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*Committee on Culture and Education*

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## **DRAFT REPORT**

on Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment  
(2008/2225(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

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## MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

### on Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (2008/2225(INI))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 149 and 151 of the EC Treaty,
- having regard to Articles 21 and 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the Commission communication: 'Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment' (COM(2008)0566) and to the working document of the Commission services accompanying that communication (SEC(2008)2443, SEC(2008)2444, SEC(2008)2445),
- having regard to the Commission communication 'Framework for the European survey on language competences' (COM(2007)0184),
- having regard to the working document of the Commission services 'Report on the implementation of the Action Plan "Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity"' (COM(2007)0554), and to the working document of the Commission services accompanying it (SEC(2007)1222),
- having regard to its resolution of 10 April 2008 on a European agenda for culture in a globalised world<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 November 2006 on a new strategic framework for multilingualism<sup>2</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 April 2006 on measures to promote multilingualism and language learning in the European Union: European Indicator of Language Competence<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to Decision No 1934/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 July 2000 designating 2001 European Year of Languages<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Education, Youth and Culture Council of 21 and 22 May 2008, with specific reference to multilingualism,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted,, P6\_TA(2008)0124.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 314 E, 21.12.2006, p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 296 E, 6.12.2006, p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> OJ L 232, 14.9.2000, p. 1.

- having regard to the draft Council resolution of 20 and 21 November 2008 on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the EU and its Member States,
  - having regard to the opinion of the Committee of the Regions on multilingualism of 18-19 June 2008 and to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 18 September 2008,
  - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A6-0000/2008),
- A. whereas linguistic and cultural diversity entail characteristics which have a significant impact on the daily life of Europe's citizens in a context of increasing mobility and migration and advancing globalisation,
  - B. whereas the acquisition of diversified language skills is considered to be of major importance for all Union citizens, since it enables them to derive full economic, social and cultural benefit from freedom of movement within the Union and from the Union's relations with third countries,
  - C. having regard to the increasing importance of multilingualism in the context of relations between Member States and in the Union's common policies,
  - D. having regard to the need for the evaluation of multilingualism to be validated by recognised instruments, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and others,
  - E. whereas certain European languages form a vital bridge in relations with third countries and between peoples and nations from the most diverse regions of the world,
1. Welcomes the submission of the Commission communication COM(2008)0566 and the attention paid to it by the Council;
  2. Reiterates the positions it has upheld over time on multilingualism and cultural diversity;
  3. Insists on the need for recognition of parity between the EU's official languages;
  4. Stresses the crucial role of the EU institutions in ensuring respect for the principle of parity, in relations between Member States as also in EU citizens' relations with national administrations and international institutions and bodies;
  5. Recalls that the importance of multilingualism is not confined to the economic and social aspects and that attention must also be paid to those related to cultural and scientific creation and transmission and to the importance of translation, both literary and technical, in the lives of the citizens and for the EU's long-term development;

6. Stresses the vital importance of creating specific programmes to support translation and of setting up multilingual terminology database networks;
7. Proposes introducing a European Day of the Translator and Interpreter;
8. Stresses the vital importance of preserving the possibility for parents and guardians of choosing the official language in which their children are to be educated in countries with more than one official or regional language;
9. Stresses the need, in Member States with more than one language, to ensure full mutual intelligibility between those languages, especially in relation to senior citizens and to the legal system, health, administration and employment;
10. Emphasises the vital need for a thorough grounding in one's mother tongue, not only for educational success in general but, especially, also for the acquisition of acceptable levels of competence in other languages;
11. Stresses, further, the importance of a full knowledge of the host country's language for the full integration of immigrants and their families;
12. Recalls that for these reasons it is vital to ensure quality in this context;
13. Stresses the need to give sufficient importance to language learning at pre-school level;
14. Believes it is vital to promote mobility and exchanges of teachers, students and pupils in the language field; recalls that the fluid movement of language teachers in Europe will help ensure effective contact for as many of those professionals as possible with the native environment of the languages they teach;
15. Encourages and supports the introduction of mother-tongue minority local and foreign languages within school programmes and/or in the context of extracurricular activities open to the Community;
16. Proposes the creation of a profile for language teachers;
17. Recommends consultation of the European federations and associations of modern language teachers on the programmes and methodologies to be applied;
18. Insists on the need for policies to stimulate reading and encourage creative writing with a view to achieving these objectives;
19. Recommends and encourages the use of information and communications technologies as an indispensable tool in language teaching;
20. Suggests that an adequate degree of multilingualism should also be ensured in the media and in Internet content;

21. Encourages the EU to reap the potential dividends offered by European languages in its external relations, and calls for further development of this asset in cultural and economic dialogue with the rest of the world with a view to strengthening the EU's role on the international scene;
22. Advocates greater support for the international projection of the European languages which are widely spoken worldwide and constitute an asset for the European project in the light of the key importance of the linguistic, historical and cultural ties between the EU and third countries;
23. Believes that companies in the EU, and especially SMEs, should be provided with proper support for language instruction and use, thus facilitating their access to world markets and especially to emerging markets;
24. Considers that the coverage of the language competence indicators should be extended as soon as possible to all the official EU languages, without prejudice to their also being extended to other languages spoken and studied in Europe;
25. Recommends that the language competence indicators should also be extended to classical Greek and Latin, not only because these languages are part of a shared European heritage that is of major civilisational and cultural importance, but also because learning them facilitates further learning experiences and stimulates reflection on language;
26. Considers that the collection of data should include testing the four language skills, i.e.. understanding of the written language, understanding of the spoken language, written expression and oral expression;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Governments and Parliaments of the Member States.

## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Since the European Parliament has already examined the issue of multilingualism on earlier occasions, only a brief explanatory statement is needed here.

Your rapporteur endorses the Commission's view that the linguistic and cultural diversity of the EU constitutes an enormous competitive advantage, recalling the need for full support for language teaching and exchange programmes, in the educational and cultural spheres and both inside and outside the Union.

Since language is a factor of social inclusion, it is important to develop policies for supporting translation, both literary and technical.

The EU needs to derive maximum benefit from this advantage, wherever possible by means of dialogue with other regions of the globe, paying attention to the specific links existing in terms of language, history and culture between the EU and third countries.

The promotion of multilingualism is also closely linked to the audiovisual sector, ITC and the new concepts of access to culture and education, especially by means of online content. These contemporary trends in cultural exchange facilitate the natural coming-together of peoples, and here too multilingualism has a part to play.

The language competence indicators should be extended as soon as possible to all the official EU languages, without prejudice to their also being extended to other languages spoken and studied in Europe.

Your rapporteur believes it is vital that those indicators should cover all of the EU's official languages.