

The European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity

Towards a new approach on languages as
part of the European Agenda 2020



**The European Network to
Promote Linguistic Diversity's
(NPLD) proposal for the
promotion of the languages
of Europe as an integral part
of diversity**



A European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity

Towards a new approach on languages as part of the European Agenda 2020

The aim of The European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity is to reaffirm the European Union's commitment to linguistic diversity and to ensure that the languages spoken in Europe, international, national, regional, minority, endangered and migrant languages are seen as common assets which need to be supported and promoted.

The Roadmap is set within the framework of the present context of the European Union, where ensuring robust economies and a highly skilled and mobile workforce are at the forefront of the political agenda. Well thought-out policies and initiatives are called for if strengthening the vitality of languages is to be linked to the creation of prosperous economies, building cohesive societies and working towards a common destiny together in Europe.

The European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity contains four major practical lines of action which, if implemented, would ensure that the European Union translates its positive vision regarding linguistic diversity into concrete, tangible and far-reaching measures.

European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity

The Way Forward

Linguistic Diversity in Europe needs to be strengthened by ensuring that:

1. The European Union adopts a holistic multilingualism policy which includes the range of languages spoken in Europe.

The European Union/Institutions should;

- ▶ Provide support and visibility to the languages of Europe by granting them the highest possible degree of recognition.
- ▶ Adopt an equitable approach to multilingualism so that all the languages of Europe are able to participate in EU programmes, initiatives and projects.

2. Languages play a determinant role in social cohesion, personal, social and economic development as well as for mobility.

The European Union/Institutions should;

- ▶ Embed all languages within the EU strategy on growth, competitiveness and jobs for the local, regional, national and international economies.
- ▶ Promote languages for different types of mobility; international mobility in which lingua francas and transnational languages play a determinant role, along with cross-border regional mobility in which regional and minority languages represent an added value.
- ▶ Promote the use of regional or minority languages in socio-economic activities and in the private sector including everyday consumer products.

3. Information and Communication Technologies are used to enhance language learning, promotion and vitality of all languages.

The European Union/Institutions should;

- ▶ Ensure that all European language communities, regardless of number of speakers, are able to participate in the development of relevant European ICT initiatives.

4. Support is provided for Regional, Minority and Endangered Languages of Europe; the most vulnerable languages of Europe.

