

# Promoting multilingualism and language learning in the European Union: the European Indicator of Language Competence

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The Council held a policy debate on the issue of a European indicator of language competence, covering, in particular, the following topics:

- the approach outlined in the Commission communication towards the establishment of the European indicator of language competence (EILC);
- the establishment of an advisory board composed of a representative of each Member State whose initial mandate would be to clarify/define the parameters for implementation;
- as regards the main parameters for the EILC:

i) the level of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) at which data should be gathered on competences in first and second foreign languages from a representative sample of pupils in education and training;

ii) because respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union, the indicator should be based upon data concerning the knowledge of all the official languages of the European Union taught as foreign languages in the Union, but for practical reasons it would be advisable, in the first round of data-gathering, for tests to be made available in those official languages of the European Union that are most widely taught in the Member States, to the extent that they provide a sufficiently large sample of testees.

The debate was focused on a number of issues, which would facilitate the further work which was needed with a view to adopting a set of conclusions at the May 2006 Council. There was broad agreement on the advisability of establishing an Advisory Board whose primary task would be to define the parameters of the indicator.

Concerning the main parameters for the EILC, there were differences of opinion on the level of education stage at which evaluation should be carried out.

While a large majority of delegations agreed that ultimately the Indicator should be available in all official EU languages, most could accept, for practical reasons, a limitation during the first round of data gathering to the most widely taught languages in the Member States. In addition, some delegations recalled that in their countries there was more than one national language and that such particularities should be taken into account so as to ensure comparability of data in the first round.