Language Policy in the European Union

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1 Introduction

> "The harmonious co-existence of many languages in Europe is a powerful symbol of the European Union's aspiration to be united in diversity, one of the cornerstones of the European project. Languages define personal identities, but are also part of a shared in-heritance. They can serve as a bridge to other people and open access to other countries and cultures, promoting mutual under-standing. A successful multilingualism policy can strengthen life chances of citizens: it may increase their employability, facilitate access to services and rights and contribute to solidarity through enhanced intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Approached in this spirit, linguistic diversity can become a precious asset, increasingly so in today's globalised world."

These sentences introduce the communication from the Commission *Multilingualism: an Asset for Europe and a Shared Commitment* (2008: 3), revealing the official position of the European Union in the extremely complex European linguistic issue. 'Unity in diversity' was adopted as the official motto of the European Union in 2000, reflecting one of the main aims of this unique organisation: to preserve the cultural differences that exist between the member states. The original idea of establishing the European Communities (the European Coal and Steel Community, the European Economic Community, and the European Atomic Energy Community) after the Second World War was mainly economic, with a more and more pronounced political aspect. After the accession of new member states and with the emerging global context of multiculturalism, the European Union has become culturally more diverse. Not only the enlargement process but the laws concerning the four fundamental freedoms of the European Union (the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital) have contributed to the multicultural and multilingual character of the European Union. Currently the European Union has 23 official languages, but more than 60 indigenous regional or minority languages are spoken throughout the continent. The situation of languages has changed a lot over the centuries due to the continuous movement of peoples on the continent, often

resulting in the appearance of new languages and the disappearance of others. In the 21st century, immigration is a new phenomenon which contributes to the complexity of the European language mosaic. Brussels, Paris, London and Berlin are just a few examples of multicultural and multilingual European cities where hundreds of languages are spoken today. As a result, intercultural dialogue is becoming increasingly important if the European Union wants to adhere to its founding principles. It is not a coincidence that 2008 has been designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID) featuring projects on a European and national level in a wide range of fields, as well as partner programmes involving civil society, and awareness-raising initiatives focusing on the importance of intercultural dialogue. In his speech at the Berlin Conference *"Soul for Europe"* (2006), Ján Figel, Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, emphasized that EYID is not only about raising awareness and increasing cultural understanding; it is connected to the political objective of creating a sense of European citizenship. His words carry the underlying meaning that culture, language, identity and ideology are closely intertwined. The European Union has seemed to recognize this by developing a language policy which respects the diversity of languages, promotes multilingualism and protects communities having an endangered language. It is clear that the language situation in Europe is very complex, and since language, culture, identity and ideology are strongly connected, the language policy of the European Union has a crucial impact on both individuals and societies.

The main aim of this paper is to identify the major problems underlying the European Union's language policy. The European Union, this unique geopolitical entity, promotes an ideology through its language policy which explicitly aims at preserving cultural and linguistic diversity, but in practice the situation is different. In order to find the roots of this striking discrepancy between theory and practice, I will analyse the European Union's language policy from several aspects.

2 What is language policy? Overview of the key terms

Firstly, it is important to define the term language policy. Language policy is concerned with a highly complex issue; therefore, language policy as a separate field of study requires an interdisciplinary approach drawing upon the knowledge and tools of several academic disciplines such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology, anthropology and political theory. This has resulted in a confusing terminology: there are several different definitions of the same term, and some terms are used with a similar or overlapping definition. Cooper (1989) points out that a lot of progress has been made in the field in the past few decades, but terminological ambiguity is still prevalent. Szépe and Derényi come to the same conclusion, and claim that language policy is not an established