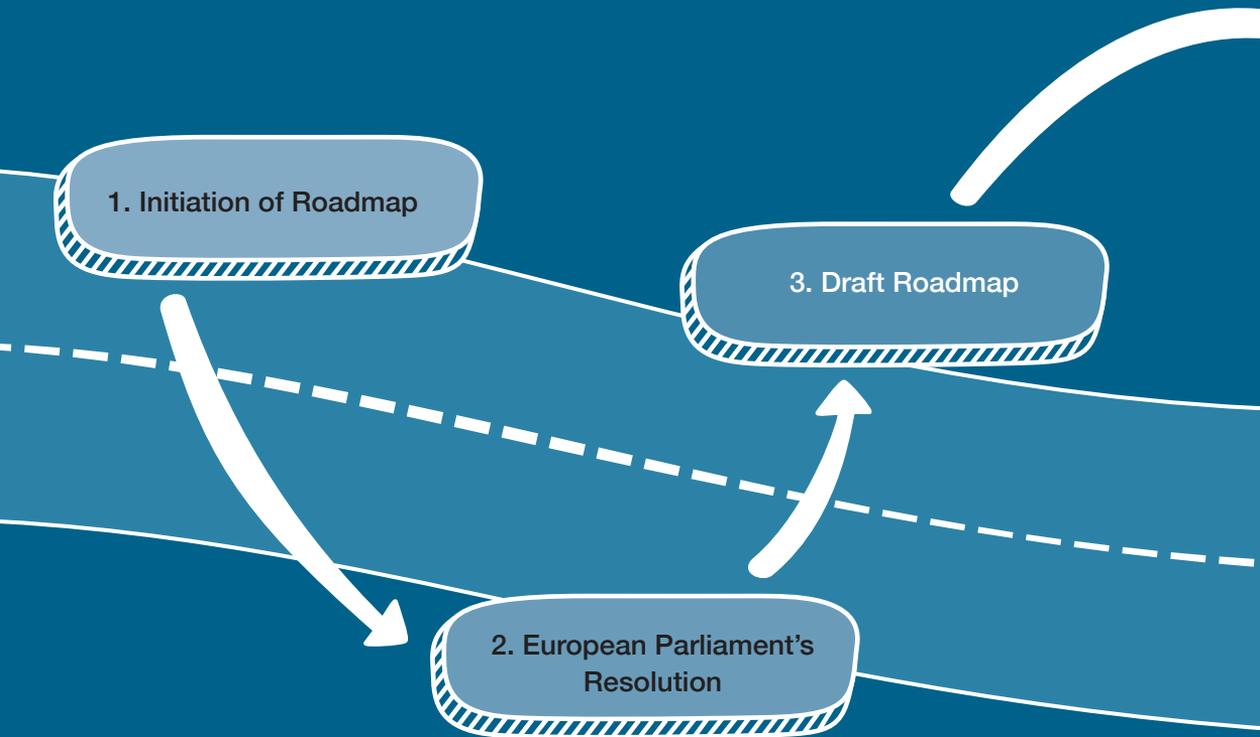
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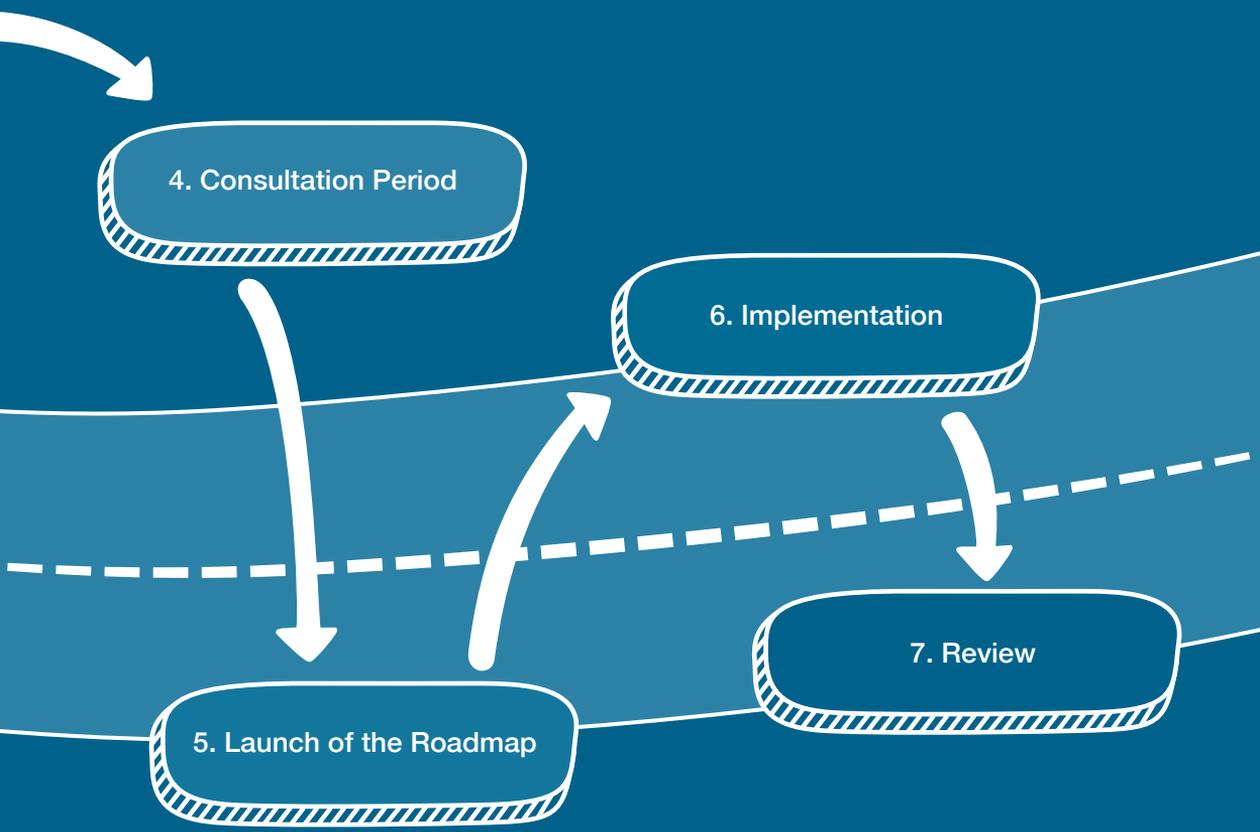
- ▶ Encourage member states to provide official status, support, promotion and use of Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages.
- ▶ Support the recognition of the languages with official status in any territory of the European Union as official languages of the European Union, provided these languages wish to accept this status.
- ▶ Adopt measures of visibility and support for Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages and include them in the new narrative of European growth and prosperity.
- ▶ Work in close contact with the Council of Europe to further develop the impact of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and ensure that all EU Member States sign and ratify the Charter, as appropriate to their jurisdictions.
- ▶ Support the inclusion of language rights within the Charter for Fundamental Rights.

