European Year of Languages 2001

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This report from the Commission on the implementation and results of the European Year of Languages 2001 is organised in two parts. Part 1 deals with descriptive information on the structures and content of the Year as well as conclusions on its implementation. Part 2 deals with the political and strategic results of the Year. Firstly, 2001 was designated the European Year of Languages 2001 by the European Union and the Council of Europe, with the general aim of encouraging language learning by all persons residing in Europe. 45 European countries participated in the Year and its implementation in the EU Member States and EEA countries was the responsibility of the European Commission. At a national level the implementation was undertaken by a network of Co-ordinating Bodies, appointed by national authorities. As regards the budget, it was EUR 11 million and it was allocated to co-financed projects, an information campaign, events to mark the launch and closing of the Year at European and national levels and a Eurobarometer survey. Two points were identified during the year to act as focal points: a Week of Adult Language Learners in May and a European Day of Languages in September. These instruments were defined to provide stimulation for activities to be organised on a wide scale. 190 co-financed projects took place at local, regional, national and transnational levels. Projects typically included 3 or 4 different types of activities, such as festivals, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, open-days, mini language courses and competitions. The majority of them included a web-site and publications which were widely distributed. The projects covered over 60 languages, with a good balance between official languages, regional and minority languages, languages of pre-accession countries and sign languages. Each project on average reached more than 12 000 people. The selection included a small number of media initiatives which reached several million television views and radio listeners. Concerning, the information campaign, it had three main elements: a press and communications campaign; the production of a logo, publications and promotional items and a European web-site. Overall , the European Year of Languages succeeded in creating a framework to encourage grassroots activity with a common European identity. This common framework was flexible enough to accommodate national context and priorities, both in terms of the objectives pursued and in terms of the instrument chosen. The Year fulfilled its objectives. It supported the promotion of a large number of languages and different types of language featured side by side in activities as well as in strategic and political developments. In addition to raising awareness of the general public, the Year was an opportunity for national and regional authorities and NGOs to debate language teaching and learning. The proposal that European school leavers should have as a minimum "Mother Tongue plus 2 languages" appears in many policy statements and was endorsed at a European level by the Barcelona Council. The report states that the experience of the European Year has demonstrated conclusively that all languages present within the communities can be promoted in an integrated fashion. Consideration needs to be given to the notion of mainstreamingthe promotion of regional and minority, sign and immigrant languages and of developing a more integrated approach to enable the skills of bilingual citizens to be valued and promoted. Lastly, at European level, the year provided a stimulus for the future developments defined through a series of resolutions and opinions passed by the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions and the Council. The Commission will present, in mid-2003, a Communication on an Action Plan to promote linguistic diversity and language learning, using resources available within existing Community programmes and activities.