discipline; it is an emerging field, which is trying to define itself, find the scope of its inquiry and establish its methods (1999: 10-11). Therefore, before discussing the language issue of the European Union, it is important to clarify what is meant by language policy. 'Language policy' and 'language planning' are often used interchangeably. Calvet writes that language planning is the practical realization of language policy (Labrie 1999: 20). Similarly, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) consider language planning the implementation of language policy. According to Labrie, language pluralism means that several languages and language variations are in contact, often resulting in language conflicts. Language policy aims at solving these conflicts and reaching a compromise by exercising direct, explicit and conscious social control, which stems from political decisions reflecting power relations. (1999: 17). Thus, language policy must be examined in a very broad context. Labrie argues that language policy (just like other disciplines) involves both theory and practice. He distinguishes between three theoretical levels of language policy. The most specific is called 'language policy', which refers to concrete, specific measures. A good example is the very first Council regulation from 1958, which determined the languages to be used in the European Economic Community. In his view 'language politics' is a more general term which includes all the steps taken by a particular state or organization in relation to languages. According to Labrie, this is what language policy as a discipline investigates. He notes, however, that language policy cannot be separated from the broad social context. Behind language policy there is an implicit language ideology framework, which is related to broad political and social ideologies. French language policy writers often use the term 'glottopolitique' ('glottopolitics'), which means that language policy must take into account the broader social and political factors such as the distribution of communicative roles in society. Similarly, in German usage, there are two terms: 'politische Sprach-wissenschaft' (political linguistics), investigating the relationship between language issues and social groups, which is expressed in 'Sprachpolitik' (language policy), an ideological component of society (Labrie 1999: 21). Labrie concludes that official language policy decisions should be analyzed in a larger political framework, which presupposes political ideologies. The models used in political science can contribute to a more comprehensive analysis of language policy, in particular if we want to evaluate the language policy of complex political organizations such as the European Union.

3 Socialization, language and identity

According to Bochmann (1999) language has a key role in establishing individuals' identity and determining their roles in society. The socialization process happens through language, so language is inevitably connected to

political interests and power relations. States and other organizations implicitly use language to communicate certain ideologies. Bochmann's theory of language policy is based on the ideas of the Italian Marxist philosopher Gramsci, who introduced the concept of cultural hegemony as a means of maintaining the power of the state in capitalist societies. It is a basic postulate of Marxism that the dominant institutions in society work to legitimize the current order and enable the group in power to control people by spreading ideas about what is considered to be natural. They orientate individuals' thinking, their cognitive interpretation of the social world and their roles in society. Gramsci (1970) makes a distinction between political society and civil society. The aim of the first is to maintain the economic, political and cultural power of the state through state institutions such as the government, the parliament, the academy, the police, the army, or language institutes by using coercive and direct dominance. The other sphere is the civil society, including non-state institutions and units such as the family, the education system, the church, trade unions, economic, cultural and professional organizations, or the media, which spread ideology implicitly by means of consent. These are what Althusser, (whose theory of ideology was influenced by Gramsci's ideas) calls ideological state apparatuses. Althusser claims that our identity is acquired by seeing ourselves mirrored in ideology. Ideology exists materially in the practices of various ideological state apparatuses. It is clear that language has a key role in the socialization process; therefore, we can assume that the language policy of the European Union has a strong impact on European citizens' identity.

In the Copehagen Summit of 1973, the heads of state and government realised the necessity to build a European identity. They realized that the success of political integration depended on the creation of a coherent community identity, which would serve as the basis for the decisions shaping their common future. According to Láncos, "the perception of common goals is closely linked with *solidarity*, the inevitable concomitant of collective identity" (2006: 18). The adoption of European symbols in the 1980s (the flag, the anthem, the motto and Europe Day) was a sign of the commitment to create a stronger European identity. The Maastricht Treaty introduced the concept of Union citizenship in 1992, which provided certain rights to all EU citizens, indicating a further step towards a common European identity. The question of European identity is more and more identified with the dominant position of the English language. It is not by coincidence that some European countries think that the development of European identity is an implicit threat to their national identity and try to protect their national interests partly through their language policy.

