



Recommendation 1383 (1998)¹

Linguistic diversification

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Europe's linguistic diversity is a precious cultural asset that must be preserved and protected.
2. Beyond the cultural and practical dimensions, a command of foreign languages is a decisive factor in understanding between peoples, tolerance of other communities, be they indigenous or foreign, and peace between nations, as well as being an effective barrier against the return of barbarity in its various guises.
3. Existing statistics show that a vast majority of pupils in Europe learn English, while other "major" European languages such as French, German, Spanish and Italian lag far behind. Languages which are spoken by hundreds of millions of people in the world, such as Russian, Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese, have only a tiny place in school curricula. Moreover, the standard of teaching in these languages is not always satisfactory.
4. There is no disputing the importance of a lingua franca - nowadays English - in the context of globalisation created by telecommunications, tourism and trade. But a knowledge of English alone, seen as the international language of communication, appears insufficient if Europe is to stand its ground in the face of international economic competition and preserve its cultural diversity.
5. There should therefore be more variety in modern language teaching in the Council of Europe member states; this should result in the acquisition not only of English but also of other European and world languages by all European citizens, in parallel with the mastery of their own national and, where appropriate, regional language.
6. The new approach to modern languages in Europe's education systems should focus on the following objectives :
 - 6.1. a wider selection of languages to cater for the new needs generated by the development of international exchanges;
 - 6.2. the teaching of languages of local minorities at school if there is sufficient demand;
 - 6.3. the acquisition of satisfactory skills in at least two foreign languages for all pupils by the time they leave school;
 - 6.4. the possibility of modern language learning as a lifelong activity;
 - 6.5. the recognition of partial skills and learning ability;
 - 6.6. knowledge of the social, economic and cultural realities of the countries where the languages are spoken.
7. Consequently, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers :
 - 7.1. make linguistic diversification a priority of language policy. In practical terms, the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) should conduct, on a regular basis, comparative studies on linguistic diversification in its member countries, to serve as a basis for drawing up European policies on the

1. Assembly debate on 23 September 1998 (29th Sitting) (see [Doc. 8173](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr Legendre). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 September 1998 (29th Sitting).



matter. In order to avoid duplication, these studies should complement the work of the European Union's Eurydice office. The first study should be carried out within the framework of the conference on language learning policies, scheduled for 1999;

7.2. promote knowledge by students of at least two foreign languages by the time they leave school, with study of the second language beginning at secondary level;

7.3. involve the Parliamentary Assembly in the preparation of the European Year of Languages, which the Council for Cultural Co-operation plans to hold in 2001;

7.4. speed up work on "threshold levels", the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio, and continue to provide expertise in drawing up national language policies;

7.5. ensure that the work done by the CDCC in the fields of lifelong education and new technologies includes a linguistic dimension.

8. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers invite member states :

8.1. to promote the creation of regional language plans, drawn up in collaboration with elected regional representatives and local authorities, with a view to identifying existing linguistic potential and developing the teaching of the languages concerned, while taking account of the presence of non-native population groups, twinning arrangements, exchanges and the proximity of foreign countries;

8.2. to develop language co-operation agreements between border regions;

8.3. to promote distance education to make the major European languages accessible to all small schools and colleges and facilitate the development of less commonly taught languages;

8.4. to set up networks of schools and colleges to ensure diversity in the range of languages offered (including minority and less commonly taught languages);

8.5. to promote and develop bilingual education and arrangements for pupils to be able to sit school-leaving exams wholly or partly in their chosen foreign language;

8.6. to extend arrangements for language study visits by:

a. making them a compulsory feature of school education;

b. making exclusively public funding the norm;

c. allowing entire classes to participate in exchanges;

d. making them an integral part of teacher training;

8.7. to encourage member states to make wider use of foreign teachers, by developing extensive teacher exchange schemes between member states, underpinned by guarantees in relation to teachers' careers and conditions of employment;

8.8. to ensure the supply of teachers of minority languages by means of a recruitment plan for each country, drawn up following a study of medium- and long-term requirements;

8.9. to prioritise teaching methods geared to developing oral expression through the use of audiovisual materials and interactive media, setting up co-operation arrangements with educational television channels and promoting films on television and at the cinema in their original language;

8.10. to promote the creation of audiovisual materials in the different regional languages of each country, as well as the publication of newspapers and books in regional languages for the use of the general population;

8.11. to promote a type of education that places greater emphasis on the culture and society of the countries concerned;

8.12. to supervise the setting up and implementation of a licensing system for private language schools, to ensure that the language skills acquired are up to official standards.