Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment

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The Committee on Culture and Education adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Vasco GRAÇA MOURA (EPP-ED, PT) on multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment.

The report recalls that linguistic and cultural diversity has a significant impact on the daily life of citizens of the European Union and that the acquisition of a diverse range of language skills is considered to be of the greatest importance for all EU citizens, since it enables them to derive full economic, social and cultural benefit from freedom of movement within the Union.

MEPs welcome the submission of the Commission Communication on multilingualism and the attention paid to it by the Council. In particular, they insist on the need for recognition of **parity between the EU's official languages** in all aspects of public activity. They consider that Europe's linguistic diversity constitutes a major cultural asset and it would therefore be wrong for the European Union to restrict itself to a single main language.

The report recalls that the importance of multilingualism is not confined to economic and social aspects and that attention must also be paid to cultural and scientific creation and transmission. It stresses that multilingualism is a transversal issue that has a major impact on the lives of European citizens and therefore calls on Member States to **mainstream multilingualism in policies other than education**, such as lifelong learning, social inclusion, employment, media and research.

MEPs also stress the importance of a full knowledge of the host state’s official languages for the **full integration of immigrants** and their families and call on Member States to provide immigrants with the necessary means to learn the language and culture of the host country, while allowing and encouraging them to maintain their own language. In this context, they regret that the Commission has so far not instituted either a multi-annual programme or a European Agency on linguistic diversity and language learning.

The report stresses the importance of **promoting mobility** and exchanges of language teachers and students and urges the Commission and the Member States to encourage professional mobility for teachers and cooperation between schools and different countries in carrying out technologically and culturally innovative teaching projects.

MEPs also stress that an adequate degree of multilingualism should be ensured in the **media** and in Internet content. In this context, they support the use of subtitles in national languages on television programmes, particularly children’s programmes, instead of dubbing and voiceovers.

According to MEPs, sufficient support should be provided to help citizens of all age groups to develop and improve their language skills on an ongoing basis by giving them access to suitable language learning or other facilities for easier communication. In particular, the Commission and the Member States are called upon to promote measures facilitating language learning by people in disadvantaged situations, persons belonging to national minorities and migrants, in order to enable these persons to achieve social integration and combat social exclusion.

The report draws particular attention to possible dangers in the communication gap between individuals with different cultural backgrounds and the **social divide between multilingual and monolingual people**

. It therefore urges the Commission and the Member States to take measures to narrow the gap between multilingual people - who have more opportunities in the European Union - and monolingual people.

Lastly, MEPs call on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen their efforts in enhancing cooperation between the Member States by making use of the open method of coordination, in order to facilitate the **exchange of experiences and good practices in the area of multilingualism**, taking account of the economic benefits, for example in multilingual undertakings.