4 Dimensions in language policy evaluation

Slightly modifying Kroon's language policy cube, Ahn (2007) presents an effectttive tool which can provide a useful framework in the evaluation of the language policy of the European Union as well. Her model is a cube with three axes, which can be seen in figure 1:

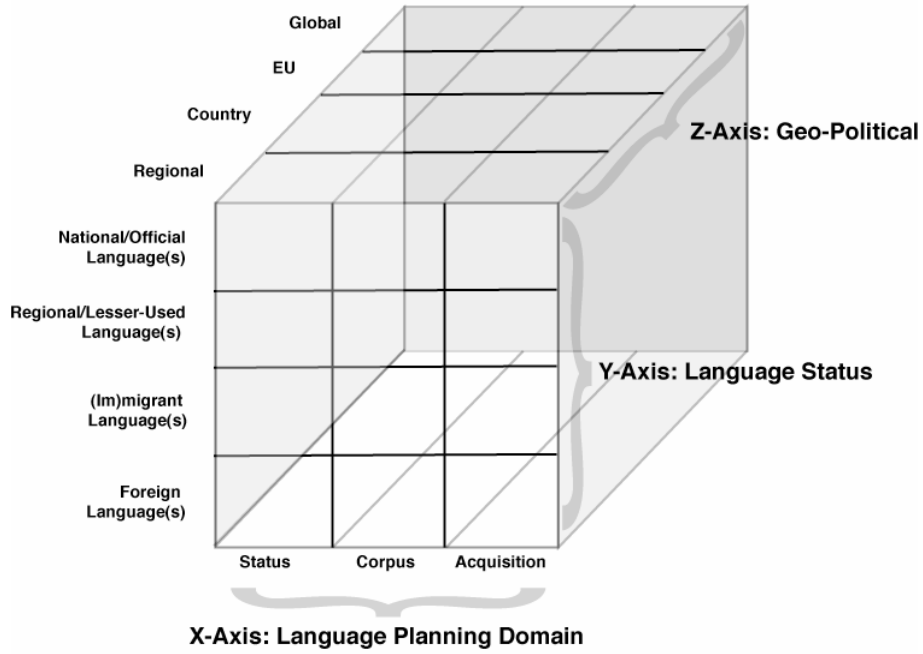

Figure 1. Language policy cube including the EU (Ahn 2007: 5)

X-Axis includes the three language planning domains: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. These terms also appear in the language planning model of Cooper (1989). Status planning refers to planning the prestige of a language in relation to other languages, for example by making a language official. Corpus planning means planning the 'body' of the language itself by codifying it or elaborating its vocabulary or grammar. Finally, acquisition planning is related to promoting the language and increasing the number of its speakers. Y-Axis refers to the status that a particular language has in a given society. In the European context there are four main categories established on the basis of the political recognition of languages: national / official languages, which are legitimated by the state, minority languages – which can be divided into old and new minority languages. 'Old minority languages' refer to regional and lesser-used languages, while 'new minority languages' are the languages spoken by immigrants. The last category on the Y-Axis is foreign languages,

which are not normally spoken in a given community. Finally, Z-Axis reflects the geopolitical level at which the language policy is formulated. These levels can be regional, country, EU and international (Ahn 2007: 6-11).

5 Language policy in the European Union

Van Els (2006) makes a distinction between 'institutional' and 'non-institutional' language policy in the European Union. The former refers to the language policy which determines the use of languages in and between the EU institutions, the use of language(s) outside the EU, and the language(s) used in the communication between the EU and the member states (and their citizens). In contrast, 'non-institutional language policy' refers to the language(s) used in individual member states between the citizens.

5.1 Institutional language policy of the European Union

The fundamental principle of the institutional language policy of the European Union is multilingualism. From 1 January 2007 the official languages of the European Union are: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish and Swedish. Although there are 27 member states, the number of official languages is 23 because some languages are spoken in more than one member state. Besides, Luxembourgish (an official language in Luxembourg) and Turkish (an official language in Cyprus) have not been accorded the status of official languages of the European Union although Luxembourg and Cyprus are member states. When a state joins the EU, its national government has to determine which language or languages it wants to be declared official language(s) of the EU. One might ask why it is necessary to have so many official languages instead of using only a few like most international organizations such as the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), NATO (English and French), OECD (English and French), World Trade Organization (English, French and Spanish), or the Council of Europe (English and French). The answer lies in the very nature of the European Union. It is an organization operating through a supranational and intergovernmental system. Supra-nationalism is a deeper level of integration, meaning that the member states retain their national sovereignty, but in certain areas they transfer specific powers to common institutions (the Parliament, the Commission and the Court of Justice), which are elected democratically and represent the interest of the community as a whole. The first pillar of the union (involving economic, social and environmental policies) represents this level. In the second pillar (Common Foreign and Security Policy) and the third pillar (Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters) intergovernmental principles are stronger, so the powers of common institutions

