Accessibility for regional or minority languages to EU programmes

A practical assessment

H. Kuipers-Zandberg
A.F. Schukking

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Authors:

H. Kuipers-Zandberg

A.F. Schukking

Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning

Project coordinators:

C. van der Meer

Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning

V. Climent-Ferrando

Directorate-General for Language Policy, Department of Culture, Government of Catalonia

Executive summary

The European Union celebrates diversity and considers it as one of its cornerstones as indicated in its motto "Unity in Diversity". The commitment to language and cultural diversity is enshrined in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which claims that "the EU shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity". The Charter also ensures non-discrimination based on language (art. 21).

In 1981, the EU's political bodies, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, established the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) and, eventually, the Mercator Network in 1987, to support minority languages and cultural diversity within the EU (Faingold, 2015). Since the establishment of EBLUL, the Council of Europe has established two treaties for protecting regional and minority languages in the EU: the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Besides these, the commitment to language and cultural diversity is enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon, and the European Parliament has taken some steps to improve the status of certain regional minority languages that have official or devolved status in their own countries by passing a number of resolutions (such as the Reding Resolution of 1991, the Killilea Resolution of 1994, and the Alfonsi Resolution of 2013, among others).

The Resolution of the European Parliament on a Community Charter of Regional Languages and Cultures and on a Charter of Rights of Ethnic Minorities (OJ C 287 9 November 1981) created a separate budget line to provide support to regional and minority language (RML) (Gazzola, Grin, Häggman, & Moring, 2016). In 1998, however, this budget line for regional and minority languages was suspended as a result of a ruling delivered by the Court of Justice. This has had devastating effects for these languages, as the support for these languages is now provided through a broader framework (known as *mainstreaming*), along with other (non-language or non-regional/minority-language) related projects. RMLs had to face a new paradigm, that is, competing with more powerful languages for financial support as well as identifying new, unexplored possibilities for funding (as language is transversal and can be part of a larger objective when applying for funding), but lower chances of acceptance in competing with stronger and/or larger language communities.

This report represents a first attempt to investigate how funding opportunities for RMLs have been used and allocated over the period 2014-2020. It is the joint result between the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, hosted by the Fryske Akademy, and the Directorate-General for Language

Policy of the Government of Catalonia, with the financial support of the European Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity.

The report is structured as follows: It first explores the background and motivation for the investigation in section one, providing examples of funding opportunities and cases in which these opportunities have proven inaccessible to regional and minority languages. Section two explores the funding opportunities that currently exist in the EU. While, as mentioned before, language is a transversal issue and can be part of other objectives, this report narrowed its investigation down to the programmes that are specified for language and culture in Europe, namely Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, and Interreg. Given that the Creative Europe programme also supports European culture and media, literary translations, and mentions RMLs, it is also included in this research. Section two describes the period analysed, the main objectives of the different programmes, how languages fit into these programmes, and if there is a specific mention on RMLs. This is done by giving a concise overview, and providing more in-depth information in sections 2.1 through 2.4.

Section three gives a thorough analysis of the programmes and accessibility for RMLs languages by describing the application procedures, available funding, and, whenever possible, acceptance rates and the share of funding specifically for RMLs. A table with concise information on available funds, awarded funds, eligibility criteria, and acceptance rate is given. For a more in-depth description, the programmes are separately described in sections 3.1 to 3.2.

In section four, the conclusion, the key findings from the investigation are described. It can be concluded that mainstreaming has been detrimental to RMLs, and that these languages must also be supported as they are also European languages. It has also become clear that RMLs receive only a small percentage of available funding, but exact data is unavailable. However, there are a number of opportunities within the current programmes. Erasmus+, with multilingualism as its core value, offers most opportunities, but when languages are interwoven with a larger objective, it certainly has a place within multiple other programmes. Another key finding in section four is that application procedures, eligibility criteria and success rates affect regional and minority languages' participation.

Finally, section 5 outlines recommendations in order to improve RMLs access to European programmes. These are divided into a set of recommendations for the EU, and a set of recommendations specifically for the NPLD.

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Chapter 1
Background and motivation

1. Background and motivation

In the late 1950s, there were four official languages in the European Union. Today, there are 24, but figures provided by the European Commission reveal that some 40 million people in the EU speak around 60 autochthonous languages other than the official State languages, referred to as regional or minority languages (RMLs). The European Union celebrates diversity and considers it as one of its cornerstones, and finds the linguistic diversity within the Union to be a powerful example of its motto "Unity in Diversity" (European Commission, 2020b).

In 1981, the EU, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, established the European Bureau of Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) to support minority languages and cultural diversity within the EU (Faingold, 2015). The same budget line also funded the three Mercator Centres in 1987 (Mercator Education, Mercator Legislation, and Mercator Media), which still exist and are part of the Mercator Network.

Since the establishment of the EBLUL, the Council of Europe has established two treaties for protecting RMLs in the EU: the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, for which the term regional and minority languages is devised for languages traditionally spoken in a region, or a language differing from the state language (Council of Europe, 1992), and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1995). It is worth noting that the Charter consists mostly of a set of principles (Parts I and II), and the rules in Part III are not compulsory (Määttä, 2005). The Council of Europe does not have the power to compel member states to sign, ratify, or implement the Charter (Faingold, 2015). It only publishes a set of recommendations for States to comply with.

The commitment to language and cultural diversity was further enhanced by the Treaty of Lisbon, following negotiations in an intergovernmental conference with the representation of EU member states, signed by all member states in Lisbon on 13 December 2007, effective 1 December 2009. Articles 7 and 17 from the Treaty of Lisbon establish the official languages of the EU and state provisions for their use in communication with EU officials. Article 17 grants EU citizens the right to communicate with EU authorities in one of the official languages of the Lisbon Treaty and receive an answer in the same language.

However, these articles do not mention rights of minority languages or provisions to protect the rights of language minorities to communicate with EU authorities. Basque, Catalan, and Galician, which have official status in the regions where they are spoken in Spain and are used by millions of speakers on a daily basis, and Welsh, which has official status as a regional language in the UK, are neither official languages of the EU nor of the

Treaty (Faingold, 2015), and thus their speakers are not allowed to communicate in their native languages with EU authorities.

