

SEÁN Ó RIAIN, JOZEF REINVRT

Information on Civil Society Platform on Promotion of Multilingualism and its Recommendations

Abstrakt (Platforma Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego Promowania Wielojęzyczności i jej rekomendacje). Podejmowane od 2001 r. zabiegi Komisji Europejskiej mające na celu promocję wielojęzyczności w Unii Europejskiej nie doprowadziły do zmiany sytuacji językowej; komunikacja odbywa się obecnie w ograniczonej liczbie języków dominujących. W 2009 r. Komisja zachęciła europejskie społeczeństwo obywatelskie do uczestniczenia w promocji wielojęzyczności oraz do przedstawienia własnych propozycji poprzez powołanie Europejskiej Platformy Społeczeństwa Obywatelskiego, której celem było sformułowanie konkretnych ram dla rozwoju polityki wielojęzyczności w Europie. Zajmowała się ona również kwestią znaczenia wielojęzyczności dla spójności społecznej i dialogu międzykulturowego oraz problemem równego poszanowania wszystkich języków Europy oraz stworzenia większych możliwości nauki języków.

Platforma rozpoczęła pracę w czterech grupach roboczych (GR):

GR1 – Edukacja (obejmująca naukę języków, propedeutyczne nauczanie języków, języki mniejszości, języki rzadziej używane, wczesną naukę języków, działania motywujące oraz promocyjne);

GR2 – Planowanie i polityka językowa (równość i użycie języków, zmiany strukturalne, obserwatorium językowe, możliwość powołania rzecznika językowych praw obywatelskich, możliwość stworzenia dyrektywy przeciwdziałającej dyskryminacji językowej);

GR3 – Zróżnicowanie językowe i włączenie społeczne (mniejszości, nauka języka kraju goszczącego, dialog międzykulturowy);

GR4 – Tłumaczenie i terminologia (tłumaczenie literatury, napisy w materiałach audiowizualnych, kultura, terminologia).

Praca członków Platformy (przedstawiciele 29 paneuropejskich organizacji pozarządowych) oparta była na odpowiedziach obywateli oraz organizacji pozarządowych większości państw członkowskich Unii Europejskiej na przeprowadzone kwestionariusze. Określono w ten sposób rekomendacje płynące prosto od członków europejskiego społeczeństwa obywatelskiego. Finalna wersja raportu Platformy oraz jej zalecenia zostały przedstawione Komisji Europejskiej 30 marca 2011 r. Komisja planuje wdrożyć je w trzecim projekcie uchwały dotyczącej komunikacji wielojęzycznej, który planowany jest na początek 2012 r.

Abstract. The European Commission's efforts to promote multilingualism in the EU since 2001 have not effected a change in the current language situation where the EU and

its citizens are drifting towards a narrow multilingualism of the dominant language(s). In 2009 the Commission invited EU civil society to participate in the promotion of multilingualism and present its ideas and recommendations through a new Civil Society Platform, which has aimed at formulating a coherent overall framework for the development of multilingual policy in Europe. This includes the importance of multilingualism for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, for parity of esteem for all European languages, and enhanced language-learning opportunities for all citizens.

The Platform set to work in four working groups (WGs):

WG1 – Education (including language learning, propaedeutic language teaching, minority languages, lesser used languages, early language learning, motivation and promotion)

WG2 – Language planning and policy (equality and use of languages, structural changes, linguistic observatory, possible language ombudsman and possible directive against language discrimination)

WG3 – Linguistic diversity and social inclusion (minorities, learning the language of the host country, intercultural dialogue)

WG4 – Translation and terminology (literary translation, subtitling, culture, terminology).

The members of the Platform (representatives of 29 pan-European NGOs) based their work on responses from citizens and NGOs of most EU Member States to detailed questionnaires. The following recommendations thus emanate from the heart of European civil society. On 30 March 2011 the final version of the Platform's report and its recommendations were presented to the Commission, which intends to use them in drafting its 3rd communication on multilingualism, planned for early 2012.

