

**“TWO LANGUAGES IN ADDITION TO MOTHER TONGUE” –  
WILL THIS POLICY PRESERVE LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY  
IN EUROPE?**

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**Abstract.** This article discusses the problem of the maintenance of linguistic diversity in Europe, on the basis of an analysis of the European Commission’s multilingualism strategy and a qualitative study among language experts from the member states of the Council of Europe. The problem is that the strategy allows the language environment of Europe to be regulated by market logic. The Less Widely Used Languages (LWULs) are expected to take care of themselves. The results of this study suggest that the European Commission’s policy “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” will foster the formation of a “language market” within Europe and a hegemony of widely used languages. In order to preserve multilingualism in Europe, groups who carry the cultural value of language, rather than single individuals, should be clearly addressed in the language strategy. The LWULs ought to be supported by language planning initiated partly by the Council of Europe and the central institutions of the European Union.

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**Abbreviations:** EU – European Union, LUL – lesser-used language, this term does not include official EU member state languages, LWUL – less widely used language, this term includes LULs and the small EU member state languages, RML – regional or minority language

## 1. Introduction

This article focuses on the problem of maintenance of linguistic diversity<sup>1</sup> and a multilingual environment in Europe. The European Union has stressed the multilingualism of Europe from the very beginning, from 1958, with Regulation No 1 of the Council of Ministers, which determined the four official and working languages of the European Economic Community. Since then, the official languages of all joining member states have been regarded as equal, having the status of official European Union languages. However, the situation in the field of linguistic diversity and the multilingual environment in Europe does not conform to the ideal; it leaves much to be desired<sup>2</sup>.

The protection of the multilingual environment of Europe should be one of the priorities of the cultural and language policy of the European Union. There has been no explicit language policy<sup>3</sup> across the European Union. Since the late nineties, the institutions of the European Union have been quite modest in analyzing the impact of economic, demographic and cultural processes on the status, usage and possibilities of acquisition of European languages and in offering practical solutions to the problems that have recurred within European Union institutions (e.g. Ammon 2006, van Els 2005, Yves 2004:3, Lenaerts 2001, Pool 1996). Several authors consider that the European Union is only holding up a multilingual mask to the face of the reality, that the usage of English is increasing *vis-à-vis* other languages, and the LWULs are in a very vulnerable position (e.g. Caviedes 2003, Lenaerts 2001, Christiansen Vanting 2006). For example, Caviedes argues:

*“...the trend towards English continues and the multilingual administration of the EU presents the idea that form is more important than substance, since in*

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<sup>1</sup> “Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises. Taken as a whole, the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with ‘national’ status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world” (An Action Plan 2003:9).

<sup>2</sup> The documents of EU institutions point to narrowing scope of linguistic diversity in education. For example: “The range of foreign languages spoken by Europeans is narrow, being limited mainly to English, French, German, and Spanish” (An Action Plan 2003:24; Eurydice 2005:44–56). “...the range of languages taught at all ages is extremely narrow, and ... the diversity of languages on offer is decreasing; there is a growing tendency for ‘foreign language learning’ to mean simply ‘learning English’.” (Indicator 2005:3–4).

<sup>3</sup> Language policy and language planning are defined differently by different authors. Some do not draw a clear dividing line and treat both together, defining language policy as the government’s language planning (e.g. Tollefson 1991). The others argue that language policy is carried out by politicians, i.e. the chosen few who are temporarily trusted with power by their electorate, but the language is planned by experts in the field who are also responsible for its scientific quality (Rannut et al 2003:194). Here we proceed from the understanding that the language policy and language planning are intertwined into: “government authorized, long term sustained and conscious effort to alter a language itself or to change a language’s functions in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems and to facilitate communication within the state (Weinstein 1983:37).

*reality English becomes ever more hegemonic, even in the face of laws and policies aimed at preserving equality” (Caviedes 2003:254).*

There are some major problems which are expected to be elaborated within the framework of the language policy of the European Union. One problem concerns the LWULs – either official (national) languages of EU small member states or non-official regional or minority (RML) languages<sup>4</sup>. The latter have to resist pressure on both the international and national levels. The key question is whether LWULs should be protected explicitly, in order to promote the teaching and dissemination of LWULs *vis-a-vis* languages having large numbers of speakers<sup>5</sup>. Today the LWULs, including RML<sup>6</sup> languages, can benefit from European Union programs based on common grounds.

The other problem, connected closely with the first one, is the question of a *lingua franca*. There is no official *lingua franca* in the European Union, nor is it mentioned in new documents. However, critics emphasize the inconsistency between the declared equality of languages, stated *de jure*, and the linguistic hegemony of English, sustained by global economic processes, proceeding *de facto* (e.g. Caviedes 2003, Christiansen Vanting 2006). The “free market” approach – in which there is no explicit language policy – would lead to a strengthening of the economic pressure to learn English. Therefore, some authors suggest officially establishing English as the *lingua franca*, in order to create a common communicative space (e.g. Wright 1999, Laitin 1992). Other authors suggest a planned or auxiliary language, such as Esperanto, to be employed as the *lingua franca*, in order to maintain equal opportunities for all languages (e.g. Christiansen Vanting 2006, Cwik 2006, Orlandi 2006).

From the beginning of the new century, the European Union has issued several documents which express its values and a framework for action to ensure the maintenance of the linguistic diversity of Europe. The Heads of State of the Governments of the member states acknowledged, in 2002, the need to introduce measures to improve language skills and called for at least two foreign languages to be taught from a very early age. The Education Council of the European Union proposed that the European Commission prepare an action plan and the document “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004–2006” (from this point on referred to as “Action Plan”) was completed in 2003. The European Commission also has a commissioner (currently Leonard Orban)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.mercator-education.org/minority-languages/facts-figures/facts-figures> Taking the official definition of the language charter into account, there are approximately 60 minority languages in Europe (---).

