### 5.1 Language competence as a transversal element across the curricula

The development of language competence and of linguistic awareness can be integrated transversally into the curricula, for obtaining better results in language education. Integrating languages and other subjects makes it possible to provide more authentic learning geared towards real-life situations.

Inclusive curricula integrate the language dimension comprehensively and go beyond a simple opposition between monolingual and bilingual educational models or mother tongue versus foreign language. The Multilingualism Curriculum developed by Krumm and Reich (2013)<sup>58</sup>, for instance, focuses on the development of language awareness, which means the ability to

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<sup>53</sup> European Commission (2017) – 10 trends transforming education as we know it, European Political Strategy Center, [https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/other-publications/10-trends-transforming-education-we-know-it\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications/other-publications/10-trends-transforming-education-we-know-it_en)

<sup>54</sup> Idem.

<sup>55</sup> Cummins, J. (1981) – 'The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students'. In: California State Department of Education (ed.), *Schooling and Language Minority Students. A Theoretical Framework*. Los Angeles: California State Department of Education

<sup>56</sup> Council of Europe (2015) – *The Language Dimension in All Subjects*, Council of Europe Publications, <https://book.coe.int/eur/en/language-policy/7119-the-language-dimension-in-all-subjects-a-handbook-for-curriculum-development-and-teacher-training.html>

<sup>57</sup> Antón, E., et al. (2016) - Testing bilingual educational methods: A plea to end the language-mixing taboo. *Language Learning*, no 66(2)

<sup>58</sup> Krumm, H-J.; Reich, H., (2013) - *Multilingualism Curriculum: Perceiving and Managing Linguistic Diversity in Education*, Waxmann, Munster

reflect on one's own linguistic situation and to analyse others' situation, the knowledge about languages and their significance for people and groups, the knowledge necessary for the comparison of languages, a varied range of learning strategies and self-confidence.

### **Content of Multilingualism Curriculum by Krumm and Reich (2013)<sup>59</sup>**

Starting with years 1 and 2 at primary level, common objectives and methodological principles are described. This section is followed by the syllabus for the various sub-areas such as 'perceiving and managing multilingual situations', 'knowledge about languages' and 'acquisition of language learning strategies'. Each sub-area consists of the description of aims and content and gives examples and suggestions to existing resources and finally explains the correspondences in the current curricula, exemplary for Austria. This structure is repeated for years 3 and 4 as well as years 5 and 6 enlarged by 'comparing languages' and 'analysis of social and cultural aspects of languages'. The subareas in years 7 and 8 are again expanded by 'multilingual situations'. This structure is then repeated for years 9 and 10 as well as years 11 and 12. A specific section is devoted to upper secondary level in vocational/technical education such as Commercial College.

Example from Member states:

Building on Krumm's work and the Council of Europe's FREPA<sup>60</sup> (Reference Framework for Plural Approaches to Languages and Cultures), the Multilingualism Curriculum of South Tyrol in Italy published in 2016 defines multilingualism competences as fourfold:

- *Savoir* - the knowledge about multilingualism;
- *Savoir-faire* - acting in multilingual environments;
- *Savoir apprendre* - strategies of learning languages and transferring language knowledge;
- *Savoir être* - perception and handling of linguistic diversity.

## **5.2 Bilingual models in education**

The increasing diversity of school classrooms has prompted both policy makers and researchers to re-evaluate the educational models that are currently in use, and in particular the teaching strategies – if any – are used, with respect to multilingualism.

There are several countries where bilingual models have been in use for over 50 years, and consistent positive effects have been reported in numerous research studies. However, as became clear from research evidence, the benefit typically emerges after 5 to 7 years<sup>61</sup>. Bilingual models are often based on the idea that children can become bilingual relatively quickly as long as they are motivated by a real need to communicate in the "target" language<sup>62</sup>. The level of language development in a target language is dependent on several factors<sup>63</sup>:

<sup>59</sup> Krumm, H-J., Reich, H., (2013) - Multilingualism Curriculum: Perceiving and Managing Linguistic Diversity in Education. Waxmann, Munster

<sup>60</sup> FREPA Project website: <http://carap.ecml.at/Portals/11/documents/CARAP-version3-EN-28062010.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Coelho, E., (2012) - Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms: A Practical Approach, Bristol, England, Multilingual Matters

<sup>62</sup> Grosjean, F., (2010) – Bilingual: Life and Reality, Harvard University Press

<sup>63</sup> Idem.

- the amount of input -in the languages to acquire;
- the type of input (oral/ written);
- the support provided by the family;
- the support provided by the school and the community;
- the attitudes towards languages and cultures included in the curriculum.

