

On 2 February, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation Rec (2005) 3 on teaching neighbouring languages in border regions.

The Recommendation, which proposes measures to be implemented in the member states concerning the teaching and promotion of neighbouring languages, makes specific reference to Project 1.1.4. of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) first medium-term programme.

Through this project, entitled "Neighbouring Language Teaching in Border Regions", a coordinating body - "Cicero" (<http://www.cicero-net.nl/>) - designed to disseminate good practice in this field was set up, with the help of funding from

the EU Socrates programme. The project also gave rise to a CD-Rom produced by the ECML entitled "Neighbouring languages in border regions" (available on request from the ECML).

- Considering that good neighbourly relations are the basis for a more free and tolerant Europe, which is the key to consolidating democratic stability;
- Having noted that in many border regions trans-frontier cooperation of all kinds is hindered by linguistic and cultural differences;
- Bearing in mind the benefits

for member states of the Council of Europe's achievements in the field of language teaching;

- Emphasising the political importance of developing strategies for diversifying and intensifying language learning in order to promote plurilingualism in a pan-European context, further developing links and exchanges, and exploiting new communication and information technologies;
- Wishing to maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national, regional or minority languages;
- Aware of the wealth of experience of trans-frontier edu-

"Neighbouring Language

Recommendation on teaching neighbouring languages

cational cooperation in border regions and the valuable contribution they can make as examples of linguistic and cultural approaches to preparing the citizens of a united Europe,

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers recommends that governments of member states:

- a. when developing their language-education policies, apply the principles of plurilingual

education, in particular by establishing conditions that enable teaching institutions in border regions at all levels to safeguard or, if need be, introduce the teaching and use of the languages of their neighbouring countries, together with the teaching of these countries' cultures, which are closely bound up with language teaching;

b. encourage different trans-frontier cooperation players - such as local and regional authorities, trans-frontier cooperation groups between local and regional authorities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, employers and other organisations and individuals concerned - to involve the educational and lin-

guistic sectors in the trans-frontier cooperation projects they are organising or preparing;

c. seek to establish language reciprocity in their cooperation with a neighbouring country, or countries, concerning the teaching of neighbouring languages in border regions, allowing room for their own national language and also, where applicable, other languages used in the border areas concerned, be they less widely spoken languages, regional or minority languages;

d. take all possible steps to apply this Recommendation;

e. seek cooperation in this field with the relevant bodies of the European Union, in order to achieve maximum synergy.



Measures to be implemented concerning the teaching and promotion of neighbouring languages in border regions

The measures recommended are addressed to central authorities, where these are responsible for defining the legal framework and supervising the activities of territorial communities or authorities.

A. Possible general measures and principles

i. Specify a government department or agency to act as the contact point for neighbouring countries' ministries on matters relating to educational cooperation and the teaching of neighbouring languages in border regions, if this does not already exist. Nominate or establish a national body, if this does not yet exist, or use the government department or agency, to collate and disseminate, at national level, knowledge concerning language teaching in border regions and encourage this body to cooperate with other European organisations having the same remit.

ii. Help to set up a European network of these national bodies to exchange information on organisational and educational matters, establish a data bank of examples of good practice, undertake joint projects and draw up a guide to the organisation of language teaching in border regions.

iii. Launch or continue dialogue with neighbouring countries to exchange information on their respective educational systems and policies and develop joint programmes or policies on teaching neighbouring languages and educational cooperation. Such programmes should enable educational institutions to develop long-term cross-border relationships, launch educational projects aimed at acquiring the necessary skills for living and working in border regions, increase the number of trans-frontier exchanges and visits and develop special teaching materials.

iv. Encourage and support local and regional boards of education in their efforts to make

contact with their trans-frontier counterparts, exchange knowledge and experience, cooperate and overcome differences in administrative arrangements and the organisation of education.

v. If necessary, authorise the introduction of the teaching of the neighbouring language and of subjects linked to the neighbouring country's history, geography and culture into the syllabuses and curricula of educational institutions in border regions and develop the appropriate teaching aids.

vi. Bearing in mind the opportunities offered by existing European programmes, strengthen or establish the legal conditions for educational mobility in border regions, including pupil and student exchanges and visits to neighbouring countries, keeping administrative procedures to a minimum, so as not to hinder or discourage this mobility.

vii. Remove legal and other obstacles that prevent teachers qualified in their own countries from practising their professions, wholly or in part, in partner schools on the other side of the frontier, while maintaining their employment rights and conditions.

viii. Make it possible for the relevant authorities and/or educational institutions to officially recognise parts of pupils' or students' education completed in partner schools or universities across the border.

ix. Encourage those involved in local and regional affairs to promote greater public awareness of the importance and value of familiarity with the language, culture and society of neighbouring regions.

