



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Education and Culture

Lifelong Learning: Education and Training policies

**Multilingualism policy**

EXP LG 5/2006 EN Annex FIN

## Follow-up of the Action Plan on language learning and linguistic diversity National Report Template

Country ...**The Netherlands**.....

### INTRODUCTION

The Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity invited Member States to take actions on various issues. This document lists these points for action. It follows the same order as the chapters of the Action Plan: *1. Lifelong language learning; 2. Better language teaching; 3. Building a language-friendly environment.* Chapter four invites you to outline the global national strategy on languages and, if Member States so wish, to provide information on other language initiatives which do not fit into the framework of the Action Plan and/or plans for multilingualism.

Some actions recommended by the more recent Communication on Multilingualism are also included in the relevant chapters. They are shadowed in grey and are optional. Although the time allowed for these actions is shorter, Member States have the possibility to report on their initial work on them.

The national report should be written by filling in this template. Each point is followed by some key questions which guide Member States in presenting their work in progress. It is not compulsory to answer each point. If some of them were not a priority at national level it should be mentioned and the point(s) skipped.

Once completed, the national report should be posted on CIRCA: [http://forum.europa.eu.int/Members/irc/eac/languages/library?l=/actionsplans20042006/follow-up\\_national&vm=detailed&sb=Title](http://forum.europa.eu.int/Members/irc/eac/languages/library?l=/actionsplans20042006/follow-up_national&vm=detailed&sb=Title)

For more information, please post a message on the CIRCA language newsgroup ([http://forum.europa.eu.int/Members/irc/eac/languages/newsgroups?n=europa.eac.languages.bulletin\\_board](http://forum.europa.eu.int/Members/irc/eac/languages/newsgroups?n=europa.eac.languages.bulletin_board)) or contact Patrizia Baralli or Luca Tomasi (see contact details at the end of the document).

### 1. LIFE-LONG LANGUAGE LEARNING

#### 1.1. 'Mother tongue plus two other languages': making an early start

*It is a priority for Member States to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary school is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed, and the foundations for later language learning are laid. The European Council in Barcelona called for "further action ... to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age.*

*In implementing this commitment, most Member States will be called upon to make significant additional investments. In implementing their commitment to teach at least two foreign languages from a very early*

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*age, Member States should consider whether adjustments are necessary to primary school curricula, and whether provision for the training and deployment of additional specialist teaching staff and other teaching and learning resources in primary and pre-primary schools is adequate.*

*Member States are invited to review their current arrangements for early language learning in the light of best practice from across Europe; and implement the Conclusions of the Luxembourg Presidency concerning Content and Language Integrated Learning, including raising awareness of the benefits of this approach, exchanging information and scientific evidence on good CLIL practice and specific CLIL training for teachers.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

**ELL**

In primary education, all pupils receive English lessons in the top two classes (starting at about age 10). Schools are also free to start earlier on their own initiative. The number of schools doing so exhibits clear growth.

It has been legally possible since 2006 for schools of primary education to offer French and German; this was previously only possible as an experiment. Starting this year, they will also be able to offer Spanish, but this requires special permission from the Ministry.

There are now 85 schools offering English, German, French and/or Spanish at an early age, out of a total of approximately 7000 schools for mainstream primary education.

**CLIL**

CLIL is not offered in the Netherlands until secondary school. This type of education started from a bottom-up approach. The number of schools offering CLIL (to select groups of pupils) is growing steadily. In the 2004-2005 school year, 63 schools offered it; this is expected to increase to 90 in the 2006-2007 school year, and will likely rise to 94 in the 2007-2008 school year (more than 15% of schools). All these cases involve CLIL in which English is the target language. There is also one school where German is the target language. The number of pupils (nearly always pupils preparing for higher education) taught with CLIL is not continuously registered. As of 1 January 2004, there were about 5000 pupils; it is estimated that there are now about 7000.

CLIL is also offered in senior secondary vocational education in a growing number of bilingual programmes (English). There are also schools that use CLIL in project-based education. This takes place very rarely.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

**ELL**

There are no special training programmes for teaching foreign languages from an early age. Standard English is generally taught in primary school by the broadly educated group teacher. There is an impression that these teachers are not always sufficiently prepared for their task. Extra support is needed for teaching foreign languages at a very early age.

