



Executive Agency, Education, Audiovisual and Culture



**Language and Education Addressed through
Research and Networking by Mercator / LEARNMe**

Progress Report

Public Part

Project information

Project acronym: LEARNMe
Project title: Language and Education Addressed through
Research and Networking by Mercator
Project number: 530895-LLP-1-2012-1-NL-KA2-KA2NW
Grant Agreement number: 2012-51111/001-001
Sub-programme or KA: KA2
Project website: www.learnme.eu

Reporting period: From 01-01-2013
To 01-06-2014
Report version: 1
Date of preparation: 24-06-2014

Beneficiary organisation: Mercator European Research Centre on
Multilingualism and Language Learning

Project coordinator: Cor van der Meer
Project coordinator organisation: Fryske Akademy
Project coordinator telephone number: 0031 2343063
Project coordinator email address: cvdmeer@fryske-akademy.nl

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© 2008 Copyright Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency.
The document may be freely copied and distributed provided that no modifications are made, that the source is acknowledged and that this copyright notice is included.

Executive Summary

The aim of the LEARNMe project is to provide policy guidelines and recommendations for policy stakeholders in the field as well as practitioners. Being an academic network, it uses academic input to reach this purpose. The LEARNMe project aims mainly at three target groups: policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The impact of the project, however, also extends to legal experts and to grassroots organizations.

The guidelines and recommendations are meant to provide a very practical outline of how the multilingual needs of lesser used languages can be approached. Furthermore, we will explore the effect of implicit and explicit policies towards linguistic diversity, multilingualism and education. This way, the recommendations can be used directly by practitioners and policy makers.

The network itself has extensive expertise in the field of multilingualism and language learning. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning is and has been a point of reference in Europe for over 25 years. It gathers and mobilises expertise in the field of language learning at school, at home and through cultural participation in favour of linguistic diversity in Europe. The second partner, Mercator Legislation (CIEMEN), consists of a group of researchers conducting a series of projects within the field of sociolinguistics, glottopolitics and law. Thirdly, Stockholm University studies and shares knowledge about the linguistic, cultural, social and political conditions which influence the position of Finnish in Sweden and beyond. The Research Institute for Linguistics from Hungary, the fourth partner, researches Hungary's linguistic minorities. In addition, it has specific knowledge about Roma, sign and smaller state languages. The Mercator institute for Media, Languages and Culture, finally, works with a number of institutions, universities, companies, agencies, associations and individuals across Europe.

Thus, the network itself has extensive knowledge regarding linguistic diversity. Besides, the network has a wide range of contacts with other experts in the field. Every year a workshop on a specific theme is organized, resulting in a position paper on that specific topic. The aim of the first workshop was to form a theoretical basis regarding linguistic diversity and media. Several academic experts from all over Europe were invited to give a presentation and to share their knowledge about the subject. The result of the first workshop was a position paper, interviews and video recordings. The second workshop addressed implementation and practices, drawing on the voices of experts and practitioners in the field of education. The third workshop will focus on policy makers. Every workshop is attended by invited experts on that specific field. Three experts will attend all three workshops in order create continuity within the project and between workshops. So far, two workshops have been held and one position paper has been written.

In the near future a second position paper will be published. In 2015 a third workshop will be held and a position paper will be written after that workshop as well. The three position papers are important input for the white paper that will be written in 2015. The white paper will be presented at a final conference in September 2015.

Find more about LEARNMe on our project website: www.learnme.eu

Table of Contents

1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES.....	6
2. PROJECT APPROACH.....	7
3. PROJECT OUTCOMES & RESULTS.....	8
4. PARTNERSHIPS	9
5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE	10
6. CONTRIBUTION TO EU POLICIES	11
7. EVALUATION STUDY	12

1. Project Objectives

The overall aim of the LEARNMe project is to elaborate several strategic tools in order to help to transform the conceptual formulation of the current linguistic arrangements. We specifically concentrate on less widely spoken languages because they often have special needs when it comes to education and media. A concrete objective of the project is to provide policy guidelines and recommendations for policy stakeholders in the fields mentioned and for practitioners. These guidelines and recommendations are meant to provide a very practical outline of how the multilingual needs of lesser used languages can be approached. We will collect and provide research results and provide best practices regarding the promotion of lesser used languages through education. In this context education is understood in the largest sense, including formal and informal education, adult education, and education that takes place outside school.

The LEARNMe project has three main target groups: researchers, policy makers and practitioners. Every year we organize a workshop, aiming at a specific target group. We also expect to reach a broader target group, containing grassroots organizations and legal experts in the field, through the extensive network of the different partners in the project. The target groups are closely involved in the project; they are invited to our workshops and we use their expertise.