are much weaker. The primary function of these common institutions (including the Council of the European Union, which is composed of the national ministers depending on the issue being discussed) is legislation. There are different types of laws made at a European level, but regulations, directives and decisions are binding in some way. A regulation is binding in its entirety on all the citizens and directly applicable in all the member states. That is, it becomes national law in all the member states and applies to all the citizens. In a democratic organization, each citizen must be granted access to legislation in their own language, which guarantees equality before the law. "Ignorance of the law is no defence, so the law cannot be imposed in an incomprehensible foreign language" (Wagner 2002: 3). Therefore, EU legislation must be translated into all the official languages, making translation indispensable in the working of the European Union. As Umberto Eco said, "translation is the language of Europe." When the Treaties of Rome came into force on 1 January 1958, the first regulation that the Council adopted concerned the official and working languages to be used. This regulation is often referred to as the language charter of the EU. Originally there were four official languages: Dutch, French, German and Italian, but the regulation is amended with each enlargement to incorporate the new official languages. In addition to legislation, in today's European Union, all official documents must be translated into all 23 official languages. On the other hand, a legal act is the result of a long process of negotiation based on the co-operation of EU institutions, national governments, committees, and representatives of the private sector and the civil society. In order to make the work of the European Union more democratic and transparent, every citizen is entitled to contribute to the discussions and address the official EU institutions in any of the official languages, and they have the right to receive a reply in the same language. This principle was enshrined in Article 21 of the EC Treaty (1958). In the Final Provisions of the same Treaty, it is written that all four texts of the treaty are equally authentic. With the amendments following each enlargement, this principle provides equal status to the official languages of the European Union. As a consequence, in the above mentioned Regulation No 1, Article 4 declares that regulations and official documents must be drafted in all the official languages. The verb 'translate' was deliberately avoided: if these texts were translated, they would lose their authenticity, their originality; consequently, the text of laws and official documents are never said to be translated. Instead, they are said to be drafted in all the official languages although this is rather a symbolic statement. In reality, language use is much different in the everyday work of the European Union. Although all 23 official languages are working languages, not all of them are used in everyday communication. Based on information from the EU's official website, the working languages in the main institutions of the EU are the following:

Council of the European Union	all 23 languages
European Parliament	all 23 languages
European Commission	English, French, German
European Court of Justice	French
Court of Auditors	English, French, German
Committee of the Regions	all 23 languages
Economic and Social Committee	all 23 languages
European Central Bank	English
European Investment Bank	English and French

Table 1. Working languages in the European Union

In the European Commission, the term 'procedural languages' is used, which means that documents must be provided in these languages before the Commission adopts them at a meeting (Wagner: 10). It is clear from the table that in some institutions not all the official languages are used for internal communication, which makes the equality of languages an illusion. Pym draws attention to the imbalances in official language use, and goes as far as comparing the European Union to empires like the Persian, Roman, Austro-Hungarian, British or Soviet empires, which "remained largely multicultural and multilingual despite the imposition of strong lingua francas" (1999: 7). He argues that in spite of the public ideologies, the European Union has one lingua franca: English. Although the main input languages are English, French and German, there is a pragmatic hierarchy even between these languages. Pym points out that "EU plurality only extends to highly privileged languages – the major national languages [...], and even then it does so in a very unequal way" (ibid.: 8). Statistical data seem to confirm that English and French predominate. In *Translating for a Multilingual Community*, a booklet published by the European Commission Directorate-General for Translation (2007), we can find some statistics with regard to source and target languages. In 2006, 72% of the texts which they translated were in English, 14% in French, 2.8% in German, and the rest in other official languages. The figures in 1997 were 45.4%, 40.4%, and 5.4% respectively. As regards target languages, the breakdown is more balanced – as legislation has to be translated into each official language –, but figures show that English, French and German enjoy a higher position even regarding output. Although the original working language used in the institutions of the European Economic Community was French, since the accession of the United Kingdom and Ireland in 1973, English has become the dominant working language. Thus, Pym (1999) argues that the illusory equality should be replaced by a more effective language policy taking reality into account. He points out that the cost of translation and interpretation should be an important factor in the EU's language policy. According to the EU's official website, the cost of