**CLIL**

Teachers of subjects which require the teaching of many facts, such as History or Geography, cannot automatically teach in another language. Extra attention for the quality of this type of education is required, because the standard examinations can only monitor the quality to a limited extent. Suitable lesson materials are not always immediately available, not even from foreign suppliers. This type of education is taught almost exclusively in English.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

**ELL**

In the context of the Day of Languages 2006, a major conference was organised for primary school teachers and English language instructors in primary education, during which English in primary education will take centre stage in various possible forms.

A number of projects to stimulate English in early education also received awards in the context of *Werkplaats Talen*, a procedure in which the field of education was able to nominate initiatives from within the field for partial subsidies (see also item 4).

Starting in 2006, the European Platform (officially known as the Socrates National Agency) will be setting up a modest revision of a support structure for English instruction in early education. Instruction in French and German during early education is part of a special pilot project for those languages in twenty locations. This concerns encounter-based education, in which the language is taught in a playful manner. This project, called LinQ, has been placed under the auspices of the European Platform in cooperation with others. Project support for Spanish in early education has also been placed under the auspices of the European Platform.

### **CLIL**

Various courses have been developed to offer refresher courses for specialist teachers, English language modules are being offered in initial teacher training courses, and post-graduate programmes have been developed. General support for bilingual secondary education is offered by the European Platform, which has also worked with the schools to set up a thorough system of quality control. During periodic reviews, the quality is assessed on the basis of an extensive list of criteria. The pupils participate in the standard Dutch final examination, but in order to measure their greater competence in English, they also have the option of sitting an IB examination in the subject of English. The European Platform has also eliminated a number of lacunas in the lesson materials. The LinQ project, also falling under the auspices the European Platform, which is intended to improve the results in French and German education, will be reviewed to see if it is possible to develop educational modules in those target languages.

A small conference will be organised this autumn for senior secondary vocational education regarding the application of CLIL in competency-driven education. A brochure has also been written (*'Internationaliseren? Talen leren!'*) about linking international traineeships to language instruction. This brochure will be distributed widely among teachers and managers in senior secondary vocational education.

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provides an annual subsidy of €250,000 to the European Platform to support early education in foreign languages, enhanced language instruction and bilingual education (especially the start of this form of education).

## **1.2. Language learning in secondary education and training**

*In secondary education or training young people complete the acquisition of the essential core of skills that will serve them throughout a lifetime of language learning. Member States agree that pupils should master at least two foreign languages, with the emphasis on effective communicative ability: active skills rather than passive knowledge. 'Native speaker' fluency is not the objective, but appropriate levels of skill in reading, listening, writing and speaking in two foreign languages are required, together with intercultural competencies and the ability to learn languages whether with a teacher or alone.*

*Member States should provide adequate information to parents about the choice of their child's first foreign language, and the flexibility of school curricula to permit the teaching of a wider range of languages.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

### **Secondary education**

In secondary education, the schools have gained more policy room to set up education in many ways, in part to increase pupils' choices. English continues to be the required first foreign language for all pupils, right up to the final examination.

As of 2006, at least two foreign languages are in principle required in the first half of secondary school (from age 12 to about 14 or 15 years old). For approx. 40 per cent of the pupils, this is where it stops. That requirement no longer applies for the very practically oriented group of pupils (approx. 15 per cent). Pupils preparing for higher education (approx. 45 per cent) will continue to have the requirement of three foreign languages. This increases the number of languages that are available, although German and French do take precedence to some degree.

In the final years of preparatory secondary vocational education (VMBO, from 14 to 16 years) foreign languages, generally German or French, only take on a preferential position in the economic sector. Pupils can choose supplementary instruction in foreign languages to fill in the free space of the other learning tracks.

As of 2007, in the final years of secondary school in preparation for a form of higher education (from 15 to 17 or 18 years), only pupils preparing for university (and not attending classical *gymnasium*) will still be required to take a second modern foreign language through to end of the final examination year (in which the second foreign language will then be assigned more hours than the sum of the required second and third foreign languages were previously assigned together). The senior general secondary education (HAVO) pupils in the Culture & Society subject cluster who are preparing for higher professional education share that requirement. This means that, as of 2007, there will be fewer requirements, but the opportunities to choose a second and third foreign language with a substantial number of hours in the context of other subject clusters and the free space will increase.