Bilingual education models for ethnic minorities across Europe were developed partly based on this knowledge. For instance, these models expand the amount of input in the languages to be acquired and reinforce the more effective types of input. In addition to the factors named above, they also support families and communities of these target languages and foster positive changes in their attitudes towards these languages. In these bilingual education models, the dominant and non-dominant languages are both supported at school, which means that they are both actively used for teaching and learning. There are numerous examples throughout Europe of such models (for example geared towards the Basque language in the Spanish Basque country, or the Frisian language in the Northern province of the Netherlands). These models are highly successful in terms of revitalizing the linguistic and cultural community and boosting the endangered language of the region. Importantly, such models provide support in both/all languages, which ultimately allows a higher level of achievement in each.

#### **Multilingual curriculum in the Basque country**

The integrated multilingual curriculum in the Basque Country is interesting in this context. Ruiz de Zarobe and Lasagabaster (2010) have shown that to efficiently develop both languages, the Content and Language Integrated Learning method needed to include at least seven hours per week taught in the languages to be learned. The Ikastola education system is implementing an integrated language curriculum that uses the non-dominant language (in this case Basque/Euskara) as the main language of teaching, while systematically teaching the dominant language (Spanish) and one or two other languages<sup>64</sup>.

#### **Inclusive multilingual education in the Slovene-German schools in Carinthia, Austria**

These schools provide a bilingual teaching and learning environment, and also adapt to their students' multilingual realities and support their identification with multilingualism. In this approach, language policies and educational goals are negotiated between teachers, parents and students alike. The teaching and learning strategies build on pro-active language stimulation and allow students to make less use of the dominant language in group activities, fulfilling tasks in their non-dominant language(s) without the teacher's assistance, which allows them to be the main participants in the learning environment<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Elorza, I.; Muñoa, I., (2008) - 'Promoting the minority language through integrated plurilingual language planning: The case of the Ikastolas'. *Language, Culture & Curriculum*, no 21(1)

<sup>65</sup> Purkharthofer, J. & Mossakowski, J., (2011) - Bilingual teaching for multilingual students? Innovative dual-medium models in Slovene-German schools in Austria. In: *International Review of Education* Vol. 57. No. 5/6, Quality Multilingual and Multicultural Education for Lifelong Learning

### 5.3 Efficient and innovative teaching practices / pedagogies

A growing body of research supports the identification of inclusive and efficient teaching practices, both for multilingual learners and foreign language teaching. Innovative language teaching practices include translanguaging (the use of different languages for communication and learning), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), the use of digital technologies and the use of creative subjects for language learning.

Following the comparative analysis, the Working Group on languages in education and training elaborated a report on how to improve the effectiveness of language learning<sup>66</sup>. The report focused on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and the use of digital tools, whereby both concepts were enlarged to cover a wide spectrum of teaching methods and tools. These concepts are today used in many schools throughout Europe, but far from being mainstreamed. Nevertheless, they form an integral part of language education today.

The NESET II network's<sup>67</sup> study "Multilingual Education in the Light of Diversity" clustered the following pedagogical approaches to language development, developed in recent years:

- **Language portfolios**

The European Language Portfolio<sup>68</sup> is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning experiences. The European Language Portfolio has three parts:

- 1) A language passport where the language learner can summarise their linguistic and cultural identity, language qualifications, experience of using different languages and contacts with different cultures.
- 2) A language biography which helps the learner to set learning targets, to record and reflect on language learning and on intercultural experiences and regularly assess progress.
- 3) A dossier where the learner can keep samples of their work.

A grid is provided where his/her language competences can be described according to common criteria accepted throughout Europe and which can serve as a complement to customary certificates.

The **Europass Language Passport**<sup>69</sup>, an electronic version of the standard Language Passport for adults, was jointly developed by the Council of Europe and the European Union. It can be completed on line or downloaded.

The ELP also contains a detailed Language biography describing the owner's experiences in each language and which is designed to guide the learner in planning and assessing progress. Finally, there is a dossier where examples of personal work can be kept to illustrate one's language competences. Portfolio models vary according to countries and educational contexts. They are all examined by a European Validation

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<sup>66</sup> European Commission (2014) - Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and Computer assisted language learning, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/clil-call\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/clil-call_en.pdf)

<sup>67</sup> Network of experts working on the social dimension of education and training (NESET) : <http://nesetweb.eu>

<sup>68</sup> Council of Europe, European Language Portfolio, available at [https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Portfolio\\_EN.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Portfolio_EN.asp)

<sup>69</sup> Europass: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

Committee which accords an accreditation number. Note: Models are not available from the Council of Europe.