At the start of the project, the term 'linguistic diversity' had to be analysed and revisited. In the first workshop we used the latest academic research results and expertise of specialists to develop a revisited definition of linguistic diversity. The second workshop focused on experts and practitioners in the field of education and the third workshop, which will be held in 2015, will focus on policy makers. After each workshop a position paper is produced, aiming at different target groups.

In the workshops researchers can share their expertise with each other and gain new ideas and input for their own research field. Policy makers and practitioners can profit directly from the concrete recommendations made in the position papers and the best practices provided.

2. Project Approach

Every year has a similar approach. A workshop is organized on a specific theme. Experts are invited to send in a discussion paper in advance. After each workshop a position paper is produced, stating an elaborated position about the topic addressed at that particular workshop. The three position papers serve as main input for the white paper that will be written at the end of the project. The added value of the chosen approach is that we are able to discuss specific thematic issues in depth with a select group of experts. This way we can learn from each other, but also produce new and sharp insights. The white paper will be presented at a final conference. The conference will be the summarizing and main dissemination event and demonstrate the results of the workshops to a broad public.

The first workshop aimed to develop a theoretical basis regarding linguistic diversity. Several academic experts from all over Europe were invited to give a presentation and to share their knowledge about the subject. The result of the first workshop was a position paper. The second workshop relied more on the experience of practitioners that are involved in language education. The third workshop will focus on policy makers. Every workshop is attended by invited experts on that specific field. Three experts will attend all three workshops in order to create continuity within the project. So far, two workshops have been held and one position paper has been written. Every year the results of the project are evaluated by an external evaluator, guaranteeing a sufficient level of quality.

In order to extend the impact of the work and activities of the project, to promote linguistic diversity, and to raise the awareness of the general public in Europe a set of short films will be made. These films will mainly contain interviews with specialists representing the different target groups and thematic areas involved in this project (researchers, practitioners, education specialists and policy makers), but they will also promote good practices by showing specific multilingual situations.

The results will be disseminated to a broad public at a final conference, which will further contribute to the promotion of linguistic diversity and the development of language policies. The three position papers, the white paper and the films produced will have a sustainable impact on practitioners and policy makers and will also be used by researchers beyond the lifetime of the project.

Furthermore, each partner has its own extensive network through which results will be disseminated. As a network we have strong contacts with other networks such as the Civil Society Platform, the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) and the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN).

3. Project Outcomes & Results

At this stage of the project, two workshops have been organized. One in Aberystwyth, Wales (2013) and one in Stockholm (2014), reaching altogether so far, about 100 persons who were directly involved in meetings. One position paper has been produced by the Welsh partner, the Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture. The second position paper is expected at the beginning of October 2014. As was planned originally, the first position paper is mainly about revisiting the concept of linguistic diversity. A dozen academic experts in the field of multilingualism and language learning gave input and presentations about this theme. The experts have been asked to prepare an article for publication on the basis of their contributions to the workshop.

After the first workshop in Wales, questionnaires have been distributed to the participants. This resulted in an evaluation report drawn by P2 with recommendations for the next workshop. Besides, an evaluation report is written by an external evaluator on the first year of the project.

So far, 9 Power Point presentations from workshop 1 have been uploaded to the Mercator LEARNMe website. The presentations as provided by the experts during the second workshop will shortly be put online.

Already 15 films/interviews have been produced. Because the films still need to be subtitled, they are not online yet, but they soon will be on our website and on Youtube. The contributions were recorded in various languages such as Frisian, Finnish, Catalan, Irish, Czech, Welsh and Swedish.

A flyer has been produced to make the LEARNMe network more known to people in the field. The flyer can be found on the LEARNMe website and all partners have distributed this flyer through their own channels.

All experts in Europe are kept informed about this project and on other issues on minority languages and education through the monthly eNewsletter.

These results and other can be found at the project's website: www.learnme.eu.

News and real time information about presentations during the workshops can be followed on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/mercatornetwork>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mercatornetwork>) .

4. Partnerships

The LEARNMe project is implemented by the Mercator Network. The Mercator Network was established in 1987 with three specialized institutes within the field of regional and minority languages in Europe: Mercator Legislation in Barcelona, Mercator Media in Wales and the Mercator Research Centre in Leeuwarden. The network started with gathering and producing documentation and research about regional and minority languages in Europe, each of the three institutes working within their own area of expertise. This network, and its specific knowledge has been recognised up to this day. In 2009 the network was extended with two new partners: the Research Institute for Linguistics from Hungary and the Centre for Finnish Studies from Sweden. In 2012 instead of the Centre for Finnish Studies the department of Baltic Languages at Stockholm University, became a partner. Stockholm University studies and shares knowledge about the linguistic, cultural, social and political conditions, which influence the position of Finnish in Sweden and beyond. The Research Institute for Linguistics from Hungary researches Hungarian and other neighbouring, linguistic minorities. It furthermore has specific knowledge about Roma, sign and smaller state languages.