### **Vocational training**

In this sector, the educational objectives are set on the basis of tripartite consultation between employers, employees and institutes of education. In knowledge centres for business and vocational education (known as KBBs), they determine together which requirements the vocational graduate must meet. Since the Adult and Vocational Education Act (*Wet Educatie en Beroepsopleiding*) came into effect in 1996, these requirements are specified in the skill structure for vocational training (KSB). This structure is currently being updated. The requirements set for the modern foreign languages (and for Dutch) are laid out in 'language competency profiles' in accordance with the CEFR, indicating the level to be achieved for each skill. Schools are working to redesign their programmes based on this new skill structure. As a result of the redesign project, the modern foreign languages are increasingly integrated into profession-oriented subjects or projects, often supported by a language centre in which the languages can be learned and practised in the context of a course. English plays a leading role in the new skill structure, with German as the second language. French and Spanish follow far behind and are often optional languages. The choice of which second foreign language to take is often completely up to the pupil. This gives schools the opportunity to offer more foreign languages. Ten schools offer bilingual programmes (Dutch and English).

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

### **Secondary education**

Although the key objectives and examination programmes emphasise communication skills, the education inspection office has noted that the speaking and listening skills require more attention. It should also be taken into account that the languages will not receive substantially more teaching time.

### **Vocational training**

In vocational school, there is also often insufficient time available to attain the intended level of language skills, particularly because there is often little or no basic knowledge of foreign languages other than English. For German, French and Spanish, pupils often have to start from scratch.

See also 1.6.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### **Secondary education**

The Ministry has asked various national support institutes to develop materials to aid teachers in facilitating speaking skills. This topic is receiving a great deal of attention, including in the framework of *Werkplaats Talen*. A project has been started at the European Platform, called LinQ, not only providing the aforementioned support for early education in German and French in primary education, but also supporting twenty secondary schools in achieving better results during normal lesson times, especially in the area of productive skills. In order to stimulate the pupils, they have the opportunity to supplement their standard diploma in this subject by sitting a German examination administered by the Goethe Institut or participating in the Delf Scolaire examination in French (both examinations are linked to the CEFR).

### **Vocational training**

For vocational school, a course in German A1 and German A2 has been developed by the Goethe Institut in consultation with several schools, accompanied by examinations and certificates.

### 1.3. Language learning in Higher Education

*“Higher Education institutions play a key role in promoting societal and individual multilingualism. Proposals that each university implement a coherent language policy clarifying its role in promoting language learning and linguistic diversity, both amongst its learning community and in the wider locality, are to be welcomed. All students should study abroad, preferably in a foreign language, for at least one term, and should gain an accepted language qualification as part of their degree course”*

*Member States are invited to review training programmes at universities to ensure that they equip students in the language professions with the right skills for rapidly changing working conditions.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

Higher education in the Netherlands, which comprises higher professional education and university education, is highly autonomous. It agrees on the final terms in the context of the Bologna Declaration. In higher professional education, the HBO Council (the umbrella organisation for all institutes of education) recently signed a covenant. This agreement states that the parties will communicate better with each other about the contents of the degree programmes with regard to the needs of the field in which the graduates will theoretically be employed.

In order to attract more foreign students, an increasing number of programmes are offered in English. There are now about 800 of these programmes that end in a bachelor's or master's degree (out of a total of more than 2000, including every programme at every institution), as well as about 350 special courses.

Many students in higher education go abroad for part of their studies. The most common destinations are: United Kingdom (ca. 3000), Belgium (ca. 3000), Germany (ca. 2300), Spain (ca. 1900) and the United States (ca. 1700). These data come from *Key figures for internationalisation in higher education in the Netherlands*, published in September 2006.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

English occupies a dominant position.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### 1.4. Adult language learning

*Every adult should be encouraged to carry on learning foreign languages, and facilities should be made readily available to make this possible. Workers should have the opportunity to improve the language skills relevant to their working life. Cultural activities involving foreign music, literature or films, holidays abroad, town-twinning activities, voluntary service abroad can be promoted as opportunities for learning about other cultures and languages”*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

This is not a priority for the Ministry; it is left to the private sector. There are a great many private, often commercial institutes in the Netherlands that offer language courses. Adult education centres and community centres often offer language courses as well. Several schools for senior secondary professional education (MBO) have a language centre in which they offer language courses for regional businesses and the regional population, in the context of contract education. A survey of Dutch opinions about learning later in life was taken several years ago. It showed that three-quarters of the Dutch population believed that learning is also essential for adults in order not to be sidelined. Where personal development was concerned, language courses came in third, after courses in hobbies and sports and in ICT skills.

