
Draft proposal for an all-European regional project

Context

- The Council of Europe wants every European citizen to have a command of their mother tongue plus two additional languages. EU Commissioner for multilingualism Leonard Orban states “*speaking many languages makes businesses and citizens more competitive and more mobile*”.
- The European position is clear and well articulated – and evokes strong reactions both for and against. Why the diversity of views? How good is the dialogue between diverse groups? Are lessons being learned?
- David Graddol claims in the British Council published **English Next**: “*As global English makes the transition from ‘foreign language’ to basic skill, it seems to generate an even greater need for other languages*”.
- Michael Byram, Professor of Education at Durham University and language policy advisor to the Council of Europe, draws out implications for the teaching of languages: “*In addition to raising competitiveness and mobility, language teaching should support the development of intercultural awareness, tolerance, social inclusion and a European identity*”.
- The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 seeks to deal with these among other issues.
- All this implies new roles for language teaching amidst demands for further education reform across Europe.

What roles can the UK and the English language play in the development of multilingualism?

- The UK has extensive experience in dealing with social and educational aspects of minority and migrant languages.
- As English is often the first foreign language taught, it can be a starting point and foundation for the learning of other languages.
- Thanks to the role of English as a global language, the teaching of English is relatively advanced in its methodology. Language professionals therefore have expertise to offer to the debate on how to develop coherent language curricula and materials for all languages (including mother tongue).
- Language teaching and learning approaches of the future will increasingly have to deliver general transferable language learning strategies, intercultural awareness, citizenship preparation, soft skills etc. The UK has expertise to offer in these areas.
- The UK is increasingly involved in the development of language policy at a European level (and is more committed than many realise).
- The UK is strongly aware of issues around the promotion and integration of minority and migrant languages, including Arabic, and is well placed to contribute to both policy and professional debate.

Project objectives

- To establish the British Council as a significant voice in the debate regarding language policy and teaching.
- To explore how issues relating to multilingualism are dealt with in communities and in language education in countries across Europe plus Russia and neighbouring countries including in Africa and the middle east.
- To offer European networks and institutions a platform for presenting and dovetailing their work and developing visions for future policy.
- To influence the debate about and support the implementation of educational reform across Europe.
- To bring new dimensions to the debate by involving professionals from diverse fields including language policy, language learning, intercultural awareness and citizenship.

Strategic outcomes

e.g. (depending on the emerging new phrasing of corporate outcomes for programme areas)

- The UK is regarded as a valued partner in Europe.
- The UK is seen as a facilitator of positive social change.
- The UK is seen as helping to increase social inclusion and participation in civil society.
- The UK helps to improve levels of shared understanding between UK and other societies including between Muslim and non-Muslim communities internationally.
- The British Council is recognised as a world authority in language teaching and as an organisation keen to learn from all sectors of society and feed their messages to those who influence policy and debate.
- The British Council has a mutually beneficial influence on the development of a language and social policy towards multilingualism in Europe

Research issues to explore and feed into debate

- How is multilingualism perceived by people 'on the edge' of Europe – geographically or in terms of social integration?
- How is multilingualism achieved in areas where it is a reality? (with a focus on e.g. EU accession states and countries 'on the edge' of Europe, northern Africa, near and middle east, and Russia)
- How do diaspora communities (e.g. in the UK) perceive multilingualism and social integration? What are the barriers and contributors to achievement? What support do they want / need?
- How does institutionalised language learning work in different European countries? Which languages are taught, who learns languages, how are they taught, who (really) sets the agendas?
- Which countries have developed Language Policy Profiles with support from the Council of Europe? How are they being followed up? What are the lessons learned? What next steps should be taken?
- How can English serve as a starting point for learning other languages (focussing on the teacher and the learner, teaching methodology and language learning strategies)?

Outputs

- Reports from perception research conducted across wider Europe and neighbouring countries.
- Reports reflecting current education practice and analysing needs in pre-service and in-service training in participating countries concerning the teaching of issues related to multilingualism (e.g. language learning strategies, intercultural awareness, citizenship skills).
- International events offering platforms for open and constructive dialogue, discussing research results and other issues and developing action points in working groups. Event participants come from diverse backgrounds - e.g. administrations, agencies, NGOs, social inclusion programmes etc. (2-4 major events?)
- Online interactions which continue and extend the dialogue, arising from participant engagement.

Target groups

- National and EU/CoE policy makers in the fields of foreign language learning, teaching and administration.
- NGOs, agencies, associations and institutions involved in integration issues.
- Curriculum/syllabus designers, materials designers, publishers in the foreign language field
- Representatives from teacher training institutions and teacher trainers (pre-service and in-service)
- Higher education professionals involved in language teaching and policy formation.
- Trainers in relevant fields – e.g. intercultural learning.
- Students and young professionals from multilingual communities or aspiring to become multilingual.

Contributions from the UK

Developing the project; research; participation in debate and events; evaluation.

British Council countries to be involved

To be determined (e.g. Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey, and countries from north Africa, the Levant and the middle east.)

Potential partners / networks

- CILT and CILT Scotland
- Council of Europe; and CoE Language Policy Profile co-ordinators
- European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz
- EU National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC)
- Socrates/Leonardo/YOUTH and other EU programmes
- UK education institutions and research councils (e.g. Arts & Humanities Research Council)
- Colleges of Europe in Bruges and Warsaw

Partners/event participants from other networks created through previous regional projects

- Advisors and 'Think Tank' members
- MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index)
- Intercultural Navigators / The Network Effect
- INDIE (Inclusion and diversity in education) / Challenges in Schools
- Open Cities / Creative Cities /

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