

**Promoting multilingualism and language learning in the EU**

**European Parliament resolution on measures to promote multilingualism and language learning in the European Union: European Indicator of Language Competence (2005/2213(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled 'The European Indicator of Language Competence' (COM(2005)0356),
  - having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled 'A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism' (COM(2005)0596),
  - having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled 'Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004-2006' (COM(2003)0449),
  - having regard to the programme for 'Education and Training 2010: the success of the Lisbon Strategy hinges on urgent reforms' (Council document 6905/04 EDUC 43),
  - having regard to the communication from the Commission entitled 'Draft 2006 Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the Implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme' (COM(2005)0549),
  - having regard to the conclusions reached by the European Council Presidency in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002,
  - having regard to the conclusions of 24 May 2005 reached by the Council of Ministers for Education, Youth and Culture concerning new education and training indicators,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0074/2006),
- A. whereas the cultural and linguistic diversity of the European Union is now integral to European identity,
- B. whereas multilingualism facilitates more effective communication and better mutual understanding,
- C. whereas it is essential for the achievement of a People's Europe and the knowledge-based society, both of which are aims of the Lisbon strategy, for every citizen to have a practical grasp of at least two languages other than his own, the acquisition of just one common language of communication (as a lingua franca) not being sufficient,
- D. whereas the ability to understand and communicate in foreign languages and higher standards of linguistic proficiency are of major importance for the more effective deployment of manpower in Europe, language skills being a fundamental requirement for all European citizens with a view to promoting the full exercise of the rights and

freedoms arising from mobility within the European Union and creating a genuine European employment market,

- E. whereas greater and more widespread linguistic proficiency are goals against which to measure the quality of European education and training systems and two of the criteria for assessing progress towards the objective of making the European Union the most dynamic knowledge-driven economy in the world, as part of a more cohesive political union, united in its diversity,
  - F. whereas in March 2002 the Barcelona European Council called for the introduction of a linguistic proficiency indicator to bridge the current information gap regarding the actual language and communication skills of European Union citizens,
  - G. whereas while the Action Plan 'Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity' constitutes a positive step towards the achievement of the Barcelona objective (mother tongue+two), there is a clear need to step up EU efforts in this area,
  - H. whereas language proficiency certificates within the EU are many and varied, thereby making it difficult to compare the standards achieved by their respective holders and failing to generate the benefits to be gained from exchange of good practices, and thus also hindering the free movement of workers and students within the EU,
  - I. whereas a set of reliable indicators regarding individual levels of linguistic proficiency particularly among young people must be established, so as to introduce policies designed to offer high-quality language teaching,
  - J. whereas the 'Eurobarometer' survey of September 2005 revealed that on average only 50% of European Union citizens claim to be able to hold a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue, with enormous differences, however, between individual Member States,
  - K. whereas, according to the Commission's information, the average number of foreign languages taught at secondary school level falls far short of the target set at the Barcelona European Council of improving the mastery of basic skills, notably through the teaching of two languages from a very young age,
1. Welcomes the Commission proposal concerning the inclusion of a European Indicator of Language Competence among the criteria used by Member States under the 'Education and Training 2010' programme;
  2. Takes this opportunity to stress the importance of European indicators in assessing progress towards achieving common objectives under the Lisbon Strategy in the field of education and training and the importance of the 'Education and Training 2010' Programme for the comparison and formulation of national policies and the introduction of a European strategic framework for the transition to a knowledge-driven economy, by encouraging and exchanging good practices;
  3. Notes that the indicator in question seeks to establish accurately, reliably and at regular intervals on the basis of objective tests overall foreign language proficiency standards in all the Member States;

4. Considers that the language tests should also take bilingual and multilingual children into consideration;
5. Shares the Commission's view that in the initial phase this indicator should be used to assess linguistic proficiency in the five most widely taught languages in the Union's education and training systems (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish ); calls on the Commission and the Council, however, to take the necessary measures to extend these tests to a wider range of official Union languages without however undermining standards of teaching and development in respect of other languages not assessed by the indicator;
6. Believes that the existence of objective criteria for establishing levels of language proficiency and the introduction of a common reference framework in no way restrict the freedom of choice or the organisational methods of the various national educational systems and accordingly endorses the Commission recommendation regarding use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for the purposes of the European Indicator;
7. Calls on the Member States to participate actively in the implementation and development of the Indicator and give fresh impetus to language teaching, including through successful language immersion programmes;
8. Urges the Member States to promote multilingualism, by enhancing policies seeking to widen the present range of languages taught, giving priority to the common objectives established under the Lisbon Strategy;
9. Calls on the Commission actively to encourage information concerning the advantages of language learning from an early age, and considers that initiatives to inform the public of the advantages of foreign language proficiency, such as the European Day of Languages (26 September each year, a Council of Europe initiative) and the European Language Label (an EU initiative), should contribute more substantially to increasing multilingualism;
10. Endorses the Commission proposal regarding participation by the Member States and regional authorities with competence for language policy in developing the Indicator to the full, to set up a body consisting of Member State representatives to advise the Commission on policy issues, technical matters and all forms of technical support, and to monitor progress regarding the practical use of the Indicator in the Member States and those regions with competence for language policy;
11. Points out that the Indicator proposed by the Commission does not involve additional EU budget outlay, the estimated operating expenditure being met by the existing Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programmes and the new integrated Lifelong Learning programme;
12. Calls on the Commission and Council accordingly to ensure that the new integrated Lifelong Learning programme is endowed with the necessary resources for the promotion of language learning;
13. Calls on the Council and Commission to ensure that the next financial perspectives include sufficient funding for measures to make full use of the Indicator;

14. Calls on the Council to concur with the approach, parameters and timescales adopted by the Commission regarding the establishment and implementation of the European Indicator of Language Competence so as to complete the preparatory phase as soon as possible and speed up its implementation, given its particular importance as a policy-making instrument;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.