### **Netherlands: The European Language Portfolio**

Pupils in the Netherlands use the European Language Portfolio (ELP) to report their language learning activities undertaken outside the classroom (e.g., use of first/non-dominant languages, which are different from schooling language, or contacts with family or friends in foreign countries), and can self-assess their competences. The ELP allows children to obtain recognition of their first language skills, which are acquired through non-formal education. Evidence suggests that learners had positive attitudes towards it, because their language competences were recognised and positively valued and they could assess and record their progress. The study also showed that the ELP enables teachers to better understand their multilingual classrooms and appreciate the strength of pupils' language competences<sup>70</sup>.

### **Austria: Trilingual Language Portfolio KAJPATAJ**

The trilingual language portfolio Kajpataj in Carinthia, a federal state in the southern part of Austria, was commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education together with the regional education authority. It is an example where built on the constitutionally guaranteed right to minority language instruction in Slovene the historically existing bilingualism of German and Slovene was opened up to multilingualism by another language of the bordering region, Italian. The portfolio is conceptualized as an instrument for the pupils, one ring-binder for primary school and another for lower secondary, where they can document their language progress in German, Slovene and Italian over a period of eight years (BMUKK Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur, 2013).

- **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

Research evidence suggests that Content and Language Integrated Teaching (CLIL) is an effective way to support language and subject learning, with benefits for education and other outcomes. The basic principle of CLIL is that all teachers are also language teachers.

Content and Language Integrated Learning refers to a programme characterized by dual language immersion at primary and secondary education. The main principle of CLIL is that both languages are not only used as vehicles for communication but also for transmitting curricular content. The pedagogical goal is therefore supported by the authenticity of the communicative situation.

CLIL capitalizes on one language that is already known and one language that is being learned. The pupils learn to communicate in daily conversations and academically in both languages. To do so, they learn the new language by focusing on the subject that is taught instead of focusing on the language itself.

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<sup>70</sup> European Commission (2015), Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms : [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/multilingual-classroom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/multilingual-classroom_en.pdf)

A CLIL science lesson on ecosystems, for example, will convey knowledge on the subject matter, but also check any previous knowledge students hold in the subject, practice the relevant language and vocabulary, before consolidating and applying this new knowledge in class. Practical tools for teachers to implement CLIL include i.) the adjustment of speech and language to ensure understanding of all learners, ii.) the use of group work and interactive elements to support language use, iii.) scaffolding of instruction to aid comprehension.

**CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) was introduced in the Italian school system in 2003** through a Reform Law, which made it mandatory for upper secondary schools<sup>71</sup>.

The introduction of CLIL was implemented in all Licei and Istituti Tecnici (upper secondary education) in 2014/15 as part of a comprehensive school reform. In practice, one non-language subject must be taught in a foreign language in the final year at Licei and Istituti Tecnici. In the latter, the subject must be chosen from the specialist areas. In the final three years of Licei linguistici, two different nonlanguage subjects must be taught through two different foreign languages.

The Ministry of education has defined the competences and qualifications teachers need to teach CLIL classes. They concern the target languages, the non-language subjects and issues relating to methodology and teaching approaches. In particular, CLIL teachers must have attained a C1 level of competence on the scale defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In order to help potential CLIL teachers acquire the appropriate knowledge and skills, the education authorities are financing specific continuing professional development activities. For instance, in 2016, within a new school reform, they launched a National Teacher Training Plan which established a wide range of training programmes in CLIL methodology, which also included teachers from primary, lower secondary and vocational schools.

- **Translanguaging and meta-linguistic competences**

Over recent years, translanguaging pedagogies have emerged in Europe and beyond, based on growing awareness that all languages present in a classroom or school need to be recognized/ acknowledged<sup>72</sup>. In essence, translanguaging stems from the idea that children may be able to transfer skills from one language to another with minimal support. Languages are ‘mobile resources or practices, within social, cultural, political and historical context’<sup>73</sup>.

Translanguaging encourages learners to use their full linguistic repertoire in the school context. In order to transfer skills to a new language, children require support, a positive environment and encouragement to do so. The use of translanguaging in the classroom implies that teachers will value the multilingual resources of children, in an attempt to go beyond a strict separation of languages. For example, for languages from the same family, such as French, Spanish and Italian, comparing languages might prove beneficial to learning. The essential hallmark of this strategy is that it makes

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<sup>71</sup> Cinganotto, L. (2016). CLIL in Italy: A general overview. *Latin American Journal of Content and Language Integrated Learning*

<sup>72</sup> Garcia, O. and Wei, L. (2014) – *Translanguaging: language, bilingualism and education*, Palgrave, MacMillan

<sup>73</sup> Idem.

strategic use of the entire linguistic repertoire of children in order to maximize communicative as well as cognitive potential development.

