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## Education and public services must go multilingual, says EU platform

[Brussels, 25 August 2011] The EU **Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism (CSPM)** has published its **policy recommendations** to the European Commission, member states and regional authorities. Education and public services must go multilingual to boost Europe's language skills, sustain Europe's economies and cater for increasingly diverse societies, says the EU platform. The recommendations are available on the website of the European Commission's multilingualism portal ([http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news5090\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/news/news5090_en.htm)).

There are still unacceptable gaps in support for multilingualism and language learning throughout the EU. Even where good policies exist, implementation is often inadequate; some countries and regions show a much stronger commitment to multilingualism than others.

To make language teaching and learning more efficient, and enhance the ability of public services to meet the needs of their users, the CSPM urges European policymakers to:

- **make plurilingual education** (i.e. mother tongue plus two) **the norm**: content-based language learning should be introduced more widely, and extensive informal learning outside the classroom created; early language learning and lifelong learning opportunities should be developed;
- **strengthen learning support for immigrants**: for integration and social cohesion purposes;
- **improve language skills of public services** across Europe: to offer adequate services to newcomers, foreigners, migrant workers, as well as to disabled people and citizens with communication difficulties.

Multilingualism is also crucial to the preservation and accessibility of the common European cultural heritage. In this context, translation can make existing texts cross linguistic and cultural borders, and is an essential tool for communication and intercultural understanding. **Working conditions for translators should thus be substantially improved**, and sound degree programmes and opportunities for mobility developed.

As the Chairman of the Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism, Uwe Mohr, points out: "Europe needs to develop a language policy that monitors language use and ensures that languages are treated equally. We also highly recommend that the Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism be continued on a permanent basis to act as an instrument of dialogue between the EU policy level on the one side and the national, regional and local language policy levels and social reality on the other side."

To advise policymakers in designing and implementing successful policies for multilingualism, nine CSPM members have committed to setting up an on-line **Language Observatory**. The observatory, part of the ongoing **Poliglotti4.eu** project funded by the European Commission, will conduct research, capture and disseminate good practice; it will be launched in the autumn.

The ultimate goal of the project is to raise awareness for the importance of multilingual education and training in Europe. Because, as Mohr puts it, "only as multilinguals can we fully enjoy the benefits of our culturally and linguistically diverse Europe and live a richer, more interesting and more successful life in the Europe of the future."

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### NOTES FOR EDITORS

The **Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism (CSPM)** was set up by the European Commission in October 2009 to promote multilingualism in Europe in the areas of culture, media and non-formal education. Members are non-governmental organisations committed to promoting multilingualism, operating at a trans-national or European-wide level.

Its twenty-nine members are: ACT-Association of Commercial Television in Europe; ALTE-Association of Language Testers in Europe; CEATL-Conseil Européen des Associations de Traducteurs Littéraires; CEPI-European Coordination of Independent Producers; Club of Madrid Brussels Office; CMFE Community Media Forum Europe; Culturelink Network; EAEA-European Association for the Education of Adults; EBLUL-Eurolang Brussels; ECA-European Council of Artists; CSWE-European Council For Steiner Waldorf Education; EEE-YFU- European Educational Exchanges - Youth for Understanding; EEU-Europa Esperanto-Unio; EFIL-European Federation for Intercultural Learning; FENIL-European Federation of National Institutions for Language; EfVET-The European Forum for Vocational Education and Training; EPC-European Publishers Council; ETC-European Theatre Convention; EUNIC in Brussels-EU National Institutes for Culture in Brussels; EUROCLIO-European Association of History Educators; European Association for Terminology; European Writers' Council; Federation of European Publishers; Federation of European Publishers; FUEV-Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen; ISSA-International Step by Step Association; Literature Across Frontiers; Mercator Network of Language Diversity Centres; RECIT-Réseau Européen des Centres Internationaux de Traducteurs Littéraires; FAEY-Fundación Academia Europea de Yuste.

**Poliglotti4.eu** is a project promoting multilingualism in Europe - the result of the deliberations of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism. The project will result in the creation of an On-line Observatory, reporting on best practice in language policy and language learning. The observatory will provide policymakers, teachers, learners and civil society organisations with a powerful toolkit for benchmarking and enhancing their activities, in non-formal and informal education and learning sectors. The project is funded through the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme.

The project's nine partners are: Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE); British Council (BC); Danish Cultural Institute Benelux (DKI); EU National Institutes for Culture in Brussels (EUNIC in Brussels); European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA); European Theatre Convention (ETC); Fundación Academia Europea de Yuste (FAEY); Goethe-Institut Brüssel (GI); Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator).

## CONTACTS

### Project Management: EUNIC in Brussels

Ulla - Alexandra Mattl

Tel: 0032 (0)471 51 44 80

E-mail: [co-ordinator@eunic-brussels.eu](mailto:co-ordinator@eunic-brussels.eu)

### Press & Public Relations: European Theatre Convention

Luca Mangiat

Tel: 0032 (0)488 465 383

E-mail: [lmangiat@etc-cte.org](mailto:lmangiat@etc-cte.org)



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Lifelong Learning Programme

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