Article 2.3 from the Treaty of Lisbon states the linguistic rights of all citizens in the European Union, in that the Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced. Article 2 states the values on which the EU was founded, including "equality" and "the rights of persons belonging to minorities" (Piris, 2010). Accordingly, article 2.3, appears to declare not only cultural diversity but also language rights, albeit in vague terms (Lähdesmäki, 2012), as it avoids mentioning languages by name. It is unclear which linguistic practices are covered under the notion of linguistic diversity in the Treaty of Lisbon. For example, it is unclear whether large immigrant minorities and large endogenous minorities will have the same, more or fewer rights than speakers of autochthonous languages with official status within their own member states. One might have the idea that the Treaty of Lisbon "little more than lofty words to speakers of minority languages" (Faingold, 2015). The EU narrative on the intrinsic value of linguistic diversity as the cornerstone of the European project has been subordinated to the economic goals of growth, competitiveness and jobs, and has evidenced the lack of a principled, real commitment and normative coherence of the EU towards its languages. The economic focus of the EU approach to language policies cannot be analysed in isolation, as it has been determined by the overall strategic economic goals and political priorities of the Lisbon Strategy first, during the 2000-2010 period, and the current Europe 2020 Strategy (Climent-Ferrando, 2016).

The European Parliament has taken some steps to improve the status of certain regional minority languages that have official or devolved status in their own countries (de Swaan, 2001). For example, the Parliament passed the Reding Resolution in 1991, that considered granting official status to Catalan and other languages spoken widely in the EU (European Commission, 1991). In 1994, the Killilea Resolution recommended that the EU enact legislation allowing the use of minority languages in education, justice, public administration, and the media (European Commission, 1994). The Alfonsi Resolution (2013) calls on the EU and its Member States to pay attention to the endangered status of many European languages, and to commit to protect and promote these through policies. It also calls for the preservation of the diversity of cultural and linguistic diversity of the EU (Alfonsi, 2013).

Some EU institutions have reached an administrative agreement with the UK and the Spanish Governments on the use of certain Regional and Minority Languages (Basque, Catalan, Galician, Welsh and Scots Gaelic) in certain EU institutions. In both cases, translations are provided by the government of the Member State concerned, as and when needed and at its own expense. This agreements are not applicable to all EU

institutions. For instance, MEPs are not allowed to use these languages in the Parliament's plenary sessions or in committee meetings (Faingold, 2015).

The first initiative on minority languages adopted by the EU was the Resolution of the European Parliament on a Community Charter of Regional Languages and Cultures and on a Charter of Rights of Ethnic Minorities (OJ C 287 9 November 1981), with which a separate budget line was created to provide support to projects particularly benefiting RML (Gazzola, Grin, Häggman, & Moring, 2016). Until 1998, all funding programmes were opened up to all languages. In 1998, however, the budget line for RML and multilingualism was suspended as a result of a ruling delivered by the Court of Justice (C-106/96, May 1998), which ruled that all EU support needs to have a legal base. The support to projects was allowed to continue for three years, while a legal base was being prepared, but the Commission has not been successful in installing a legal base of this kind (Gazzola, Grin, Häggman, & Moring, 2016).

In a resolution of 24 March 2009 on Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (2008/2225(INI)), the European Parliament called on the Commission to draw up measures aimed at promoting linguistic diversity (European Parliament, 2009). More recently, in 2018, the Parliament adopted a resolution (2018/2028(INI)) on language equality in the digital age (Hériard, 2019), and a resolution on protection and non-discrimination (2017/2937(RSP)) with regard to minorities in the EU (European Parliament, 2017). In 2019, the Parliament adopted a legislative resolution (No 1295/2013 (COM(2018)0366 – C8-0237/2018 – 2018/0190(COD)) on the proposal for the Creative Europe programme, stressing that account had to be taken of the "specificities of different countries, including countries or regions with a particular geographic or linguistic situation" (European Parliament, 2019).

As enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon, all 24 official languages are accepted as official (de Swaan, 2001). Yet, in the day-to-day operations of the EU, the most frequently spoken languages are English and to a much lesser extent French, which are referred as "procedural," or "administrative" languages (Phillipson, 2003). 67% of Europeans perceive English as one of the two most useful foreign languages, followed by German and French, making multilingualism tend to disappear (Kelly, 2012). A great number of reports are in English, and this practice tends to apply to invitations to tender for signing public contracts financed by the Community budget (Truchot, 2003). Whereas Community regulations explicitly stress the tenderers' right to express themselves in their own language, they are implicitly invited to use English. As far as programmes are concerned, most of the time these are dealt with in English (Faingold, 2015). This, in combination with the aforementioned 1998 court ruling, with which the specific budget line for RML disappeared in 2001, has had a devastating effect for these languages. As of this time, the support for these languages is offered by including them in projects carried

out within a broader framework (known as *mainstreaming*), along with other (non-language or non-regional/minority-language) related projects. In practice, the mainstreaming approach adopted by the Commission since 2000 resulted in a substantial decrease in actual possibilities of accessing EU funding for RML, and has since-then not improved (Gazzola, Grin, Häggman, & Moring, 2016).

Combined, these matters have raised the question of contemporary accessibility of the funds that the EU installed for projects that seek to raise awareness and promote and protect RML. The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) has encountered, through past experiences and research, instances in which programmes of the European Commission were not or hardly accessible for RML, as has also been reinforced by Faingold (2015). Some examples illustrate this point, such as the programme *Juvenes Translatores*, a translation contest for young translators in the EU (European Commission, n.d.-f). It is inaccessible for RML, and only accessible for the official EU member state languages (NPLD, 2019). The *Interactive Terminology for Europe* (IATE), a database that has been used by EU institutions and agencies for the collection and dissemination for EU terminology, does not feature nor accepts terminology in languages other than the official 24. Moreover, the *Online Linguistic Support*, an online tool offering online language courses that has been developed for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps participants, is solely available in the 24 official languages (Erasmus Plus OLS, 2018). Another example can be found in the European Language Label, an award for projects improving language teaching and making use of available resources to diversify languages on offer. Although projects dealing with RML were awarded and can be searched for through the search option, the project database with information on the projects and awards is only available in the 24 official languages.

This report represents a first attempt to investigate how funding opportunities for RML have been used and allocated. It is the joint result between the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, hosted by the Fryske Akademy, and the Directorate-General for Language Policy of the Government of Catalonia, with the financial support of the European Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity. It will investigate which programmes are available for RML, and how accessible these programmes are. This means the report focuses on a two-way approach: funding opportunities for RML, and accessibility. Language, of course, is a transversal issue; in principle, it could be included in many programmes which do not necessarily focus on language. For example, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) is open to projects that deal with the successful integration of third-country nationals, including the linguistic integration of migrants. Research on all EU programmes, however, is beyond our scope. Therefore, the selection is narrowed down to the programmes which were put in place by the EU first and foremost for language and culture.