#### **Let's compare our languages – example of translanguaging project in France**

In France, in classes for newly arrived pupils, language learning is based, either consciously or unconsciously, on a comparison between the existing language system and the language pupils want to learn. Starting from this fact, this method is aimed at helping newly arrived student discover the French language by comparison with other languages including their own while working jointly with other students. This method stimulates thinking about languages and offers the learner a real education in the languages/cultures of others, while promoting his/her own. In class, each student is both teacher and learner. Hence, each student feels recognised and valued for who they are and what they already know<sup>74</sup>.

This project was awarded the **European Language Label in 2006**<sup>75</sup>.

### **5.4 Digital tools and language learning**

The potential of digital tools is fully embraced to enhance language learning, teaching and assessment. Technology can massively support broadening the language offer, provide opportunities for language exposure, and be very useful for supporting those languages which are not taught in schools. In this context, developing critical thinking and media literacy and an appropriate use of technology are essential.

Due to the fast pace of technological change, innovative teaching approaches and strategies are being developed to successfully integrate new technologies into language teaching. In order to increase pupils' language competences, the use of digital technologies is highly promoted in European classrooms. Some approaches using new technologies are web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual education opportunities and digital collaboration.

Although there is a consensus among researchers that the use of digital tools is useful for improving language learning, the field still lacks sound evidence. According to some studies, pupils prefer using digital methods over traditional ones, and digital tools positively influences their engagement in the language learning process<sup>76</sup>. Considering that pupils can easily review difficult lessons and exercises in online learning, this may reduce anxiety that can occur in traditional classroom settings and generate positive attitudes towards language learning<sup>77</sup>.

In order to make language teaching and learning more effective, a wide range of digital tools and methods are introduced in the classrooms. The previously mentioned European Commission report (footnote 67 2014a, p. 19) suggests the following tools:

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<sup>74</sup> Auger, N., (2005) - **Comparons nos langues. Démarches d'apprentissage du français auprès d'enfants nouvellement arrivés. CRDP Languedoc-Roussillon**

<sup>75</sup> For further information and illustration how the translanguaging concept works in practice, see: [https://youtu.be/\\_ZiBiAoMTBo](https://youtu.be/_ZiBiAoMTBo)

<sup>76</sup> Golonka, E. M.; Bowles, A.R.; Frank, V.M.; Richardson, D.L.; Freynik, S., (2014) - 'Technologies for foreign language learning: A review of technology types and their effectiveness'. Computer Assisted Language Learning

<sup>77</sup> Kongrith, K. and Maddux, C. (2005) – Online Learning as Demonstration of Type II Technology: Second Language Acquisition, Computers in Schools, no 22

### Examples of digital tools for language learning

- Authentic modern language material, such as video clips, flash-animations, web-quests, pod-casts, web-casts, and news etc.;
- Online environments where learners can communicate with foreign language speakers, through email, text-based computer-mediated communication (synchronous and asynchronous), social media, or voice/video conferencing;
- Language-learning tools (apps or software), such as for phonetics, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and clause analysis, which may include a text-to-speech function or speech recognition, and often includes interactive and guided exercises;
- Online proprietary virtual learning environments, which offer teacher-student and peer-to-peer communication;
- Game-based learning;
- Telecommunication platform such as e-twinning.

Studies show that digital tools, such as computer-assisted pronunciation training, in particular automatic speech recognition (ASR), chats, digital game-based learning, text-based computer mediated communication (CMC) are beneficial for the development of a language proficiency. Electronic dictionaries are effective tools for students to speed their search for new words without interrupting the reading process<sup>78</sup>. Digital tools are also used to foster pupils' motivation to learn foreign languages, strengthen collaboration with classmates, and raise their confidence.

**The eTwinning<sup>79</sup>** project focuses on taking advantage of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance cooperation between schools, through internet-based twinning links. The aim is to develop joint projects using the tools and the secure internet spaces made available for them through the European eTwinning portal. eTwinning provides the opportunity of intercultural exchange and language learners a great opportunity of learning a foreign culture in its context.

**Virtual cooperation between schools through eTwinning** allows young people to improve language learning, to work with peers from another country and to prepare for mobility to study, train or volunteer abroad.

The eTwinning Project kit<sup>80</sup> '*e-journal bridges for foreign language learning*' aims at encouraging language learning and intercultural dialogue. Pupils, aged 10 - 19, learn how to write collaboratively, with both their classmates and partners abroad, and publish articles on-line. It supports writing and reading skills in a foreign language, the ability to communicate efficiently with both classmates and partners abroad and to develop intercultural skills.

<sup>78</sup> Golonka et al., (2014) - Technologies for foreign language learning: A review of technology types and their effectiveness'. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 27

<sup>79</sup> [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.etwinning.net/files/kits/7/kit\\_7\\_en.pdf](https://www.etwinning.net/files/kits/7/kit_7_en.pdf)



Digital tools can also play a significant role in providing language support for minority pupils' home languages, which is an important resources especially for situations where teachers may not be able to support each student with her/his home language.

