



Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture

The Commission's Contribution to the Leaders' Working Lunch
Gothenburg, 17 November 2017

#FutureOfEurope #EURoad2Sibiu

LANGUAGE LEARNING

WHAT EXISTS TODAY

- ▶ **Erasmus+** aims to improve language teaching and learning and to promote the EU's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness.
- ▶ The **European Day of Languages**, proclaimed by the Council of Europe and jointly run with the EU, is a yearly awareness-raising campaign on the importance of language learning held on 26 September since 2001.
- ▶ **eTwinning**, the online platform for teachers, allows language teachers to communicate, collaborate and develop projects together.

 <p>figures since 2005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⚙️ Over 500,000 teachers are registered with the platform.⚙️ 4 in 10 schools have participated in a virtual exchange.⚙️ Over 60,000 projects have been developed since its launch in 2005, covering all Member States.
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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR



One in two EU citizens can speak and understand **only their mother tongue**.



Only **one in four** EU citizens can hold a conversation in two other languages.



The number of lower secondary students learning two foreign languages is up compared with ten years ago (in 2014, **60%** of all students enrolled in lower secondary education were learning **two foreign languages or more**; in 2004: **47%**).

- ▶ **Pupils in primary education** start learning a foreign language from 6 years of age and continue learning throughout the years of compulsory education¹.
- ▶ **Languages in compulsory education**: although all Member States have invested large resources in language teaching and learning in compulsory education, the efficiency of foreign language education is still inadequate².
- ▶ English is the dominant first foreign language and in many Member States it is the only foreign language that is compulsory.

¹ Eurydice 'Key Data on language teaching in schools in Europe'.

² 'Languages in Education and Training: Final Country Comparative Analysis' (2013), prepared by Languages in Education and Training TWG with support by ICF. http://ec.europa.eu/languages/library/studies/lang-eat_en.pdf

In a fair number of countries learning time is considered to be adequate, but achieved competency levels at the end of secondary education are too low, thus pointing at a problem with the efficiency and quality of teaching.

The vast majority of Member States make the learning of two foreign languages compulsory for all students during their schooling. In seven Member States, learning two foreign languages is an option rather than an obligation (Belgium — French Community, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Croatia, Hungary, United Kingdom).



WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS?

- ▶ In May 2018, adopting a **Recommendation on improving language learning in Europe** starting from early childhood education and agreeing a common benchmark for linguistic competences at the level of upper secondary education (**mother tongue plus two by 2025**). It will also define the desired outcome (e.g. 'independent' user for at least one of the other languages) and a regular monitoring of language competences across the EU.
- ▶ Increasing the **efficiency of language teaching and learning** by systematically supporting the introduction of innovative methods such as 'bilingual teaching' and the use of digital tools.
- ▶ Developing a **pilot project for bilingual teaching options** in border regions and in areas where inhabitants use more than one language (EUR 5 million).

POSSIBLE INITIATIVES WITH A 2025 PERSPECTIVE

- ▶ **Every newly graduated language teacher should have spent at least six months of learning or teaching abroad** with the support of the Erasmus+ programme.



The political ambition would need to be aligned with the means to act and reflected in the future discussions on EU finances.