At the beginning of a new millennium in 2001 the European Union by declaring “European Year of Languages” launched a series of activities for the promotion of multilingualism. The EU has aimed its multilingualism policy at three main activities: 1) to encourage language learning and the promotion of linguistic diversity in society; 2) to promote a healthy multilingual economy; 3) to give citizens access to EU legislation, procedures and information in their own language.

As within the period of 10 years of the EU endeavour to promote multilingualism there has not been noticed a change in the current language policy guiding the EU and its citizens to narrow multilingualism of dominant languages, and to some extent in allowing a drift towards the domination of just one language, English. In the years 2007 until early 2010 there was a member of the European Commission (Commission) specifically charged with multilingualism policy, Mr Leonard Orban of Romania. However, that policy has not been continued by the current Commission, so that multilingualism policy has again become politically less salient.

In an effort to promote a broad multilingualism the Commission invited in 2009 for the first time in the promotion of multilingualism the EU civil society to participate in the process and present its ideas and recommendations through a new mechanism which it set up, the Civil Society Platform for the Promotion of Multilingualism (Platform). The goals of the Platform are: to promote multilingualism for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, to provide opportunities for migrants to learn the language of the host country and also to cultivate their own native language, to take advantage of the media which have the potential to open channels for intercultural dialogue, to

enhance multilingualism policy to secure the rights of all European languages (official, regional, minority and migrant languages), to secure language learning opportunities for all citizens, throughout their lives.

The platform was set up to hand in proposals in order to influence the decision-making process at open method of coordination and EU level and the design of the financial instruments (new generation of funding programmes 2014–2020). In that sense, the networks' potentials and inputs are very important.

Multilingualism policy, if sensitively framed and implemented by the EU institutions in close cooperation with Member States and regional authorities, has the potential to contribute towards the realisation of wider EU goals, such as bringing Europe closer to the citizen, and strengthening a pan-European identity in harmony with national and regional identities.

The Platform has therefore aimed at formulating a coherent overall framework for the development of multilingual policy in Europe. Indeed, while basic rules exist with regard to the use of official languages, and while there is a commitment to increase the teaching of languages with special attention to languages other than English, EU language policy remains piece-meal, lacking in direction, and 'alien' to the citizen.

The Platform set to work in four working groups (WG) on: 1) Education, 2) Language planning and policy, 3) Linguistic diversity and social inclusion and 4) Translation and terminology. The members (representatives of 29 European nongovernmental organisations) of the Platform based their work on responses received from citizens and NGOs of most EU Member States to a number of detailed questionnaires sent to their members throughout the EU.

On 30 March 2011 the final version of the Platform's report and its recommendations were presented to the Commission. The whole report contains the WG motivations for them which will be presented in the individual WG reports in Annex I. Annex II presents the data that underlies these reports. The Commission has undertaken to use the recommendations of the Platform as one of the inputs in drafting the Commission's 3rd communication "Strategy for Multilingualism" to be published at the beginning of 2012.

Each WG has submitted its policy recommendations for the areas that specifically concern them. We would like to provide you a preliminary brief overview of the Platform report and the WGs key recommendations. The following recommendations thus emanate from the heart of the European civil society are in line with the Commission requests not to be a repetition of already known ideas and methods, which have been already approved but brand new proposals from the bottom which citizens consider important even if they would be controversial.

Let me present you now the Platform's WGs recommendations:

1. WG on Education

Research

- *Research on language education pedagogy* from a plurilingual perspective on all levels. The Platform proposes to further promote successful programmes of bilingual and/or multilingual education and use them to build language education pedagogies for the development of plurilingual competences. Continuing research has a crucial part to play in this work.