European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity

The Process and Outcomes

The Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity includes 7 stages of development:





1. Initiation of the Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity (2013)

The process for the development of Roadmap Initiative began with an event held at the Irish Embassy in April 2013 where the need to face up to the present situation of many of the languages of Europe was highlighted. Following this event, a report was created that outlined the challenges facing these languages and especially regional, minority and endangered languages. The report was presented to the General Assembly of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) in June 2013.

2. The European Parliament Resolution on 'Endangered Languages and Linguistic Diversity' (September 2013)

Discussions were held with the team that developed the motion presented to the European Parliament on 'Endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union'. This motion became a resolution of the European Parliament on the 11th September 2013 with a 92% majority in favour of the resolution. This Roadmap builds upon the recommendations of the EP resolution.

3. Draft Roadmap (May 2013- October 2014)

During the period proceeding the discussion of the motion by the EP a number of roundtable discussions were held on Endangered European Languages and Linguistic Diversity in Europe. Following these discussions, and as a follow-up to the European Parliament's resolution, a draft Roadmap was produced for internal discussion by NPLD members. The Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity was released fully as an internal discussion document in October 2014 and as an external discussion document in February 2015.

4. Consultation Period (February 2015-May 2015)

Following the release of The European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity, in its draft form, there will be a full consultation period where all the major external stakeholders will be consulted on the content of the Roadmap and its recommendations. Following these discussion, a Language Summit will be held where the major contributors to the discussion, from the public, private and voluntary sector as well as relevant EU and Council of Europe institutions will be invited to an open discussion session to consider the implementation programme for the Roadmap itself.

5. The Launch of the Roadmap (October 2015)

The European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity will be launched at a high profile event in Brussels in October 2015 to an invited audience which will include representatives of the stakeholders, the European Parliament, Council and Commission and other European organisations such as the Committee of the Regions and the Council of Europe.

6. Implementation of the Roadmap (2016-2019)

An implementation programme with a specific timetable will be agreed during the consultation period. The relevant partners/institutions and agents for change will be highlighted and responsibilities allocated to these key actors.

7. Review (2018-2019)

Included within the implementation plan will be a mechanism for reviewing progress. The first full review will be undertaken in 2018/19 prior to the publication of the new European funding programme for the period 2020-2027.

Languages as an Integral Part of Diversity

Introduction

The motto United in Diversity was first adopted by the European Union in 2000. This motto expresses the common goal of the European project, which is to achieve unity of purpose through peace and prosperity in Europe while acknowledging and fostering the wealth of its different cultures, traditions and languages.

Recent years, however, have brought significant challenges to the European Union. The gap between the European institutions and its citizens is increasingly widening. The new narrative that the European Union is currently forging needs to consider how its existing diversity can be developed as a shared value and a common asset. Strengthening the European economies and ensuring high levels of employment are key issues within this discussion, but other elements must be included in this dialogue if it is to lead, ultimately, to a more stable, secure and prosperous society.

The EU has within its borders a rich diversity of languages, both territorial and languages brought through migration over the centuries. Its linguistic diversity is what best defines the continent and, at the same time, expresses and reinforces the cultural identity of Europe.

‘Languages are not only a means of communication. They also have embedded within them people’s values, aspirations and hopes.’

Looking Ahead

The aim of the proposed European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity is to reaffirm the European Union's commitment to linguistic diversity so that languages are seen as a common asset, which need to have the practical support of the European Union. Well thought-out policies are called for if strengthening the vitality of languages is to be linked to the creation of prosperous economies, building a cohesive society and working towards a common destiny.

1. The legal status of languages

- 1.1 The degree of vitality of a language community is tightly linked to the level of recognition it is given by regional, national and international authorities. The higher the legal support and social status of a language, the more

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- ▶ **Adopt an equitable approach to multilingualism to ensure that all the languages of Europe participate in EU programmes, initiatives and projects**

chances it has of being a language of everyday life. In cases of coexistence between majority and minority languages, speakers may consider the dominant language to be the language of social and economic opportunity, prosperity and progress whereas regional, minority or endangered languages might be perceived as languages only to be used in the private sphere. Granting official recognition to a language in a minority situation is key to reversing this perception and can greatly help build confidence and self-esteem of speakers of a language.

