# Valuing All Languages in Europe (VALEUR)

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*This project is carried out in co-operation with the ECML and CILT – the National Centre for Languages (UK).*

## 1. CONTEXT

The mission statement of the ECML recognises that

> to achieve better European integration, important prerequisites are the improvement of communication […] and furthering mutual understanding between citizens, whose diverse linguistic and cultural traditions are a source of mutual enrichment.[1]

The recognition that linguistic diversity is a valuable asset is the starting point for this proposal, which focuses on Europe's community languages. The term 'community languages' is used here to refer to languages other than those which have formal national status. In other words, these include:

- the languages of recently established or migrant communities such as Polish in the UK, Turkish in the Netherlands, Arabic in Spain;
- languages spoken across Europe, such as Yiddish or Romani;
- the various sign languages used in Europe;
- local languages of long-established communities such as Sorbian in Germany or Lithuanian in Poland.

These languages, like the various national languages of Europe, represent a rich resource both for the communities which speak them and for Europe as a whole.

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[1] Source: ECML Mission Statement, at http://www.ecml.at/aboutus/aboutus.asp?t=mission

Lo Bianco[2] identifies six dimensions to such a resource: intellectual, cultural, economic, social, citizenship and rights. A community, a nation, or a larger collective which invests in all its languages is therefore likely to see:
- enhanced intellectual and academic achievement of all children;
- enriched cultural activities in all arts fields;
- greatly increased possibilities for trade and investment;
- heightened capacity to compete in the knowledge economy;
- improved social services;
- greater engagement in public life, and democratic practices;
- better strategies to combat prejudice, promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

However, the resource which community languages represent is not always recognised. Consequently, provision to support the learning of these languages may not always be adequate to ensure that they thrive and that the resource can be exploited in these ways. In fact, the extent to which the potential of community languages is overlooked is such that little is currently known about the nature of current provision or its outcomes. This proposal therefore aims to redress the information gap by: mapping the kinds of formal and informal provision available for children of school age; describing, in broad terms, the outcomes of such provision; identifying existing 'good practice' in the field and also areas where further support is needed; and making recommendations for improvements to provision.

## 2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### General aims

The overarching aim of this project is to raise awareness:
- of the resource represented by the community languages spoken across Europe;
- and of the potential to capitalise on this resource in intellectual, cultural, economic, social cohesion, citizenship and rights contexts.

### Specific objectives

To achieve these general aims, we intend to collect more accurate information about provision, and through that process raise awareness of the benefits of this potential resource. Specifically, this project will:

1. *Map formal and informal[3] provision* enabling children of school age in member states[4] to acquire enhanced language skills, most notably literacy skills, in the community languages of significance to them; this map will include information such as the aims and goals and the nature and scope of provision, uptake, professional preparation and supply of teachers, available funding and resources, and will also help to identify gaps and inconsistencies in provision;

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[2] Lo Bianco, J. (2001). *Language and Literacy Policy in Scotland.* Stirling: Scottish CILT.

[3] 'Formal' provision, broadly speaking, refers to provision within the state education system or supported by local or national education bodies. 'Informal' provision is likely to include provision made independently by language communities such as supplementary schools, or by individual families, such as home schooling.

[4] The aim will be to collect information relating to all 33 states who are signatories to the enlarged partial agreement of the ECML; however, in recognition of the likelihood that this may not be feasible in all cases, the project will aim to collect data for a **minimum of 20** out of the 33 states.

2. *Present a snapshot of the outcomes* for those who have had access to such provision, by the time they have completed secondary level education. We will examine learners' achievements in terms of Lo Bianco's six dimensions, including, therefore, available evidence of the role of provision in supporting:

- intellectual and academic achievement
- cultural practices
- skills for work
- social inclusion
- engagement in public life and democratic practices
- combatting prejudice and promote tolerance and mutual understanding.

We will also seek to relate the outcomes to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment (CEFR).

3. *Identify some of the characteristics of good practice and areas where further support is needed:* what constitutes 'good practice' will be defined in the course of the project through discussion with the various participants, but a basic position is that good practice will support the achievement of the goals set for the provision and that these goals will be recognisably in line with the principles set out in the ECML mission statement;

4. *Present conclusions concerning good practice and possible further action, for community language teachers and service providers,* with reference where appropriate to the CEFR and to the European Language Portfolio; and disseminate the outcomes to various audiences, including practitioners, decision-makers, educational managers and academics concerned with languages education at local, national and European levels.

