

## Support for new language education policy initiatives

The Conference on "Languages, Diversity, Citizenship: Policies for Plurilingualism in Europe" held on 13-15 November 2002 in Strasbourg was attended by around one hundred policy deciders and experts from member States, Canada and South Africa.

In the context of the follow-up to the European Year of Languages, the aims of the Conference were:

- i) to examine how plurilingual education and education for plurilingualism might be promoted further by education systems;
- ii) to illustrate the contribution of existing instruments (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment and European Language Portfolio*) to the attainment of these goals. These tools and others recently developed – *Guide for Language Education Policies in Europe and Language Education Policy Country Profiles* (see below) – aroused much interest among partners.

The Conference examined current language policy issues being considered by policy deciders such as the need for diversification in the language curriculum, the "role of English", the concept of plurilingualism and the various ways in which it could be developed through national education systems, drawing on the Guide and Country Profile activity which in turn link to the Framework and Portfolio.

**Details:** *Web site / Conference on language policy*

## Assistance for a self-evaluation of national language education policies

This new activity to elaborate Country Profiles launched in Hungary at the

end of 2002 is designed to assist countries in analysing their language education policy with a view to focusing on possible future policy developments within the country. This policy self-evaluation is carried out in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts who act as catalysts in this process.

In practical terms, the authorities prepare a national report with an overview of their country's language education policy wherein priority areas are identified. The Council of Europe expert group then examines the report which serves as a basis for a week's study visit to meet the relevant parties and to acquire a better understanding of the situation. The report produced by the Group of experts based on the visit will be discussed at a Round table gathering the parties and partners concerned. The final outcome is the development of a Language Education Policy Country Profile – document elaborated jointly by the Council of Europe experts and the national authorities – which can be used for the review of their language policy.

In 2003, three new countries have availed themselves of the offer to reflect upon their language education policy by undertaking a "self-evaluation" of their policy (Norway, Slovenia and Cyprus) while other countries have also expressed an interest.

**Details:** *Web site / Policy Development activities*

## Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe

The aim of this Guide is to offer an analytical tool which can serve as a reference for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in member States (essentially in education systems) and, through it, an examination of European language policies.

It offers an analysis of current approaches in the light of Council of Europe principles (part 1), identifies the technical conditions necessary to take the required decisions (part 2), and provides a range of concrete proposals for greater diversification in language teaching (part 3).

The Guide exists in two versions: the "Main version" (technical guide) and an "Executive version" (aimed at policy deciders). It was presented at the November conference as a first draft which will lead to a process of consultation and piloting with member states in 2003-2004.

The Guide is accompanied by a series of Reference studies which expand on some of the issues covered in the main version. Both the Guide and the studies are available on the website (Section "Guide") or can be obtained from the Division.

**Details:** *Web site / Policy Development activities*

## Towards an enhanced coherence of levels of language examinations and diplomas

Often employers, universities, etc. have no idea of applicants' language profiles in spite of being provided with official diplomas.

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEF)*, developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, offers a six level scale (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) defining degrees of language proficiency. This reference tool has been translated into eighteen languages so far and has been used on a large scale for curriculum development, language examinations, textbook writing and teacher training. The European Commission, in its "Council Resolution on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning..." has asked

its members states "to set up systems of competence in language knowledge based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* developed by the Council of Europe, taking sufficient account of skills acquired through informal learning".

In order to assist language examination providers in relating their examinations to these six levels, a Manual is currently being developed. This Manual will be completed in autumn 2003 and followed by a related, simplified version adapted for teachers and course providers. With these tools, the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division seeks to support greater transparency and coherence in the way in which users of the CEF with different perspectives interpret the six levels, and greater reliability in the way in which language qualifications are benchmarked to the CEF.

### European Day of Languages (EDL)

*Event celebrated in 44 countries*

Following the success of the European Year of Languages 2001, the European Day of Languages was declared by the Council of Europe as an annual event.