To define accessibility, this report will investigate the prerequisites of the programmes defined in chapter two, for instance, whether RML are specifically mentioned in the programmes or calls, which languages applicants may use in their proposals, and how much effort (time, money, and staff) goes into the application process. The literature study was supplemented by expert insights of J. van der West, an expert on project acquisition; M. Brummel, advisor and contact person in the Netherlands for Interreg Europe; an experience expert from a cultural foundation in the Netherlands about their experience with funding application for European programmes; the programme manager at Erasmus+ for primary and secondary education, whose statements in the report reflect their expertise; and Kristina Cunningham, senior expert in the European Commission. Whenever possible, an insight into the share of available funding that has gone to RML will be given. For that last part, this report considers the period from 2014-2020. As noted before and extensively investigated by Gazzola et al. (2016), the EU previously employed RML-specific funding, which has been transformed into mainstreaming, where the RML needs to compete with the official languages for project funding. Even by Mercator European Research Centre's own experience, after this change of funding, RML started to turn from the main focus of projects and studies, into an aspect of larger objectives. Project applications need to be creative to be able to incorporate RML into their objectives in order to receive funding. As 2014 was the start of a new multi-annual budget period, lasting from 2014 until 2020 (Europa Nu, n.d.), this will be the period investigated in this report, which will also allow this study to investigate whether there have been improvements in EU support since the analysis conducted by researchers Gazzola et al.

In section four, a conclusion with key findings is described. Section five offers proposals that can be addressed to the European Commission as well as practical recommendations on the accessibility and an increase of funding opportunities for RML to be used by the NPLD.

Which European programmes exist for language and culture?

2. Which European programmes exist for language and culture?

This section will explore the programmes that currently exist for language and culture in Europe. Described as suitable for the promotion of multilingualism by Mr Navracsics, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in the Juncker Commission, these are Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, and Interreg (European Parliament, 2018). However, as the programme Creative Europe supports European culture and media, literary translations, and mentions RML on their website (European Commission, 2013), this programme was also added to the list of programmes analysed. Below is a table with the different programmes, period, main objectives, how languages fit into the programmes, and if there is a specific mention of RML. Further on, a more in depth description of what the separate programmes entail and aim to achieve will be given, including available funds whenever possible. A more thorough analysis of these programmes can be found in chapter 3.

	Period	Main Objectives	Languages	RML
Erasmus+	2014-2020	• Social inclusion • Job opportunities • Promote adult learning • Collaboration and mobility within EU partner countries	• Multilingualism: one of its cornerstones • Language learning and linguistic diversity: specific objects	Specific mention cultural differences, "people belonging to a national or ethnic minority"
Horizon 2020	2018-2020	• Innovation • Science • Leadership • Societal challenges	No specific mention	No specific mention. General mention on "social/cultural diversity".
Interreg	2014-2020	• Research and innovation • Information and communication technologies • Competitiveness of SMEs • Low-carbon economy • Combating climate change	No specific mention	No specific mention

		• Environment and resource efficiency • Sustainable transport • Employment and mobility • Social inclusion • Better education, training • Better public administration		
Creative Europe	2014-2020	• Supporting culture and audio-visual sectors • Cross-border cooperation • Networking • Literary translations	Mention of linguistic diversity	Mention of RML in their FAQ, but no further reference

Figure 1: Programme analysis

Note: data compiled by authors from sources referenced in chapters 2 and 3, 2020.

2.1. Erasmus+

The Erasmus+ Programme was initiated by the European Commission "to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe". The programme, which started in 2014 and ended in 2020, aims to increase social inclusion, create job opportunities and promote adult learning, as well as collaboration with and mobility within EU partner countries. So far, the programme has resulted in training and study possibilities for over 4 million European citizens (European Commission, n.d.-c).

On the European Commission's information page on EU languages, Erasmus+ is mentioned specifically as the programme that is a "significant source of funds for initiatives to protect and promote the teaching and learning of minority languages" (European Commission, 2020b). In addition, the Erasmus+ guide (2020) indicates that multilingualism is one of the cornerstones of this programme. Also, language learning and linguistic diversity are noted as specific objects of the Erasmus+ programme (European Commission, 2020a, p. 9). Equity and inclusion are said to be important features of the project as well. In this case, the guide makes specific mention of people who have to cope with cultural differences, such as "people belonging to a national or ethnic minority" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 10).

With the purpose of meeting the objectives of the programme, Erasmus+ makes use of three Key Actions: (1) mobility of individuals, (2) cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, and (3) support for policy reform. In addition, the Erasmus+ programme supports Jean Monet and sports activities (European Commission, 2020a, pp. 11-12).

Besides these three Key Actions, the Erasmus+ programme supports the so-called Jean Monet Activities. These Jean Monnet Activities have the aim to promote "excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide", and are part of the general call for proposals (European Commission, n.d.-d).

The overall budget of the Erasmus+ Programme is €14.774 billion for the current programme from 2014 to 2020 (European Commission, n.d.-m). Besides, the programme has €1.680 billion available for activities with partner countries.

The Erasmus+ programme is open to individuals and organisations but eligibility can vary depending on the Action and on the country of residence of the participant (European Commission, n.d.-k). Individuals that want to participate and apply for Erasmus+ funding, need to apply on behalf of a group. In addition, a common rule is that participants need to be based in one of the programme countries, even though some actions are also open to partner countries (European Commission, 2020a, p. 21). In most cases, the Erasmus+ application procedure consists of filling in an e-form which is sent to the national or executive agency. The e-form "must be completed in one of the official languages used in programme countries. In case of Actions managed at centralized level by the executive agency, applicants must fill in the form in one of the EU official languages" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 258).

2.2. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 was set up to promote innovation and competitiveness of European industry and business, and to be able to face European societal challenges with science. Horizon 2020 implements *Innovation Union*, an initiative aimed at improving performance in European science, removing obstacles to innovation, and improving the cooperation between European institutions, national and regional authorities, and business. It does this as part of Europe 2020, aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness. Horizon 2020, therefore, is mostly a programme aimed at innovation, focusing on science, leadership, and societal challenges.

Funding opportunities under Horizon 2020 are set out in multiannual work programmes (European Commission, n.d.-g), which cover the large majority of support available. The work programmes are prepared by the European Commission within the framework provided by the Horizon 2020 legislation and through a strategic programming process integrating EU policy objectives in the priority setting. The current work programme (2018-2020) consists of 18 themes with the overarching four *focus areas* (European Commission, n.d.-h). Because the themes within the Horizon 2020 are very broad (ranging from, for example, agriculture to space and climate action) (European Commission, n.d.-i), and many of these are beyond the scope of this policy

paper, it was decided to only include the theme in which language and/or culture play a significant role. This theme is *Europe in a Changing World*, which focuses on inclusion and cultural and social diversity, and falls under the category of Social Sciences and Humanities with the parent programme *Societal Challenges* (CORDIS, 2014).