<sup>5</sup> The LWULs which are in the status of an official language in multi-ethnic societies need also support in order to guarantee social inclusion and integration of minority groups into the public sphere. In the case when the mother tongue of an individual is not an official language of the country, one of the two additional languages should be an official language within a formula 1+2.

<sup>6</sup> Some scientists emphasize that “the distinction between ‘indigenous peoples’ and ‘minorities’ is important. Only peoples, not minorities or populations or (ethnic or other) groups, have the right to self-determination in international law” (Skutnabb-Kangas 2002:10).

responsible for multilingualism. The Commission's latest output is: the "New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism" (from this point on referred to as "Strategy"), adopted in November 2005 by the European Council and "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment". Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (18.9.2008)<sup>7</sup>. The Commission's multilingualism policy has three aims: 1) to encourage language learning and promote linguistic diversity in society; 2) to promote a healthy multilingual economy, and 3) to give citizens access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages. The Commission's long-term objective is to increase individual multilingualism until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages, in addition to his or her mother tongue (A New Framework Strategy 2005:3–4).

This article discusses the texts of documents of the Strategy and Action Plan against the background of criticism by the European Parliament and the Committee of Regions, and the academic discussions of the language policy in the European Union. This exploratory study focuses on one of the most discussed points in the Strategy – the aim that every European citizen should know his or her "mother tongue plus two foreign languages". As the national authorities are seen as principal implementers of this aim, the authors of the current article sought the opinion of language experts of European countries<sup>8</sup>. We used the open-ended questionnaires filled in by 25 linguistic experts from member states of the Council of Europe. The aim of the analysis was to elucidate the experts' opinions regarding the implementation of the aim "mother tongue plus two foreign languages" on the European and on the national level. Were the discourses of experts based on the "open market" principle or on the principle of external regulation and language planning?

We believe that this material is worth exploring because it explains the context of the realization of the aims raised in the Strategy and Action Plan and provides information on the aspects that need to be improved and advanced. The next section discusses the Strategy and Action Plan in detail. The third section gives an overview of the method of the Study. The fourth section consists of an analysis of interviews with language experts. The article ends with discussion and suggestions for advancement of the Strategy and elaboration of the language policy of the European Union.

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<sup>7</sup> Other remarkable documents are: High Level Group on Multilingualism (2007). Final Report. Commission of the European Communities; "Languages mean Business. Companies work better with languages". Recommendations from the Business Forum for Multilingualism established by the European Commission (2007) and "A Rewarding Challenge. How the Multiplicity of Languages Could Strengthen Europe." Proposals from the Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue set up at the initiative of the European Commission (2008). This article discusses the text of documents of the Strategy (2005) and Action Plan.

<sup>8</sup> The authors themselves represent one of the LWULs (an official language of an EU small member state) and have particular concerns about the future of the European linguistic landscape.

## 2. The framework strategy for multilingualism

In this section the text of the documents of the Strategy and Action Plan will be analyzed in detail. The analysis will be guided by three questions: 1) Who are the actors – the European Union, or national and local governments – who are meant to implement the Strategy?; 2) How concretely does the document treat the different types of languages (English, Esperanto, LWULs, including RMLs)?; 3) Which spheres does the Strategy aim to regulate and how thoroughly?

Following the last question, we will organize the comments according to the three main spheres the Strategy tackles: political, economic and cultural/educational. In the **political sphere** the main aim of the Commission's multilingualism policy is defined: "to give citizens access to European Union legislation, procedures and information in their own languages" (A New Framework Strategy 2005:3).

The main means foreseen to achieve the aims in the political sphere are the products needed in translation services, which are also assured for LWUL languages. The Strategy proposes standardized and interoperable language resources (dictionaries, terminology, text corpora, etc.) and applications for all languages, including LWULs of the Union (A New Framework Strategy 2005:10).

However, there is controversy regarding the general aim, which states that citizens of the European Union should have access to legislation, procedures and information in their own languages. Later in the text, the access is limited to "national languages": "(---) the translation and interpretation services ensure that the European and national institutions can effectively exercise their right of democratic scrutiny. Translators and interpreters guarantee that citizens can communicate with the Institutions and have access to decisions in their national language(s). (---) The translation and interpreting services of all institutions together cost the equivalent of 1.05% of the EU's total budget for 2004, or €2.28 per citizen per year. For this price, all citizens get universal access to all EU legislation and the right to communicate, contribute and be informed." (A New Framework Strategy 2005:13).

Criticism has been expressed regarding this ambiguity by the European Parliament. The report of the European Parliament from October 2006 says: "It is a mistake when they say that all citizens have universal access to the EU project when stateless and regional languages, some of which have more speakers than member state languages, are in fact excluded. It is incredible that when the EU is seeking to get closer to its citizens it excludes 10%<sup>9</sup> of them at the outset because of the lack of an inclusive language policy." (European Parliament Report 2006: 5). It is proposed to make all European languages official. The Parliament argues:

"Official status for one's language sends out a clear message to all EU citizens that they are to be treated equally and can only act to better connect the EU with its citizens. Some 10% (46 million) of the EU's population, the EU's RML language speakers, are compelled to use their Member State language and not their

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<sup>9</sup> There are around 46 million regional or minority language speakers in Europe, making up some 10% of the EU population.

mother-tongue when dealing with the EU” (European Parliament Report 2006:6). The Parliament suggests, for this purpose, reducing the number of full working languages in the European Union, as is already the *de facto* situation. In academic fields, there has long been a discussion of the internal working languages for European Union institutions and, in general, the authors (Ammon 2006, van Els 2005, Lenaerts 2001, Pool 1996 etc) agree that the number of working languages in the European Union should be limited, and they criticize the unwillingness of institutions to solve the problem. For example:

*“It cannot be impossible to work out whether the theoretical premises of language equality are feasible at all. (---) Even though the language compromise in the EU practice undoubtedly touches on issues that are politically delicate and emotional to the many member States, there is a certain reluctance to think through all the consequences on the language policy and the practical problems that have recurred so consistently over so many years”* (Lenaerts 2001:237).