- *Research the propedeutic qualities of various languages* to discover which second language is most likely to encourage subsequent language-learning. It is generally accepted that any second language which has been thoroughly learned tends to improve subsequent language-learning – there is a language-learning skills transfer effect. Latin and Ancient Greek have traditionally fulfilled this role in many European countries. The Platform recommends further pedagogical research of a propedeutic approach as to which language is most likely to encourage subsequent language-learning, thereby strengthening multilingualism, which involves orientation sessions in a language which is foreign to children in order to show them how languages operate and to teach them basic survival skills in that language. The idea behind it is the language-learning skills transfer effect and the goal of developing in children a multilingual consciousness. *An innovative UK programme supervised by the University of Manchester, entitled Springboard to Languages (www.springboard2languages.org), has been testing an alternative propedeutic approach since September 2006, involving four primary schools and approximately 250 pupils, with the following two aims: 1) to raise language-awareness, and 2) to prepare learners for the subsequent study of other languages. To this end, it used a language-orientation instruction course as a springboard, based on the basic grammar and 500 most frequently-used morphemes of the international planned language, Esperanto. The reasons for using Esperanto have to do with the regularity of this language, its grammatical transparency, the lack of exceptions to its rules, the fact that it gives access to the variety of cultures of all of its speakers throughout the world and that it does not impose any predetermined thought patterns or societal organization.*

- *Further research on the impact of language testing* in all varieties on plurilingual language tuition, teaching tools and teacher training and development.

Policy and practice

- *The creation of a forum for regular strategic review of language learning policies*, where the main EU institutions could work with civil society to help disseminate examples of best practice in language learning throughout the Member States – see the best practice examples from the Education subgroup's report.

- Member States, supported by members of the Platform and other interested parties, should *further develop a proactive framework to establish stronger relationships between non-formal education systems and formal education structures.*

- *To promote international recognition at EU level for linguistic diversity* by raising awareness amongst European institutions and citizens of the benefits of multilingualism and multiculturalism for social cohesion, economy and academic success.

Facilitation and sharing of best practice

- *A network of early-language-learning teachers should be developed.* There is still an urgent need to convince stakeholders about the benefits and advantages of early language learning.

- *Develop and disseminate appropriate methodologies for adult language learning,* help with the funding of staff and teacher training and development, to the highest standards.

- *Improve learning facilities for marginalized groups and with a lower level of education.* Systematic efforts are needed to give a taste of successful language-learning to far wider groups of Europe's population. This ties in well with the Europe 2020 priority of "reducing the drop out rate to 10% from the current 15%" (section 3.1).

- *Production of bi- and multilingual school textbooks for other subjects.*

2. WG on Language Policy and Planning

A language plan promoting equality and the use of Europe's languages

The EU has set out to be a space for living together in which respect for ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity prevails, and which guarantees that citizens can exercise their European citizenship on equal terms, without feeling excluded in any way, either as individuals or as a collective. The Union space should strive to include all the European diversities.

The EU has evolved an ad-hoc language policy based on the official status of Member State languages. *It is time to consider a substantive EU language plan and policy. The plan should set targets and timelines and would act to implement the rights and obligations set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and together work towards making a reality of the statement that 'all European languages are equal'. The plan should be:*

- *Comprehensive and inclusive,* it should take account of the true extent of multilingualism and language-learning in Europe and recognise that the benefits of a multilingual society can only be realised by having plurilingual individuals within it.

- *Citizen-centred,* it should take into account the wishes and needs of citizens in economic, social, educational, cultural and religious spheres as well as the needs of the wider society. *It should link with other policies and objectives* (e.g. policies for economic competitiveness and social cohesion). It should not be a policy which only interests linguists or educationalists.

- *It should cover all areas of language planning,* i.e. a) *status* (rules and regulations), b) *corpus* (creation of descriptive data, corpuses, tools such as dictionaries,

terminology etc., c) *acquisition* (learning of languages, including L1, L2 and LF) and *use* (planning opportunities to use each language).