According to the European Commission's information page on Horizon 2020 (European Commission, n.d.-j), this programme is "the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020)". It also mentions that the programme will attract private investment, promising "breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market." CORDIS, the Community Research and Development Information Service of the European Commission, gives an insight into how much funding went to each specific theme within the Horizon 2020 programme. For the theme Europe in a Changing World, the total funding was €1309.50 million, that is 1,64% of total available funding (€80 billion), or 4,4% of its parent programme's funding of €29.679 million (CORDIS, 2014).

The Horizon 2020 programme explicitly states that it is open to everyone and that it has a simple structure so that it is easy for potential participants to apply for funding (European Commission, n.d.-j).
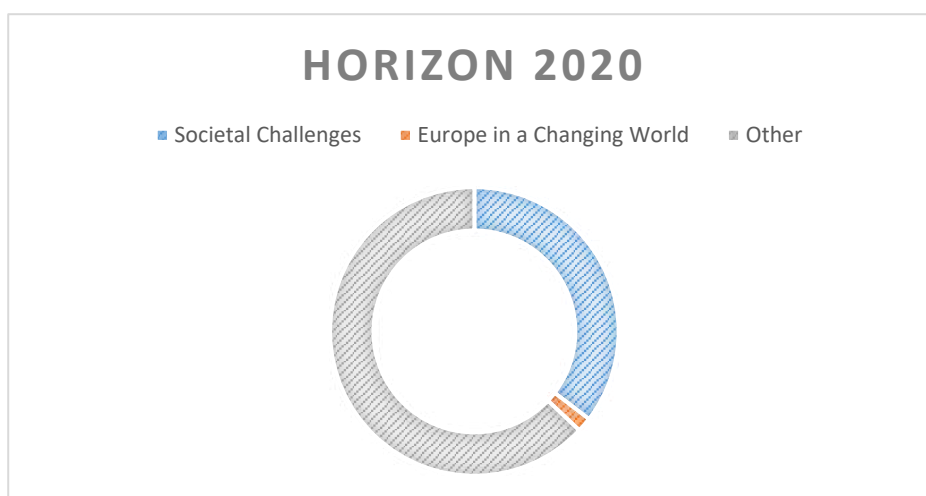

Figure2: The distribution of funding for Horizon 2020
Note: data compiled from CORDIS (2014).

2.3. Interreg

The European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), known as Interreg, was set up in order to increase cooperation across borders between EU countries. Interreg started in 1990 as a community initiative with a specific focus on cross-border cooperation. Besides cross-

border cooperation, the programme later started to focus on interregional and transnational cooperation (European Commission, n.d.-l). The overarching aim of the Interreg programme is to "tackle common challenges and find shared resolutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy and more (Interreg, 2020a)". The Interreg programme has been funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (European Commission, n.d.-l).

The Interreg programme consists of three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B), and interregional (Interreg C) (European Commission, n.d.-l). The strand cross-border cooperation consists of 60 programmes which focus on tackling challenges across borders within specific regions (Interreg, 2020b). The strand transnational cooperation consists of 15 programmes which "involves regions from several countries of the EU forming bigger areas" (Interreg, 2020c). The interregional strand consists of four programmes, which work on "pan-European level, covering all EU Member States, and more". The main focus here is the development and exchange of good practices (Interreg, 2020d). Programmes in this strand focus on tackling challenges through cooperation within regions as well.

The fifth Interreg period is effective from 2014 till 2020 and is therefore known as Interreg V. As is also the case in the other EU programmes, the fifth Interreg period focuses on 11 investment priorities, which should contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". The investment priorities are the following:

- Research and Innovation
- Information and Communication technologies
- Competitiveness of SMEs
- Low-carbon economy
- Combating climate change
- Environment and resource efficiency
- Sustainable transport
- Employment and Mobility
- Social inclusion
- Better education, training
- Better public administration

The total Interreg budget is €10.1 billion, which is invested in the cooperation programmes for cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation "between regions and territorial, social and economic partners". The budget "also includes de ERDF allocation for Member States to participate in EU external border cooperation programmes supported by other instruments". No less than 80% of the Interreg budget for each of the cooperation programmes needs to focus on four of the "thematic

objectives" of the 11 investment priorities mentioned above (European Commission, n.d.-l).

How the Interreg budget is divided over the three cooperation strands is displayed in figure 3.
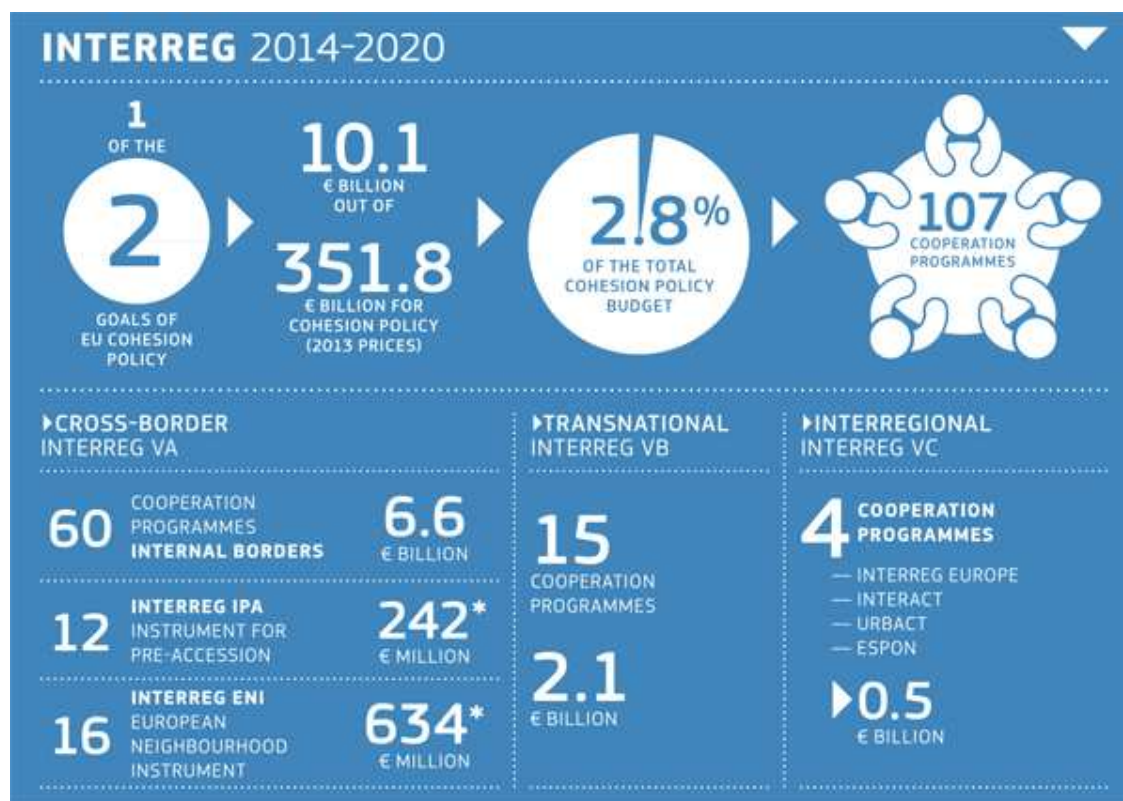

Figure 3: Division of Interreg V budget
Note: From Interreg – European Territorial Co-operation (n.d.-l).