The second aim of the Strategy was to “promote a healthy multilingual economy” (A New Framework Strategy 2005:3), thus it touches also the **economic sphere**. Under the chapter “The Multilingual Economy”, the Commission highlights the importance of language knowledge for increasing the competitiveness of the EU economy, as well as the mobility of workers in the EU market, translation services, Web use and language industries (A New Framework Strategy 2005: 9–12, Figel 2006:4–5). Of the potential means and actions uniting the educational system with the language and cultural industries, production of sub-titles in TV, language learning modules on the Web, tourism projects, cross-border projects and town twinning schemes are mentioned (An Action Plan 2003:13). The research results encourage the use of new technologies to promote multilingualism. For example, Wodak and Wright, who have analyzed the virtual discussion forum Futurum, conclude that multilingual interaction was fostered (Wodak & Wright 2006). The results of the Eurobarometer Survey also reveal that tourism and other visits to foreign countries were recognized as rather good tools for language acquisition. Films, audio-video materials and ICT solutions are less often used (Europeans and their languages 2006).

Thus the development of the language industry and other economic mechanisms are important in creating and maintaining a multilingual environment. However, the relevant means and actions are mentioned in an indefinite way in the Strategy, without suggesting to whom they should be addressed.

The Working Document of the European Parliament on A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism criticizes the Strategy for making no specific reference to RMLs in speaking about the multilingual economy. The Working Document remarks that the text of the Strategy appears to be aimed at “official languages” (Working Document 2006:3).

*“The paradigm here appears to shift away from investing in multilingualism as a social capital investment to language knowledge as good for business with no mention of the human and social value of language diversity. It rationalizes multilingualism purely on economic terms”* (Working Document 2006:3).

**The cultural sphere**, more precisely education, has the heaviest load to carry in attempting to realize the first aim stated in the Strategy, “to encourage language learning and promote linguistic diversity in society” (A New Framework Strategy 2005:3). In calling for educational rearrangements for these purposes, the role of national authorities is stressed: “It is the authorities in Member States who bear the primary responsibility for implementing the new push for language learning in the light of local circumstances and policies, within overall European objectives” (An Action Plan 2003:5). The role of the European Union is defined in helping to develop cooperation and exchange (An Action Plan 2003:5). Also, the Committee of the Regions calls on “the Commission to intensify its awareness-building campaigns on the economic and cultural benefits of language learning” (Opinion of the Committee of the Regions 2006:8). The results of the Eurobarometer Survey confirm that need. The majority – 84 per cent – of EU citizens agree that everyone in the European Union should be able to speak one language in addition to the mother tongue, but only 50 per cent agree that everyone should be able to speak two foreign languages (Europeans and their languages 2006).

The demand that national education institutions should realize the aim “two languages in addition to mother tongue” might not be in harmony with the other demand to offer a wide choice of languages, including smaller European languages, as well as RMLs, an issue also raised in the Action Plan (An Action Plan 2003:9).

Since direct investments in educational infrastructure from the Member States, in appropriate class sizes, in the training of teachers are expected (An Action Plan 2003:6), it is inevitable that widely spoken languages which have greater market demand (and sometimes also support from the relevant countries) will be preferred in curriculae. RMLs have little potential to compete with those languages.

The problem of RMLs in Europe has been discussed at academic forums. For example, Laitin proposes that Europeans will need to be able to speak their national language and the *lingua franca* (English), as well as possibly a local vernacular if it is distinct from the national language (Laitin 1992). Opponents consider this idea unrealistic (e.g. Caviedes 2003). Indeed, to realize this idea would require an explicit language policy which has yet to be offered. Laitin’s suggestion that RMLs will be strengthened through their dealings with the European Union and its ‘eurocrats’ (Laitin 1992) means that RMLs must also be official languages of the European Union.

The European Commission is rather vague regarding how the language choice should be made. The European Parliament criticizes the Strategy for its vague statements about the teaching of regional or minority languages, saying that “Amongst the proposals they outline that (---) rather half-heartedly that ‘the teaching of regional or minority languages should also be taken into account as appropriate’” (European Parliament Report 2006:4). The European Parliament asks, in its working document, for concrete proactive policies in favour of Europe’s less widely used languages:

*“What it should be encouraging is more, as an example, Welsh-speaking Estonians or Lithuanian-speaking Catalans or people learning languages from*

*outside their language group, e.g. Germanic speakers learning a Slavic language. English language learning is its own dynamic, profit-making industry, (---) it doesn't need further EU support"* (Working Document 2006:8).

Thus the Parliament suggests subsidizing lesser-used languages (European Parliament Report 2006:5) – balancing the market logic which favours the teaching and learning of English and other widely used languages.