translation and interpretation in 2005 amounted to €1123 million (€2.28 per person per year), which is 1% of the annual budget. 1% does not seem to be very high, but in reality it is a huge amount of money. Pym argues that the money invested in translation and interpretation should not exceed the benefits of cross-cultural co-operation. Therefore, he suggests that learning a lingua franca might be more appropriate than investing money in training more and more translators and interpreters. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) make a distinction between 'symbolic' and 'substantive' language policy statements, the latter involving specific steps taken in reality. Ahn (2007) points out that the European Union's respect for linguistic diversity in its institutional language policy is rather a symbolic policy statement, which does not carry much weight. In reality, English is the prevalent language despite the laws aimed at preserving linguistic equality. As Wise puts it, "despite its extraordinary respect for linguistic diversity, political tensions associated with language rights are growing even within the EU" (2007: 176).

5.2 Non-institutional language policy of the European Union

Non-institutional language policy of the European Union refers to language use with and between the member states and their citizens. This basically refers to the European Union's language and education programmes promoting foreign language education throughout the Union. Languages have played a key role in the historical construction of Europe's nation-states and in determining national identity. Caviedes points out that the central components of national identity are culture (including symbols), language and religion (2003: 250). Article 149 in the EEC Treaty (1957) declares the following:

> The Community shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

Although the term was introduced only by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, in this text there is indirect reference to the principle of subsidiarity. It was established in community law as a reaction to the deepening level of integration between the member states. It can be described as the delegation of competence in decision-making – an essential component of the relationship between the European Union and the member states. Under this principle, the European Union can only take action if the objectives of a specific action cannot be achieved by the member states. According to Frivaldszky (2006), this term reads two ways: on

the one hand, the principle means limiting the competence of the Union by restricting community actions which have a centralising effect. On the other hand, the principle ensures effective operation of the community by delineating areas which fall within the Union's exclusive competence. The member states of the European Union have always been determined to assert their sovereignty over language policy; thus, national language policies fall within the competence of the member states. As Wise formulates it:

> Although ready to accept generalised statements of intent, they [the member states] generally remain reluctant to ratify anything requiring a significant modification of national policies defending the primacy of the official state language(s)" (2007: 178)

It is clear that the European Union cannot interfere with national language policies; it can only co-ordinate foreign language education programmes. In the historical process of building nation-states, a single official language was specified in order to make communication easier within the state. According to Caviedes, the political conflicts brought about by the dominant position of the English language are the natural consequences of the political and geographical structure of the European Union. He argues that if more significance is attached to efficiency than to the values of democracy, identity and equality, it will have political impacts, as status planning is an important dimension of language policy (2003: 252). When analysing the non-institutional language policy of the European Union, it is necessary to look beyond Europe and take into account the wider context of globalisation and its language aspect. Mamadouh argues that the European integration process has not had a major effect on the member states' language policies. However, the position of state languages has been more and more affected by three other phenomena happening at the same time:

> [...]the intensification of worldwide communication with the growing use of international English as second language; the strengthening of regional languages concurrent to the decentralization of administrative tasks and the devolution of political power to linguistically distinct regions (especially in Spain); and international migration flows (including intra-EU migration) (2002: 330).

The fact that English has become the dominant language in Europe is not the consequence of an intentional hegemonic language policy of the United Kingdom. English has become the primary language in the media, science, technology and business due to the economic (and therefore political) power of the United States. Caviedes points out that English is a popular choice because of its pluricentric character, "which gives it a de-ethnicized and culturally-

unbounded quality that allows speakers to use it without automatically identifying with one nation" (2003: 254).

