

# Languages for Jobs

Providing multilingual communication skills for the labour market



**Report from the thematic working group "Languages for Jobs"  
European Strategic Framework for Education and Training**

**(ET 2020)**

*This Report presents the outcomes of the OMC group "Languages for jobs" that the Commission has set up under the Education and Training 2020 framework. This is an independent report. The views expressed herein are those of the independent experts which do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission.*

Mrs Zehra ADIYAMAN, Ministry of National Education, Turkey  
Mrs Anna ARSENIEVA, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, Bulgaria  
Mr Mario AZZOPARDI, Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, Malta  
Mr József BAGÓ, Ministry of National Economy, Hungary  
Mrs Nathalie BAÏDAK, Eurydice-EACEA  
Mrs Olga BORODANKOVA, Eurydice-EACEA  
Mrs Kristin BROGAN, Institute of Technology Tralee, Ireland  
Mrs Marie ČERNÍKOVÁ, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Czech Republic  
Mrs Natalia GUIDO, Institute for the development of Vocational Training for Workers "ISFOL", Italy  
Mrs Karine JACQUES, ECOTEC (National Agency for Leonardo da Vinci Programme), UK  
Mrs Patricia JANISSIN, Ministry of National Education, France  
Mrs Danièle JANSSEN, Ministry of the French Community, Belgium  
Mrs Monica LIPPOLIS, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Italy  
Mr Wolfgang MACKIEWICZ, independent expert  
Mrs Jasminka MAJSEC, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatia  
Mr Panayiotis MAVROS, Ministry of Education and Culture, Cyprus  
Mrs Suzanne MEHRENS, National Agency for Education, Sweden  
Mr Franz MITTENDORFER, Centre for Vocationally Oriented Language Education, Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture, Vienna, Austria  
Mrs Kerstin MOLANDER, Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden  
Mrs Katrien MONDT, Flemish Ministry of Education and Training, Belgium  
Mr Jens NORLYK, Ministry of Education, Denmark  
Mr Ryszard RASIŃSKI, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Poland  
Mrs Irena RAUDIENĖ, Ministry of Education and Science, Lithuania  
Mrs Taina SAARINEN, University of Jyväskylä, Finland  
Mr Erik SANDVIK, Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, Norway  
Mrs Eleonora SCHMID, Cedefop  
Mrs Bronka STRAUS, Ministry of Education and Sport, Slovenia  
Mr Tõnu TENDER, Ministry of Education and Research, Estonia  
Mr Manfred THÖNICKE, Hamburg Institute for Vocational Education, Germany  
Mrs Mihaela TILINCA, National Centre for the Development of Vocational and Technical Education (CNDIPT), Romania  
Mrs Teresa TINSLEY, independent expert  
Mrs Murielle VERAGHEN, Ministry of the French Community, Belgium  
Mrs Anna WOJCIECHOWSKA, Ministry of National Education, Poland

## EUROPEAN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(ET 2020)

### PROVIDING MULTILINGUAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

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The working group has drawn up this report as a response to the main challenges associated with the provision of language skills for the labour market. It constitutes an appeal to sharpen the focus on employment-related aspects of language learning. The aim is to provide input for the current discussions at national and European levels on modernising education systems and quality assurance built on learning outcomes. However, the report's recommendations are not confined to the field of competence of Ministries of Education. They should spark off a multi-level dialogue between the worlds of work and education, involving companies, professional organisations, social partners and Ministries of Employment and Social Affairs.

The main challenge is for language teaching to become learner-focused, better geared to professional contexts and the needs of the jobs market. This, in turn, will improve learner motivation and the successful taking up and use of available opportunities. This will be to the benefit not only of learners but also those seeking to employ people who are well-trained and properly qualified to assume their professional responsibilities.

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the outcome of exchanges and work within the **thematic expert group "Languages for jobs"**, set up by the European Commission in 2010 as part of the Open Method of Coordination between the Commission and the Member States. With the objective of producing **policy recommendations which can bring about a better match between demand and supply of language and communication skills on the European labour market**, the group has collected, analysed and discussed examples of good practice, studies and relevant policy developments and challenges in the participating countries and at European level. Building on these exchanges, the group has come up with a set of recommendations, which can be seen as suggestions for action planning on regional, national, or European level. The findings of the group have **implications for a wide range of actors**, ranging from the educational institutions and institutions of vocational training, across employers and businesses to decision makers in the national Ministries.

The demand **for foreign languages and communication skills is steadily rising** on the European labour market. In order to reduce the gap between offer and demand of language skills and to increase the motivation of learners, the experts of the group encourage the development and dissemination of new methods of teaching languages. These methods should be learner-focused, practically oriented and more applied to professional contexts. **Effective communication and cultural awareness are important elements of language teaching**, as intercultural competence, ability to work in multilingual and multicultural teams, flexibility and good communication skills are highly demanded by the employers. Since these skills can be acquired or enhanced through spending a study exchange or work placement abroad, **mobility of both learners and teachers** needs to be further increased and supported. **Partnerships between local and regional authorities, business and education** could be developed for the purpose of increasing funding for mobility and language preparation in connection with mobility on all educational levels.

Special attention is dedicated to **language teaching in the vocational education and training sector**, as this is an area in which progress is needed. Specialised methods of language teaching have to be accommodated in order to respond to professional needs of the learners in vocational training. Therefore, **specialised teacher training for language teachers in vocational education and training** needs to be developed and networking between such institutions is encouraged and possibly financed through future European

programmes. The CLIL method has been seen as a promising approach worth applying in vocational training context, although specialised training and very good team work between different categories of teachers are necessary for its success. Both **public authorities and companies should ideally be involved in the financing** of vocationally oriented language training in general and the linguistic preparation of mobility actions and work placements abroad in particular. **The new generation of EU education programmes** is to be explored with regard to opportunities for partnership on different levels. In order to improve the **dialogue between education and the world of work**, regional skills councils and similar forms of collaboration is encouraged with a view to enabling employers to take part in the continuous evaluation of teaching syllabuses and to contribute to guidance of students concerning their career choices.

Employers require **diplomas/certificates as a proof of language competence**, which is why the testing and accreditation methods connected to language competences relevant for professional purposes should be developed. **The new SurveyLang methodology** through the Europe-wide consortium set up by the European Commission within the framework of the European Indicator for Language Competences could be exploited for this purpose. The language skills acquired outside the formal education system should also be acknowledged, for example through the dossier accompanying the Europass Language Passport. The Council of Europe's **Common European Framework of Reference**, which provides the structure for SurveyLang and most other assessment methods for language competences, provides transparency and authenticity. Education authorities in Member States and the European Commission in collaboration should explore this framework even further and integrate it in a common approach with the aim to provide proof of appropriate skills for various occupations.

Another recommendation of the group is that **a wider offer of languages taught and learned** in the educational and training systems should be promoted. Although English is extremely important, it is other languages that will provide a competitive edge. A variety of language skills are needed and therefore regular surveys of the need for language skills on the labour market should be carried out nationally and brought to the attention of education planners and careers advisers. **Vocationally oriented language training of adult learners** as a means of supporting career changes and lifelong learning should also be encouraged.

The experts also concluded that **languages brought by immigrants should be valorised and used strategically**. At the same time, facilities for teaching the language of the host country to migrants, preferably with vocationally oriented options, must be ensured.