- 1.2 While it is true that the responsibility for a language's status lies, first and foremost, with regional or national governments, international bodies such

as the European Union can support and promote equitable multilingualism, in which all the languages of Europe are regarded as instruments for social cohesion, growth and prosperity for the peoples of Europe. Guaranteeing Europe's linguistic diversity must therefore be a common goal for institutions at all levels within the European Union. As the main institutions representing the interests of all the citizens of Europe, the European Parliament and the European Commission have the role of providing greater visibility and value to all the languages of Europe, with special emphasis on the most vulnerable languages.

- 1.3 The European institutions need to adopt a positive and proactive common language policy, based on the promotion of linguistic diversity at the level of the European Union, the Member States and the regions. The goal should be to achieve a balanced multilingualism which includes the revitalisation and normalisation of regional and minority languages, and the development of a harmonious coexistence between languages.

2. Language skills as an economic, educational and cultural driver

- 2.1 The identified goal by the EU is a Europe where everyone can speak at least two other languages. This is in addition to their mother tongue or, in some territories of the Union where minority and State languages coexist, two first languages. In this context, some Member States and regions across Europe have developed well-structured strategic plans for the promotion and development of linguistic skills and their use in all spheres of life. The awareness of the importance of language skills is increasingly gaining ground in the current economic context and a multilingual and

‘Multilingual citizens are better placed to take advantage of personal, educational, professional and economic opportunities.’

multicultural labour force is considered crucial for economic growth and better jobs, enabling businesses to be more competitive.

- 2.2 A key paradox persists within the European Union; skills shortages and bottlenecks coexist with areas of persistent high unemployment. Differing levels of economic growth and employment create shortages and excesses of labour across Europe, which is due in part to low level of labour market mobility. The European Council's report on language competences to enhance mobility notes that 'professional mobility continues to be severely hampered by a limited knowledge of languages'.

The European Union/Institutions should

- ▶ Embed all languages within the EU strategy on growth, competitiveness and jobs for the local, regional, national and international economies
- ▶ Promote languages for different types of mobility: international mobility, in which lingua francas and transnational languages play a determinant role, along with also cross-border, regional mobility in which regional, minority languages represent an added value
- ▶ Promote the use of regional or minority languages in socio-economic activities and in the private sector including everyday consumer products

- 2.3 While global languages such as English, Spanish, French or Chinese play a pivotal role in international relations, trade and business overseas, it must not be forgotten that a significant part of European economic activities take place between cross-border regions. This economic activity promotes the economic and social development of those areas by addressing common challenges and promoting people-to-people cooperation, making the region more vibrant and dynamic. In this context, the learning and promotion of regional languages can have enormous benefits in terms of local economic prosperity and social and regional cohesion.

- 2.4 The Union has identified different flagship initiatives for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth to equip people with the right skills for the labour market of today and tomorrow. All languages, lingua francas, national,

regional and migrant languages, must be embedded in this strategy to compete on the basis of skills and knowledge rather than on the basis of low costs. Languages must be conceived as an opportunity for growth and prosperity.

- 2.5 An important factor in generating growth and better jobs and employment is people's mobility within Europe. Mobility is increasingly taking different forms: long-distance, more permanent mobility but also cross-border mobility, that is, mobility between different border regions in which a regional language, other than the State language, is often spoken. While English is becoming de facto the first foreign, even a second language, it is proficiency in more than one additional language that will make a decisive difference in the future.
- 2.6 There is a growing awareness and appreciation for the social and economic potential of regional and minority languages which are used in everyday communication and in cross-border activities. Public sector bodies such as city councils and Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) working at regional level are placing increasing importance on cross-border staff mobility as well as on the need to use local agents – with local languages – as an increasingly effective way to enhance cross-border cooperation.
- 2.7 In its different forms, student mobility, cross-border employee selection, or secondment schemes, mobility is directly linked to higher employability. A growing number of studies show that recruiting speakers with language skills, international, national and regional languages, has a positive effect in increasing trade volume. These linguistic skills create a positive rapport with major customers and also show evidence of long-term commitment to their market and create economic and social bonds between the regions involved.