Under the education sphere, the question of the European *lingua franca* is also touched upon, which can be interpreted as the Commission's standpoint on the issue, unless not raised overtly in the Strategy<sup>10</sup>. Namely, English as a potential *lingua franca* is considered as a warning against teaching in English in higher education institutions. If the importance of LWULs is diminishing in higher education, it has a direct impact on the sustainability of the respective language in science, terminology processes etc. and in the longer perspective has an impact also on the other phases of the education system. Thus the language policy should aim to protect the functioning of the LWUL official languages in all phases of educational systems. The opposition between English and national languages is elucidated and a call to provide continuously higher education in national languages is sounded (An Action Plan 2003:8). The Strategy sees the problem more widely, not only examining higher education and national languages, but also teaching at different education levels, both in national and regional languages:

"It needs to be recognized that the trend in non-English-speaking countries towards teaching through the medium of English, instead of through the national or regional language, may have unforeseen consequences for the vitality of those languages" (A New Framework Strategy 2005:6). However, this is a general warning without any concrete suggestions. The national and regional authorities are seen as bearers of this responsibility. The research of higher education institutions has shown that a policy based only on vaguely defined principles favours, in real life, uniformity and a diminishing of choices. The authors, having explored higher education, confirm the need for language policies to be formulated explicitly, rather than being left to market pressures, national and international (Phillipson 2006, Bruen 2005).

The solution has even been suggested, quite contrary to the warnings given in the Strategy, to counterbalance the impact of English, it has been suggested that English should be taught as the second foreign language to prevent students and schools from neglecting the remaining languages once the instrumental task of acquiring English language skills has been completed (Coulmas 1991:18).

Proponents of the idea of a *lingua franca* refer to the new nation-building the European Union should undertake, where a *lingua franca* would help to create a common communicative space and the economic utility of English as a *lingua franca* (e.g. Wright 1999, Oakes 2002, Laitin 1992). The supporters of English argue, for example:

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that a question about a *lingua franca* was included in the special Eurobarometer survey "Europeans and their languages". The survey results reveal that, in general, 56 per cent of EU citizens support the idea of a *lingua franca* (Europeans and their languages 2006). Thus there is ambiguity over the issue among the European public as well.



*“The EU needs a forum to facilitate the circulation of information and ideas, the construction of democratic governance and individual access to centres of power. (---) If it continues to lack the community of communication necessary for democratic political development, the EU will find itself halted at the level of a common market administered top down by a patrician technocracy” (Wright 1999:99).*

Several authors suggest that, in the long term, a planned or auxiliary language such as Esperanto should be employed as a *lingua franca* (Christiansen Vanting 2006, Cwik 2006, Orlandi 2006). As a reply to the suggestions to use planned or auxiliary languages, in particular Esperanto, the new Strategy notes that “the Commission does not promote the use of artificial languages which, by definition, have no cultural references” (A New Framework Strategy 2005:3).

The Strategy, although it does not favour the *lingua franca* approach in any form, neither answers the question of how to deal with the need for a common means of communication, nor does it suggest how to counterbalance the market-driven progress of English as the “unofficial” *lingua franca*.

To summarize our analysis, we have created the Scheme, where the language policy principles stated in the Strategy and Action Plan are projected in a triangular structure, where the political, cultural/educational and economic spheres form the imagined three corners which frame the actions and general guidelines proposed in the Strategy and Action Plan (see Figure 1).

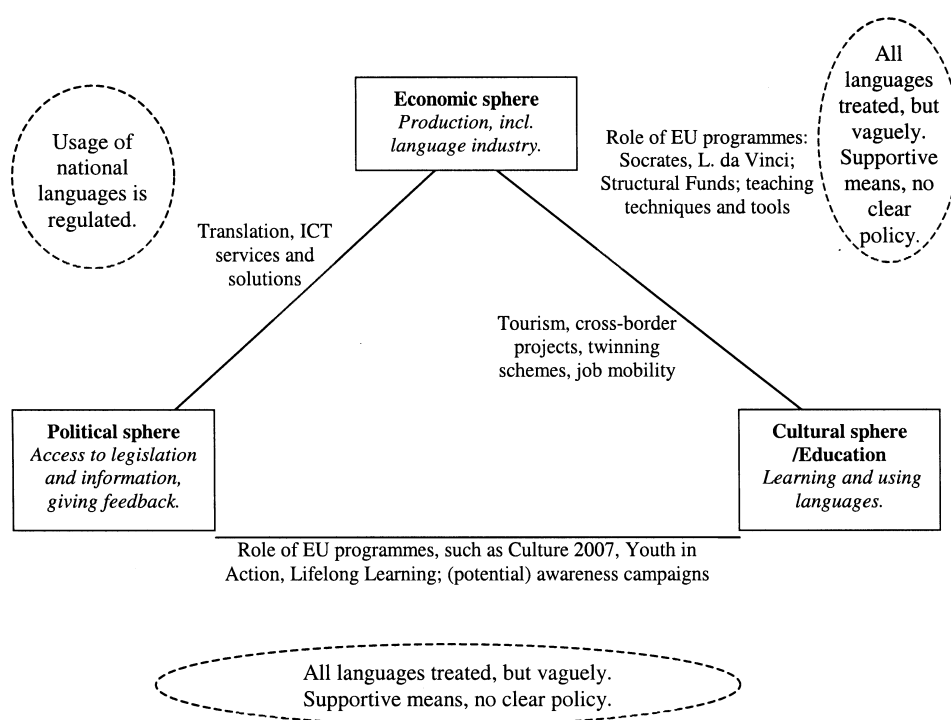
We may say that the Strategy aims to regulate all of the main spheres – political, cultural/educational and economic – but the languages are treated rather vaguely, especially in the economic and cultural spheres, where expressing clear policy is avoided. The national governments are foreseen as the main implementers, whereas the European Union provides certain supportive means.