Language and culture are not mentioned as investment priorities of Interreg V. However, according to Mercator experience and confirmed by an expert on European funding J. van der West, when language and culture are interwoven with the priorities of the programme, they can be included in Interreg projects (J. van der West, personal communication, March 12, 2020). An example is the Interreg V-A – Sweden-Finland-Norway (Nord) programme, which focuses on "targeted actions aiming at preserving and developing the culture, language and economic activities of the Sami". The expected impact of this project on the Sami language is an increase in the number of Sami language courses and "linguistic assistance training for children and youth" (European Commission, n.d.-n).

According to M. Brummel, advisor for Interreg North-West Europe, Interreg North Sea Region and Interreg Europe at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, the main focus often is on regional economic development. Nevertheless, if a RML has an important place in a project, this is regarded as positive (personal communication, April 7, 2020).

The Interreg programme is working with calls. To apply for funding, participants need to respond to the calls which suit their project goals and the geographical area in which the project is going/needs to take place.

2.4. Creative Europe

Creative Europe is a framework programme supporting culture and audio-visual sectors. It is a follow-up of the previous Culture and MEDIA Programmes that ran from 2007-2013. The current programme runs from 2014-2020. It was set up as a response to help cultural and creative sectors grow, as these sectors are inherently diversified along national and linguistic lines and enrich the European cultural landscape (European Commission, 2018).

Creative Europe's total budget is €1.46 billion. As language and culture could theoretically be the focus in any of the programmes within Creative Europe, a separate budget for language or culture will not be considered.

The MEDIA programme fosters the creation of audio-visual content and access to global audiences. The Culture programme covers culture sector initiatives such as cross-border cooperation, networking, and literary translations. The European Commission states that the programme is open to cultural and creative organisations from the EU Member States, although under certain conditions, some non-EU Member States may apply (European Commission, 2018). It is not open to applications from individuals, projects may only be submitted through cultural organisations. The Commission states this is a more cost-effective way to achieve results and lasting impact (European Commission, 2013).

Notably, the European Commission's FAQ about Creative Europe states: "The European Union has 24 official languages (...) and 60 officially recognised regional and minority languages". (European Commission, 2013). This specific acknowledgement of RML indicates opportunities for these languages within the Creative Europe programme, and nowhere in the programme is stated that projects with RML cannot apply. However, nowhere else in the programme is it specified that projects for RML *can* apply, and all calls are only available in the 24 official languages.

Chapter 3

Accessibility for Regional or Minority Languages

3. Accessibility for Regional or Minority Languages

This section investigates accessibility for RML to European funding programmes by describing the application procedures, available funding, and, whenever possible, acceptance rates and the share of funding specifically for RML.

Below is a table with concise information on available funds, awarded funds when this information was available, eligibility criteria, and acceptance rate. For a more in-depth description, the programmes, numbers and calculations are separately described in sections 3.1 to 3.2.

	Funds and rates			Elegibility criteria and application				
	Available funds	*Awarded funds for languages*	*Acceptance rate*	*Language of calls*	*Participants*	*Partners*	*Duration*	*Application*
Erasmus+	14.77 BN	Incomplete information, estimated 0.48% of total funds	Depends on the call and ranges from 17-78%	Official EU languages	Partner countries, organisations representing the participants	2-10 partners depending on the KA	12-36 months depending on the KA	In response to a call, with the national agency or a specific agency depending on the KA
Horizon 2020	80 BN	€5.098.989,- – 0,006%	11.6%	English	No limit on participants	No limit on partners	No limit on duration	In response to calls, online submission
Interreg	10.1 BN	n/a	70%	English	Recommends 5-10 partners	Partners from at least 3 countries, 2 EU member states	3-5 years	Through an online system, in response to calls

Creative Europe	1.46 BN	€494.554,35 − 0.03%	14.8-19%	Official EU languages are allowed, but English is recommended for the application	Only registered organisations, EU member states and partner countries	3-5 partners from 3-5 countries	Max 48 months.	E-form within an online application system

Figure 4: Accessibility analysis
Note: data compiled by authors from sources in chapters 2 and 3, 2020.

3.1. Application procedure

In this section we will, insofar as possible, describe the entire process from the call to the application procedure, whether RMLs are mentioned in the calls, if these calls are available in RML, and if the proposals may use RML. The application procedure entails everything from the required effort in terms of time, money, and staff, and the acceptance rate – if these are public.

3.1.1. Erasmus+

As mentioned previously, the Erasmus+ programme is open to individuals and organisations but eligibility varies depending on the Action and on the country of residence of the participant (European Commission, n.d.-k). Individuals that want to participate and apply for Erasmus+ funding, need to apply on behalf of a group. To be eligible, the project application must meet eligibility criteria relating to the Key Action under which the proposal is submitted. The general criteria are financial and operational capacity in accordance with the proposed project, and it must be an organisation representing the participants of the project. Depending on the Key Action and the call, projects must involve two to ten participants from partner countries, and the project duration is one year up to 36 months. Depending on the call, proposals must be submitted to national agencies or to a specific agency. The acceptance rate, again, depends on the Key Action, and on the specific calls within the Key Actions. Looking at the annual report of 2018, the success rate for KA1 ranges from 34-78% for the different calls, with a mean acceptance rate of 51.6%. For KA2, success rates range from 17-42%, averaging at 36%. For KA3, it's 19-76%, averaging 43% (European Commission, 2019).

To find out more about experiences with the application procedure, an experience expert (EE, 2020) from a cultural foundation in the Netherlands was interviewed about their experience with funding application for European programmes. They mentioned that they found that Erasmus+ offers most opportunities for RML-themed projects,

which is a prevailing notion that coincides with the experience of the Mercator European Research Centre.