There is a broad and diverse selection of foreign-language music, literature and films (which are shown in their original language, both in cinemas and on television). The Dutch are known for their passion for travelling. Many cities are twinned with a city in another country.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

A very recent study among ten companies of varying types showed that the Dutch have a tendency to seriously overestimate their foreign language skills. This also applied to the managers in those companies. Various newspapers published articles about this study.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### **1.5. Language learners with special needs**

*Language learning is for everybody. Only a very small minority of people has physical, mental or other characteristics that make language learning impossible. Provision for learners with special needs of one kind or another is increasingly being made within mainstream schools and training institutions; however, such learners are still excluded from language lessons in some cases. Good practice in teaching languages to learners with special needs can be further developed and new methods and approaches need to be developed for the teaching of foreign languages to such learners*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

#### **Special education**

For a great many years now, special primary and secondary schools have existed for physically handicapped pupils that cannot attend mainstream education, such as pupils who have an auditory or visual handicap. Assisted by extra facilities, these pupils in principle follow the standard programme of education.

Special primary and secondary schools for pupils that have learning disabilities or behavioural problems and cannot attend mainstream education have also existed for many years. They may receive exemptions for certain subjects, depending on the type of learning difficulties.

#### **Secondary education**

A project was started in 2005 to facilitate better foreign language learning for the more practically oriented pupils (the 15 per cent of pupils who are no longer required to take a second foreign language). To that end, examples of good foreign language education designed for this target group will be collected, developed and distributed. Educational publishers will be involved in this process to increase coverage.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### **1.6. Range of languages**

*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. The imminent enlargement of the European Union will bring with it a wealth of languages from several language families; it requires a special effort to ensure that the languages of the new Member States become more widely learned in other countries. Member States have considerable scope to take a lead in promoting the teaching and learning of a wider range of languages than at present.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

#### **Primary education**

See 1.1 for the expansion of the number of languages that can be learned in primary education. It should be noted that education in the province of Friesland is generally also offered in Frisian.

#### **Secondary education**

All pupils are required to take English until their school-leaving examination. Pupils can initially choose German and French for their second and third modern foreign languages, but these languages can be replaced by other languages for which an examination programme has been determined. Pupils preparing for senior secondary vocational education can take Arabic, Turkish and Spanish, while the choices for pupils preparing for higher education also include Italian and Russian. In Friesland, Frisian is in principle also required in the first years of secondary school. Frisian can also be selected as an examination subject in all types of education.

Pupils preparing for university have the option of taking Latin and/or classical Greek on a compulsory basis (in *gymnasium*) or a voluntary basis (in *atheneum*).

Several schools also offer modern and/or classical Hebrew.

It is also known that an unsubsidised private school offers Portuguese. Schools have also been offering Chinese as a standard option for several years now, using their free space.

### **Vocational education**

Because the new skill structure leaves the choice of the second foreign language open in many cases, a number of schools are experimenting with offering extra languages, such as Italian and Chinese. There are initiatives to create an additional selection of other migrant languages.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

Suitable lesson materials were not available for all the 'new school languages' included in the Education Act, as the target group is often too small for educational publishers. With the exception of Spanish, the languages listed are offered relatively rarely by schools, so parents are often unaware of the options available in this area. Teachers providing instruction in these languages often operate on an isolated basis.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

The Ministry has subsidised the development of new lesson materials for various languages (sometimes in a European project supplemented by subsidies from Brussels). Using subsidies from the department, the CPS (Protestant Educational Advisory Centre) published a brochure for parents this year, containing information on the options that schools can offer. The CPS also offers separate support to teachers providing instruction in the new school languages.

## **2. BETTER LANGUAGE TEACHING**

### **2.1. The language-friendly school**

*It is important that schools and training institutions adopt a holistic approach to the teaching of language, which makes appropriate connections between the teaching of 'mother tongue', 'foreign' languages, the language of instruction, and the languages of migrant communities; such policies will help children to develop the full range of their communicative abilities. In this context, multilingual comprehension approaches can be of particular value because they encourage learners to become aware of similarities between languages, which is the basis for developing receptive multilingualism.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

How a school sets up the education it offers is an aspect that the government leaves to the schools to decide; the Dutch Constitution offers that freedom. Educational legislation accordingly leaves sufficient room for an individual approach.

It should be noted that education in the mother language (migrant language) or the country of origin was abolished in 2004.