Employers need continuous support in order to understand how to best exploit language skills of their employees. Trade promotion organisations can be involved in informing companies of various measures that can improve their language management, such as **offering traineeships to foreign students, cooperating with universities or involving their staff in language training for special purposes**. To encourage companies to collaborate with the education sector and contribute financially to targeted language education, a business language label could be awarded (e.g. by the national chambers of commerce) to companies providing excellence in multilingual business communication.

A [compendium of good practices](#) illustrates the findings of the report.



## 2. INTRODUCTION – POLICY CONTEXT

Europe's vision for 2020 is to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy.<sup>1</sup> Improving the outcomes of education and training and investing in skills and the opportunity to acquire and develop skills throughout life are important prerequisites to achieve this goal. The New Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training<sup>2</sup> ("ET 2020") supports the Europe 2020 strategy and calls for action to "improve the quality and efficiency of education and training". It aims at ensuring that the assessment of future skill requirements and the matching of labour market needs are adequately taken on board in education and training planning processes.

The 2008 Communication on *Multilingualism: An asset for Europe and a shared commitment*<sup>3</sup>, pointed out the link between languages and employability, outlining that "linguistic and intercultural skills increase the chances of obtaining a better job" and therefore in particular "students in VET should have access to practice-oriented language provision".

The Council Resolution of 2008 on a *European strategy for multilingualism*<sup>4</sup> further presented multilingualism as "a factor in the European economy's competitiveness and people's mobility and employability". It highlighted the need to support languages as a way for small and medium-sized companies (SME's) "to broaden their access to markets", to "promote language skills in career development", to "provide job-specific language courses in vocational education and training (VET)" and to "use the linguistic competences of citizens with migrant backgrounds".

Pursuing the work on language learning was among the 2009-2011 priority areas of ET 2020. Already in the March 2002 *Barcelona European Council conclusions* Member States had committed themselves to giving learners the opportunity to learn two foreign languages from an early age.<sup>5</sup> The 2006 Recommendation on a *Key Competence framework* included

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<sup>1</sup> Communication from the Commission Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth COM(2010) 2020 final <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>2</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020), OJEC C 119, 28/05/2009 P.2–10 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:01:EN:HTML>)

<sup>3</sup> Communication of 2008 on Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment, COM(2008) 566 [http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/com/2008\\_0566\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/com/2008_0566_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism, OJEC C 320, 16/12/2008, P.1–3 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:320:0001:01:en:HTML>)

<sup>5</sup> Barcelona European Council 15-16 March 2002, Presidency conclusions <http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/council-eu-30.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none>

communication in foreign languages as one of the eight key competences all 'individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.'<sup>6</sup>

The Bruges communiqué of 2010<sup>7</sup> highlighted the need for authorities to "ensure the provision of language learning and intercultural competences in VET curricula".

According to the communiqué, "Opportunities for language learning for both learners and teachers in VET, and the provision of language training adapted to the specific needs of VET, with a special emphasis on the importance of foreign languages for cross-border cooperation in VET and international mobility" should be promoted.

To ensure that supply meets demand is a shared responsibility between education and training, labour market actors and social partners. Establishing trends, identifying current labour market needs and anticipating future requirements is important to inform decision makers within education and training systems. Trade promotion organisations can provide valuable information on language and intercultural competence requirements. On European level, the actions within the flagship initiative "*An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs*"<sup>8</sup> complement national and regional measures. The European Commission has initiated a structured dialogue with a number of stakeholder groups, bringing together the interests of employer organisations, professional organisations and trade unions. One of these groups is the European Business Platform for Multilingualism, which aims at raising awareness about the needs for language skills in international business and providing companies with the tools they need for improving their multilingual business communication. The Business Platform has launched a project called CELAN (Network for the promotion of language strategies for competitiveness and employability).<sup>9</sup> Within the language education sector the exchange of experiences and good practices on European level has an important role to play. This report is to be seen in that context.

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<sup>6</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC) <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:394:0010:0018:en:PDF>

<sup>7</sup> The Bruges communiqué: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/vocational/bruges_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Communication of 2010 on "An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment", COM(2010) 682 final <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=6328&langId=en>

<sup>9</sup> Project launched by the European Business Platform for Multilingualism: <http://celan-project.blogspot.com/>

### **3. WORK PROCESS AND DEFINITIONS**

#### *3.1. Working methods*

In Spring 2010, the Member States were invited by the Director General for Education and Culture of the European Commission to nominate experts for a thematic working group within the field of "languages for jobs".

The main objective of the group was to establish policy recommendations on how to enhance the role of languages in improving the chances of employment, to be submitted to the Ministers of Education, as a part of the general review of the multilingualism policy scheduled in 2011/2012.

The group has carried out the following tasks:

- a) collected and exchanged information on relevant policy developments and challenges in the participating countries and at European level;
- b) collected, analysed and discussed examples of good practice and operational challenges;
- c) identified priority areas for action and coordination at national and EU level in the light of existing good practices and the EU Information Initiative on languages for SME's;
- d) proposed and helped develop further actions supporting objectives that have been determined and which will effectively contribute to the shaping of the new EU Education programmes;
- e) drafted appropriate strategic and operational recommendations, to be submitted to the Ministers of Education in October 2011.

The group met three times in 2010 and three times in 2011. A large conference providing the opportunity for the stakeholders and the government representatives to meet and discuss issues linked to languages and employability was held in September 2010.

The discussions have been enriched by contributions from a number of related Commission services. Representatives of CEDEFOP and Eurydice have participated in every meeting.

Contributions have also been received from the School education unit concerning key competences, from the University-Business Forum, from the Leonardo da Vinci unit for Vocational Education and Training, from the Adult education unit, from the Lifelong Learning policy unit and from DG Industry and Enterprise.

### *3.2. Scope*

The group has sought to complement the general discussion about matching demand and supply on the labour market. The work has focused on language competence for occupational purposes from the perspectives of vocational education and training. However, the conclusions of the group have implications for all educational levels and sectors.

The recommendations are to be seen in conjunction with the main strategic priorities of the European Commission in the field of Education and Training, including the two flagship initiatives Youth on the Move and Agenda for New Skills and Jobs.

The findings of the working group have implications for a wide range of actors, ranging from the learners and teachers themselves, across employers and businesses to decision makers in the national education departments. The report is a first part of an agenda for change. Dissemination and follow-up will be discussed in a wider context and possibly lead to a second phase involving the working group.

### *3.3. Definitions*

For the purposes of this report, the group has agreed on the following definitions:

**Employability** is understood as the combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment and to progress during their career.

**Multilingualism** refers to both a person's ability to use several languages and the co-existence of different language communities in one geographical area.

**Mother tongue/ First language(s)** refer to the first language a child acquires and uses. In some cases children will be fully bilingual and thus may not actually have one first language, but perhaps two or more languages.

**Second language** is used to describe a language widely used in the surrounding environment which is not considered to be a foreign language.

**Language of instruction** – Language in which curriculum subjects are presented.

**Foreign language** – A language which is not usually used in the surrounding social environment.

**Languages for specific purposes** is a teaching method designed to meet specific (mainly professional) needs of the learner. For that reason, it always integrates the language learning and subject learning approaches. Great emphasis is put on the practical outputs of language learning.

**Mediation** involves understanding and problem solving in a specific situation. In the context of this report, mediation is always linked to a professional situation and context. "Mediators" are understood as professionals who convey messages between (business) partners who can't understand each other directly due to foreign language deficits and cultural differences.