- The Platform is in favour of a project for the development of *good quality (electronic) dictionaries from any European language to any other*. Certainly if we build on *the idea of personal adoptive languages*, it is of utmost importance to *guarantee direct access to the vocabulary* of these languages for all learners and (foreign) users of that language *without a need for a intermediate language*, which in most cases will be English. *Such a language plan would be designed to protect and promote all European languages.*

Creation of Good Conditions for Practical Work – structural measures

The Platform believes in *the need to focus on the process of creating good conditions within which the EU can continue to work for the promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity*. The following structural measures could help to create favourable conditions:

- ***Permanent Platform of EU level language NGOs:*** *The European Parliament voted at Plenary in 2004 that there should be an Agency for Linguistic Diversity.* The Platform is of the opinion that a simple network is not adequate, but that *it would be beneficial to create a permanent platform of network organisations (network of networks) as an instrument of dialogue between the European policy level and the local, regional and national language policy level, and social reality.* Both the European institutions and Member States could *support improved collaborative work between key actors and stakeholders – including associations, regional authorities and NGOs.* This may be done through supporting existing agencies and associations. *The three principal EU institutions – the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission – should work together to develop and implement a working forum for regular strategic review of language policies, to ensure better liaison between all levels involved in the formulation of language policy, and thus help diffuse examples of best practice in language planning and policy.*

This flexible and “soft” structure/network with financial support from the Commission could become the virtual laboratory for the ‘linguistic vision’ and one of its outputs could be to produce a feasibility study and business plan to develop and implement an Agency.

- ***Legal basis:*** *the creation of a legal basis that allows the EU to give structural financial support to network organisations in the field of language and culture and to interact with them as their interlocutors that represent civil society in the domains of culture and language.* These organisations should perform preparatory work such as dedicated policy-oriented research, formulation of proposals, dissemination of results, and creation of awareness. Given the nature of these network organisations they guarantee that all countries and languages are involved and – through their member organisations – reach the grass roots level.

Linguistic Observatory

It is recommended that there be a European linguistic observatory dealing with all European languages in regular use by a community, whether territorial or diaspora. It would be responsible for collecting data, acting as a watchdog of language use throughout Member States, monitoring numbers of speakers, implementation of legislation, teaching provision, courses and so on. Such an observatory would best be a part of the proposed Platform of Networks.

Direct support for endangered languages

The Platform calls on the Commission *to change the Community language programmes' criterion in order to facilitate access to EU language project funding for communities speaking endangered languages, and furthermore for the establishment of a specific fund for these languages from the existing budget.* There needs to be administrative simplification over grant applications proportionate to grant size, a change of criteria for pre-funding, and a lowering or preferably a removal of thresholds for grants to make it easier for small NGOs from endangered language communities to apply. It urges the Commission to support, through its programmes, the European level NGOs and other organisations, initiatives and activities, who work to develop and promote lesser-used languages and linguistic diversity.

Language Ombudsman

A language ombudsman, either as a new stand-alone office or attached to the EU Ombudsman office, could act as a one-stop-shop on all issues over language use and possible discrimination. One example is the Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages who is the ombudsman for English and French bilingualism in the federal government of Canada. The Irish Language Commissioner follows to some extent the Canadian model. The EU's linguistic complexity is far greater than that of Canada or Ireland. The proposal would therefore need more detailed consideration as to its feasibility in the EU context.

EU linguistic diversity Directive

With the coming into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, any discrimination based on language, or on membership of a national minority, is now prohibited. While we have 'respect for linguistic diversity' at the heart of the European project, one cannot *respect* something and idly stand by and watch it disappear. *The Platform calls on the EU to work towards a EU Directive on the respect for linguistic diversity and the prohibition, preferably the abolition of discrimination on the grounds of language.* The procedure could commence with a formal discussion on proposals with the various stakeholders and institutions. Following that the Platform would begin to formulate proposals over the next two years.