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science supports the schools by organising a Day of Languages each year, highlighting a different theme each time. The European Label is also awarded each year, and a Language Teacher of the Year will be elected starting in 2006.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?
- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

## 2.2. Language teacher training

*Language teachers have a crucial role to play in building a multilingual Europe. They, more than teachers of other subjects, are called upon to exemplify the European values of openness to others, tolerance of differences, and willingness to communicate. It is important that they have all had adequate experience of using the target language and understanding its associated culture. All teachers of a foreign language should have spent an extended period in a country where that language is spoken and have regular opportunities to update their training.*

*The skills and personal resources required to teach languages well are considerable. Initial training should equip language teachers with a basic 'toolkit' of practical skills and techniques, through training in the classroom; language teachers need the advice of trained mentors as well as regular opportunities to keep their language and teaching skills up to date, inter alia via e-learning and distance learning.*

*Language teachers may often feel isolated, unaware of developments elsewhere with the potential to improve their work; they may not have access to adequate professional support networks; it is therefore important to facilitate contacts and effective networks between them at a regional, national and European level.*

*In this field, Member States have a crucial role to play in ensuring that all teachers of a foreign language have:*

- appropriate initial training including practical training in the pedagogy of foreign languages, and experience of living in a country whose language they teach, and
- regular paid access to in-service training.

*Member States will recall that the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 invited them to encourage future language teachers to take advantage of relevant European programmes to carry out part of their studies in a country or region of a country where the language which they will teach later is the official language.*

*Member States are invited to review their current arrangements for foreign language teacher training in the light of the findings of the study 'European Profile for Language Teacher Education';<sup>1</sup>*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

The quality of the teacher training courses needs to improve. With this in mind, the Policy Agenda for Teacher Training Courses 2005-2008 was established in 2005. It is a joint agenda of the Ministry, the HBO Council and VSNU, in which performance agreements were set out to improve the quality of the teacher training courses. In that context, teacher training courses can submit project proposals and set up centres of expertise for specific subjects, such as modern foreign languages.

In 2004, the Education Professions Act (*Wet op de beroepen in het onderwijs*) was passed. This law promotes educational personnel achieving and maintaining a specific minimum level of quality. As of 1 August 2006, general minimum requirements for competence have been set for the category of teachers (primary education, secondary education/vocational training/adult education and preparatory higher education). This minimum package leaves room for supplementation, including in the area of specific subjects. Employers must make it possible for their personnel to maintain their skills and competencies.

There are two important forms of knowledge exchange and sharing for senior secondary vocational education (MBO): a Web portal for all foreign modern language teachers in MBO ([www.trefpunttalen.nl](http://www.trefpunttalen.nl)) and the *Platform MVT-beleid* (platform for modern foreign languages

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<sup>1</sup> *European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference*  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/doc/profile\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/doc/profile_en.pdf)

policy), which focuses more on the management of language education in MBO. More than half of all MBO schools are (or have been) members of this Platform, in cooperation with the largest educational publishers in the Netherlands. An important publication that came out last year (*Da's andere taal!*) describes good practices in senior secondary vocational education. Training courses are regularly held for teachers, emphasising the use of CEFR and the ELP. The European Platform has an overview of the mobility (subsidised only) of teachers to other EU countries, but there is no such overview specifically for language teachers.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

See above.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

During the European conference on language education, which the Netherlands organised in 2004 during its presidency of the European Union, representatives from the teacher training courses were introduced to the European Profile for Language Teacher Education. If themes relevant to the teacher training courses are on the agenda, then key figures from the training world are nominated to participate in the activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz. They are expected to ensure dissemination of their findings.

The Dutch National Bureau of Modern Foreign Languages has taken the initiative to promote cooperation among teacher trainers. The aim is to increase the overall basic knowledge of teacher trainers (and of employees at institutes for educational support). To that end, a series of seminars is being prepared.

In recent years, the Ministry has subsidised the development of a Language Portfolio for teachers. This describes various types of competencies at increasing levels of difficulty for different categories of teachers. Using these scales, a teacher can indicate where he thinks he stands and what he hopes to attain, even during a performance review with his manager.