**Skill** means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

**Competence** means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and /or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

**Skill is a sub-set of competence.** Competence = skill + ability to effectively apply it whenever necessary.

**Learning outcomes** – statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

**Vocational education and training (VET)** - Education and training which aims to equip people with knowledge, know-how, skills and/or competencies required in particular occupations or more broadly on the labour market.

**CLIL (Content and language integrated learning)** is an approach in which a foreign language is used in to teach certain subjects in the curriculum with the aim of developing both language skills and content knowledge.

**Immersion learning** is when the language of learning is a second language.

#### 4. DEMAND FOR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Languages are at the heart of the European project: they reflect different cultures and, at the same time, provide a key to understanding them. There is a clear role for the European Commission to support and complement the Member States in their promotion of multilingualism: citizens who speak more languages can reap the full benefits of free movement in the European Union and can integrate more easily in another country for study or work.

Seen from an employment perspective, language skills are always a means to an end. Academics as well as students in initial vocational education and training need to make sure that their language skills become part of a qualifications profile that matches the future requirements on the labour market. The demand for foreign languages is steadily rising. Gradually more employers adopt recruitment strategies reflecting the fact that they operate in a multilingual society and/or compete on global markets.

##### *4.1. An increasingly multilingual labour market*

Language skills are considered by employers as one of the ten most important skills for future graduates. In a recent Eurobarometer study<sup>10</sup> 40 % of recruiters in the industry sector highlighted the importance of language skills for future higher education graduates.

Across Europe, the awareness of the importance of language skills varies considerably between countries. According to the Eurobarometer it is lower in the UK than anywhere else in Europe. However, a recent desk research<sup>11</sup> commissioned in the UK by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, nonetheless shows an important level of demand for language skills. Through monitoring of the language requirements in vacancy notices, the researchers found more than 2000 requests for 20 different languages over a period of three months.

Language requirements vary according to the position and role within the company. The CEMS group of management training institutions pursues a strategy of producing graduates with a minimum of two foreign languages, English plus one. The group carried out a study among large multinational corporations to find out just how high they rate language skills of

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<sup>10</sup> Eurobarometer 304, 2010 "[Employers' perception of graduate employability](#)".

<sup>11</sup> Sean Mulkerne and Anne Marie Graham, Universities Council of Modern Languages (2011): Labour market intelligence on languages and intercultural skills in Higher Education: <http://tinyurl.com/6gw91bv>

new recruits.<sup>12</sup> For senior management positions in international business, at least a very high level of English is expected. For key positions within sales and marketing, multilingualism with fluency and negotiation skills in several languages is generally highly rated. For positions within production, logistics, economy and finance, there are generally no language requirements beyond English. However, the report shows that the knowledge of more than one language is often seen as a demonstration of cultural openness and adaptability.

As smaller companies are getting more and more international, they gradually become more aware of language barriers and what it takes to break them. According to a study about the internationalisation of European SME's published by the European Commission in 2010,<sup>13</sup> when companies start exporting, language and cultural barriers are perceived as important obstacles.

Another recent study focused on the future skills needs in micro and craft type enterprises.<sup>14</sup> The report shows that there is a general awareness among these very small entities that they will need to communicate with clients and suppliers on foreign markets and to process "market intelligence" from several countries.

The importance of having a language strategy has been highlighted through the so-called PIMLICO report which was carried out during 2010.<sup>15</sup> The report was the first phase of the European Commissions initiative to promote the greater use of language management strategies by European small and medium-sized enterprises. The report features models of best practice in 40 European SMEs, which have been selected for their significant trade growth as a result of progressive language strategies. Recruiting multilingual staff features prominently among these strategies.

The next sub-sections of the report "Languages for Jobs" elaborate further on language requirements on the labour market. However, it is a very complex issue and there is not nearly enough information available to allow employers, education and training authorities and learners to make informed decisions about how much to invest in language skills. There are short-term needs to deal with as a result of rapid market developments and there are long-term

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<sup>12</sup> Hervé Didiot-Cook, Valérie Gauthier, Koen Scheirlinckx (2000) Language needs in business, a survey of European multinational companies. CEMS Inter-faculty Group for Languages Joint Study Project <http://www.hec.edu/var/fre/storage/original/application/7ca31409fee3f05c77b4a3d9286927d2.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Internationalisation of European SME's [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/market-access/files/internationalisation\\_of\\_european\\_smes\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/market-access/files/internationalisation_of_european_smes_final_en.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Study published in 2011 on the European Commission's entrepreneurship pages: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/crafts-micro-enterprises/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/crafts-micro-enterprises/index_en.htm)

trends that are linked to the macro-economic parameters for growth and competitiveness. In both cases, better ways of anticipating and identifying trends concerning the need for language skills is one of the recommendations of this report.

#### *4.2. Many languages are needed*

English is clearly an extremely important language for international exchange and is increasingly regarded as a basic skill. However, according to the report of the European Business Forum for Multilingualism<sup>16</sup>, led by Viscount Etienne Davignon, English only is not enough: "Although it appears certain that English will keep its leading role as the world business language, it is other languages that will make the difference between mainstream and excellence and provide a competitive edge".

In large parts of Europe and beyond, English is already considered more as a basic skill than a foreign language. Speaking like a native speaker is becoming less relevant as English becomes a component of basic education in many countries.<sup>17</sup> Against that background, the need to maintain the advantage by moving beyond English will be felt more acutely.

It is a paradox that companies in countries with a generally high level of English can experience communication problems when trying to do business with countries with a much lower level of English and still not recognise that they need additional languages. In a Danish study of 2007<sup>18</sup> companies declared that they encounter language barriers in particular in China, France, Germany and Russia. However, it was the perception of a majority of the respondents that the source of the problem was the insufficient English of the foreign trade partner! This indicates an overrating of the universal use of English as lingua franca for international trade in combination with a lack of awareness about the significance of other languages.

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<sup>15</sup> PIMLICO: "Promoting, Implementing, Mapping Language and Intercultural Communication Strategies in Organisations and Companies" (European Commission, 2011). Study available on [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/evidence-from-research/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/evidence-from-research/index_en.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Companies work better with languages (Recommendations from the Business Forum for Multilingualism established by the European Commission, 2008). Available on [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/documents/key\\_docs/languages/davignon\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/documents/key_docs/languages/davignon_en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Research carried out by the British Council draws attention to the extraordinary speed of change to issues affecting English, especially the two reports by David Graddol "Future of English" (1997) and "English Next" (2006). <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-englishnext.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Dansk Industri: Research report (only in Danish) about languages in Danish export companies carried out in collaboration with the Copenhagen Business School: [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/files/di-report\\_da.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/files/di-report_da.pdf)



[Good practice](#) in awareness raising and matching supply and demand: UK: Languages work; Ireland: IoTs Languages Strategy Network; Italy: "Let it fly" – research concerning vocationally oriented language training needs and language learning promotion.

#### *4.2.1 Languages of main trading partners*

The large ELAN survey<sup>19</sup> carried out among almost 2000 SME's in 2006 showed that the languages on top of the wish lists of European SME's apart from English were German, French, Russian and Spanish.

Globalisation is rapidly changing the context for trading. Arabic is gaining importance as a language for international trade. According to the OECD, China could overtake the United States and Germany to become the world's largest exporter in the next five years. By 2030 the top six world economies could be China, followed by the United States, India, Japan, Brazil and Russia. Emerging markets are increasingly important for all European companies and adequate language skills make it possible to compete anywhere in the world.

