



UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Languages for mobility, jobs and active citizenship

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Workshop B

Languages for working opportunities

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From the very beginning, the EU's Language Education Policy (LEP) has been linked to the issue of enhancing working opportunities

European Commission

WHITE PAPER ON TEACHING AND LEARNING (1995)

- “Proficiency in several Community languages has become a precondition if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from the **occupational** and personal **opportunities** open to them in the border-free Single Market.”
- Everyone → 3 Community languages = 1+>2



Presidency Conclusions Barcelona European Council (March 2002)

- Essential goal of economic and social policies: **full employment**
 - Heads of state and government call for further action in E&T – “to improve the mastery of basic skills by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age“.
- ⇒ Reference to Community languages dropped
- ⇒ Languages for competitiveness



EP & Council (2006) – list of key competences for lifelong learning, among them

- Communication in the mother tongue.
- Communication in foreign languages, which involves ... mediation and intercultural understanding.

2008 Communication from the Commission ***Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment***

- Highlights the external dimension of multilingualism



In the past six years or so ...

Major developments relevant to languages in the labour market

- process of worldwide globalisation
 - internationalisation in many fields of human activity, including enterprise
 - increasing intra-European mobility and trade
 - large-scale migration into the Union
 - major advances in language and language-related technologies
- ⇒ Major changes in business language needs and language use



As regards employability, multilingual communication skills have reached a new level of importance

Commission initiatives

- (i) OMC thematic working group “Languages for Jobs” (2010-2011) – Final report: *Providing multilingual communication skills for the labour market*
- (ii) Business Platform for Multilingualism; report 2011
- (iii) CELAN – Language Strategies for Competitiveness and Employability (2011-2013)



A complementary initiative

LINCQ – Languages in corporate quality – a small-scale project carried out under the auspices of the the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz (AT)



Point of departure – the Languages for Jobs report

- ⇒ Overarching aim of the OMC group – to produce policy recommendations which can bring about a better match between demand and supply of language and communication skills on the European labour market.
- ⇒ Special emphasis on language teaching in the VET sector, including training of adult learners.
- ⇒ Need for a wider offer of languages taught and learnt in the E&T systems.



Discussion of select recommendations

(i) Improve the information flow about the language skills needs in the labour market

- regular surveys
- involvement of business representatives in continuous curriculum revision and innovation

BUT – SMEs frequently not aware of their needs, and of pertinent tools and resources provided by the language industry (language technology)

CELAN – Language Needs Analysis Application



(ii) Develop and offer dedicated language options directed towards particular occupations

- also important for enhancing learner motivation

BUT: who can foretell where students in VET, upper secondary and tertiary education will be in five, let alone in ten years from now?

HENCE some food for thought

- also teach linguistic know-how / skills required across different contexts in which multilingual competence is essential (report of Business Platform)
- make learning to learn a key issue
- enable learners to self-assess



(iii) Develop standardised diplomas / certificates required by employers as proof of language competences connected to specific professions and professional contexts, possibly linked to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

PROBLEM – employers (SMEs) interviewed in LINCQ indicated that they do not trust certificates – they test candidates themselves

ALSO – most interviewees did not know the CEFR, the European Language Portfolio, or Europass.



(iv) Validation and recognition of the outcomes of informal and non-formal learning

- increasing importance of competences acquired outside formal education because of (virtual) communication with speakers of other languages
- important as an incentive for learners to acquire competences relevant to the labour market
- also important for migrant workers

Recommendation: proper exploitation and further development of the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio, particularly the Dossier



(v) Provide facilities for vocationally oriented options in teaching the language of the host country to migrants, while recognising and further developing students' competences in their languages of origin.

A tremendously important issue – not least so for the children of migrants.

(vi) Languages alone are not enough – practical training must also be provided in related skills, such as entrepreneurship, communication skills and ability to work in multilingual and multicultural teams (= skills panorama) <= LINCQ



(vii) Increase opportunities for language learning and training in higher education

- languages in student mobility
- lack of contact between HEIs and the world (<- CELAN survey); Freie Universität Berlin

(viii) Not in “Languages for Jobs“, but in CELAN – the overarching importance of language technology tools for business-relevant language learning and language use

- not properly integrated into language teaching / training in any sector



IN SUM

Because of recent developments, languages have become infinitely more important for employability and businesses

Challenges

- education authorities / systems / institutions and businesses / business representative organisations must respond to this – JOINTLY
- the linguistic diversity of our societies must be fully exploited
- learners must be motivated



Opportunities

The multilingual and multicultural make-up of the populations of many of our education institutions provides a unique opportunity for preparing pupils and students for jobs in internationalised enterprises.

However, and the “Languages for Jobs“ report makes this absolutely clear – this opportunity can only be exploited if the teaching staff at our education institutions is properly prepared for this. The magic word -
MEDIATION