In the European context, the term 'multilingualism' has two meanings. It refers to the specific situation in the European Union that many languages exist at the same time – a much more natural phenomenon in other continents such as Asia, where people are multilingual in most countries. The other meaning is individuals' foreign language knowledge. In 2005 the European Commission adopted the first communication dealing with multilingualism (*New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*) identifying the priorities in the European Union's multilingualism policy. In 2007 the European Commission created a separate portfolio focusing on multilingualism, the European Commissioner for Multilingualism, currently held by Leonard Orban. This new portfolio focuses mainly on the promotion of foreign language learning as the most effective means of individual mobility and competitiveness and the key to the European values of democracy and intercultural tolerance. One of the objectives is that EU citizens should speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue. In 2005 the Commission carried out a special survey related to multilingualism (*Europeans and Their Languages*). The results of the survey revealed that the language considered most useful for personal development and career reasons is English although there is a difference in the results in EU15 and the new member states (2006: 32):

	10 new member states	**EU15**
English	72%	68%
French	5%	23%
German	48%	17%
Spanish	2%	19%
None	13%	9%
Russian	10%	2%

Table 2. Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are most useful to know for personal development and career?

The results are even more interesting at a country level, where the significance of English is clear (ibid.: 33):

	English	French	German	Spanish	Russian	Italian	Swedish
EU25	68%	25%	22%	16%	3%	3%	1%
BE	83%	53%	8%	5%	0%	1%	-
CZ	70%	6%	55%	3%	7%	1%	-
DK	94%	8%	55%	10%	0%	1%	2%
DE	81%	28%	5%	12%	5%	3%	0%
EE	76%	2%	14%	1%	48%	0%	1%
EL	74%	21%	30%	4%	0%	6%	0%
ES	73%	33%	11%	5%	0%	1%	-
FR	82%	2%	20%	37%	1%	7%	-
IE	4%	58%	37%	34%	1%	6%	-
IT	80%	24%	13%	15%	1%	1%	-
CY	94%	35%	19%	4%	5%	7%	0%
LV	74%	3%	17%	1%	54%	0%	0%
LT	87%	4%	28%	1%	50%	1%	0%
LU	37%	81%	60%	1%	0%	1%	0%
HU	62%	4%	55%	1%	2%	3%	0%
MT	91%	12%	6%	2%	-	64%	-
NL	94%	19%	47%	16%	-	0%	0%
AT	72%	16%	2%	8%	3%	9%	-
PL	72%	5%	46%	2%	9%	1%	0%
PT	59%	35%	6%	6%	0%	0%	-
SI	78%	4%	61%	2%	1%	12%	0%
SK	72%	5%	61%	2%	6%	2%	-
FI	88%	8%	19%	4%	10%	1%	30%
SE	97%	13%	37%	22%	1%	1%	3%
UK	5%	62%	27%	34%	1%	4%	0%
BG	65%	11%	34%	5%	11%	2%	0%
HR	77%	4%	54%	1%	1%	12%	-
RO	64%	34%	17%	7%	2%	8%	-
TR	83%	10%	40%	1%	2%	1%	0%

= First language = Second language

Table 3. Which two languages, apart from your mother tongue do you think are most useful to know for personal development and career?

Even though the European Union aims at preserving linguistic diversity, the dominance of the English language is apparent. According to Caviedes, "the newest and most illuminating policy trajectory emanating from the Commission is a tacit recognition of the dominant position of English within Europe" (2003: 256). The question is whether English should be officially recognized as the single lingua franca in the Community. Truchot points out that native speakers of English are more competitive on the market, and argues that there are two opposing interests in the European language question: the preservation of cultural identity and the spread of standardised international culture with mainly economic interests (1999: 184-185). De Swaan (2004) argues that the dominant position of English is the natural consequence of having more and more official languages in the European Union. Belgian philosopher and political economist Phillippe van Parijs (2004) points out that having a common lingua franca is a precondition for a working democratic organization, and it guarantees access to democracy. However, the adoption of English as the single lingua franca would be unfair as those whose native language is English already enjoy certain benefits; for example, they have privileged access to certain jobs where English is involved while non-natives have to invest time and money to learn English. Therefore, the question of a common language in Europe is a very delicate issue currently resulting in a deadlock. Some of the questions related to the ideas behind EU language policies in the 2006 Eurobarometer seem to support the complexity of the issue. 84% of the respondents agreed that everyone in the EU should be able to speak one language in addition to their mother tongue, 72% agreed that all languages in the EU should be treated equally, 70% said that everyone in the EU should speak a common language, and 55% thought that EU institutions should adopt one single language to communicate with European citizens (2006: 54).