The importance of cultural understanding when building long-term trading relations can not be over-estimated. This leads employers to look for people with experience from different countries having shown that they are able to adapt to different cultures. Both overseas students and migrant workers can act as cultural mediators for companies wanting to enter new markets. Cultural training is also increasingly used by internationally successful companies.

The already mentioned PIMLICO study presents examples of companies having used languages more strategically for expanding their business abroad, resulting in considerable increases in sales turnover. The report shows that the choice of which languages to use has often been circumstantial. The companies featured in the PIMLICO report have used a variety of different languages in order to seize business opportunities on as many markets as possible. Their philosophy has been to use the language of their potential customers, wherever in the world these may be located. In order to do so, they have looked for language competences

very broadly. Native speakers or graduates of less used languages have been contracted for longer or shorter periods of time, in order to break new ground, sort out the initial paper work and build up business relationships.

#### 4.2.2 Languages of neighbouring countries

Member States report an increasing demand in border regions for bi-lingual professionals for developing border trade but also for ensuring social services for people that commute between neighbouring countries.

The Austrian *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* has published several reports and research papers<sup>20</sup> projecting future needs in Austria. It appears that English is far from sufficient as a lingua franca for doing business in Central and Eastern Europe, where German and Russian are still frequently used for international trade. In addition to these main languages which, in Austria, also include Italian, companies operating on regional levels and doing cross-border business certainly welcome language skills in Czech, Slovak, Hungarian or Slovene – depending on which partners they do business with. Any such competence will not only have a very positive impact on business relations spanning across linguistic and political borders but on the development of social and intercultural awareness and on mutual relations in general.

[Good practice](#) in learning the language of the neighbouring country: Czech Republic and Germany: Schiller Gymnasium.

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<sup>19</sup> ELAN Study: "Effects on the European Union Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise" (European Commission, 2006). Full study available on [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/files/elan-full-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/languages-mean-business/files/elan-full-report_en.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> *Fremdsprachen für die Wirtschaft* (Foreign languages for business), a compilation of research papers and reports published by the Austrian *Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft* (2008). Report in German available on <http://www.ibw.at/media/ibw/fb143.pdf>

### 4.2.3 Languages brought by immigrants

Immigrants have brought a wide range of languages with them: it is estimated that at least 175 nationalities are now present within the EU's borders.<sup>21</sup> Due to these and other factors, thousands of European work places have become more international and more multilingual.

The Education Ministers of the EU insisted on the importance of languages in their Conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background of 2009.<sup>22</sup> They stressed that the successful integration of migrants into society remains a precondition for Europe's economic competitiveness and for social stability and cohesion. The Conclusions point out that although the primary focus should remain on the host language(s), encouraging pupils to acquire or maintain knowledge of their heritage language can bring benefits professionally in terms of future employability. Member States are invited to provide specialised training in managing linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as in intercultural competences, for school leaders, teachers, trainers and administrative staff.

One example of a concentration of a multicultural work force is the airport London Heathrow. In 2004, CILT, the national Centre for Languages in collaboration with the London West learning and skills council commissioned a language audit among the employees. In the sample of 150 staff interviewed during the course of the project, 27 different first languages were identified and a total of 45 languages recorded as being spoken. The report<sup>23</sup>, which was published in March 2005, contains recommendations about how to use these multilingual resources to further develop and improve customer service in the terminals of London Heathrow. Other findings cover the training needs, including the support in English as a second language, which were made apparent through the audit. The variety of ethnic and linguistic background of staff members provides both opportunities and challenges for their employers. The awareness about this, and the ability to use this knowledge strategically, can set examples for other workplaces with diverse work forces.

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<sup>21</sup>Eurostat, *Europe in Figures: Eurostat Yearbook 2006-2007*, Luxembourg 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Council conclusions on the education of children with a migrant background, Brussels 26 November 2009: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/111482.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/111482.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.rln-london.com/pdf/heathrow\\_talking\\_summary.pdf](http://www.rln-london.com/pdf/heathrow_talking_summary.pdf)

OECD has carried out a series of reviews examining migrant education in Europe.<sup>24</sup> The policy recommendations for teaching the language of the host country to migrants, in general education and in VET, essentially aim at making a second language (the language of the host country) operational and used for practical purposes. Therefore, there are conclusions about practically oriented teaching methods that could be applied to the teaching of foreign languages across the board.

Good practice in teaching the language of the host country to immigrants: Sweden: Swedish for immigrants; Belgium (French community): Immersion French as a foreign language for recently arrived children.

#### *4.3. Labour market needs – putting language skills into context*

Companies who are looking for language skills are generally in search of recruits with the ability to apply those skills to a variety of different work situations. They are also looking for good communicators regardless of language and for people with cultural competence, ability to work in multilingual and multicultural teams, flexibility and international experience.

In some Member States the discussion about partial skills and job specific language competences is considered as stating the obvious, but not everywhere.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)<sup>25</sup> has been developed by the Council of Europe and provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe and beyond. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which a language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

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<sup>24</sup> OECD Reviews of migrant education – closing the gap for immigrant students, Policies, practice, performance [http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_39263294\\_44870901\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3746,en_2649_39263294_44870901_1_1_1_1_00.html)

<sup>25</sup> Council of Europe, Education and languages, CEFR: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp)

There are examples of Member States where the CEFR has been further developed into job specific standards, building on agreed profiles for individual jobs. The profiles have been developed by educational institutions and employers in collaboration.

Other initiatives to create job-specific language standards can be found in the database of European multilateral projects<sup>26</sup>, either developed within the sector of vocational training (Leonardo da Vinci) or within the centralised programme for languages (Lingua or Key Activity Languages).

In addition to a certain level of language proficiency, other competencies are required such as intercultural competences, mediation skills, negotiation skills, etc. Going back to the Eurobarometer quoted in section 4.1 above, the skills most highly valued by employers across the board are team working skills (67%), followed by sector-specific skills, communication skills, computer skills, being able to adapt to new situations, ability in reading/writing and analytical and problem-solving skills. Between 58% and 67% of respondents consider these skills as very important for new recruits. The study explored the job market for university graduates and similar surveys among SME's point in the same direction.

## **5. LANGUAGE OFFER IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS**

### *5.1. A gap between offer and demand*

In the report of the Business Forum for Multilingualism in 2008 some clear messages were addressed to the education authorities: "We would like to see multilingualism being encouraged more actively at all school levels. First and foremost, the choice of languages needs to be widened. At higher levels, learning methods need to be more applied and practice oriented. Proper recognition should be awarded for language skills in school curricula and at a later stage in the assessment of job candidates. In a different context, language skills need to be acknowledged in an appropriate way in centrally negotiated agreements between the social partners."

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<sup>26</sup> EVE – The European Commission's single information point on results of funded projects: [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/eve/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/eve/index_en.htm)

Although most Member States increased language learning provision in primary and secondary education between 1999 and 2005, this largely involved English.<sup>27</sup> In nearly half of the Member States, students still do not have the opportunity to study two languages during compulsory schooling. The number of languages offered and the level of outcomes in VET may vary considerably between sectors, types and levels of programmes (e.g. more languages in the tourism sector than in others; difference between school-based VET that allows progression to higher education and apprenticeship programmes). Generally, however, despite an increasing trend since 2000, VET learners seem to acquire fewer foreign languages than those in general streams and lacking language skills still remain a barrier to mobility in VET.<sup>28</sup>

According to "Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe", published by Eurydice in 2008<sup>29</sup>, only 2.7% of all languages learnt by pupils in general secondary education in the EU are other than French, English, Spanish, German and Russian. Eurydice does not publish any specific data on language teaching in vocational education.

