

**BILINGUAL AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANIZED
BY EŬROPA ESPERANTO-UNIO
BRUSSELS, 10 DECEMBER 2008**

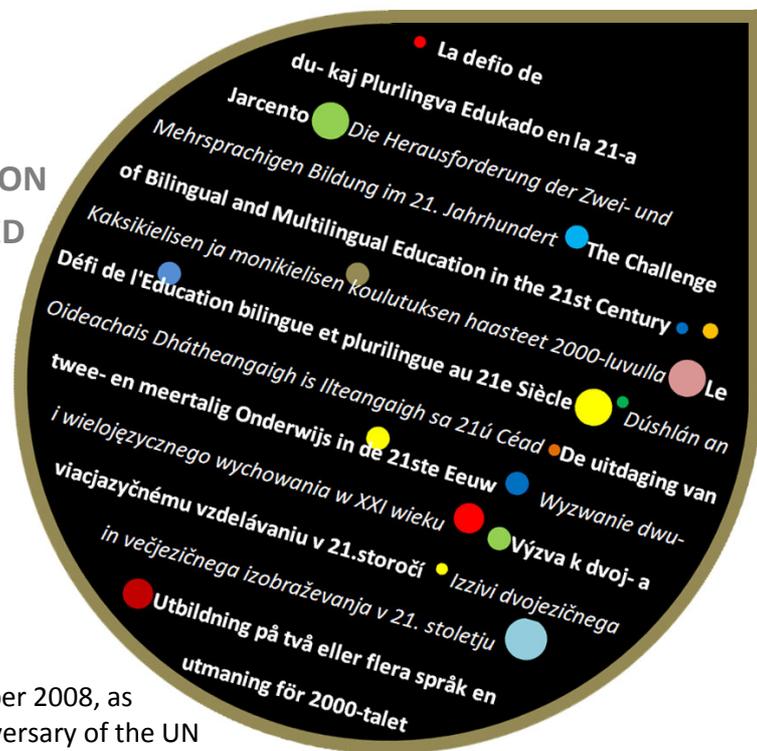
DRAFT COMMUNIQUÉ

Considering that

- a) the conference took place on 10 December 2008, as EEU's contribution to mark the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- b) 2009 has been proclaimed the European Year of Creativity and Innovation;
- c) the use of short language-orientation courses to raise language awareness and improve language-learning, are both creative and innovative;

The conference agreed that

1. Bilingual and multilingual education for children has many positive aspects, as they acquire valuable intercultural skills both before and during their school-going years. Consciously-cultivated family bilingualism tends to promote an increase in the amount of time each parent spends interacting with children, initially to promote their linguistic development, but subsequently this interaction deepens understanding of the culture of the people who use each of the languages.
2. The use of the target language in real communication is crucially important to ensure that the learners gain an adequate command of it. For example, one or more school subjects may be taught through the target language, it may be the language used in school administration, in general communication between teachers and students, etc.
3. It remains important, however, to ensure that each child's mother tongue is sufficiently established before a second language is used to teach other school subjects.
4. In the case of migrants, bilingual or multilingual education does not impact negatively on a child if it is part of a coherent educational plan which has societal support.
5. The conference showed a lively interest in the "personal-adoptive language" concept mooted by the Maalouf Report, "A Rewarding Challenge: How the multiplicity of languages could strengthen Europe" (http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/archive/doc/maalouf/report_en.pdf).
6. Many participants stressed the importance of the propedeutical approach to language-learning, i.e. the use of short (50-100 hours) courses in more regular languages, aimed at increasing the confidence, and consequently the motivation, of language-learners; and at promoting multilingualism in broader segments of the population.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The conference considered the UK “Springboard” Project (www.springboard2languages.org), i.e. the use in a cross-curricular context of a “language-orientation course” based on the grammar of Esperanto and a limited vocabulary of its most frequently-used morphemes, to be an example of a “best practice” in language-learning. It recommended that European Commission commission a detailed study of the project, particularly of its potential to improve language-learning in other EU Member States. It also recommended that the Committee for Education and Culture of the European Parliament conduct a feasibility study of the Springboard project.
2. The conference recommended that the European Commission encourage the Member States to agree on a system to enable schoolchildren living in another Member State to study their mother tongue in their homeland for at least one month of each year. Schools should show reciprocal flexibility in both allowing a month’s absence and in accepting pupils from other Member States for one month.

Professor David Marsh, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Professor Wim Jansen, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Dr Katalin Kovats, leader of the project “Edukado.net”, the Netherlands

Angela Tellier, leader of the “Springboard” project, UK

Kristin Tytgat, Erasmushogeschool, Brussels

Zlatko Tišljär, Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, Slovenia

Marc Demonty, secondary teacher of Dutch, English and German, Brussels

Ljudmila Novak, MEP, leader of the “Nova Slovenia” party, Slovenia

Małgorzata Handlik, MEP, Citizen’s Platform party, Poland

Dr Seán Ó Riain, author of “Language Planning in Ireland and Québec” (Foras na Gaeilge, 1994), Ireland

Jozef Reinvar, Deputy Head of Misson, Embassy of Slovakia to Belgium and Luxembourg

Flory Witdoeck, entrepreneur, Oostende, Belgium

Michael Cwik, economist, former European Commission official, Brussels