3. ICTs at the service of language learning

- 3.1 A powerful mechanism to ensure effective learning and teaching of languages is Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Their usage have brought about great changes in communicative behaviour as the new technologies have broken down borders and barriers at an extremely fast pace and have enabled immediate access to knowledge

and diversified communication. Access to content in different languages has never been easier; vast linguistic resources and an exhaustive range of materials are available in a wide variety of languages. There is no doubt of the positive potential of ICT for languages.

- 3.2 New media has given rise to new opportunities for language communities, opportunities which are characterised by openness, user participation and wider networks. All language communities can theoretically take advantage of the open web to create content and communicate in their respective languages. The very nature of open-source tools has been very useful for all languages regardless of number of speakers, as it has made it possible for them to participate in an environment considered pre-eminently Anglophone, increasing in some cases the number of speakers and users of specific languages thanks to the new technologies.

The European Union/Institutions should

- ▶ **Ensure that all European language communities, regardless of number of speakers, are able to participate in the development of European ICT initiatives**

- 3.3 The European Union has placed technology at the forefront of its 2020 Strategy. The EU regards this as an effective way to strengthen Europe's competitiveness. It wishes to stimulate ICT innovation across all business sectors as well as in the public sector by promoting the use of modern accessible online services such as e-government or online health. To this end, it has called for the need to facilitate the use of structural funds in pursuit of this agenda.
- 3.4 However, not all European languages are benefitting equally from language technologies. Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages are lagging behind and the gap between international languages and other languages is widening. It is widely agreed that the presence of a language on the Internet and in other new media is key to its future as it is linked with progress, participation and usefulness, especially for the younger generations. As predicted by many experts, all languages will only progress if their speakers can make use of electronic technology.

- 3.5 All the languages of Europe need to participate on an equal footing in the development of these tools which can create synergies and commonalities between all actors, both in the public and private sector.

4. Support for the most vulnerable languages of Europe

- 4.1 In addition to the current 24 official languages of the EU, some 80-90 regional, minority or endangered languages are also spoken across Europe which enjoy different degrees of official recognition. These range from communities with full co-official status such as Basque, Catalan, Galician or Welsh, to linguistic communities with little or no official recognition but with a strong will to keep their languages alive.

The European Union/Institutions should

- ▶ Encourage member states to provide official status, support, promotion and use of Europe's Constitutional, Regional and Minority languages
- ▶ Support the recognition of languages with official status in any territory of the European Union as official languages of the European Union, provided these languages wish to accept this status
- ▶ Adopt measures of visibility and support for Europe's less widely-used languages and include them in the new narrative of European prosperity
- ▶ Work in close contact with the Council of Europe to further develop the impact of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and ensure that all EU Member States ratify the Charter, as appropriate to their jurisdiction
- ▶ Support the inclusion of language rights within the Charter for Fundamental Rights

- 4.2 The European institutions have expressed their support over the past decades for Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages. Never before has cultural and linguistic heritage been dealt with so prominently in an EU-treaty as in the Lisbon Treaty, which stipulates that the European Union 'shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded'.

- 4.3 The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU brings together in a single document the fundamental rights protected by the EU. Article 22 of the Charter notes that 'The Union respects cultural, religious and linguistic diversity'. Proclaimed in 2000, the Charter has become legally binding in the EU with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.
- 4.4 In November 2008, the Council of the European Union passed a resolution on a European Strategy for Multilingualism. The resolution noted that linguistic and cultural diversity should be part and parcel of the European identity and an asset for Europe. It advocated the need to make significant efforts to promote language learning and to value the cultural aspects of linguistic diversity at all levels of education and training, while also improving information on the variety of European languages and their dissemination across the world. In its conclusions on how to improve linguistic competence to enhance mobility in November 2011, the Council also recognised the need to offer a broader choice of languages, including regional and minority and endangered languages.
- 4.5 The European Parliament has long advocated a more prominent role for regional and minority languages in Europe. Since the first Arfé Resolution (1981), many initiatives and reports in favour of Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages have been agreed by the Parliament. The latest of these initiatives, a resolution on Endangered Languages passed on the 11th of September 2013, calls for stronger EU support and additional funding to promote Europe's small language communities. The actions of the European Parliament, in general, reflect a persistent effort to mainstream support for linguistic diversity and minority language protection. This reflects the high level of interest in the issue of linguistic diversity and the level of support and demand for preserving minority languages.
- 4.6 Other international bodies have also supported Europe's minority languages. The Council of Europe, through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and also the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has actively supported the promotion of regional, minority and endangered languages. This framework assists in the process of identifying those languages which are at greatest risk in order to assist them in the process of policy developments, identification of needs and appropriate safeguarding measures. UNESCO has also developed

a Language Vitality Index, which is reflected in the Atlas for Endangered Languages.