One of the most promising tools in this regard is Computer-based learning environments (CBLEs), which offer multilingual support<sup>81</sup>. CBLEs are based on a code-switching approach. In the virtual learning environment, pupils can do science subject tasks in the target language and, if there is a need of clarification, they can switch to a language they understand better. One of such virtual environments, E-Validiv, has been implemented in Belgium.

**E-Validiv<sup>82</sup>** is a computer-based learning environment project, developed within the context of the broader **Validiv-project<sup>83</sup> (Valorizing Linguistic Diversity in Multiple Contexts of Primary Education) in Belgium**. The goal of this project is to teach fourth and fifth grade students about topics in different science education subjects (nature, technique, time and space, society, etc.). It offers all content for pupils in two different languages: Dutch, which is the language of schooling in Flanders, and one of the six other languages, namely English, French, Italian, Polish, Spanish and Turkish.

New media provide new opportunities for the learning and teaching of languages in a number of ways:

- The Internet provides access to authentic material and examples of foreign and other languages;
- Smartphones, Skype and e-mail enable learners to have direct contact with others all around the world;
- Social media promote immediate connectivity and commentary on what is happening in the world.

The challenge for schools is to find innovative ways to use the new opportunities to make language learning and teaching more effective and more interesting, while maintaining the qualities and values of more conventional teaching.

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<sup>81</sup> Van Laere, E., Rosiers, K., Van Avermaet, P., Slembrouck, S.; Van Braak, J., (2016) - 'What can technology offer to linguistically diverse classrooms? Using multilingual content in a computer-based learning environment for primary education', Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development

<sup>82</sup> Project website: [www.e-validiv.be](http://www.e-validiv.be)

<sup>83</sup> Project website : [www.steunpuntdiversiteitleren.be/onderzoek/validiv](http://www.steunpuntdiversiteitleren.be/onderzoek/validiv)

## 6 Supporting teaching staff for a comprehensive language approach

Teachers play a key role when it comes to achieving quality and equity in school education. There is broad evidence that their quality has a major impact on learner achievement and motivation<sup>84</sup>.

There is no EU-wide analysis of the availability of qualified teachers in the most frequently taught languages or the number of students enrolled in initial language teacher education. A recent study on language teachers' own perception of their competence showed that their competence derives from a combination of university studies, teacher experience and stays abroad. Visits abroad play an important role in developing prospective foreign language teachers' oral language skills. However, in the 2017 Brief on teaching languages at school in Europe, Eurydice shows that less than 60 % of all language teachers in Europe have been abroad during any part of their education.

### 6.1 Linguistic-sensitive teaching

The **teaching of language is an important element across all subjects**<sup>85</sup>. Teachers of all subjects need to understand and recognise the various ways language is used in the classroom and the vital role language plays in learning and understanding subject content. Acquiring a good command of academic language goes hand in hand with the development of subject knowledge and understanding. Besides, a good command of academic language is essential not only for academic success, but also in later life for democratic participation in society.

#### Example of project from the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz

**Pluriliteracies Teaching for Learning (PTL)**<sup>86</sup> shows how teachers and materials develop ways of fostering deep learning by paying attention to the development of students' subject specific literacies, as well as their conceptual understanding and automatization of subject-specific procedures, skills and strategies. By communicating about their evolving understanding in increasingly sophisticated ways, students internalize these understandings and ways of acting and thinking. PTL not only makes the links between content and language learning visible, but it also shows how teachers can create learning trajectories by taking students' current abilities as a starting point, and tracing their progress along the learning pathway.

All teachers need to have good knowledge about language and language learning, diagnosis and support. Re-thinking teacher initial education and continuous professional development programmes is necessary to equip teachers with knowledge and competences to support multilingual education.

To prepare subject teachers to become language-aware and take their language responsibilities within their subject teaching, through initial training and in-service training, entails specific

<sup>84</sup> European Commission/OECD (2010) - Teachers' professional development, Europe in international comparison, <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7454deec-f2ec-4537-845c-ce01f8c1317b/language-en>  
The importance of teachers and their competences for education is also echoed in public opinion: see Special Eurobarometer 417 on the European Area of Skills and Qualifications, 2014 : [http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_417\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/ebs/ebs_417_en.pdf)

<sup>85</sup> Council of Europe (2015) – The language dimension in all subjects, Council of Europe Publications, [https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Handbook-Scol\\_final\\_EN.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Handbook-Scol_final_EN.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> Project website: <http://pluriliteracies.ecml.at>

needs. This includes: understanding what their learners face when they are dealing with the respective subject-matter in school, when they acquire new knowledge, reflect about and incorporate it, when they try to jointly construct meaning with peers and communicate about it. This does not mean that subject teachers need literally to become language teachers, but rather that they should develop language awareness and be “sensitive” to the many issues involved in integrating content and language learning, even more so when the language of instruction is not the first language or the mother tongue of the learners.