Furthermore, it was noticed that in case of Erasmus+, difficulties with the application arise for smaller organisations, as those organisations simply do not have the same tools as larger organisations (e.g. paid staff, experience with project applications). This in combination with the, in some fields, low acceptance rate, might discourage smaller organisations from applying. The expert expressed that in the past, primary schools from RML regions used to profit from the Erasmus+ exchange programmes with other RML regions, but that in recent years these exchanges have become less attractive. This is mainly due to new privacy policies (GDPR, General Data Protection Policy) that the schools have to adhere to when using the Erasmus+ programme for exchanges.

3.1.2. Horizon 2020

The Horizon 2020 programme states that it is open to everyone and that it has a simple structure making it easy to apply for funding (European Commission, n.d.-j). Applicants must register their organisation to begin the application procedure, after which they go through an admissibility and eligibility check (European Commission, n.d.-o). As far as this report found, the calls are only available in English. There is no limit to the number of participants or on the project duration.

According to an interim evaluation of the Horizon 2020 programme, there is an oversubscription issue, meaning that applications are surpassing the funds at a notably fast pace, resulting in a success rate of 11,6% (European Commission, 2017). There are two main reasons for oversubscription. On the one hand, there are high funding rates for multiyear projects, for which applicants are queuing up. On the other hand, there is a trend of fewer calls (per domain and per year), and the calls available are for larger projects with a wider scope. For successful applicants, benefits outweigh the costs of a lengthy application procedure, in which evaluation often takes up to eight months, but because the success rate is low and less attractive for smaller organisations, it is expected that smaller organisations working on protecting and promoting RML will not be able to profit extensively from Horizon 2020 funding.

3.1.3. Interreg

As mentioned in section 2.3, language and culture have not stated to be investment priorities of the Interreg V programme (2014-2020). Nonetheless, language and culture are not fully excluded from Interreg projects, as they can be interwoven with the priorities (Van der West, 2020).

The Interreg programme works with calls. To apply for funding, participants need to respond to the calls which suit their project goals and the geographical area in which

the project is going/needs to take place. Interreg recommends projects to work with five to ten partners. Partners must hail from at least three different countries, of which two have to be EU Member States (Interreg Europe, 2019). Interreg North Sea region states that their success rate of final applications in 2018 was 70% ((Interreg North Sea Region, 2019). It seems that calls are only available in English.

M. Brummel (advisor Interreg programme at the Netherlands Enterprise Agency) acknowledges that in the case of the Interreg programme, the application procedure for small organisations, often with no paid staff members, is difficult. The reason for that is the fact that the projects often focus on capacity-building and knowledge transfer and that most of the budget is spent on salary costs. There are possibilities to hire an external expert, but only under certain conditions and often up to a maximum percentage of the project costs. Within the Interreg programmes, it is assumed that organisations only learn and can build capacity when people who work for an organisation participate in the project themselves. If an external expert is hired, this automatically also means that the acquired knowledge will 'leave' the organisation once the project has come to an end. Interreg B and C always ask for an international consortium. This may well be a combination of large and smaller parties (personal communication, March 12, 2020). Interreg A "supports cooperation between NUTS III regions from at least two different Member States" (European Commission, n.d.-q). NUTS III regions "are small regions for specific diagnosis" (European Commission, n.d.-r).

Even though the application procedure might be more difficult for smaller organisations, J. van der West emphasises that smaller organisations can participate in EU programmes such as Interreg when they seek cooperation with larger parties (personal communication, April 17, 2020).

3.1.4. Creative Europe

Creative Europe is open to cultural and creative organisations. Proposals must be submitted online and may be written in any of the 24 official EU languages, but English is recommended. There's no minimum project duration mentioned, only a maximum of 48 months. To find out more about the application procedure, the experience expert as mentioned previously was questioned on their experience with the application for Creative Europe project funding. The experience expert wished to apply for project funding with Creative Europe in 2016. They stated that one of the ways to commence the application procedure is by going through a form on Creative Europe's website, answering questions about the organisation and project. In their experience, it is impossible to complete the form for an organisation that does not conform to a minimum number of paid staff members. However, both the applicant guide for the culture sub-programme as the applicant guide for the MEDIA sub-programme do not

contain any indication regarding the minimum size of an organisation in order to be eligible (European Creative Europe Desks, 2016). The MEDIA applicant guide does state that an organisation has to be registered for 12 months before application in order to be eligible (Creative Europe, 2019).

Another problem with eligibility that the expert reported was the number of partners needed to complete an application, which ranges from three to five partners from three to five different countries. For the smaller organisations committed to the protection and promotion of RML, it is often hard to find international partners for their projects. It is possible to find potential partners through the Creative Europe website, but this would mean that organisations would have to start a project with partners they are not familiar with. Larger organisations with international working experience have a benefit here.

The expert furthermore mentioned that having a larger number of staff is also beneficial when it comes to the accountability, as it is a very comprehensive task, and as the application is very time-intensive, it makes it almost impossible for small organisations to fulfil their obligations for funding without hiring extra staff. That, plus the low rate of awarded funding, makes small organisations question if the application is even worth their time and effort. For example, the Culture sub-programme had an average selection rate of 14.8% in the cooperation strand in 2018. In MEDIA, 19% of the proposals for the Development Single scheme were accepted. Illustrated by the figure below is the number of high quality projects that could not be supported in 2018. It should be noted that the European Commission has proposed a budget increase of about 34% for the 2021-2027 programme (European Commission, 2019).

Calls with lowest selection rate	High quality projects rejected	Hypothetical budget required to finace them [€ m]	Additional % of strand budget needed to finance them
Development Single Project	171	6.9	6.3%
Development Slate Funding	43	7.1	6.5%
TV Programming	32	11.1	10.2%
Festivals	22	0.9	0.8%
SUB-TOTAL MEDIA	**268**	**27.4**	**23.8%**
Cooperation projects smaller	30	5.7	8.9%
Cooperation projects larger	20	29.5	45.9%
SUB-TOTAL CULTURE	**50**	**35.3**	**54.8%**
TOTAL CREATIVE EUROPE	**318**	**62.4**	**35.8%**

Figure 5: Schemes with the highest shares of high quality applications rejected due to insufficient budget, 2018.
Note: from the Creative Europe Monitoring Report 2018 (European Commission, 2019).

Moreover, in the expert's experience as well as in Mercator European Research Centre's own experience, applications are almost never done just for RML: these are almost always included in a broader project, as these have increased awarding opportunity. Projects targeted at RML really have to distinguish themselves to be able to stand a chance, especially as the programme does not specifically mention RML in their funding opportunities.

3.2. Share of RML in funding

To date, there is not much information available on EU financial support for RML. There are no public records that make it easy to gain a quick insight into which projects work on RML protection and promotion, and, consequently, how much funding went to those. This was also confirmed by Kristina Cunningham, senior expert for the European Commission: "RML is not a specific sub-category in any of our automatic data collection tools, it falls under language teaching and learning or in some cases other headings under the culture programme" (personal communication, July 14, 2020).

