

# United in Diversity: The EU Approach to Language Learning and Multilingualism

*Jelena Zdrilić, prof.*

Agencija za odgoj i obrazovanje

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## The 8 Key Competences for Lifelong Learning

**Competences:** a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context.

Lifelong learning has become the necessity for all citizens who need these competences for:

- *personal development and fulfillment*
- *active citizenship*
- *social inclusion*
- *employment.*

- ▶ LITERACY (communication in the mother tongue)
- ▶ **MULTILINGUALISM** (communication in foreign languages)
- ▶ MATHEMATICAL COMPETENCE & BASIC COMP. IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
- ▶ DIGITAL COMPETENCE
- ▶ LEARNING TO LEARN
- ▶ SOCIAL & CIVIC COMPETENCES
- ▶ SENSE OF INITIATIVE & ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- ▶ CULTURAL AWARENESS & EXPRESSION

# Survey: Understanding of EU Education Policy on Foreign Languages



## Arguments to support language learning

Multilingual competence provides a better understanding of other cultures, contributing to the development of citizenship and democratic competences.

- ▶ For **individuals**: creates personal and professional opportunities
- ▶ For **companies**: workers with language and intercultural competences are a vital resource, helping businesses to succeed and grow in global markets
- ▶ For **society**: it fosters cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion

# Key aspects of EU Language Policy:

- ▶ Promoting Multilingualism
- ▶ Encouraging Language Skills
- ▶ Fostering Mobility and Understanding
- ▶ Valuing Linguistic Diversity

## Promoting multilingualism

- ▶ Foster intercultural understanding
- ▶ Enhance mobility and employability
- ▶ Protect Europe's cultural heritage
- ▶ Fundamental aspect of the European identity, culture and competitiveness

It is one of eight key competences needed for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion, as outlined by EU Member States in the Council recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning

## Encouraging language skills

- ▶ Promoting mobility
- ▶ EU Commission recommendations to encourage young people to improve their language proficiency
- ▶ 76% of Europeans: improving language skills should be a policy priority

EU's official policy - each citizen to master their mother tongue + more than one foreign language

## Fostering mobility and understanding

- ▶ Enabling people to interact and cooperate with citizens of other cultures across borders
- ▶ United in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project
- ▶ Cultural awareness, mutual understanding and social cohesion

Language competences are indispensable for mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding across borders

## Valuing linguistic diversity

- ▶ EU: 24 official languages and cca.60 regional and minority languages - example of the European cultural diversity
- ▶ Languages define personal identities but are also part of a shared (European) inheritance
- ▶ Strengthening European identity, vital parts of its cultural heritage

The co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the EU's aspiration to be united in diversity.

## Strong public support for the EU policies regarding language learning and teaching

### Eurobarometer survey:

85% believe English is the most important language for children to learn for their future

- ▶ Eurobarometer showing citizens value linguistic diversity and believe improving language skills should be a priority
- ▶ 86% believe that everyone should speak at least 1 foreign language
- ▶ 59% can have a conversation in one f.lang. which is 3/5 Europeans, or
- ▶ 79% or 4/5 young Europeans (15 - 24 years old)
- ▶ English spoken by 47% of the EU population, 7/10 young Europeans can have a conversation in English
- ▶ 31% of Europeans use their 1st foreign language daily

## What about the 2nd foreign language learning and teaching?

- ▶ 28% of Europeans can have a conversation in more than one foreign language, or
- ▶ 39% of young people (15 - 24 years old)
- ▶ After English, French (11%), German (10%) and Spanish (7%) are the most often spoken foreign languages in the EU
- ▶ EU policies strongly emphasize the need of 2nd foreign language teaching and learning / 2nd F. Lang. proficiency

2019 Council Recommendation: comprehensive approach to the teaching & learning of languages aims at acquiring proficiency in 2 other languages (besides the mother tongue) before the end of upper secondary education

## Some more info/stats...

The OECD study shows that young people are increasingly learning languages outside of the classroom by using internet, social media or watching content in the original language and 65% of them prefer subtitled to dubbed content.

- ▶ *2023 Eurydice Key data:*
  - 98,3% of European students in lower secondary school and increasingly from an earlier age are learning English
- ▶ *The main benefits of learning a new language include:*
  - 51% job opportunities
  - 45% understanding ppl from other cultures
  - 42% getting a better job in their country
  - 42% using it on holidays/travel
  - 40% using it at work and business travel

## It all comes down to...

- ▶ Collaborating with our foreign languages teachers/colleagues
- ▶ Strengthening language bonds and connecting language learning and teaching in more than just one lang.
- ▶ Planning common PD meetings and sharing info, practices and goals
- ▶ Obtaining support from the educational/school infrastructure

Fostering language competences is at the heart of the EU's role in education.

**Multilingual competence is acquired throughout life and opportunities for learning and improving language skills should be made available at all stages in life.**

## *Literatura:*

- COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 22 May 2019 on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019/C 189/03), Official Journal of the European Union, C 189/15
- Multilingualism as a key competence - European Education Area
- <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/142/language-policy>
- <https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-policy>

**Hvala na pažnji!**