

High-level Conference

Towards a multilingual society: the value of teaching and learning heritage, home, regional languages at an early age

València, 24th May 2018

-By invitation only-

Multilingualism as a social phenomenon is common throughout Europe, and indeed in the whole world. All European citizens live in a multilingual society. In their daily lives they come across many different languages. As a communication tool, languages are useful in communicating with others for trade, tourism, and international contacts. In its symbolic function, language carries the deepest emotions and the historical awareness of its speakers.

In Europe, there is a growing awareness of the value of linguistic diversity and the need to learn languages. One of the goals of the Council of Europe and the European Union is that all Europeans learn to speak at least two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.

We can conclude that the terms multilingualism and plurilingualism are generally seen as a valuable asset for individuals and that the term bilingualism is often used for community/groups.

However, the equality of languages of all kinds is not self-evident. Bilingualism is positively perceived as an educational advantage when it involves two high-status languages; but when the languages have a low status, bilingualism is viewed as an educational handicap that must be overcome. Too often, multilingualism is valued differently by educationalists depending on the social and political status of the languages concerned.

As a result of this imbalanced situation of multilingualism, the mastery of a minority or a regional language is not always considered (and by not everybody) to be a valuable asset. Often, practical and political arguments in favor of learning English are revealed. And, unfortunately, the well-documented arguments of the mother tongue being the best basis for a good linguistic and cognitive development, and language providing of cultural wealth are less widely known.

The core idea of this High-level Conference -organized by the **Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity** and the **Government of València**- is to discuss about the necessary elements to effectively build a multilingual society taking as a reference that a language is not merely a tool of communication but also a value. Interpretation services provided from/to English, French, Spanish and Catalan/Valencian.

**Venue of the Conference: Palau de Pineda (Aula Magna). Plaça del Carme 4, València.*

***Fair of the Languages: Centre del Carme (Cloister). Carrer del Museu 2, València.*

PROGRAMME

08h30-
09h00

Registration open

09h00-
09h30

Welcome words & Opening of the Languages Fair

Vicent Marzà, **Regional Minister for Education and Culture. Government of València**
Sietske Poepjes, **Chair of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity**

09h30-
10h30

Opening speech

Colin H. Williams, **Cardiff University** *The benefits of a multilingual education*

10h30-
11h00

Coffee break (The Orange Trees Courtyard)

11h00-
11h30

Keynote speech

Rubén Trenzano
Government of València *Regional or minority languages in the toy industry: the Valencian case*

11h30-
13h00

Panel discussion: A holistic approach to language learning

Moderator Sixto Molina
Head of the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages Secretariat

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| Panelists | Alex Riemersma Government of Friesland | <i>Bi-/Tri-/Multilingual children: attitudes, practices, achievements</i> |
| | Empar Marco Valencian Media Corporation | <i>The linguistic landscape in the media: the role of public media</i> |
| | Bessie Dendrinos National & Kapodistrian University of Athens | <i>Developing intercultural awareness in very young children</i> |
| | Xurxo Salgado University of Santiago de Compostela | <i>Linguistic Diversity in the global social networks</i> |

13h00-
14h00

Lunch break (The Orange Trees Courtyard)

Open discussion I: Strategies for developing heritage language competence*

14h00-
14h30

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| Session I | Paula Kasares Government of Navarre | <i>Children's language socialization: How to become competent speakers of a minority language</i> |
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14h30-
15h00

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| Session II | Iain Caimbeul National Centre for Gaelic Language & Culture | <i>Children's real needs and rights with regard to their heritage and home languages in schooling</i> |
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15h00-
15h30

Coffee break (The Orange Trees Courtyard)

Open discussion II: Enhancing the learning of languages at an early age*

15h30-
16h00

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| Session I | Lorea Bilbao Government of Biskaia | <i>The socialization of a minority language through the sport</i> |
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16h00-
16h30

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| Session II | Joaquim Dolz University of Geneva | <i>The role of parents and the community</i> |
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16h30-
17h00

Closing remarks

Sietske Poepjes, Gregorio Ferreiro & Sabrina Rasom, **Chairs of the NPLD**

**10 minutes presentation followed by 20 minutes debate*