## 3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Outcomes of the project will include:
- publication of a report setting out the findings and conclusions for community language teachers and service-providers and others with an interest in this field;
- establishment of a network to support developments;
- preparation of proposals for funding of further development work based on the outcomes of the study to relevant European agencies.

## 4.  ACTION PLAN

The project will run from May 2004 until June 2007.

| 2004 |
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### 14-15 May
**Expert meeting 1:**
- the scope and nature of the data to be collected (including definitions of terms and outcome indicators) and the procedures by which this will take place, will be determined;
- tasks following on from this discussion will be allocated to project team members, for completion prior to expert meeting 2.

| 2005 |
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### 17-18 June
**Preparatory meeting 2**:
- report-back and evaluation of project team tasks;
- planning for central workshop, including development of pre-workshop tasks for participants;

| 2006 |
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### 9-11 March
**Central workshop:**
- presentation of project
- input on the potential value of community languages as a European resource will be provided by invited international experts
- review of data collected
-  planning for further action
- evaluation and dissemination issues

**Profile of participants:**
The *national representatives* should
- be willing to participate actively in the project;
- have expertise in the promotion of community language learning and/ or responsibility for promoting cultural diversity and the rights of minority groups;
- access to information sources relating to provision for community languages and experience of collating and presenting this type of information.

They may be practitioners, managers or academics in this and related fields.

Those attending the central workshop will be expected to provide, in advance of the workshop, an overview of provision for community languages in their own country, using a template supplied.

After the workshop, the representatives should provide a completed version of the overview by the end of April 2006.  Those who have provided a complete version according to the guidelines set out by the project team will be invited to attend the network meeting in October 2006.

*April-June*
**ECML Fellowship***. The project seeks the appointment of an ECML fellow for three months to facilitate the work of the project during the data collection period. The fellow will maintain contact with the national representatives, aiming to ensure that the data is sent to the project team in time for Expert Meeting 3 in June 2006, and will also help to collate* the data.

## 30 June - 1 July

**Expert meeting 3**. The expert group will review the information submitted by national delegates for presentation at the network meeting; and devise activities to facilitate discussion of how awareness can be raised and what constitutes good practice in the context of provision for community languages. Preparation for the network meeting.

## 6-7 October

**Network meeting.** The map of provision and snapshot of outcomes will be presented to those who participated in the central workshop and subsequently provided information about provision in their countries. Discussion at the network meeting will focus on what constitutes good practice and on the drawing of conclusions, for community language teachers, service-providers and decision-makers. The aim will be to produce an agreed comprehensive list of conclusions by the end of the network meeting. Participants will also be asked to make suggestions about further developments of this work. Links between the issues emerging from this project and Council of Europe policy work in that area will be sought. Participants will be asked to evaluate the usefulness of the project and make suggestions for further dissemination of the outcomes.

**Participants** at the network meeting will be those national delegates who provide information about provision for community languages in their countries according to the guidelines and within the timeframe set at the central workshop. We aim to encourage at least 20 of those who attended the central workshop to return as network participants.

| **2007** |
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## February

**Expert Meeting 4**. The experts will meet to discuss details of the project publication and to plan the submission of proposals to relevant European bodies for developmental work to support provision for community languages. At this meeting, the team will consider how well the project has met its objectives and success in disseminating the message. Following the meeting, the final version of the report will be produced and submitted to ECML, by June 2007; and bids for further funding will be submitted at the appropriate time.

**NB.:** the expert meetings will be of two days duration in each case. The central workshop will be of three days duration for the national delegates, but of four days duration for the expert group. The experts will use the additional time for more in-depth discussion with the invited experts. The network meeting will be of two days duration.

## 5.  LANGUAGES

The working languages of the project will be English and French. The expert group will work through the medium of English but both languages will be used at the central workshop. Interpretation facilities are requested for the central workshop. Many of those participating in the various stages are likely to be fluent in a range of community languages, in addition to one or more national European languages, but all will need to be fluent in either English or French.