

THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE ISSUE OF LANGUAGES

A note from the Conseil Européen pour les Langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC) for the attention of the authorities and organisations carrying forward the Bologna Process

The Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué highlight a number of issues and developments in which the question of languages is of direct relevance.

- improving the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
- promoting inter-institutional co-operation in regard to mobility schemes, curriculum development and integrated programmes of study ('joint degrees'), training and research ('the European dimension of higher education');
- developing first-cycle programmes leading to a degree relevant to the European labour market ('the European dimension of employability')

Improving mobility

It has long been recognised that Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity constitutes a major obstacle to mobility, but that, at the same time, mobility has great potential for enhancing and extending the learning of languages and for cultivating positive attitudes to other cultures. In order to overcome one of the main obstacles to mobility and to enable individuals, institutions and society to reap the benefits of mobility, higher education institutions have to provide linguistic preparation and support for mobility by taking appropriate action in education, research and services related to them.

Promoting the European dimension of higher education through inter-institutional co-operation

Those that have been engaged in European inter-institutional co-operation have come to appreciate that co-operation will only succeed if the individuals and institutions involved have proper regard to the question of languages. While in many disciplines English has assumed the role of an academic *lingua franca*, it would be wrong to expect that a majority of students and teachers have an adequate command of English or that English is enough. The implementation of integrated programmes of study, training and research requires enhanced and extended knowledge of European languages; it is the responsibility of higher education institutions to provide opportunities for acquiring the necessary linguistic skills and competences.

Developing the European dimension of employability

European Union citizenship entails the right to move, reside and work freely within the territory of the Member States. It is a declared aim of the Union to increase geographical mobility on the European labour market. If higher education degrees are to be relevant to the European labour market, graduates have to be able to communicate in a number of languages and to expand their linguistic repertoire in response to changing needs. It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to provide opportunities and incentives for students to acquire these abilities.

In view of the fact that the question of languages is of such crucial importance for European integration in general and for the creation of a European higher education area in particular, the Conseil Européen pour les Langues / European Language Council calls upon the authorities, institutions and organisations carrying forward the Bologna Process to put the question of languages on their agenda. The signatory states and higher education institutions have to take concrete action to meet the linguistic requirements resulting from the Bologna Process. Higher education institutions should respond to these requirements by developing and implementing their own specific language policies. They will only be able to perform their role as institutions in the European higher education area if they if they adopt a multilingual ethos.

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