In several countries, the percentage of pupils learning French and German has been in more or less steep decrease since the previous publication of Key Data. A parallel slight increase in the number of Spanish learners across Europe does not necessarily reflect labour market needs. German is highly sought after by employers and in several countries there is a pronounced deficit of people with German language skills, both university graduates and people in vocational training. Ireland, UK, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe are countries where German speakers are highly in demand.<sup>30</sup>

Employer need for languages skills goes far beyond the languages commonly taught in schools and the wider languages capital present in our schools has the potential to supply

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<sup>27</sup> M. Strubell et al., *The diversity of language teaching in the European Union*, 2007 (Report to the European Commission, DG EAC) [http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/divlang\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/pdf/divlang_en.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Cedefop: A bridge to the future. European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10. Cedefop reference series.: Luxembourg: Publications office of the European Union [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3058\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3058_en.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Eurydice, *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*, 2008 Edition, <http://www.eurydice.org/portal/page/portal/Eurydice/showPresentation?pubid=049EN>.

<sup>30</sup> For example Sonja Vandermeeren: German language needs in Danish companies, Hermes, Journal of linguistics nr 31-2003: [http://download1.hermes.asb.dk/archive/download/H31\\_02.pdf](http://download1.hermes.asb.dk/archive/download/H31_02.pdf)

needs not only in rapidly-growing languages of global business such as Chinese, Arabic and Russian, but in rarer languages needed for niche markets.<sup>31</sup>

Several European and national initiatives contribute to a gradually more conscious approach to the modernisation of education systems in order to fulfil the needs of the job market. The recent flagship initiative "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs" builds on past development but sets out more ambitious goals for the future, mainly that "education and training systems must deliver the right mix of skills, including digital and transversal key competences, media literacy, and communication in a foreign language". This Agenda calls for the creation of an EU skills panorama, where language skills are considered a key competence for European citizens to increase their employability and the competitiveness of the European economy.

With regard to languages, the implementation of the actions initiated in the Agenda will not be a quick and easy fix. It will be a real challenge to make a new generation of national curricula respond to present and future language needs.

### *5.2. Dedicated language content for occupational purposes*

Building in job specific language teaching in vocational education and training on all levels can be motivating for learners who might otherwise be less interested in or avoid foreign languages. Dedicated teacher and trainer training is crucial in this context.

As regards language education for employability and more specifically within vocational education and training, the objective clearly stretches beyond the development of a merely linguistic repertoire which enables the learner to carry out certain language activities in some general or particular professional context. It includes the readiness and ability to communicate successfully, the criteria of success being defined by the nature and purposes of the tasks which are set and by the contextual and situational parameters that are determined by a particular professional challenge or environment.

Against this background, VET-oriented language teaching in some Member States includes "mediation" as a specific discipline which is always linked to a professional situation and context.

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<sup>31</sup> "Language Capital" – mapping the languages of London's school children, Eversley et al (2010): [http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/news/news\\_items/language\\_capital.aspx](http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/news/news_items/language_capital.aspx)

In several countries, language skills are required as part of skills profiles for certain occupations. The level and orientation of such occupationally adapted language skills are thoroughly specified and reflected in the diploma exams. On European level, this approach will be reflected in the development of the European Skills Panorama within the flagship initiative "An agenda for new skills and jobs".

Excluding primary schools that have introduced early foreign language learning into the curriculum, some 3% of all mainstream schools in Europe are estimated to be using content and language integrated learning methodologies (CLIL). The proportion of private schools is considered much higher. There are indications that such methodologies are now increasingly entering vocational education.<sup>32</sup> CLIL is seen as providing a framework for achieving best practice without imposing undue strain on either curricular time or resources. One of the success factors has been that the approach is seen to open doors on languages for a broader range of learners. It therefore has particular significance in terms of vocational education. However, teachers, trainers and school leaders are faced with considerable challenges as the teaching of CLIL requires specially trained teachers and trainers, good organisation and very good team work between different categories of teachers (e.g. language teachers and teachers of occupation specific areas, language teachers and teachers or trainers in workshops).

In Member States with more than one official language, immersion learning is often recognised and applied as an option for language learning for any of the national languages of the country. Immersion learning can be offered by any type of institutions, those providing initial training as well as those providing vocational training.

The shortage of well trained teachers with the necessary competences to teach a subject in a different language than the language of instruction is the main obstacle to the development of CLIL and immersion learning in many countries.

Good practice in content and language integrated teaching: Austria: International Communication for Business Purposes; Belgium (French community): Immersion learning within a legal framework.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information about CLIL/EMILE see <http://www.clilcompendium.com/clilcontacts.htm>



### 5.3. *Teacher and trainer training*

#### 5.3.1 *Pre-service training*

It goes without saying that teaching methods and materials need to be adapted to language teaching targeting partial skills or languages for special purposes. Language teachers need to understand the context in which the language will be used as well as any specialist concepts and terminology. In many cases this involves a thorough revision of current methodologies. It will also require a new approach to teacher training. Without necessarily putting Content and Language Integrated Learning into system for all sorts of vocational training, it seems likely that the barriers between language teaching and teaching of other subjects will become less impenetrable in the future.

Pre-service teacher training is often provided by academically oriented university departments with little if any awareness of what is needed to teach language for non-academic purposes. As a consequence, language teaching in the vocational education and training sector (the sector which caters for the great majority of learners at upper secondary level) still tends to be treated with lower priority. Currently professional language teachers are often not trained for specific training, tailor-made courses and teaching practical use of a language.

<p><a href="#">Good practice</a> in pre-service language teacher training: Czech Republic: Foreign languages for special purposes.</p>
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#### 5.3.2 *In-service teacher training*

Some countries have recognised this problem and offer language programmes to VET teachers. In-service teacher training for VET will consciously build upon established practice, professional experience and expertise. It will follow the general principles of adult education, include strong elements of group/peer learning and emphasize the need for teachers to network within and beyond the educational institution they operate in and for. It will focus on authentic language practice in a particular professional environment and on clever ways of bridging "the gap between classroom and workroom". It will invite practitioners from the worlds of work to share their views on realities, objectives and needs in a particular professional situation. It will provide insight into the rationales of various types of business

organisation and employment. It will be interdisciplinary and it will underline a clear view of language being taught – and used – for a purpose. Finally it will convince teachers that task completion and learner performance in VET is to be assessed not only according to criteria of language correctness but also according to aspects such as customer perception, corporate identity etc.

Individual initiatives, often financed through the European funds, have facilitated the creation of European networks for teachers in vocational training. Language teachers have often been singled out for dedicated language courses. In practice, many teachers of other subjects follow courses in English, without ever considering the possibility of using that language as a language of instruction.

[Good practice](#) in in-service teacher training: Hungary: Development of the content and quality of VET.

### *5.3.3 Teacher and trainer mobility*

The ongoing trend towards internationalisation calls for increased teacher mobility. There are gradually more possibilities, provided that the forward planning of the education institutions allow for teachers to benefit from cross border exchanges, for example through the Leonardo da Vinci programme as detailed below. However, there are still considerable obstacles preventing the international mobility of teachers. The Commission financed a study on obstacles to mobility of foreign language teachers<sup>33</sup> which reported on tools facilitating language teacher mobility and on the main obstacles encountered. It recommended that a mobility strategy be established at European level for language teachers to encourage bilateral and multilateral exchanges, support exchanges of prospective teachers and young teachers in particular, encourage the recognition of qualifications acquired through mobility, organise workshops and on-site working visits abroad as a form of teacher training, and set up a clearing system to match supply and demand across countries and institutions.