In general, the Framework Strategy is “full of holes” – it sets aims and values but does not specify how they should be realized. It does not offer mechanisms to regulate the language processes in the European Union and to protect the LWULs of Europe. The European Parliament has critics on both points. Firstly, the report of the European Parliament notes that the Strategy does not provide coherent, meaningful EU language policy and legislation:

*“While there are language rules and regulations there is to date no coherent legally binding language policy for the EU either at the level of the institutions or in member states. (---). In a sense, then, many ingredients are present, but there is no recipe, and there is also no composite product or result either” (Working Document 2006:9).*

Secondly, the European Parliament points out the shift towards an “open market” strategy in the discourse of the Commission’s proposal. The Report says:

*“The Commission’s proposals signal a paradigm shift away from the earlier pre-2000 EU policy of direct support for lesser-used languages (with the B-line budget) to one where minoritised language communities have to compete on the ‘open market’ with the big languages. How they are meant to achieve this remains unclear” (European Parliament Report 2006:5).*



**Figure 1.** The framework of language policy principles, suggested by the European Commission: spheres, actions and treated languages. Authors' Figure.

One may assume that the fact itself that the Strategy has been worked out indicates a wish to regulate and plan the language environment in Europe in order to counterbalance “market forces”. The Strategy need only be transformed into more concrete forms. However, approaching the issue from Bourdieu’s concept of the “linguistic market”, the institutional policies may well foster market processes. Bourdieu defines a linguistic market as a “*system of relations of force which impose themselves as a system of specific sanctions and specific censorship, and thereby help fashion linguistic production by determining the ‘price’ [or value] of linguistic products*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:145). Bourdieu’s concept of a “linguistic market” is developed on the basis of national (French) society, but it can be used in analysing the European trans-national context as well (Pachev 2002). Following Bourdieu’s theory of language and symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991), the groups having higher symbolic capital also re-invest the resources in order to maintain their “capital” (language) on the market. The same can be said of countries and languages in the European trans-national context. The language policy on the national or international level considerably shapes the “linguistic market”. Referring to Bourdieu, Pachev argues:

*“Just as the state can use a range of legal, monetary, financial and other measures to change the structure of the economic market, it can also do so in*

*the linguistic market. Language policy can affect the European linguistic market, the national linguistic market and the internal market of the minority language and have real economic and political effects, such as the appropriation of positions and economic advantages reserved for holders of legitimate competence, or the symbolic profits associated with the possession of a prestigious, or at least unstigmatized, social identity (Bourdieu 1991:259)" (Pachev 2002:4).*

Following this logic of argumentation, if the language policy worked out by the European institutions supports a *laissez-faire* or "free market" approach on national and local levels, it fosters market mechanisms in the European language space and thereby the hegemony of languages having more symbolic capital.

Keeping in mind the arguments and doubts raised by the Strategy, a qualitative study among language experts was undertaken. The aim of the analysis was to elucidate the experts' opinions on the implementation of the Strategy, more precisely the aim "mother tongue plus two foreign languages" on the European and on the local/national level. Were the discourses of experts based on the "open market" principle (as pointed out by the critics of Parliament) or on the principle of language planning and the establishment of a real multilingual environment? The opinions in relation to the LWULs are of particular interest in this analysis. We believe that this material is worth exploring because it explains the context of the realization/ implementation of the aims raised in the Strategy and Action Plan and provides information on the aspects that need to be improved and advanced.

### 3. Method

This article is based primarily on a study conducted among language experts of member states of the Council of Europe<sup>11</sup>. Our aim was to seek the opinions of experts who have participated in the formation of European language policy and who are also experts in the field of languages. They are people of different backgrounds: employees of universities and of research or scientific institutions. Many of them are internationally renowned experts, as well as people from ministries or government agencies, etc. In their respective countries, they deal with language issues and more specifically with the development of the Council of Europe's project – the European Language Portfolio<sup>12</sup>. In several cases, a member state of the European Union is represented by the same expert in the language working

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<sup>11</sup> The Council of Europe is a separate organization and not part of the European Union. The Council of Europe unites 47 countries: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

<sup>12</sup> About the European Language Portfolio see the website of the Council of Europe <http://www.coe.int/portfolio>

groups of both the Council of Europe and the European Commission. Thus, in responding to the questionnaire, they also had to be flexible *vis-a-vis* their work in these institutions.

The language experts we questioned are not the main, or only, decision-makers in the field of language policy in their respective countries – decision-makers are politicians who have received a mandate from their electorate for a certain period. However, the aim of our study was not to find out the official position of national governments – this should be studied by using other methods. In the analysis of experts' answers, we did not suppose that the experts officially represented their states. We assumed that, although the opinions of experts might be shaped by the language situations and perspectives in their own countries, they would express their expert opinions on the situation of European languages today and in the future in general and would not necessarily be limited by the position of their own countries. Our study is a qualitative study which aims to bring out the different discourses and arguments concerning the language policy in Europe. The language experts we questioned contribute significantly to the formation of discourses and arguments in discussing the language policy in their countries or regions. They also form a certain micro-community in discussing language policy issues in the Council of Europe and European Commission. Thus our study sheds light on the thinking patterns and beliefs which lie behind institutional discussions.

We conducted the study among language experts of member states of the Council of Europe, because our aim was to collect not only the opinions of experts from the member states of the European Union, but also those of non-member states, because the language strategy (or “no policy” strategy) implemented within the European Union will have an impact on the whole linguistic landscape of Europe.

The data collection method was a structured, open-ended questionnaire. The analysis covers answers to two questions:

“Do you consider the aim of the language policy of the European Commission (acc to the document *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004–2006*) “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” realistic and achievable? Which are the factors contributing to or hindering this aim?”