The Day concerned all Europeans of all ages and from all walks of life and focused on "Lifelong Language Learning". The numerous activities organised included those of a festive nature (competitions, festivals, variety of entertainment etc.) as well as those based on specific themes (colloquies, seminars or round tables) and those intended for the general public (radio and TV programmes). All social categories were targeted.

### Support material

A poster and brochure were widely distributed and often adapted to local needs. They were also downloaded from the website. The European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz) created an interactive section which allowed organisers to post events and contained examples of good practice.

### Partners

In order to simplify the dissemination of information and liaison with the Council of Europe, Relay Persons were nominated in almost all countries (list available on website). Several NGOs also participated in the Day.

### Themes and next steps

The Day 2003 will not have a specific theme but will focus on its three main objectives:

- i) alerting the public to the importance of language learning and diversifying the range of languages learnt in order to increase plurilingualism and intercultural understanding;
- ii) promoting the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe, which must be preserved and fostered;
- iii) encouraging lifelong language learning in and out of school.

The EDL is co-ordinated by and in close co-operation with the Language Policy Division and the European Centre for Modern Languages. ■

The website on the EDL ([www.coe.int/JEL](http://www.coe.int/JEL)) containing additional information has just been updated.

## Regional project "legislative frameworks for quality assurance in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia"

The regional project "Legislative Frameworks for Quality Assurance in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia" was carried out as part of an overall strategy for educational assistance within the Education Directorate's initiative "Partnerships for Educational Renewal". This regional project combined bilateral support for national reforms and with sustained regional exchange. By contributing to the development of national quality assurance mechanisms, in

particular for higher education, the project should leave a lasting impact of long-term improvement of education quality and level of opportunity in the region of the South Caucasus.

In May 2000, the first regional conference in Tsakhkadzor, Armenia launched the project with the participation of high-ranking delegations from the three countries. The statement of the Ministers of Education adopted at that time laid out common goals for

education reform and enumerated steps to be taken nationally in the area of quality assurance.

From June 2000 until June 2001, national working groups comprising international and national experts worked out detailed recommendations for the national systems of quality assurance in education. Significant progress was made in introducing legislation or regulations for the national systems, including the requirements

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**O**n 3 April 2003, Serbia and Montenegro became the 45th member State of the Council of Europe. The particular importance of this accession was two-fold: it brought the Organisation a step closer to achieving its goal of pan-European representation, and was the signal for a new departure in the Balkans. With this accession, all the states of the former Yugoslavia have returned to the European fold, and the process of full integration into the European democratic family can be completed.

The Education Directorate has been extremely active in South-East Europe for many years, and its activity is set to expand further with the recent launch of the Joint Programmes with the European Commission for Serbia and Montenegro and for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which supplement the work already being carried out under the Framework Programmes of Co-operation agreed with these countries. As promised in our previous issue, Bosnia and Herzegovina features prominently with news of legislative reform and teacher-training seminars in human rights education (page 2).

A vital aspect of building the future is to face and learn from the past. This issue reports on the Seminar of European Education Ministers on a "Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust and Prevention of Crimes against Humanity" and the initiatives taken to ensure that the memory of that tragedy and all genocides does not disappear (page 3). The contribution made by history teaching to democratic

stability is illustrated by the Council of Europe's co-operation with the European Commission in the North Caucasus and its co-ordination of the Stability Pact working group on history in South East Europe (page 5).

Remembering the past also implies remembering our institutions and our cultural heritage. The capacity of European universities to adapt to change is directly related to current reform aimed at achieving a European Higher Education Area. The concrete issues involved in this process are examined in "The Heritage of European Universities" project (page 6).

Coherence and harmonisation are, as ever, keywords in the field of education, and setting common standards, whether in quality assurance (page 8) or language education policy (page 7) continue to rank highly among the Education Directorate's activities. Finally, education must be available to all. In response to a Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers, a project has been launched to develop educational strategies for Roma/Gypsy children (page 4).

In short, this issue illustrates the need to take account of the inseparable relationship between the past, present and future in building a better society for all Europeans. This is the multi-dimensional role of education, which the Council of Europe's Education Directorate endeavours to fulfil through the whole range of its activities

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