### 2.3. Supply of language teachers

*Some Member States face shortages of adequately-qualified language teachers; these may be general shortages or may relate to certain languages or certain types of education or training; these shortages need to be addressed and sustainable solutions found. More can be done to exchange teachers between Member States; such teachers may work as teachers of their mother tongue, teachers of another language or as teachers of another subject through their mother tongue. In linguistic border areas there is particular scope for initiatives targeting neighbouring languages in this field.*

*Member States have been recommended<sup>2</sup> to remove legal and administrative obstacles to the mobility of teachers and their progress needs to be monitored*

*In this field, Member States have a particular responsibility to remove any remaining administrative or legal barriers to the employment of teachers of a foreign language from other Member States.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

Under the auspices of the European Platform, programmes have been set up to train sufficiently qualified native speakers of French and German to be fully qualified teachers (ten each year for each language). Senior secondary vocational training schools are encouraged to use the schemes in place for using a foreign language assistant.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

The native speakers of French noted a much greater cultural chasm in relation to the Netherlands than the native speakers of German.

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<sup>2</sup> by the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Mobility ... for Students, Persons Undergoing Training, Volunteers, Teachers and Trainers (2001/613/EC)

There are fewer job openings for French teachers than had initially been thought, and they are generally outside the Randstand urban conglomeration, in regions that these native speakers consider less interesting.

The number of job openings for German teachers is still high, even for teachers that are qualified only to teach the early years of secondary school (requiring a second level qualification). Senior secondary vocational training schools that have a language centre are enthusiastic about using language assistants from other countries. However, they would prefer to use them for a whole school year, not just half a year as is now the case.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

The project to offer teacher training to native speakers of French will be discontinued this year. Instead, more native speakers (twenty) will be trained as assistants, to be used in various places (teacher training courses, primary and secondary education). They are expected to make a special contribution in improving the speaking skills in particular.

The project training native speakers of German to become fully qualified teachers will continue unabated and will be expanded this year to include a programme to train teachers for a second level qualification, which qualifies them to teach all years of senior secondary vocational education and the first three years of higher secondary education (HAVO and VWO).

The number of students enrolling in the German teacher training course (and the university degree courses in German) increased significantly this year for the first time in a long while.

## 2.4. Training teachers of other subjects

*Most pupils and trainees could study at least some of their curriculum through the medium of a foreign language. Many more members of the teaching profession should in future be able to teach their subject(s) through at least one foreign language; to this end, trainee teachers should study language(s) alongside their area of specialisation and undertake a part of their teaching studies abroad.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

See 1.1.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

## 2.5. Testing language skills

*The Common Reference Scales of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Language<sup>3</sup> provide a good basis for schemes to describe individuals' language skills in an objective, practical, transparent and portable manner. Effective mechanisms are needed to regulate the use of these scales by examining bodies. Teachers and others involved in testing language skills need adequate training in the practical application of the Framework. European networks of relevant professionals could do much to help share good practice in this field.*

*The European Language Portfolio<sup>4</sup> can help people to value, and make the most of, all their language skills, howsoever acquired, and to carry on learning languages by themselves*

*In this respect, Member States were invited by the Council Resolution of 14 February 2002 to set up systems of validation of competence in language knowledge based on the Common European Framework*

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language\\_Policy/Common\\_Framework\\_of\\_Reference/default.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/Common_Framework_of_Reference/default.asp)

<sup>4</sup> [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main\\_pages/welcome.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/welcome.html)

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

In secondary education, the examination programmes and examinations used in all school types are linked to the CEFR.

It is not possible to link the key objectives for primary education and the first years of secondary education directly to the CEFR since they apply to a very diverse student body in terms of capacities and, in part for that reason, are very general. The key objectives are developed in more detail by using examples, which makes it possible to include a link to the CEFR.

A new skill structure has come into effect in senior secondary vocational education (MBO), in which the requirements for foreign languages (and for Dutch) are set out in language competency profiles in accordance with the CEFR. A conference for MBO was organised on the theme of testing language skills. This yielded recommendations that have been pooled in a publication that will be distributed widely. The essence of the recommendations consists of promoting the use of the CEFR and the ELP.

This framework of reference is increasingly setting the standards for describing language skills in higher education as well. For example, the national consultation body for the higher professional degree programmes in International Business and Languages has defined a competency profile for the languages which is related to the CEFR.

ELPs have been developed and validated for nearly all types of school. The SLO (see also below under item 4) and institutes of higher education are still working to develop a language portfolio for higher education. One new factor is the development of an electronic ELP, aimed at the broad target audience of everyone learning languages. This will still be submitted for validation.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

The criteria and guidelines that European countries apply in linking their tests to the CEFR still vary widely. This may cause differences in the quality of testing and in examination candidate assessments.