As explained in section 1, the EU used to have separate funds to financially support RML. Nonetheless, that specific financial support has been reshaped into mainstream funding, leading to a decrease in financial support for RML over the years. Furthermore, as supported by the article on EU funding by Gazzola et al., specific programmes and actions aimed at the RML through earmarked funding have been much more successful than the current mainstream support (Gazzola, Grin, Häggman, & Moring, 2016).

In this section, whenever possible, the share for RMLs in the available funds of the aforementioned programmes are displayed. This was done by searching available project databases (referenced below) with search terms as *minority language* or *language*. Minority language would be the most straightforward term to search for projects on RML, as it is assumed that programmes that have protection and promotion of RML as their main objective would mention minority language(s) in their main description.

3.2.1. Erasmus+

The overall budget of the Erasmus+ Programme for the period 2014-2020 is €14.7 billion. Besides, the programme has €1.68 billion available for activities with partner countries. Even though Erasmus+ has been entitled as the programme which supports "the teaching and learning of languages" and which lays a focus on "promoting the Union's linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness" (European Parliament, 2018), it was not possible to discover how much of the total budget has been spent on RML or multilingualism in general. Nevertheless, according to the European Parliament, "the

Erasmus+ Programme funds numerous projects every year to support the teaching and learning of sign languages, and to promote linguistic diversity awareness and the protection of minority languages" (Hériard, 2019).

No lists were available on the amount of Erasmus+ projects involving RML. Therefore, this report investigated how many projects incorporated RML over the years 2014-2020 through the project database for *Erasmus+ project results*, using *minority language* as the search term. According to this database, there were 626 projects which had a focus on minority languages, out of a total of 130.781 projects (0.48%) (European Commission, n.d.-p). However, it is impossible to be sure to which extent RML play part in these projects, as the scope of this article does not allow time to go through every single project. Moreover, results varied according to which search term was used. When using *minority language* as a search term in the Excel file provided by Erasmus+, which should include those aforementioned 626 projects, only 11 projects came forward as a match.

3.2.2. Horizon 2020

As described in section 2, €29.679 million was available within the Horizon 2020 programme Societal Challenges. This report examined the share of funding that reaches RML through this programme, by searching Horizon 2020 funded projects with the term *language* in them. This yielded 56 results (Cordis, n.d.). Next, it was investigated whether or not these projects specifically mention the promotion or protection of RML as a main objective.
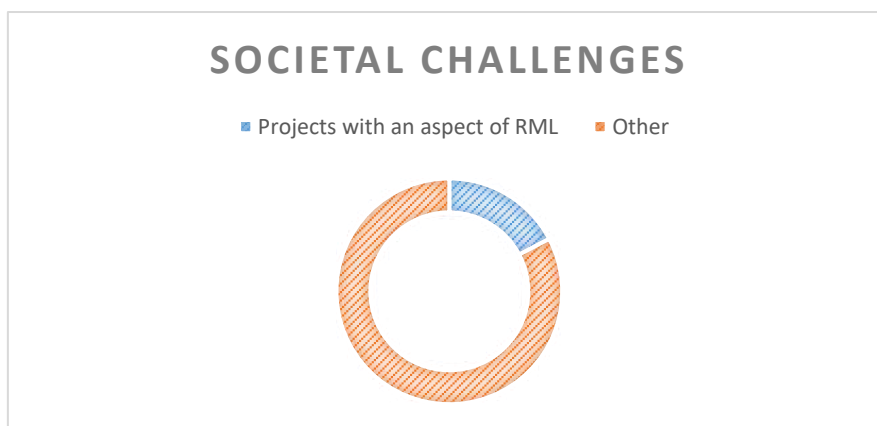
Figure 6: Share of RML in Societal Challenges funding under Horizon 2020

Note: data compiled from CORDIS (2014) and CORDIS (n.d.)

For the entire period of 2014-2020, four projects were found.[1] Of these four projects, three focused on recognition and promotion of sign language. Sign languages were officially recognised as a minority language in the EU in 2003 (Timmermans, 2005). The

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[1] These are: SIGN-HUB (https://www.unive.it/pag/33750/), Defera (http://www.chabla.me/), Signs for Europe (https://www.equalizent.com/en) and CoHere (https://research.ncl.ac.uk/cohere/).

fourth programme contained an aspect of multilingualism and language tourism. These projects collectively received a total of €5.098.989,25 in Horizon 2020 funding. This means that about 17,2% of Societal Challenges funding went to RML through Horizon2020, or just a speck of the total available funding of €80 billion (0,006%).

3.2.3. Interreg

The total Interreg budget is €10.1 billion, which is invested in the cooperation programmes for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. As RML are not part of the 11 investment priorities, there is not a separate budget for this specific topic. Nonetheless, it should be possible to integrate RML into an Interreg project, when it is interwoven with one of the other Interreg priorities, such as better education or social inclusion. This will be expanded on in section 4 and 5.

It is not feasible to find out whether and which projects focus on RML, considering that Interreg is divided into three cooperation strands, each of them with a separate list of projects. No specific data could be found, and M. Brummel, as a representative of Interreg, was not aware of any lists available on the amount of Interreg projects involving RML. Therefore, research was conducted on how many Interreg projects incorporated RML over the years 2014-2020. The fact that each Interreg programme has its own project database makes it difficult to search through the available projects of the overall programme. Therefore the project database *keep.eu*, which should cover most of the Interreg projects during this period, was used and searched with the term *minority language*. According to this database, there were two Interreg projects that had a focus on RML. It has become clear that it is not possible to get a complete overview through the database, and it is impossible to tell how many projects truly had RML as (one of) their objectives.

3.2.4. Creative Europe

For Creative Europe, project results can be downloaded as an Excel file (Creative Europe, 2020), in which was searched for *minority language*. This yielded five results[2], with a total funding of €494.554,35, or 0,03% of total budget funding. Of course, as noted in the above described programmes, results may vary according to search term.

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[2] These are: Other Words (http://otherwordsliterature.eu/), Colibri (https://www.colibri.bg/), Ex-Centricidades (http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/europacreativaandalucia/ex-centricidades-el-aliento-renovador-de-la-literatura-europea/), Poesie et Prose XX (http://nov-zlatorog.com/), and L'identité Européenne (http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/cultura/europacreativaandalucia/lidentite-europeenne-a-travers-10-oeuvres-de-fiction-traduites-en-bulgare-2/).