“Do you consider the principle “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” to be something that would make European language usage more diverse and give every single language more potential for improvement or, quite the opposite, do you believe it would deplete European language usage, giving preference to the languages used by a great number of people and thus edging out the small languages? Please comment.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The wording of the second question was rather long and the two alternatives were pre-given in order to stimulate the experts to think and express their opinions, not about the linguistic diversity in Europe in general but in regard to the LWULs. In addition, the emotional style used in the questionnaire and the fact that Tõnu Tender, who conducted the survey, was personally known to many of his colleagues most likely stimulated respondents to give sincere and straightforward answers.

The advantage of the questionnaire was that the questions were presented to all experts in the same way. It was assumed that, in the interview, there might be many branches and cues, arising from the discussion, which might shape the answers to the key questions (because the topic is very complex and complicated). Thus they had the same starting point in making the selection of sub-topics and arguments. The main drawback of the genre of the questionnaire is that the texts are guided by questions. There is less “free discourse”. The actual answers varied from the mention of a couple of keywords to half-page long narratives. The average length of one answer was 58 words. In general, the answers were profound enough to be used in the qualitative text analysis and to use the elements of discourse analysis.

Experts could respond to the English or French language questionnaire, which means that a majority of experts had to express their thoughts in a foreign language. The experts have been working in these languages for some time in discussing the language problems of Europe. Thus we assume that using a foreign language had a minor impact on the content of answers<sup>14</sup>.

The majority of responses were collected in the autumn of 2004 in Madrid at an annual seminar on the Language Portfolio. A total of 63 questionnaires were distributed. Finally we got back 25 questionnaires, from experts of 23 member states of the Council of Europe plus one anonymous response<sup>15</sup>. Assuming that the opinions of experts might be shaped by the language situations and perspectives in their own countries, it should be mentioned that different types of languages and countries were covered by the responses. The final collection of answers included non-member countries having lesser-used languages (LUL) or medium-used languages as national languages, such as Norway (Norwegian), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian, Croatian respectively), Croatia<sup>16</sup>, Montenegro (Serbian) and Turkey; non-member countries having languages with a large number of speakers, such as the Russian Federation; non-member countries where people speak one of the official languages of the EU, such as Switzerland (German, French, Italian<sup>17</sup>) and Liechtenstein (German); member countries with languages with a large number of speakers, such as the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Austria and Poland; and member countries with languages with a medium or small number of speakers, such as the Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, Malta (Maltese<sup>18</sup>), Latvia and Lithuania. Also the sample included some countries where a regional language of the EU, Catalan, is used – Andorra and the Catalanian region of Spain.

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<sup>14</sup> The impact of a foreign language may be greater on the style. Therefore, only some elements of discourse analysis, which are not related to style, are employed in the analysis.

<sup>15</sup> The data collection period was rather long (2004–2005). The majority of responses were collected in the autumn of 2004 in Madrid at an annual seminar on the Language Portfolio. A total of 63 questionnaires were distributed, 51 in English and 12 in French, in Madrid in 2004 and in Moscow in 2005. Completed questionnaires (2 in French, the others in English) were returned personally at the seminar or later by post or by e-mail.

<sup>16</sup> Croatia and Turkey are also candidate members of the EU.

<sup>17</sup> One of the official languages is also Romansh with, 50–70 000 speakers.

<sup>18</sup> Malta has two official languages: Maltese and English.

A qualitative text analysis was utilized to analyze the answers to the questionnaire. Answers were coded and analyzed according to the general principles of qualitative text analysis (see Miles and Huberman 1994). We implemented a cross-case analysis, which means that we did not analyze the answers by experts/countries, but collected and systematized the statements made by different experts under similar themes and categories. At first we systematized the experts' opinions regarding the results of implementation of the principle "mother tongue plus two foreign languages" throughout Europe. We coded the answers on the imaged axis of upshot: preservation of multilingualism (as offered in the Strategy) or the hegemony of certain big languages (as warned about by critics). As a second step, we analysed the discourses of answers. We used the concept of "discourse" in the meaning<sup>19</sup> of a certain mode of organizing and representing the knowledge and ideas about certain topics in certain contexts (Hall 1997).

In building up a framework for coding, we used the arguments from the academic and institutional discussions referred to above (sub-chapter "The framework strategy for multilingualism") and the general theoretical concepts on the value and symbolic power of language (Bourdieu 1991, Lehmann 2006).

According to Lehmann, a language can have a practical value "which derives from the power and wealth that it represents and promises" (Lehmann 2006:157). In learning a (foreign) language, individuals usually consider the practical value of a language, seeking advantages connected with learning and speaking the language. Bourdieu makes a similar argument in speaking of the linguistic market: people undertake speech production with a certain "anticipation of profit", or anticipation of the expected reception of their words. Although Bourdieu uses the terms 'market' and 'capital' metaphorically, the symbolic capital and 'value' of languages might be translated into real economic gain or loss for individual users of a given linguistic code, as studies on education have shown (Unger 2006).

A language also has cultural, epistemic and aesthetic values<sup>20</sup>, which are seldom considered by individuals but are important in the identity-building of social groups. Language is a symbolic system by which social groups shape and recognize their identity and maintain a social structure.

In analysing the experts' answers, we sought to determine whether the point of departure of argumentation is a single individual (his/her choices, experiences) or a social structure (institutions, formal groups), and coded the texts accordingly.

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<sup>19</sup> There are many theoretical concepts of discourse and operationalisation schemes for analysis, such as Norman Fairclough's (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. Boston: Addison Wesley; Teun A. van Dijk, (ed.) (1997). *Discourse Studies*. 2 vols. London: Sage; Ruth Wodak (2006) 'Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis'. *Handbook of Pragmatics*, Benjamins. In our Study, we utilized only some elements of discourse analysis, as the texts were not very long and were produced in the specific settings discussed above in the article.