3. WG on Linguistic Diversity and Social Inclusion

To foster development of EU, national and regional language projects and initiatives to enhance the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups:

- *through new EU programmes related to the promotion of multilingualism, and existing programmes but in a more explicit way.*
- *creating tools (observatories, web sites etc.) for sharing good practice on multilingualism for social inclusion should be created and promoted, particularly in public and social services.*
- *promoting specific academic multidisciplinary research on the topic of multilingualism and social inclusion at EU-level.*

To foster a bottom-up approach to foreign language learning and multilingualism promotion programmes, and encourage the participation of civil society (NGOs, trade unions, foundations, grassroots movements, associations, etc.) at community level.

- Although the primary responsibility for providing educational and cultural services falls on member States, cooperation from a multi-governance approach should be encouraged.

To teach intercultural competencies as an integral part of language learning in preschools and schools to create an inclusive society, to combat xenophobia and discrimination.

- Member States should incorporate teaching intercultural and multilingual competences in their regular preschool and school curricula starting at a very young age.
- At community level *awareness raising activities on the issue of multilingualism should be organized, with participation of all the parties concerned. In local communities a bi-directional approach should be applied, with immigrants attaining a good competence in the dominant language(s) of the host country to stimulate reciprocal interest and creating better conditions for mutual understanding and respect.*

To further develop the rights of citizens to receive interpretation and translation in legal settings and public and social services (i.e. hospitals) and to prepare good training programmes in particular to the immigrants and their children.

4. WG on Translation and Terminology

In both literary and non-literary translation, measures should be taken to promote a more equal exchange between countries and cultures

- Such measures should include the collection and dissemination of data by Member States; the promotion of literary translations to and from less widely-used languages (LWULs); the participation of authors in cultural events in Europe and

beyond; and the setting up of European publishing offices, both within and beyond Europe.

Education and Training

- Measures needed to include mobility grants for translators; the international exchange of students and teachers; beginning translation training in early high-school; the foundation and support of translators' centres; the setting up of pan-European training courses, including professional experience abroad, for publishers.

Research and Development of Translation Technologies

- Necessary measures should include more concentration on the performing arts sector; the extension of existing European culture programmes to the performing arts; support for a database to connect all national platforms at EU level, to promote multilingual content; enhanced promotion of the subtitling of films; and support for subtitles, particularly in smaller linguistic areas.

At the end we would like to inform you on a study published by the Directorate-General for Translation of the European Commission at the beginning of this year ***“Lingua Franca: Chimera or Reality?”*** which has opened a discussion on the politically sensitive issue and presented three different approaches, whether the EU needs a common language or not and, if so, which one would be politically the most suitable and would meet linguistic requirements (communication and identification functions).

The Platform dealt with this issue ***“English as a ‘lingua franca’, approaches to fair linguistic communication”*** and made its recommendation.

As already pointed out, a polity of 27 states with 23 official languages is an enormous challenge. The public discourse of EU politicians stresses the need to maintain all the languages of the EU, for they are an essential component of European identity. The EU's linguistic reality looks different. It is characterised by the ever greater predominance of just one language, English. Recent publications have shown that the hegemony of English leads to disadvantages for non-Anglophones in general and in academia in particular. There is a growing awareness of the dangers emanating from the dominance of any one language, which is a clear threat to all other languages, whether they be national or minority languages, widely-spoken or not. Several options for language policy have been presented to find fair and democratic approaches to international communication, and an article by Dr Sabine Fiedler of Leipzig University was circulated to all Platform members. The article outlines the options as follows: (1) multilingualism/plurilingualism, (2) restriction to receptive skills (e.g. European Intercomprehension), (3) reduced variants of English, sometimes referred to as globish, and having a vocabulary as small as 1,500 words, e.g. the model 'English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)', (4) initiatives to revive an ancient language (e.g. Latin), and (5) the use of a planned language such as Esperanto.

The Platform identified three types of danger for the other languages, represented by an overwhelming dominance of English: (a) fewer opportunities to be learnt as foreign languages, (b) the loss of functional domains, e.g. as languages of science and scientific education and (c) even the extinction of languages as a result of substitution from one generation to another. In order to be effective language policy should address the three types of danger.

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