[Good practice](#) in teacher mobility: France: Jules Verne long term teaching assignments abroad.

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<sup>33</sup> Detecting and removing obstacles to the mobility of foreign language teachers, report 2006  
[http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/detect-remove\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/languages/documents/detect-remove_en.pdf)

#### 5.4. *Learner mobility*

Learner mobility has always been a priority in Community programmes in favour of education and training. The current flagship initiative Youth on the Move calls for a significant increase in mobility for all educational sectors.

Evaluations of learning mobility have shown that team working skills, communication skills, adaptability to new situations as well as analytical and problem-solving skills are examples of competences acquired or enhanced through spending a few months or a year abroad. This goes for studies as well as work placements and volunteering. Language skills are of course also always mentioned as a main benefit of mobility but on the other hand a lack of language skills is quoted as the biggest obstacle to learning mobility. Therefore, the prospect of mobility – the opportunity for everyone to spend a part of their learning pathway abroad - should be firmly embedded in all language teaching from the very start in primary school. It is seen as a way to make language learning more attractive as it is connected with an interesting purpose. Virtual mobility can also enhance learner motivation. Such virtual mobility is applied through many e-twinning projects. E-twinning provides teachers with simple and flexible tools to put language teaching into context and can easily be used within vocational education and training.<sup>34</sup>

The Leonardo da Vinci (LdV) programme of the European Commission was introduced in 1995 as a way to support the European dimension of vocational education and training. Since the start the programme has supported around 708 000 training placements. This includes the mobility of more than 364 000 learners in initial vocational education and training, around 125 000 people on the labour market and 110 000 exchanges of VET teachers and trainers. Leonardo da Vinci supports around 80 000 placements in enterprises annually of which 60 000 for trainees/apprentices in IVET and 20 000 people already on the labour market. Over 12 000 VET teachers and trainers received support for training abroad last year. Linguistic preparation is an essential part of all these mobility period. At the same time the lack of language skills limits the choice and the scope of opportunities for VET students and apprentices.

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<sup>34</sup> E-twinning portal <http://www.etwinning.net>

[Good practice](#) in vocationally oriented language teaching: Lithuania: Languages for public service officials (LdV project); Austria: National language contest in VET; Hungary, Ireland: Vocationally Oriented Culture and Language.

### *5.5. Languages in adult education*

Language learning for employability should be seen in a lifelong learning perspective – either it concerns professionals or job seekers who need to adapt their skills to the fast changing market, immigrants or individuals approaching the third age. The recent thematic study on adults in formal education<sup>35</sup> published by Eurydice gives some guidance on adult participation in language teaching and learning across Europe. The 2010 Joint Progress Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the “Education & Training 2010 work programme”<sup>36</sup> stresses that in adult learning it is also important that provision covers the full range of key competences, and notes that there is a major challenge to ensure that all learners benefit from innovative methodologies, including the disadvantaged and those in VET and adult learning with special learning needs.

Higher and vocational education institutions are encouraged to target adult learners and to collaborate with businesses to promote learning at the workplace. For employers, language courses represent a profitable investment in human resources and are considered as an important incentive by the employees.

The value of adult learning to employability and mobility is widely acknowledged across the EU, but it still needs greater recognition and resources. At present, adult participation in ‘lifelong learning’ varies greatly and is low in many EU countries. Provision of high quality adult learning has been identified as a bottle neck, a problem which has repercussions for the vocational education sector. However, a wealth of activities have been carried out throughout Europe implementing the 2007 Action Plan: “It is always a good time to learn”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Adults in formal education – policies and practice in Europe  
[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic\\_reports/128EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/128EN.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Joint progress report: OJ C 117, 6.5.2010

<sup>37</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc58\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc58_en.htm)

Within the Lifelong Learning Programme, the Grundtvig programme funds a lot of projects and mobility grants around language teaching, including for the benefit of adult migrants. Trying to dispel the stereotype that languages can only be learnt when you are young; some of the projects funded by the Grundtvig programme target the elderly population. As an example of how language skills can be put into practical use, the Senior Volunteering Action gives European senior citizens the opportunity to take part in volunteering projects in a European country other than their own, allowing them to learn and share their knowledge and experience. Volunteers aged 50 and over, usually spend from three to eight weeks abroad working for projects in fields including social protection, the environment, sport and culture, and language acquisition and training is an additional spin-off.<sup>38</sup>

[Good practice](#) in adult education: Italy: Higher Technological Education and Training Courses.

## 6. VALIDATION OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### 6.1. Tools to make language skills visible

A number of initiatives has been developed to enhance the transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications and to facilitate the mobility of learners and workers. These include Europass, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and the European Credit System for VET (ECVET).

Europass<sup>39</sup> is an EU initiative which aims to help people make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe, thus facilitating the mobility of both learners and workers. Europass consists of a portfolio of five documents designed to help people document their skills and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to undertake an education or training programme, look for a job, or get experience abroad. The Europass documents comprise Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV), Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Certificate Supplement and Europass Diploma

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<sup>38</sup> Senior Volunteering Action: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/doc986\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/grundtvig/doc986_en.htm)

<sup>39</sup> Cedefop's web site on Europass  
[http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Introduction.csp?loc=en\\_GB](http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/hornav/Introduction.csp?loc=en_GB)

Supplement. The Europass Language Passport<sup>40</sup> is closely based on the European Language Portfolio, which consists of the Language Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier, within the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

The CEFR sets out to provide a common reference rather than to define what sorts of qualifications there should be at any level. Making use of these reference levels, learners can record their language proficiency. By offering reference levels that are based on learning outcomes the CEFR has common features with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>41</sup>. This meta-framework of 8 levels covers the full range of qualifications. As such, it is intended to function as a translation device enabling countries to relate their qualification levels to a set of common reference points. When developing their national qualification frameworks, some countries include what is expected at different levels also for languages. By 2012 new qualifications, certificates and Europass documents are to indicate the corresponding EQF level.

The European credit system for vocational education and training (ECVET)<sup>42</sup> is also based on the learning outcomes approach. It helps to validate, recognise and accumulate work-related skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country or in different situations, so that these experiences contribute to transfer credits from one qualification system to another, or from one learning "pathway" to another. According to this approach, individuals can accumulate the required learning outcomes for a given qualification over time, in different countries or in different situations.

In 2011, fourteen Member States are for the first time participating in a new survey on language skills which will feed into a Europe-wide indicator on language competences on secondary school level.<sup>43</sup> The survey is testing the two most widely taught European languages (from English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) in each country from a

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<sup>40</sup> Europass Language Passport:  
<http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/europass/home/vernav/Europass+Documents/Europass+Language+Passport.csp>

<sup>41</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning - (2008/C 111/01)

<sup>42</sup> Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) - (2009/C 155/02)

<sup>43</sup> SurveyLang has been developed by a consortium of member organisations of ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) led by the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations:  
<http://www.surveylang.org/>

representative sample of pupils in their final year of lower secondary education. Students' proficiency in listening, reading and writing are being assessed. As the test is computer based, speaking skills are difficult to assess, but they should be integrated in the next version of the survey, which is planned for 2015-2016.

