Multilingualism: framework strategy for language learning and linguistic diversity

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PURPOSE: the presentation of a new framework strategy for multilingualism.

CONTENT: this Commission Communication is the first report to explore the role of multilingualism in Europe and reflects the fact that a European Commissioner has, for the first time, been given explicit responsibility for multilingualism. The report seeks:

- to reaffirm the Commission's commitment to multilingualism in the EU;
- to set out the Commission's strategy for promoting multilingualism;
- to propose a number of specific actions which stem out of this strategic framework.

The Commission reminds its readers that the EU is founded on the concept of "unity in diversity", which naturally includes the twenty official languages of the Union as well as the 60 or so other indigenous languages and scores of non-indigenous languages spoken by the migrant community.

In this document, the term multilingualism is used to describe the new field of Commission policy that promotes a climate conducive to the full expression of all languages. As such the Commission' policy in this field is centred on three main objectives:

- to encourage language learning in society;
- to promote a healthy multilingual economy;
- to give citizens access to EU legislation, procedures and information in their own languages.

The Commission, however, reminds the Member States that progress rests in their hands – be it at a national, regional or local level.

In its conclusions, the Commission states that multilingualism is essential for the functioning of the EU. The Commission proposes that the current state of multilingualism can, indeed must, improve for the sake of job security and better jobs in a global environment. Within this context it urges the Member States to take additional measures to promote widespread individual multilingualism and to foster a society that respects all citizens' linguistic identities. In order to promote this issue the Commission will:

- set up a High Level Group on Multilingualism to provide support and advice on initiatives;
- organises a ministerial conference on multilingualism in order to allow Member States to share progress thus far and to plan future work;
- present a further Communication proposing a comprehensive approach to multilingualism in the EU.

For further information concerning the financial implications of this measure, please refer to the financial statement.