In **Denmark**, ‘Teaching bilingual children’ has been a mandatory module in initial teacher education since 2013. It aims to prepare all student teachers to learn about language didactics and to deal with the identification of language educational challenges in the teaching of subject knowledge. This aims to favour bilingual pupils' linguistic development and academic attainment in linguistically diverse classrooms, and overall improve language competence of all students.<sup>87</sup>

The module focuses on the development of inclusive educational and didactic practice in which Danish as a second language is a dimension of the learning processes in all subject teaching in primary and lower secondary school education.

Working with bilingualism, second language acquisition and inter language analysis, language as a learning tool in school subjects, language tutoring, intercultural education as well as the analysis of learning resources and evaluation in a second language perspective for student teachers to be able to integrate language didactic reflections in their theory and practice when teaching main subjects.

## 6.2 Teacher education

Linguistic awareness, linguistic responsive teaching, combining language with content teaching and supporting learners in multilingual settings is important learning content of teacher education. A recent study carried out for the European Commission<sup>88</sup> shows that teaching staff in European schools lack experience with teaching in multilingual classes, which also means that teachers of other subjects lack knowledge on how they can also support language development. Initial and continuous teacher training are vital ways to prepare teachers for teaching in multilingual setting, including through imparting methodological competences, pedagogical content knowledge and experience.

Using latest research evidence to inform the design of teacher training is important to ensure that teaching is effective. Teacher educators have a key role to play in equipping teachers with the right skills and should be encouraged to base their teaching on up-to-date research evidence.

In the context of growing diversity in European classrooms, initial teacher training and continuous professional development can ensure that teaching staff in ECEC as well have the skills to teach children who don't speak the language of schooling and may be multilingual<sup>89</sup>.

‘**Samenspel**’ in the Netherlands is a long-standing programme, established in 1989, which prepares children for pre-school by supporting competence development in their home language and language of schooling. The low-threshold activity addresses children aged 2-2.5 years and their parents. Parents

<sup>87</sup>European Commission (2017) – Preparing Teachers for Diversity: the role of Initial Teacher Education, [https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20170510-diversity-teaching-report\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20170510-diversity-teaching-report_en)

<sup>88</sup> Idem.

<sup>89</sup> European Commission (2016), Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/multilingual-classroom\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/languages/library/studies/multilingual-classroom_en.pdf)

and children with minority language background meet in weekly playgroups, where two ECEC teachers provides support: one who speaks the language of schooling and one who speaks the minority language. Language acquisition is supported in a playful way<sup>90</sup>.

The EU-funded **Edina project**<sup>91</sup> currently develops a virtual training module for teachers, aiming to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in a diversified classroom, with a specific focus on newly arrived migrants. The module will be based on evidence from research and practice and will be piloted in partner schools. The module was developed in partnership with teachers and schools, following an action-research model for working in collaboration with teachers and school leaders.

Continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, through networks, communities of practice, MOOCS, centres of expertise, cooperative online learning, action research, are the most efficient ways to keep them up to date with latest pedagogical innovations and to upskill them.

The Teacher Academy on the **School Education Gateway (SEG)**<sup>92</sup> offers different Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for teachers to continue their learning and professional development further. A MOOC on language-aware schools is currently being developed for the SEG's Teacher Academy and will probably be made available later in 2018.

### 6.3 Mobility for increased language competence and intercultural awareness

Mobility is an important part of modern language teachers' preparation for classroom practice. Spending time abroad studying through another language, or studying other languages has multiple benefits for language learning, in improving overall language competence and intercultural knowledge. Teachers should be encouraged, all along their education and career, to take part in exchange schemes with countries where their target language is spoken, as part of their initial education and/ or further professional development. Every newly graduated language teacher would benefit from spending at least six months of learning and/or teaching abroad.

Research studies<sup>93</sup> examined foreign language teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching their subject and concluded that their perception of competence derived from a combination of university studies, teacher experience and stays abroad. Visits abroad play an important role in developing prospective foreign language teachers' oral language skills. It also greatly contributes to their knowledge and understanding of the 'everyday culture' of the country where the target language is spoken – as opposed to knowledge of the 'Culture with a capital C' which is provided during their initial teacher education.