A sample of approximately 1500 students per language tested, per country is used. Schools are sampled systematically to ensure the test is representative of the whole student body at the final year of lower secondary education or the second year of upper secondary education, for each country.

The survey, which will give a statistically reliable overview of the general level in two foreign languages across all participating countries, was developed as a way to measure the fulfilment of the Barcelona objective. It should provide data for a future benchmark on language competences.

The working group would like to see increased transparency between these different dimensions of qualification frameworks and indicators. CEFR is established, effective and well integrated into most national qualification frameworks. It is well placed to be further developed in the context of professionally oriented qualification profiles for different occupations.

<p><a href="#">Good practice</a> in assessment of language competences in vocational education: Germany: KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat; Italy, Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Romania, UK: ELP-desk.</p>
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## *6.2. Validation of informal language skills*

Employers do not wish to rely solely on certificates or diplomas certifying language skills. Candidates with excellent credentials can nevertheless show deficits in practical skills.

According to the previously quoted CEMS study, when recruiting, companies tend to ask for a proof of language competences such as long stays abroad, standardised tests, exchange programmes, internships, professional experience, or post-graduate degrees.

Mobility within Europe and immigration from other parts of the world have led to an increasingly multicultural and multilingual society, where the notions of mother tongue, first language(s), host country language and language of instruction are blurred. Against this background, the possible validation of language skills acquired outside the formal education system is vital. Recognition leads to up-grading, not only externally but also from the point of view of self-esteem. Awareness of the value of their language skills can make individuals more confident when applying for jobs. It can lead to entrepreneurial ventures in the field of translation, interpretation and mediation in social services and have other positive spin-off effects. In many Member States formal validation of skills is available for all languages but it is not necessarily encouraged.

The Europass Language Passport provides a record of relevant skills and experience, regardless of if these have been acquired outside the formal education system.

If universally used and recognised, the Language Passport will provide an appropriate tool for presenting language competences to recruiters in a comprehensive and harmonised way. This kind of accreditation including a dossier reflecting candidates' practical experience with the acquired languages should be able to work as an operational tool on the labour market. However, awareness among employers about the merits of the Europass Language Passport needs to be substantially increased and its practical use for professional certification should be actively promoted on the labour market.

### *6.3. Networking between training institutions*

When it comes to language teaching and training, no European standard or harmonised approach has been adopted concerning the accreditation delivered by education and training institutions or the accreditation of the institutions themselves.

However, there are initiatives building on cooperation partnerships between schools in different Member States, which can be further examined in order to promote excellence in language teaching, in particular targeting language skills for the labour market.

In Higher Education, the CEMS inter-faculty group previously quoted works as a network of institutions having adhered to certain principles for enrolment in undergraduate and



postgraduate studies. They have elaborated a programme, Master of International Management (MIM) which leads to a diploma certifying communication and negotiation skills in two foreign languages, one of which must be English.

CertiLingua® is an international programme that recognises excellent performance in the provision and demonstration of plurilingual, European and international competences. It was initiated by North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands and developed further in cooperation with a range of European partner countries.

In a standardized procedure CertiLingua® certifies high levels of competence in two modern foreign languages, bilingual competences (successful use of at least one of these languages as their learning and working language in one or more CLIL courses) as well as the ability to act in a European or international context (participation in a European / international cooperation project).

At the end of the upper secondary cycle of education and in addition to the national baccalaureate or equivalent school-leaving certificate, a label of excellence is awarded to students who have shown evidence of the above mentioned competences and abilities.

The CertiLingua® label of excellence may only be awarded to students from schools which have been officially accredited by their highest national authorities. This is done according to clearly defined criteria and processes. The quality standards for CertiLingua® were agreed upon in the international CertiLingua® network and guarantee comparability of the competences that are certified. Pupils can thus receive an internationally transparent document verifying their outstanding linguistic and international competences.<sup>44</sup>

Accredited schools enjoy official recognition and acclaim of their commitment to provide extended foreign language education with the aim of integrating other subjects and of developing and maintaining a high level of European and international orientation.

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<sup>44</sup> CertiLingua website <http://www.certilingua.net/>

## 7. DIALOGUE BETWEEN BUSINESS AND EDUCATION

### *7.1. Structures for dialogue between business and education*

Dialogue between education and business is vital if the supply of language skills from education systems is to be better matched to the needs of the labour market. However, we need to recognise that this is a complex process and that the two sides do not necessarily share the same assumptions or goals. Employers expect the education and training system to provide them with 'job ready' applicants, but educators rightly believe their role is more profound than simply supplying the needs of the labour market. In order to adapt courses to focus more on the specific competences required by employers, employers would need to be able to articulate much more clearly the level and types of competence required, and be prepared to provide opportunities for teachers to gain an insight into their business processes.

A number of Member States have put in place language strategy networks, or are in the process of starting similar working groups. These networks have the aim to provide a forum for several educational institutions, often with collaboration from employers, social partners and other stakeholders, to elaborate recommendations for language teaching in higher education and/or vocational training.

The Agenda for new skills and jobs calls for the creation of sector skills' councils. These councils would enable to draw profiles on which skills are needed for which job. Dialogue between education and business is essential to provide the right skills to the future graduates. "While delivering the right mix of skills is important, avoiding the under-utilisation of people's talents and potential is just as essential. This requires better cooperation between the worlds of work, education and training."<sup>45</sup>

However, there is the difficult question of the time lag between a specific demand which is identified in the workplace (for example, the recent burst of demand for French speakers with skills in the computer gaming industry as a result of changes to French law regulating this industry) and time it takes to prepare candidates for such posts. Clearly it is not simply a matter of identifying and supplying current needs, but of identifying future needs and

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<sup>45</sup> Communication of 2010 on "An Agenda for new skills and jobs: A European contribution towards full employment", COM(2010) 682 final  
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0682:FIN:EN:PDF>

preparing students who will be adaptable in combining language ability with knowledge of a particular industry sector.

### *7.2. Partnerships promoting language skills*

The need for language skills is an issue that has not been much focused on in the context of school-business partnerships. It is suggested to extend current partnerships to encompass examples of good practice and to involve Chambers of Commerce and other professional organisations in the development of long term strategies for school curricula.

Within Higher Education, the process has been going on for a long time. The 2006 Commission Communication on Modernising Universities<sup>46</sup> stated that "...enterprises can both help to define [the education] and offer the kinds of placement which will help students make the transition from study to work".

The University-Business Forum created by the European Commission brings together the higher education sector with the world of work through a series of events and publications and similar meetings have recently been taking place with representatives of the school education sector.

Until now, an increase of the activities in the private education sector has been observed, in many cases to compensate for a downsizing of linguistic departments within mainstream education.

<p><a href="#">Good practice</a> in collaboration business/education: Finland: National network for language education policies; Austria: Training firms.</p>
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### *7.3. Financial support*

In times of cutbacks and scarce resources, it is even more important that funding for education and training is used efficiently. A weak supply of language skills, inappropriately matched to employer needs, makes employers dissatisfied with the skills on offer and limits their capacity to exploit them to benefit their business. This in turn makes providers and policy-makers less likely to see the importance of language skills and less likely to invest in improving them. However there is already ample evidence to show that language skills improve business

performance and benefit the wider economy and are a vital tool in achieving the growth Member States so desperately need. We need to break through the vicious circle by working to provide a better match between supply and demand and supporting employers to understand how best to exploit language skills.