The network consists of a good mix of different institutions. Each partner contributes with its own field of expertise, leading to an extensive basis of knowledge and experience within the network.

As a network with tradition it has so far been the only academic network that was able to bring together regional minority languages, immigrant languages, sign languages and smaller state languages. The geographic distribution of the network allows for a wide European distribution of knowledge, not covering just a northern or southern part of Europe, but covering the whole of Europe.

Within this network of networks information gathered is not only distributed among the LEARNMe partners, but it also reaches the networks of the partners and thus reaches other academics, policy makers, grassroots organisations and practitioners.

5. Plans for the Future

In the near future the second position paper about educational practices will be issued. In January 2015 the third and last LEARNMe workshop will be held in Barcelona, Catalonia. Several European experts will be invited to write a discussion paper on the 'policy' theme. After the workshop the Catalan partner will write a position paper that draws on the findings and conclusions of the workshop, but also on the input of previous position papers.

In September 2015 a conference will be held in Budapest, Hungary. This conference will be the main dissemination event at which the workshop results will be presented as well as the white paper. 100-150 participants are expected to attend the conference. The conference will include contributions of the workshop participants and will be open to a wide range of target groups, including academics, educational professionals, policy makers and practitioners. After the conference, proceedings will be drawn up by the Hungarian partner.

The Swedish partner is responsible for the first draft of the white paper. The white paper will contain the most prominent outcomes of the three position papers. During the conference the white paper will be presented to a representative of the European Commission.

At the end of 2015 an evaluation meeting will be held in Barcelona, to evaluate the work and achievements of the Network. The evaluation will lead to a report that will be used as quality assurance towards the European Commission. The sustainability plan addresses the time after the project's funding phase ends. It will formulate in what way and to which extent the partnership will be continued and to which extent the working methods can be maintained.

After the project's funding phase has ended, we will continue with Twitter, Facebook and our eNewsletter. Furthermore, the films that we made will be subtitled and showcased at the conference in Budapest, on our website and on Youtube.

6. Contribution to EU policies

The LEARNMe network specifically addresses priority 2.2.4. of the KA2 programme: *“promoting the learning and use of less spoken European languages”*.

In key European documents (e.g. the European Charter for Regional and Minority Language; the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; the Barcelona Objectives on Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity and the Report on Endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union) states are directly addressed to take action for the maintenance and promotion of lesser used languages. The maintenance and promotion of Europe’s linguistic diversity cannot be achieved by individual states, but needs to be cultivated and executed in a common effort. It is crucial to work across borders, to exchange knowledge and give examples of good and bad practices. The Network represents an ideal European network where minorities with and without kin states, smaller state languages, sign languages and immigrant languages are represented. Our expertise and experience with less widely spoken languages is useful and valuable in other multilingual situations. The network is acquainted with good and bad practices and will make these available for policymakers and practitioners.

7. Evaluation study

In May/June 2013 the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning did an evaluation study, funded by the Province of Fryslân. Aim of this study was see how the field and stakeholders evaluate the activities of the Mercator Research Centre, including the e-newsletter of the LEARNMe-project. This study was carried out by means of an online questionnaire. In total 263 people, mostly from countries in Europe other than the Netherlands (76%; respondents from the Netherlands: 11%; respondents from beyond Europe: 13%) filled in the online questionnaire. Most respondents had an academic/scholar background (77%), followed by educational professionals (23%) and policy makers (10%).

The results of this questionnaire show that the respondents highly rate the activities of the Mercator Research Centre. On a scale from 1 to 5 the monthly e-Newsletter of the LEARNMe project scores 4.13 , followed by events (3.89), research papers and publications (3.89), and website (3.88).

Key words used by the respondents to describe the Mercator Research Centre were: multilingualism, network, interesting, research, documentation, basic academic information, and reliable and accurate. The Mercator Research Centre is seen as an institute that valorises knowledge (4.19 on a scale of 1 to 5), that brings people from different backgrounds together (4.14) and is seen as a reference point for knowledge (4.04).

When asked about the future of the Mercator Research Centre, most respondents replied that the Mercator Research Centre should continue its present activities and stay active in the current main fields such as education, research and multilingualism.