<sup>20</sup> The cultural value of language is connected with the culture of its speech community – it codes, interprets and transports the culture. The epistemic value of language is connected with its specific structure, which allows speakers to express some things better than in other languages and is thereby connected with the general view of the world (Lehmann 2006:158–159).

For further analysis (the third step) we developed sub-questions which were analogous to the questions used in the analysis of the Strategy:

- what spheres of activities are referred to in the texts of answers: economic, political or cultural (including education system)?
- what languages are mentioned and how (which synonyms, metaphors, adjectives are used in connection)?

The coding included not only manifest statements under each theme, but also more latent or implicit assumptions and connotations experts used in their answers. Interview fragments are marked by the country the expert represents. The name of the country is added in brackets following the quotation as background information in order to illustrate the variety of quotations used in the analysis. This does not mean that the opinion is considered to be an official representation of language policy principles of that country.

#### **4. Results**

In analyzing the answers of the experts, we found that their texts were organized along two main discourses, related closely to the upshot vision about the results of implementation of the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” principle: preservation of multilingualism or the hegemony of certain “big” languages.

Firstly, the discourse which represents the individual viewpoint and practical value of language is linked with the view that “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” will strengthen the hegemony of few languages in Europe. Secondly, the discourse which represents the viewpoint of the social group and refers also to the cultural and epistemic values of language is linked to the view that the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” principle can be an operative means for preservation of multilingualism in Europe. Next, we will describe both discourses in detail.

Characteristic of the discourse “of practical value of language and linguistic hegemony” is that the logic of argumentation focuses on the individual: one seeks for advantages connected with learning and speaking a certain language and, therefore, the practical value and prestige of a language “which derives from the power and wealth that it represents and promises” (Lehmann 2006:157). An example:

“I do not think that this principle will make European language usage more diverse. There must be a good reason (often personal) to learn other another language(s).” (the Netherlands.)

The mismatch between political ideals and the instrumental interests of individuals was brought out as a main obstacle favouring the linguistic hegemony of big languages:

“Both statements seem to be right in their own ways. Still, whether we follow the principle L1 + 2 L2 or not, convenience of all sorts will still keep

languages spoken by majorities as the preference in the learning priorities of citizens.” (Spain.)

Characteristic of this discourse are the references to the economic sphere. The job market and tourism were also mentioned as supporting factors to accept the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” principle locally. For example:

*(The supporting factors are)* “Expansion of the EU, closer ties among countries; more tourists in countries like Montenegro (---) Preference will certainly be given to English, French, German and Spanish, because there is a clear tendency for people to move from east to west, not vice-versa.” (Montenegro.)

The opposition between languages having large numbers of speakers and languages having small numbers of speakers emerged. There are various adjectives (vehicular, dominant, big) used which stress the hegemonic position of certain languages. For example:

“In practice the main vehicular languages are likely to predominate.” (the UK.)

“It is an ideal situation. In reality – “big” languages have a chance to become a communicative tool in Europe: English, German, French and Russian.” (Russia.)

As we can see from the last fragment, the practical value of a language derives from whether it can be used as a communicative tool throughout Europe. Although the official strategic documents avoid speaking of a *lingua franca*, it is an aspect considered in the evaluation of languages. For example:

“I do not think the principle can have much impact on what is happening in reality. Actually, the great majority want to learn English, in the first place, as the most necessary language for communication.” (Lithuania.)

It was pointed out that the implementation of the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” aim would require greater changes in the countries where the *lingua francas* are used. They were seen as critical actors in the process. The shift towards two-foreign-language multilingualism was called a cultural change. For example:

“This is, in fact, a paradigm shift from the norm, especially for certain countries with languages that are diffused world-wide, such as English, French, Spanish and so on. (---) It demands a change in culture. English has become a *lingua franca* and most would opt for it.” (Malta.)

Experts from countries having widely spoken languages, such as Spain and the UK, stressed that the process is long-term and that the principles of multiculturalism will be adopted very slowly. For example:

“It should be achievable in the very long-term, but it is very ambitious. The additional aim ‘from a very early age’ is unrealistic. (---) If it means literally everybody, the obstacles are massive, except in countries which are already multilingual. (---) The belief that ‘English is enough’ is an obstacle.” (UK.)



The lack of awareness was mentioned also as derived from history – the Eastern European countries were “closed” in Soviet times and, therefore, learning foreign languages was mostly not accompanied by opportunities to practice them. For example:

*(Hindering factor)* “Lack of awareness of the importance of learning foreign languages, especially in the countries that have been closed for years.” (Montenegro.)

The school system is seen as an important establisher of the practical value of languages. The logic of argumentation is that the choices made by the authorities of schools will be made based on practical calculations (existing teacher staff, tools etc) and, therefore, the school system is seen as reinforcing the existing hegemony of languages.

“It obviously gives preference to the languages used by a great number of people. Those are usually the languages learnt in school (education).” (Poland.)

In some opinions, the “open market” process can be counter-balanced by the guidance of language choices by authorities. The *laissez faire* strategy is treated with pessimism in relation to small languages. An example:

“More diverse: probably not. If language choice is not guided by authorities, uninformed choice would strengthen languages which are accidentally à la mode. Small languages would, rather, run the risk of being edged out, especially when economic interests prevail.” (Austria.)

From the arguments and discourse of language experts, we may conclude that their interpretation of the EU language policy is addressed to the inhabitants of Europe as individuals who act as consumers on the European “language market”. Therefore, launching the principle “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” provides a rather clear frame of economic and political instrumentality for the competition for the second and third foreign language spoken in Europe.