Another problem is the fact that, although various activities have been set up to familiarise the Dutch language teachers with the CEFR, it is still unfamiliar to many of them. Work with the ELP is increasing, but has not yet really taken off, with the exception of the senior secondary vocational education sector.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

The National Institute for Educational Measurement, CITO, will publish the conclusions of its study on the link between the central examinations and the CEFR in a version for a Dutch audience, primarily aimed at foreign modern language teachers. It can be expected that when in 2007, the first revised examination programmes and examinations (for pupils preparing to study in higher education) come into effect, teachers will show more interest in information about the CEFR. A number of training courses are already on offer, and teachers can register for these on a voluntary basis. In any case, activities for implementing the ELP in secondary education will still be subsidised in 2007.

Senior secondary vocational education will continue in its current direction, with a permanent focus on the implementation of CEFR and ELP.

To promote international coordination, the CITO is an active participant in international activities in this area. Dutch findings will also be made available to an international audience. For example, an English-language version of the Dutch report on the link between the central examinations and the CEFR will be published, after being adapted to an international audience. The CITO will also write a case study for the Council of Europe based on the report, including the technical procedures for linking tests to the CEFR.

## BUILDING A LANGUAGE-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

### 2.6. An inclusive approach to linguistic diversity

*National and regional authorities are encouraged to give special attention to measures to assist those language communities whose number of native speakers is in decline from generation to generation, in line with the principles of the European Charter on Regional and Minority languages.*

*Member States are encouraged to give special attention to measures to assist language communities whose number of native speakers is in decline from generation to generation, in line with the principles of the European Charter on Regional and Minority languages.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

A special project for Frisian language development at the preschool age (2 to 5 years) has been running for many years now. The lesson plan for primary and secondary schools takes in to account whether pupils have a Frisian-language background. New lesson methods are being developed for Frisian in primary and secondary education, in part to replace outdated materials. Radio and television are also used. Starting in 2007, an interactive multimedia programme will be developed for secondary education to promote reading and writing skills. Cultural activities are also held in relation to the Frisian language.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

Despite all the activities to support the Frisian language, research showed in mid-2006 that the number of Frisian people who speak their own language has dropped by 20% since 1995.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### 2.7. Building language-friendly communities

*Every community in Europe can become more language-friendly by making better use of opportunities to hear and see other languages and cultures, thereby helping to improve language awareness and learning. It is in the interest of the Union to capitalise on the skills and experiences of its many bi- and tri-lingual citizens, and temporary residents such as Erasmus students; monolingual citizens have much to learn from them; public authorities can make better use of their skills in schools, adult education centres, cultural establishments and workplaces.*

*Tourism projects, cross-border projects and town twinning schemes can form the nuclei of local language learning schemes, enabling citizens to learn the language(s) of their neighbours or twin town(s), and offering an incentive to do so.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

In the context of *Werkplaats Talen* (see also under item 4), a grant went to a project in which native speakers attending a teacher training course for French, German, Spanish or English at a higher professional school are employed as (unpaid) language assistants in different types of schools. This allows these students to gain experience with the Dutch education system, while it gives the pupils extra motivation for learning foreign languages. At the end of the project, a teaching model was developed that will also be useful for other institutes of education. For more information on this theme, see 1.4.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### 2.8. Improving supply and take-up of language learning

*It is essential to improve the take-up of language learning opportunities by continuous activities to raise awareness of the benefits of language learning, and by bringing language resources closer to the people*

*who need them. The Council of Europe's initiative the European Day of Languages<sup>5</sup> can be valuable in motivating people to learn foreign languages.*

*European Union initiatives such as the European Languages Label<sup>6</sup> also have a key role in this by highlighting local, regional, or national projects that have found creative ways to improve the quality of language teaching.*

*The provision of language learning facilities and courses is the responsibility of local, regional and national authorities. Both within and outside formal systems there is still considerable unmet demand not only for language lessons but also for information and advice on language learning.*

*Appropriate structures are required to motivate people of all ages to learn languages, to offer guidance about how to start, and to provide easy access to a variety of different language learning activities. This is likely to require some investment in new provision, though there is also much to gain by making better use of existing language learning resources and staff in schools and universities, libraries, local learning networks and adult education centres.*

- a) What concrete actions (if any) have been accomplished in this field since 2004?

The Day of Languages is celebrated every year. A booklet is produced for the schools each year, containing ideas on how to make it an inspiring day. It is in great demand. A specific theme is also showcased each year. In 2004 the theme was crossing language barriers; vocational and professional education, from the preparatory to the higher levels, received special attention. In 2005 a working conference was held for pupils, in which pupils talked about their experiences and preferences in relation to foreign language instruction. This year will focus on English in primary schools.