Teaching in Border Regions"



B. Measures aimed at border regions

i. Draw the attention of relevant organisations and educational institutions to documentation on language teaching policies produced by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division in Strasbourg and under the auspices of Project 1.1.4 (Neighbouring Language Teaching in Border Regions) of the Council's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.

ii. Encourage flexible and varied approaches to teaching the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries that fully exploit the neighbouring country's proximity and possibility of direct contact. The aim should be to maximise the availability of authentic and stimulating forms of learning, including autonomous learning (where pupils from two countries learn each others' languages in tandem), short and intensive courses; extended individual attendance at schools on the other side of the border; and bilingual education, with teachers from neighbouring countries providing proper language immersion. Direct con-

tacts and exchanges with neighbouring countries should be supplemented and reinforced by the application of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and resources.

iii. Encourage schools and colleges to establish long-term partnerships that enable them to benefit from the facilities, equipment and human resources of the partner establishments and improve their knowledge and appreciation of their local culture and differences, leading to closer understanding. Such partnerships could eventually lead to modified or new courses with qualifications recognised in both countries.

iv. Encourage recognition and use of the European Language Portfolio, while allowing for the specific needs of border regions, to ensure that assessment of language and cultural skills is consistent and transparent, thus encouraging citizen mobility.

B1. Measures aimed at higher education and universities

i. Encourage universities and

research institutions to undertake more thorough investigations of the social, cultural, economic and political situations of border regions throughout Europe and to examine their possible impact on education and on the phenomena of bilingualism, biculturalism and trans-frontier identity. Encourage these universities to establish an academic and scientific cooperation network.

ii. Support teacher training in border regions in particular, so that it can include the language and culture of neighbouring countries and international cross-border projects. Ideally, these parts of the syllabus should be undertaken in conjunction with training institutions in neighbouring regions, which should organise placements in each other's countries. These elements could also be included in in-service training for teaching staff.

B2. Measures aimed at secondary education

i. Encourage all sorts of joint projects between schools of all levels and types, where the neighbouring languages are the means of communication for exchanging information on other subjects, working in mixed pupil groups to create specific documents and end-products.

ii. Encourage secondary schools to introduce into existing or future partnerships cross-border careers guidance to inform pupils of and, if possible allow them to visit, educational establishments where they can continue their studies while qualifying for work in the other country.



B3. Measures aimed at primary and pre-school education

i. Create the conditions for the teaching of neighbouring languages from the very beginning of primary education to introduce children to other cultures and enable them to learn and use those languages in an everyday and real-life context.

ii. Encourage and support the learning of neighbouring languages from a very early age in a pre-school or voluntary sector context.

B4. Measures aimed at adult education

i. Help adult education institutions to develop teaching methods adapted to their students' needs and capacities, such as courses focusing on partial skills like listening comprehension, or alternation of language, where the same speaker uses both languages.

ii. Persuade local and regional institutions responsible for, or involved in, adult vocational training, such as chambers of commerce and industry and

professional associations, to encourage managers and staff to attend classes in the language and culture of the neighbouring country to increase trans-frontier occupational cooperation and the economic standing of border regions.

iii. Encourage local and regional authorities to organise training for their staff working in areas where transfrontier cooperation is or will soon be necessary, so as to develop their language and intercultural skills, their knowledge of life and economic activity in the neighbouring country, their commitment to successful trans-frontier cooperation and their colleagues' involvement in it. Take similar measures in respect of central and decentralised government administrative staff involved in trans-frontier cooperation.

B5. Measures aimed at socio-cultural stakeholders active in border regions

i. Encourage the relevant organisations to cooperate with their counterparts in neighbouring regions in studies on the

state of the labour market and develop joint strategies and training programmes.

ii. Enable neighbouring countries' media to broadcast or publish their products, including the press and radio and television programmes, on both sides of the border.

iii. Promote cooperation between the media from both sides of the shared border, such as exchanges and training of journalists, publishing articles and broadcasting programmes in the neighbouring language.

iv. Encourage tourism organisations and similar bodies to disseminate information on cultural, sporting and other activities, including ones such as music and dance specifically aimed at young people, in the neighbouring region.

v. Promote trans-frontier cooperation between youth, cultural and sports organisations and associations so as to implement joint activities drawing on the relevant knowledge, facilities and resources of these bodies.



The Dutch Language Academy (www.talenacademie.nl), the coordinator of the Cicero project, is pursuing the project within the framework of a Comenius network and is currently looking for partners.