As said below, the other viewpoint sees the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” principle as an operative means for preservation of multilingualism in Europe. Contrary to the hegemonic view, which represents the individual viewpoint and practical value of language, the view of “multilingualism maintenance” proceeds from the viewpoint of the social group which aims to recognize its identity and maintain social structure through language (Lehmann 2006: 162). The verbs “protection” and “support” are used and minority groups are referred to. For example:

“This is a challenge to Andorra to enrich the language space: to protect the mother tongue (Catalan, which is a less-used language) + maintain the languages of neighboring countries, migrant languages etc.” (Andorra.)

“(---) In the case of Switzerland, with 4 national languages, the aim is even necessary. We hope that it is achievable” (---) *(Hindering factor)* “The special linguistic situation in the German speaking part of Switzerland (diglossy): the every-day language is Swiss-German (dialects), the school

language is/should be standard German. In the first grades of primary school, great emphasis is put on learning the local/standard language. (---) great efforts must be undertaken to support the 4th national language (Rhaeto-romanic) as a minority language.” (Switzerland).

A discourse became visible here which represents the epistemic value of language (Lehmann 2006:2). An example:

“Through language learning, different skills can be achieved: learning skills, knowledge of other cultures through languages and others. Learning of languages becomes, somehow, natural and automated; more languages will be learnt.” (Liechtenstein.)

Also the EU language programs were mentioned as creating interest in learners towards foreign languages. For example:

(*Contributing factor is*) “Growing fun in language learning + supportive factors such as language competitions (European Language Label, European Day of Languages).” (Austria.)

The languages of neighbouring countries were mentioned as the most potent factors in second foreign language learning. For example:

“One should present a cocktail of languages: mother tongue plus one language spoken world-wide plus another language which is not so much diffused: for example, the language of the neighboring country.” (Malta.)

Regional development and neighbourhood links between countries may be factors facilitating language learning, which could compete with the instrumental attractiveness of widely used languages in Europe. In learning the neighbour’s language, practical values (related to economic links between the neighbouring countries) and cultural and epistemic values (the need to understand neighbours, cultural exchange) may combine.

In discussing the principle “mother tongue plus two foreign languages”, the topic of mother tongue was raised in connection with minority groups and regional languages. The representative of France pointed out the underdeveloped system of providing mother tongue lessons to minority group members:

“The teaching of the mother tongue is not systematic. Only the national language – French – is taught and it is the language of instruction, except in some cases where the language and culture of the country of origin is taught in agreement with the country of origin.” (France.)

The topic of the mother tongue in the “open market” of languages, for example the question of how the practical value of the mother tongue will be influenced by the process of globalization, was not discussed by experts.

## 5. Summary and conclusions

This article deals with the perspectives of maintenance of multilingualism in Europe in a situation where language policy is one of supporting, coordinating or

supplementing measures of the European Union, but the burden of protecting, developing and introducing languages falls on member states themselves. The documents “Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004–2006” and “New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism”, worked out by the European Commission, and the opinions of language experts involved in European and national language regulation were analyzed from this perspective. The conclusion derived from the analysis of the Action Plan and Strategy is that these documents are rather vague in reference to the LWULs. The documents prescribe that these languages compete on the “open market”. The document “Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment.” Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions (18.9.2008) continues the same trend.

The qualitative study among language experts revealed two discourses. Firstly, the ‘individual-practical’ discourse sees the subject of EU language policy as individuals who aim to achieve practical advantages if they learn/use certain languages. It is linked with the view that “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” will strengthen the hegemony of few languages in Europe. In referring to the Commission’s documents, a conflict between political ideals of multilingualism and reality was expressed. The demand for a second foreign language was represented as an “opening salvo” in a political and economic competition between French, German and Spanish for the position of the second foreign language.

The second discourse sees the social group as the subject of language policy and refers also to the cultural and epistemic value of language as a motivator to learn languages. The discourse is linked to the view of the possibility of preservation of multilingualism in Europe. The opinion was expressed that in order to counterbalance the “open market” process, some guidance of language choices by authorities should be provided. The principle of “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” was seen as a challenge to the local authorities to integrate it with the need to protect RMLs. Also, calls were made for regulation on the European level.

Because of the qualitative nature of our study we cannot say which discourse dominates in the discussions of language policy within the micro-community of language experts and in institutional debates. But the results warn that the “mother tongue plus two foreign languages” policy, implemented on the national and local level, may foster market mechanisms in the European language space and thereby strengthen the hegemony of languages having more symbolic capital.

To protect the multilingual environment of Europe, the Strategic documents should be advanced. The European Commission should, in addition to their current activities, support by specific measures (action plans) the cultural value of languages and generate interest among citizens in smaller languages and cultures (in cooperation with member states and minority groups). This task cannot be delegated to Member States only. The subject of policy cannot always be connected with individuals. Groups should also be the subjects of language planning, because the cultural value of language comes out in relation to groups. Social

groups using the LWULs should be clearly addressed in the policy. The experience of integration of general European principles with local policies in multiethnic countries should be brought out. The LWULs cannot resist “open market” competition and, therefore, need support from European institutions. The strategy should consider the maintenance of European languages as mother tongues. For an individual, his native language is the primary means of understanding the world and maintaining social contact (Lehmann 2006). Mother tongue protection involves more aspects than just teaching it in schools (although this is also very important for migrant groups). The development of sub-languages in specific fields, such as science, needs protection in the context of globalization. People who move throughout Europe, working and studying in other countries, need a space of communication in the mother tongue. There is a need for ICT solutions and other tools to support the cultural and epistemic value of language – language as a link with one’s cultural heritage and language as a medium of cognition of the world (Lehmann 2006).

Language planning and programs should be more integrated with regional and economic policy. The establishment of a multilingual industry, neighbourhood programs and co-operation between regions have the potential to add practical value to the LWULs. General awareness campaigns should be considered to promote the principle of “English is not enough” and to promote lifelong learning.

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