Multilingualism: framework strategy for language learning and linguistic diversity

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Bernat JOAN I MARÍ (Greens/EFA, ES) on the Commission's new framework strategy for multilingualism. The committee pointed out that "multilingualism is a special feature of the EU" and a "basic component" of European culture.
It welcomed the Commission's action to promote languages in the Community and reminded the Member States of the need to take suitable measures for a genuine policy of learning foreign language skills.

The report said that there was a lack of detailed and reliable data and appropriate indicators related to the current situation of foreign language competence in the Member States and therefore welcomed the proposal for a European Indicator of Language Competence. This should include all official EU languages and could be extended beyond the five widely-spoken languages to include the other EU languages, in order to gain a true picture of language competence.

MEPs said that the widest opportunities should be provided for migrants to learn the language(s) of host countries. They also welcomed the greater use of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), where pupils learn a subject through the medium of a foreign language. And they supported a European Standard for Translation Services and said that there should be a proactive policy for developing translation services for less widely used languages.

The report called for a clear, coherent EU language plan and EU language legislation, and also urged the European institutions and bodies to improve their communication with citizens in their own national language, regardless of whether the language has official status at Member State or EU level.

Lastly, the committee supported the proposals to develop language-related professions and industries, saying that "all European languages will need new technologies such as speech processing, voice recognition and so on, as well as work on terminology, developing language teaching, certification and testing; otherwise lesser-used languages will be left behind with their linguistic social space taken over by the more widely spoken languages - especially English".