In its Conclusions of 12 May 2009, the Council of the European Union highlighted the need to gradually expand transnational mobility, notably for teachers, with a 'view to making

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<sup>90</sup> Kieneker, N., Maas, J. (1997) - Samenspel – Mothers Speaking. A study on the experience of mothers with Samenspel, *Working Papers in Early Childhood Development 21*, Foundation Bernard Van Leer

<sup>91</sup> Education of International Newly Arrived pupils, EDINA Project Website: <https://edinaplatform.eu/home/het-project/>

<sup>92</sup> Teacher Academy on the School Education Gateway: Course catalogue: [https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/teacher\\_academy.htm](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/teacher_academy.htm)

<sup>93</sup> Vold, E, Th., (2017) - Qualifying foreign language teachers: Is teacher training enough?, *International Journal of Educational Research*

periods of learning abroad – both within Europe and the wider world – the rule rather than the exception'.

Applicants for **Modern Foreign Languages Initial Teacher Education (ITE)** courses in **Scotland, UK**, need to fulfil a certain number of requirements in order to be accepted on a course. These include having spent some time in a country where the languages they will be teaching are spoken, before they start the ITE programme.

For the first foreign language, the stay must be a duration of six months. Applicants must normally live in the relevant country in blocks of at least three months. For the second foreign language, the duration must be three months minimum - either as a continuous period or in blocks of at least four weeks. While living abroad, the applicants must have taken full part in the language and culture of the relevant country.

Employing language assistants, using the opportunities provided by exchange schemes between European countries, or with third countries, is another option to improve language teaching, especially in the context of shortage of teachers in Europe.

#### **France: Programme d'échange d'assistants de langue vivante**

In France, the Centre International d'études pédagogiques organises a programme for exchange of language assistants for mainly the following languages English, German, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, but also for Chinese, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, Hebrew, Russian and Turkish. At the same time, French teachers also participate in this programme, and go on mobility to work as language assistants in the respective countries.

#### **Czech Republic: Teaching Assistants for Migrant Pupils**

Teaching Assistants for Migrant Pupils was run by the Society for Young Migrants, an organization dedicated to the long-term education and integration of pupils from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in Czech schools, from 2012 to 2014. It supported migrants to obtain employment and qualifications so that they can work as teaching assistants to migrant pupils in ECEC and primary schools.

Participants took qualification courses on pedagogy and Czech language. Teachers in target schools were also supported through training on teaching Czech as a foreign language and how to work with the new pedagogical assistants.

## 7. Monitoring

A comprehensive approach aimed at strengthening language competences in all EU Member States profits from evidence of the effectiveness of education systems in improving language teaching and learning. Progress towards better competences can only be measured using reliable data on the outcomes of foreign language teaching and learning based upon objective tests of language ability. Analysis of such data will facilitate a more productive comparison of language policies, and language teaching methods between Member States, with a view to identifying and sharing good practice within the Open Method of Coordination in the field of education and training.

### 7.1 Key Data on Language Learning in Europe

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, provides the European Union with statistics at European level that enable comparisons between countries and regions. Data concerning language teaching in schools in relation to the agreed policy objectives is updated by Eurostat on a yearly basis and summarised on the web site "Statistics explained"<sup>94</sup>.

The Eurydice Network provides up-to-date and reliable information on education and training in Europe. It periodically publishes a comprehensive report on language teaching in schools in Europe in their Key Data series. The Key Data reports are compiled at regular intervals of ca five years. They build on Eurostat material as well as specific data compiled by the national Eurydice units. The latest report was published in May 2017<sup>95</sup>, followed by a Brief published in September 2017.

The regular reporting is based on the provision and the uptake of language teaching. It should be noted that neither Eurostat, nor Eurydice have structures in place to measure the learning outcomes, i.e. actual language competences.

### 7.2 The European Survey on Language Competences

In order to investigate the possibility to launch a qualitative benchmark at EU level, it was decided in 2006 to carry out a European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC). The data collected within the Survey constituted a valid assessment of functional foreign language proficiency at the end of compulsory education in the participating countries. The survey was launched in 2008, conducted in 2011 and the results were published in June 2012. The ESLC provided participating countries with data on foreign language skills and filled the gap in the existing information on foreign language skills, supplementing the input data compiled by Eurydice and Eurostat and public opinion polls like the Eurobarometer.

The Survey, completed to international education survey standards similar to PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, provided comparable data of foreign language competences across skills, languages and countries of more than 52,000 pupils at the end of lower secondary education (ISCED 2)<sup>96</sup>. Fourteen countries took part in the survey: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia,

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<sup>94</sup> Eurostat (2017), Foreign language learning statistics : [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign\\_language\\_learning\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Foreign_language_learning_statistics)

<sup>95</sup> European Commission/Eurydice (2017), Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe, [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfs/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL\\_2017\\_internet.pdf](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfs/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf)

<sup>96</sup> The exceptions to test at ISCED 3 were for duly justified reasons accorded to: Belgium NL (second language), Belgium FR (both languages), Belgium DE (second language), Bulgaria (both languages) and England (both languages).

France, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK-England. Belgium's three linguistic communities participated separately to give a total of 16 education systems.

Pupils were tested in their first or second foreign language to be chosen from the five most widely taught EU official languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. The language tests covered three language skills: listening, reading and writing. The results of the survey are reported in terms of the levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. Each pupil's achievement was assessed according to four levels from basic (A1) to advanced independent user (B2). In addition, the "pre-A1" level denotes achievement below A1.

Chapter 2 of the present document has referred to the main findings of the ESLC. The report revealed an overall low level of competences in both first and second foreign languages tested and a wide range of ability across countries in Europe. Moreover, there was considerable variety between the participating countries concerning the most widely taught second foreign language, both in terms of range of languages and the uptake and attrition rates among students. Therefore, it turned out that it wasn't possible to propose a competence-based benchmark for the second foreign language on the basis of the ESLC results.

### 7.3 Comparability between national language tests

A Eurydice study from 2009<sup>97</sup> on national testing in school education emphasises that national level tests – in addition to their function of awarding grades or certificates - have become an increasingly important tool for Member States to monitor their school education systems. However, evaluation policies vary in subject coverage, frequency of assessment, use of sampling or universal assessment, and how the results are used to feed back to schools and the systems as a whole. Also, the study concludes that out of the eight key competences set out by the European Framework three, namely 'communication in the mother tongue', 'communication in foreign languages', and 'mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology', are the most commonly assessed in national tests.

In May 2014 the Council invited the Commission to "explore the feasibility of assessing language competences in the Member States, including by using national data."

The European Commission, with the help of a group of experts from the Member States, examined this aspect by means of two studies - one by the Eurydice network<sup>98</sup> and the other by the Cambridge English Language Assessment<sup>99</sup>. These two reports provide a mapping and a comparison of the tests used across Europe to assess the language competences of secondary school pupils.

- Although some common trends emerge, there is a great diversity in the approaches taken to assessing language competences in secondary schools across Europe
- In the majority of countries, all national tests are linked to the levels of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of reference for Languages (CEFR)

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<sup>97</sup> European Commission, EACEA (2009), National Testing of Pupils in Europe: Objectives, Organisation and Use of Results, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/109EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/109EN.pdf)

<sup>98</sup> European Commission, EACEA (2015) - Languages in secondary education – an overview of national tests in Europe, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts\\_and\\_figures/187EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/facts_and_figures/187EN.pdf)

<sup>99</sup> European Commission, (2015) - Study on the comparability of language testing in Europe, <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/4db319de-c68b-493c-9524-41a8f1d10db5/language-en>

- The currently available documents and data on national language tests do not provide a sufficient basis for a robust comparison of the levels or the outcomes of language testing in the EU Member States
- The observed differences concern various aspects of the tests, from the test constructs (the specific abilities measured by each test in relation to each competence) to the relevance of the tests for the individual students, the interpretation of results, tested population and measurement features
- Competences in English are tested in every country except Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Dutch-speaking region of Belgium, but national tests also often assess pupils' knowledge of French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian
- France, with 47 languages tested, and Norway, with 39, offer the broadest choice of language examinations, followed by Ireland and the United Kingdom (22 and 20 respectively)

#### 7.4 International assessment, evaluation and comparison

All Member States have systems in place to assess literacy, numeracy and science. PISA, PIAAC, TIMSS and PIRLS are used in many Member States to allow also for international and national comparison - PISA since 2000, on a 3 years basis, and PIRLS since 2001, on a 5 years basis, and PIAAC since 2013.

OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Survey for Adult Skills (PIAAC) evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students, or adult population respectively, and established an international comparison basis. The PISA assessment is the basis for the Education and Training 2020 benchmark for basic skills.

PISA does not include a foreign language assessment component. However, plans to assess Global competence<sup>100</sup> in 2018 include assessing the 'ability to communicate in more than one language'<sup>101</sup>, as being an important asset for employability in an interconnected world. Data on language proficiency within the PISA Global Competence assessment can offer an opportunity for determining the relationships between second language acquisition and global understanding or positive dispositions toward other countries and cultures. Such an investigation could have several relevant policy implications for both language teaching efforts and curricular programmes aimed at increasing the level of global understanding of students. Global Competence includes the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of global and intercultural issues; the ability to learn from and live with people from diverse backgrounds; and the attitudes and values necessary to interact respectfully with others.

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<sup>100</sup> Global Competence includes the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and understanding of global and intercultural issues; the ability to learn from and live with people from diverse backgrounds; and the attitudes and values necessary to interact respectfully with others.

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>