Chapter 4

Conclusion

4. Conclusion

Since the 1998 Court Ruling by the Court of Justice, which diluted RML support into the politics of mainstreaming, the budget line for RML and multilingualism has been suspended: it ruled that all EU support needs to have a legal base and even now the European Commission has not been successful in installing a legal base of this kind for RML. It has become clear that mainstreaming became detrimental to RML for several reasons. RML have to compete for accessibility to funds, which in practice has resulted in an EU approach of equality instead of equity: while possibilities to apply have increased, as language as a transversal issue can be incorporated into more project applications. Actual opportunities have decreased now that there's more competition between language communities, and RML cannot compete with hegemonic languages. As of today, this situation has not improved (Climent-Ferrando, 2016).

Additionally, several instances in which programmes of the European Commission were not or hardly accessible for RML have been encountered and reinforced by multiple experts. In investigating this matter, this report uncovered a number of **key findings** regarding accessibility for RML to EU funds.

One of the key findings is that multilingualism and RML are marginally present in the programmes scrutinised for this report. The Erasmus+ programme is the only programme which specially mentions multilingualism as being one of its core values, even though the Creative Europe programme also specifically includes RML on their webpage. However, besides Erasmus+, the other programmes (Horizon2020, Interreg, and Creative Europe) do not mention RML in their project conditions, nor do they specify RML in their calls. It can be concluded that, for now and in the future, most opportunities lie within the Erasmus+ programme. Still, when RML is interwoven with other or larger project goals, such as innovation, migration and integration, exchanges or education, RML can certainly have a place in these programmes.

It has become clear that in the data available on success rates and project funding, RML are hardly mentioned. While the European Commission states that the funding schemes described in this report are the programmes for language and culture, it is an impossible task (for both insiders and experts interviewed for this report, let alone outsiders) to gain any insight into specific numbers of the share that RML have in these. The absence of easily accessible figures on this share of RML might be taken as an indication that RML do not play a significantly large enough part in the funding programmes.

Success rates, eligibility criteria, and application procedures affect both chances and participation of RML projects. For most programmes, smaller organisations will not

have the resources needed to complete the application procedure, and may wonder if the effort is worth it when success rates are low. Especially as smaller organisations, due to limited staff and funds, are likely to have more difficulty setting up a multiyear and multi-partner project, which is where the funding generally goes to.

Chapter 5

Proposals and Recommendations

5. Proposals and Recommendations

Based on the key findings and conclusions of this report, several actions are recommended to be carried out. First, four proposals for calls to action for EU policy are outlined, addressed to the European Commission. The issues that were encountered in this investigation are at the base of these: if these issues are to be solved, action lies with the EU. These calls to action are followed by four recommendations specifically for the use of the NPLD.

5.1. General proposals

1. Establish the legal base for RML funding

Time and time again, it has been established that the 1998 court ruling has been detrimental to RML, in this report, but also in earlier investigations (see also Faingold, 2015; Gazzola et al., 2016). Since 1998, the European Commission has not been able to establish the legal base necessary to allocate EU funding specifically for RML. It is crucial that this legal base is established, in order to reverse the detrimental effect the ruling has had for RML access to EU funding.

2. Request for funding specifically allocated for RML

Findings show that there should be financial support specifically aimed at RML, instead of the mainstream support which is now in effect. This does not necessarily mean a throwback to the previous earmarked system. Erasmus+ is already the most significant fund for RML, naming multilingualism as its core value, and is as such open to most opportunities for improvement and specification. This report recommends the creation of a new Key Action specifically for RML within the Erasmus+ programme. This would be beneficial in that RML would not have to compete for mainstream funds, and as an added benefit it would also be easier to gain an insight in how much funding goes to RML specifically.

3. Request for more calls and topics, instead of broad calls for large (and often multiyear) projects

As concluded, application procedures, eligibility criteria and success rates affect RML participation in the programmes. It is advisable to improve this by increasing calls and topics within these programmes. Instead of broad calls for large (and often multiyear) projects, more calls and shorter project durations would provide more opportunities for smaller projects and subsequently, smaller organisations. Letting go of certain eligibility criteria such as a higher number of (multi-country) partners or staff requirements would also benefit smaller organisations and, thus, RML. It would make for simplified project applications: time and staff invested in finding partners and writing applications would decrease, and in turn, application reviewers could speed up the evaluation process. All in all, it would increase equal distribution of funding.

4. Request for simplified application procedures

RML would benefit from simplified application procedures. As mentioned in proposal 3, a simplified application procedure would encourage smaller organisations to apply as they would decrease the investment (of time and staff) in the application procedure, and with simplified proposals the evaluation process would be shortened so organisations do not have to wait for a long period to receive funding.

5.2. Specific proposals for the NPLD

To provide the NPLD with practical solutions in order to address the issues found in this investigation, the following recommendations are made:

1. Initiate further research on future EU programmes

With the start of a new EU financial framework in 2021, it would be necessary to do further research into future programmes (2021-2027) and to identify which programmes would be most suitable for RML applications. The NPLD Secretariat could lead this task. Examples of investigation areas could include regional cooperation funds, linguistic integration of migrants, and social cohesion funds, among many others.

2. Explore crossovers and innovative practices

For the other programmes, besides Erasmus+, described in the report, there lie many opportunities within interweaving RML into larger or novel objectives. One example is the Interreg programme focusing on innovation in education. RML areas might function

as a pilot for objectives such as innovation and education, for example digital education materials. Therefore, it would be worth exploring crossover and innovative practices concerning interweaving RML into larger objectives.

3. Formally address the European Commission to request for data on how much funding is allocated to RML

This recommendation is dual in that it can certainly be concluded that mainstreaming has been detrimental to RML, and at the same time it is impossible to gain insight in how much funding is now going to RML. Although the commitment to language and cultural diversity is enshrined in the European treaties, and multilingualism is named as one of the EU's founding principles, the programmes designed for this commitment have not published figures on how much of their budget goes to RML specifically. Insight in these figures would make it possible to hold the EU accountable to their commitment to linguistic diversity, as these figures would evidently show the share and accessibility of RML in these funds.

4. Formally address the European Parliament to ensure that the numerous Resolutions that have been adopted are turned into concrete actions

Over the years, many Resolutions have been adopted for the protection and promotion of RML. This report has proven that adopting these did not always result in concrete actions leading to the desired outcome. Therefore, it is recommended that NPLD members formally address the EP, to ensure that those Resolutions are turned into actions. It is therefore necessary to develop a strategy addressed to MEPs along these lines.

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Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity is an international network consisting of 41 members representing state or regional authorities, academic institutions, or other organizations that aim at promoting the language maintenance, use and revitalization of European minoritized languages. It has its main office in Brussels. The members can be found in 11 countries, but the network is open for additional members.