

Wednesday 15 November 2006

TEXTS ADOPTED**P6_TA(2006)0488****Framework strategy for multilingualism****European Parliament resolution on a new framework strategy for multilingualism (2006/2083(INI))***The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 192, second paragraph, of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Articles 149, 151 and 308 of the EC Treaty,
 - having regard to Articles 21 and 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 January 2003 on the role of regional and local authorities in European integration ⁽¹⁾ and the reference therein to linguistic diversity in Europe,
 - having regard to Decision No 1934/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 July 2000 on the European Year of Languages 2001 ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 on the promotion of linguistic diversity and language learning in the framework of the implementation of the objectives of the European Year of Languages 2001 ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe, which entered into force on 1 March 1998,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which entered into force on 1 February 1998,
 - having regard to its resolution of 4 September 2003 with recommendations to the Commission on European regional and lesser-used languages — the languages of minorities in the EU — in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A6-0372/2006),
- A. whereas respect for linguistic and cultural diversity is a basic principle of the EU and is enshrined in the following terms in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity',
- B. whereas multilingualism is a special feature of the EU that makes it a clear example as well as a basic component of European culture,
- C. whereas in its above-mentioned resolution of 14 January 2003, it called for the following new Article 151a to be inserted in the EC Treaty: 'The Community shall, within its spheres of competence, respect and promote linguistic diversity in Europe, including regional or minority languages as an expression of that diversity, by encouraging cooperation between Member States and utilising other appropriate instruments in the furtherance of this objective',
- D. whereas the promotion of multilingualism in a pluralistic Europe is an essential factor in cultural, economic and social integration, enhancing citizens' skills and facilitating their mobility,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 38 E, 12.2.2004, p. 167.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 232, 14.9.2000, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 50, 23.2.2002, p. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2004, p. 374.

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- E. whereas some European languages are also spoken in a great number of non-Member States and constitute an important link between peoples and nations of different regions in the world,
- F. whereas there is a particular ability of some of the European languages to establish immediate direct communication with other parts of the world,
- G. whereas linguistic diversity can be an element of social cohesion and a source of tolerance, acceptance of differences, identification and mutual understanding among peoples,
- H. whereas multilingualism should also seek to promote respect for diversity and tolerance with a view to preventing the emergence of any active or passive conflicts between different language communities in the Member States,
- I. whereas all languages, as a pre-eminent means of access to a culture, are a distinct way of perceiving and describing reality and must therefore be able to enjoy the conditions required for their development,
- J. whereas, in order to encourage the learning of other languages and thus to meet the objective of 'mother tongue +2', it is important to be aware of the principles of learning to speak and of formulating and acquiring basic concepts in early childhood which underpin mother tongue competence,
- K. whereas regional and minority languages are a major cultural treasure and, given that they constitute a common cultural heritage, support for their preservation should be improved,
- L. whereas Parliament and the Committee of the Regions have addressed the question of the importance of less widely used languages on many occasions and there is at present no legal provision at EU level relating to European regional and lesser-used languages,
- M. whereas particular attention should be given to promoting access to language acquisition for people in disadvantaged or difficult circumstances or those with disabilities,

Specific Comments on the Framework Strategy

1. Welcomes the Commission's commitment, and particularly the new Framework Strategy, to foster the knowledge of languages and take cultural and socio-economic advantage of it;
2. Considers that, in order to achieve the objectives set by the Lisbon strategy, it is essential to improve the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of the education and training systems in the European Union by promoting foreign language learning;
3. Acknowledges the strategic importance of European World Languages as a communication vehicle and as a means of solidarity, cooperation, and economic investment and, therefore, as one of the main political guidelines of European policy on multilingualism;
4. Welcomes the Commission's long-term objective to improve individual language skills, referring to the target set in 2002 by the Barcelona European Council whereby citizens should learn at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue;
5. Reminds the EU Member States, to that end, that it is necessary to take appropriate measures to promote a genuine policy of learning foreign language skills; furthermore, re-affirms that the early learning of languages is of considerable importance, and should be based on effective methods according to the best available techniques;
6. Considers that there is a lack of detailed and reliable data and appropriate indicators related to the current situation of foreign language competence in the Member States and therefore welcomes the proposal for a European Indicator of Language Competence; that indicator should include all official EU languages and could, if feasible from a procedural point of view, be extended beyond the five widely-spoken languages to include the other EU languages, in order to gain a true picture of language competence;