The European Awards are also presented each year. This takes place during the study day of the Association of Teachers in Living Languages (*Vereniging van Leraren in Levende Talen*), where the teachers can gain knowledge about innovative initiatives in their field. A book was published in 2004 that summed up all the winning projects and focused additional attention on about ten of them. This booklet was distributed widely.

See also 1.4. The selection in the Netherlands is widely diverse and extensive. It is also relatively easy to find information about it.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?  
c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

### **3. OVERALL NATIONAL LANGUAGE STRATEGY**

*Member States are invited to describe how the Action Plan fitted into their national language policies*

- a) How has the follow-up of the Action Plan been coordinated at a national level?

The Netherlands decided to publish its own Dutch programme of activities for modern foreign languages, collecting the activities that the Netherlands has undertaken. It was submitted to Parliament in November 2005. It was distributed among the teachers affiliated with the Association of Teachers in Foreign Languages (*Vereniging van Leraren in Vreemde Talen*).

- b) Has it been included in national policy initiatives?

See 3.a.

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<sup>5</sup> 26 September each year; see [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Co\\_operation/education/Languages/Language\\_Policy/European\\_Day\\_of\\_Languages/default.asp](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co_operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/European_Day_of_Languages/default.asp)

<sup>6</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/language/label/index.cfm>

Was there a coordination group / committee?

No, not for writing the programme. However, there have been working groups and networks of those involved for various activities in the field of languages (see also the enclosed programme of activities). Members of these groups were asked to make contributions to various parts in drawing up the programme of activities.

*Member States may provide information on other relevant national initiatives for languages which do not fit into the framework of the Action Plan*

- a) Were there any language initiatives and priorities which were either planned or carried out and which did not fit into the framework of the Action Plan?

In recent years, a great deal of energy has gone into improving harmonisation of educational policy and educational innovation in practice in the schools. An interactive process has also been started to improve education in foreign languages. The National Bureau of Modern Foreign Languages first made an analysis of the current state of affairs, which produced themes for discussion and dialogue. On the basis of these themes, a discussion was started in 2004 with those involved; these discussions were intended to result in proposals to improve language education. More than forty proposals were submitted, twenty of which received funding. The presentation of the results of this project, *Werkplaats Talen*, will take place at the end of this year.

Until 2005, the National Bureau of Modern Foreign Languages acted as a centre of expertise for ICT. It did a great deal to use ICT in non-traditional ways to improve language education, in part by developing LanguageQuests.

*Member States are invited to establish national plans to give structure, coherence and direction to actions to promote multilingualism, including increasing the use and presence of a variety of languages in daily life<sup>7</sup>*

- a) What initial steps have been taken on this issue?

See also 4 and 1.6.

- b) What obstacles to the implementation of this recommendation have been identified?

In the Netherlands, the schools have a high level of autonomy in shaping the education they offer. Other than:

- Very general key objectives for primary education,
- Very general key objectives for the first years of secondary education,
- Very general examination programmes for the final years of secondary education starting in 2007,
- And central examinations at the end of secondary education,

the Netherlands does not have regulations for language instruction in primary and secondary education.

- c) What are the proposed initiatives to overcome these obstacles?

There is a strong network of organisations surrounding foreign language education. The National Bureau of Modern Foreign Languages provides advice in this field and coordinates activities. In that context, cooperation mainly takes place with:

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<sup>7</sup> These plans should be based upon Integrated Guideline N° 23 and form part of the national plans that Member States are producing in the context of the Lisbon Action Plan for growth and jobs. ([http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/integrated\\_guidelines\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/integrated_guidelines_en.pdf))

- SLO, active in the area of curriculum development for primary and secondary education and the implementation of the ELP;
- CITO, which develops examinations and tests, mainly for primary and secondary education, and ensures links to the CEFR;
- CPS, which supports primary and secondary schools in introducing innovations in language education, focusing particular attention on the less common languages;
- APS, which also supports primary and secondary schools in innovations in language education;
- CINOP, which offers support to institutes for senior secondary vocational education and adult education in innovation in language education;
- VLLT, the Association of Teachers in Living Languages;
- The European Platform, highly active in internationalisation and languages. Steps have also been taken to increase cooperation with the teacher training courses. The network stimulates schools to introduce innovations in language education, and also brings the educational sector into contact with European initiatives.