- 4.7 Despite the numerous international initiatives in favour of Europe's regional, minority and endangered languages, only the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is a legally binding instrument that contains concrete actions for the promotion, use and revitalization of these languages. At present, 25 states out of the 47 Council of Europe states have ratified the Charter, 14 of which are EU Member States.
- 4.8 An inclusive approach to multilingualism should encourage the presence and use of various languages within different administrations, educational systems and media (local, regional, national and European). This approach should encompass the redefining of the working languages of the European institutions and not use the criteria of administrative efficiency to the detriment of the promotion of linguistic diversity, and the use of regional, minority and endangered languages.



Conclusion

Developing a more integrated and self-sustainable Europe is the solution advocated by European leaders to the continent's current impasse as Europe needs to rediscover the path of economic growth and prosperity. It would be a mistake to do so at the expense of its citizens.

The new narrative for Europe should take into account the evolving reality of the world scenario but also emphasise that the European Union of the future is not solely about the economy. It is much more than that: it is about social cohesion, a sense of belonging to a common project, and the sharing of common values in a globalised world. It is in our hands to adopt an inclusive approach and embrace the languages of the peoples of Europe and make them participants in a common European project.

Linguistic Diversity: Europe's Greatest Asset

The health of Europe's linguistic diversity depends on several factors:

- ▶ Our personal attitude and will to use our languages in private and public life, and also to transmit the mother tongue(s) to the next generation;
- ▶ The way local, national and international institutions and organisations value multilingualism and act with regard to languages;
- ▶ Language law, policy and planning that allow for the recognition and equitable organisation of local, national and European linguistic diversity, with a view to multilingualism serving as an instrument for the social and economic development of all language communities;
- ▶ And language being a medium for dialogue between the people and cultures of Europe.

Linguistic diversity as the cornerstone of Europe's new narrative; what is important?

- ▶ The construction of Europe, especially in today's economic and social scenario, must include all its peoples. Cooperation, respect, recognition and mutual understanding are key elements if we are to succeed. In 2008, a group of intellectuals led by writer Amin Maalouf produced an insightful report on how the multiplicity of languages could strengthen Europe. While acknowledging the complex nature of all forms of diversity, including linguistic diversity, the group came to the conclusion that while most of the European nations have been built on the platform of their language of identity, the European Union can only build on a platform of linguistic diversity.
- ▶ That there is growing awareness that all languages – regardless of number of speakers and their official status – play a vital role in the social and economic development of Europe, in ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Languages are also key in attaining quality education for all and strengthening cooperation, in building inclusive knowledge societies and preserving cultural heritage, and in mobilizing political will for applying the benefits of science and technology to sustainable development. Research in these and other fields is needed to explore and unleash the full potential that all languages have in the equitable construction of an inclusive Europe.
- ▶ That multilingualism is not something that we aspire to, it is a reality. The coexistence of various languages is a distinguishing trait of today's European societies. It is expected that the educational and social changes, the increasing human mobility and new technologies will have an impact on how multilingualism is dealt with. Europe's increasing diversity has contributed to enhancing the broad appreciation of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. New research developments are needed to take into account the changing linguistic landscape of Europe. In this changing landscape, all languages must be equally taken into account.
- ▶ The main EU funding mechanisms for languages have been assigned under the Lifelong Learning programmes, which has now adopted the term Erasmus + for the 2014-2020 period. Much of the funding has supported foreign language learning initiatives. However, investment in non EU-official language projects has been and continues to be much lower. EU funding to support languages and promote linguistic diversity has shown a downward trend in recent years. The Commission's main goal with its multilingualism policy is to encourage language learning, promoting linguistic diversity in society and to promote a healthy multilingual economy. There is a wide concern among speakers of regional, minority and endangered languages of Europe that support will continue to decrease for those languages that need it most.
- ▶ That initiatives, best practices and projects taking place across Europe such as CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) be widely supported, shared and known. To this end, networks play a vital role in gathering information, raising awareness and disseminating knowledge on the personal, social and economic advantages of languages as well as on new methodologies and approaches to language learning and teaching.