That is why new partnerships are increasingly being sought in the area of education, both on national and on European level. With evidence of the need for language skills and the framework for collaboration initiated through the skills council on European level, national administrations need to reach out to large companies and employer organisations (both private and public) in order to provide the financing to secure a better and more targeted language teaching.

One way of encouraging companies to collaborate with the education sector and contribute financially to targeted language education is to award organisations with outstanding performance in multilingual business communication.

Good practice in funding of language training: UK: Business language champions; France: CPC, Italy: Joint interprofessional funds for continuing vocational training.

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<sup>46</sup> COM(2006)208 final "Delivering on the Modernisation Agenda for Universities: Education, Research and Innovation" <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2006:0208:FIN:EN:PDF>

## 8. TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS: ANNEX I

### Recommendations for action planning

What?	Why?	How and who?
<i>1. Improve the information flow about the language skill needs on the labour market</i>	<i>So that training providers can plan appropriately, individuals can make better choices, and a better match between supply and demand is achieved.</i>	<i>Regular surveys of trends in the demand for languages in the labour market should either be built into existing methods to anticipate skills needs or commissioned separately. This information should be brought to the attention of career advisers and education authorities at different levels. Such surveys should ideally be coordinated at EU level in order to facilitate aggregation of data and create synergy and impact.</i>
<i>2. Widen the supply of languages taught and learned in secondary education</i>	<i>The gap between supply and demand needs to be reduced.</i>	<i>Promote new methods of teaching languages in order to motivate learners to keep languages in their study programmes.</i>  <i>Education authorities need to collaborate with organisations and individuals offering education and career guidance.</i>
<i>3. Increase the opportunities to continue language learning and training throughout education pathways, including in higher education</i>	<i>The time and effort invested in language learning in school might be wasted unless language skills are maintained throughout the education pathway. A foreign language is a valuable complement to any academic diploma.</i>	<i>Enhance language training in all institutions of higher education and promote cross-curricular collaboration.</i>  <i>Provide students involved in mobility actions with incentives to learn the language of their host country in parallel to their studies (if the language of instruction is English). This action could be funded jointly by regional, national and European authorities.</i>
<i>4. Re-orient language teaching to develop targeted options and put language skills into context</i>	<i>Languages are needed for specific purposes. Different occupations require different kinds of multilingual communication skills, mediation skills etc.</i>	<i>Develop dedicated language options in both initial vocational training and tertiary education to direct language learning towards a particular occupation.</i>  <i>Explore content and language integrated learning for specialised vocational training.</i>

<p><b>5. Develop specialised language training modules and methodology for teachers and trainers in VET</b></p>	<p><i>Language teacher training is generally not oriented towards the VET sector. Teachers and trainers of occupational subject areas may lack adequate language skills.</i></p>	<p><i>Encourage collaboration involving language teachers and teachers of other subjects with a view to stimulating in-service teacher training.</i>  <i>Promote teacher mobility for shorter or longer periods either for teaching assignments or for work placements outside educational institutions.</i></p>
<p><b>6. Create best practice networking between training institutions</b></p>	<p><i>International networking can facilitate mobility of teachers and learners and help proliferate efficient teaching methods.</i></p>	<p><i>Promote collaboration between different categories of teaching institutions with a view to adopting common principles for language teaching linked to the practical training of related skills, such as entrepreneurship, communication skills and ability to work in multilingual and multicultural teams.</i></p> <p><i>Provide incentives for training institutions to provide highest quality teaching and training in languages and related skills.</i></p>
<p><b>7. Increase learner mobility across the board</b></p>	<p><i>Mobility is still under-exploited. The lack of language skills is a major obstacle, especially in the VET sector.</i></p>	<p><i>Extend mobility to wider groups of learners and encourage work placements for both students in IVET and apprentices, along the lines of the Youth on the Move initiative.</i></p> <p><i>Make languages an integral part of a strategy to make international mobility a reality for every learner.</i></p> <p><i>Promote partnerships between regional, national and European authorities, business and education institutions, with a view to increasing funding for language teaching and learning as well as for mobility.</i></p>

<p><b>8. Encourage targeted language learning in the adult population</b></p>	<p><i>Language learning is high in demand among adult learners, but is usually not connected with professional re-orientation strategies, and is costly.</i></p>	<p><i>Offer vocationally oriented language training to adult learners. Employment agencies, etc. can promote language learning to support career changes and lifelong learning strategies.</i></p> <p><i>Involve experienced individuals to add substance to language courses.</i></p> <p><i>Provide facilities for vocationally oriented options in teaching the language of the host country to migrants, while recognising students' competences in their languages of origin.</i></p>
<p><b>9. Develop methods to test and assess language competences connected to specific professions or professional contexts</b></p>	<p><i>Standardized diplomas/certificates are required by employers as proof of language competences</i></p> <p><i>Such certification would also facilitate transparency and objective assessment.</i></p>	<p><i>Consider adding a professionally oriented dimension to the new SurveyLang methodology through the Europe-wide consortium set up by the European Commission within the framework of the European Indicator for Language Competences.</i></p> <p><i>Link VET diplomas and certificates which include language skills to the Common European Framework of References for Languages. Consider closer links between the CEFR and the National and European Qualification Frameworks.</i></p>
<p><b>10. Validate informal language skills</b></p>	<p><i>Language skills can be acquired outside formal educational settings; language skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning need to be validated and recognised.</i></p>	<p><i>Develop the Europass Language Passport into an integral part of Europass. Formalise the dossier for supporting documents but also ensure the ability of the Language Passport to document skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning and experience.</i></p>
<p><b>11. Improve the structures for dialogue between education and the world of work</b></p>	<p><i>Such a dialogue is a pre-requisite to match the supply of language skills to demand from the labour market.</i></p>	<p><i>Identify organisations in which business representatives can take part in the continuous development of teaching syllabuses and contribute to the counselling and guidance of students throughout their educational pathway.</i></p>

<p><b>12. Improve employer capacity to manage and exploit language skills</b></p>	<p><b>Many employers (especially monolingual employers) know neither how to identify and articulate language skill needs correctly nor how to deploy the existing skills of their employees effectively.</b></p>	<p><b>Involve trade promotion organisations at national, regional and local level in information and promotion of measures to help companies and organisations to exploit foreign languages more fully and effectively.</b></p> <p><b>Encourage companies to access the pan-European labour market when recruiting.</b></p> <p><b>Support companies wishing to involve their staff in language training for special purposes. Organise cultural briefings involving professional organisations, labour market agencies and social partners.</b></p>
<p><b>13. Establish awards for companies to recognise outstanding multilingual performance</b></p>	<p><b>To encourage companies to improve their capacity to manage language skills and to take full advantage of language skills supplied by the education sector</b></p>	<p><b>Introduce a business language label in each participating country which could be awarded by national chambers of commerce.</b></p> <p><b>Encourage award winners to engage in a dialogue with the education sector.</b></p> <p><b>Consider linking the award project with the Commission's "Languages mean business" initiative and website.</b></p>
<p><b>14. Identify new financing models to secure provision of good language skills for the labour market</b></p>	<p><b>Funding for education is being reduced all over Europe and languages are permanently at risk of being subject to severe cuts.</b></p>	<p><b>Involve both public authorities and companies in the financing of vocationally oriented language training, in particular linguistic preparation for mobility actions and for work placements abroad.</b></p> <p><b>Use the new generation of EU education programmes to explore opportunities for partnerships at different levels, recognising the crucial role of foreign languages for the success of European programmes.</b></p>