6 Regional and minority languages

The situation of regional and minority languages in the European Union is another problematic area. According to the special *Eurobarometer* (2006: 6), there are three main categories within regional and minority languages: the first includes languages which are specific to a region (such as Basque, Breton, Catalan, Frisian, Sardinian or Welsh), the second refers to languages which are spoken by a minority group, but which are official in another member state (such as Hungarian spoken in Slovakia), and the third category refers to non-territorial languages (such as Romany or Yiddish). It is interesting that the speakers of some minority languages outnumber the speakers of official EU languages; for example, more people speak Catalan than Danish, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian or Maltese; similarly, Welsh speakers outnumber the speakers of Maltese. The recognition of Irish as a full official language of the European

Union (from 2007) has led to political tensions and strong demands that Basque, Catalan and Galician should acquire the same status. Although these languages have not been acknowledged as official EU languages, their speakers have special linguistic rights: these languages can be used in written communication in certain EU institutions. The European Union has largely been criticised for not paying enough attention to language rights issues especially concerning speakers of regional and minority (lesser-used) languages. Caviedes argues that by committing itself to multilingualism, the European Union focuses on national languages, thus propagating monolingualism in the member states (2003: 257).

There is a non-EU organization whose mission is to represent the interest of regional and minority languages: the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL). It was established in 1982 after a European Parliament initiative, and is an officially recognized non-governmental organization with close connection with the European Union and several other European and international organizations such as OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the Council of Europe, the United Nations and UNESCO. It is funded by the European Commission and also by local and regional governmental organizations. Another tool for preserving and promoting regional and minority languages is the Mercator Network established by the European Commission in 1987. The network has three research and documentation centres: Mercator-Education in Friesland, Mercator-Legislation in Catalonia and Mercator-Media in Wales. The main aim is to make information available for students, researchers, scholars and policymakers and foster co-operation.

However, the situation of regional and minority languages is different in the member states, depending to a large extent on the state's official language policy. A clear indicator of a member state's attitudes is whether it has signed or ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, adopted in 1992 by the Council of Europe (which is the major protector of human rights in Europe). France is one of the signatory countries which have not ratified the Charter fearing that by recognizing regional and minority languages the French nation state will be undermined, resulting in political disintegration. It is not surprising that France, a republic based on the concept of one nation – one language, declared the Charter unconstitutional in 1996. In contrast, Hungary was the third country to ratify the Charter in 1995. It is clear that the protection the Charter can offer to regional and minority languages depends mainly on the member states' attitudes. That is, the issue of regional and minority languages has not been fully resolved at a European level.

Finally, the groups which seem to be left out of the debate are speakers of historically non-European languages, who are immigrants from third countries. These languages are often referred to as non-indigenous languages. It makes the language situation even more complex that some of these languages are spoken by more people than some of the official EU languages. For example, there are

more than 2.5 million Turkish people living in Germany, and even more Arabic speakers within the European Union, whose interests are not represented by any official organization. It is ironic that by completely neglecting immigrant languages, the European Union betrays the principle of linguistic and cultural diversity and contributes to the marginalization of these languages and cultures in Europe.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, although there is an increased focus on linguistic diversity in the European Union's institutional language policy, in reality, the European Union has failed to establish an integrated language policy, resulting in a striking hierarchy between European languages. Due to the apparent contradiction between the interests of communication and national identity, several sensitive language policy issues still require a satisfactory resolution at a European level. A comprehensive analysis of the European Union's language policy is only possible in a wide context, taking into account political, economic, social and cultural factors.

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