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7. Believes that proposals for multilingualism should not be limited to the main official/ Member State languages;
8. Welcomes the Commission's commitment to give citizens access to EU legislation, procedures and information in their own languages; however this should include as many as possible of the languages of Member States used by EU citizens; in this way the Commission's statement to the effect that citizens have a right to access the EU in their own language without any barriers would become a reality; this would be an important step in closing the gap between the EU and many of its citizens, which is the main aim of Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate;
9. Calls on the Commission and the other European institutions to make the best possible use of new digital and technological translation tools on their Internet sites so as to enable European citizens to have access to, and obtain from the Internet, information about Europe in their own languages;
10. Considers that the widest opportunities should be provided for migrants to learn the language or languages of host countries, as defined by the legislation of those countries, with a view to their social and cultural integration in so far as is necessary, using methods which have proved effective in language learning and for the integration of migrant citizens and to enable them to be taught in their mother tongue as a way of preserving their ties with their country of origin;
11. Welcomes the idea of encouraging Member States to establish National Plans, because it recognises the need for language planning at Member State level; this will act to enhance many of the less widely used languages and raise awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity; suggests that Member State Plans should include the lesser-used languages within each Member State and examine the possibility for interested adults to learn these languages, and include these projects as examples of best practice;
12. Supports action for better teacher training, also for non-language and vocational teachers, and adds that the number of languages taught both within and outside school should be broadened to enable future teachers to learn, and subsequently teach, a greater diversity of languages under the same conditions, provided that there is an expression of interest in this direction; recalls, in this connection, that language training is essential to promote and facilitate mobility not only for students but also for all workers seeking to carry on an occupation in one of the Member States;
13. Urges that particular attention be given to promoting language learning for people in disadvantaged and difficult circumstances and for people with disabilities;
14. Considers that language acquisition should be an essential element in the lifelong learning programme;
15. Welcomes the greater use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language, and calls on the Member States to form a network of best practices, in particular by analysing the results obtained from immersion courses in multilingual countries;
16. Welcomes the fact that higher education institutions play a more active role in promoting multilingualism not only amongst students and staff, but also amongst the wider local community, and therefore believes that linkages should be encouraged between universities and national, local and regional authorities;
17. Welcomes the focus on research and technological development activities on language-related information technologies within the 7th Framework Research Programme in order to enhance multilingualism through new IT;
18. Supports the proposals for multilingualism in the information society and the creation and circulation of multilingual content and knowledge; there is an increasing array of technologies that will help a greater use of all languages, including those less widely used; technology offers the greatest potential for ensuring social linguistic space for all of Europe's languages;

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19. Supports the proposals to develop language-related professions and industries; all European languages will need new technologies such as speech processing, voice recognition and so on, as well work on terminology, developing language teaching, certification and testing; otherwise lesser-used languages will be left behind with their linguistic social space taken over by the more widely spoken languages;

20. Welcomes the proposal for greater transparency in language teaching, testing and certification by publishing an inventory of the systems currently available;

Proposed Measures

21. Calls on the European institutions and bodies to improve their communication with citizens in their own national language, regardless of whether the language in question has official status at Member State or EU level;

22. Calls on the European institutions and bodies to cooperate closely with the Council of Europe in the promotion and protection of linguistic diversity and language learning, and to build on its experience in the area of language policy (such as the European Language Portfolio or the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages);

23. Encourages the Commission to continue implementing the proposals set out in its above-mentioned resolution of 4 September 2003 in so far as they are feasible, and to notify Parliament regularly of the results;

24. Calls on the European Ombudsman to pay particular attention to guaranteeing respect for the linguistic rights of European citizens, and to provide more ways of resolving EU language conflict situations;

25. Calls on the Commission to facilitate and promote access to information and funding for applicant bodies seeking to promote multilingualism through networks and/or projects funded by the Commission from 2007 onwards;

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26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the governments of the Member States.

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The European Union's Generalised Systems of Preferences

European Parliament resolution on the European Union's Generalised Systems of Preferences

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 980/2005 of 27 June 2005 applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences ⁽¹⁾,

— having regard to Commission Decision 2005/924/EC of 21 December 2005 on the list of the beneficiary countries which qualify for the special incentive arrangements for sustainable development and good governance provided for by Article 26(e) of Council Regulation (EC) No 980/2005 applying a scheme of generalised tariff preferences ⁽²⁾,

— having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 169, 30.6.2005, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 337, 22.12.2005, p. 50.