Community Languages in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract
This paper reviews issues affecting school students’ learning of community languages across Europe, with the aim of identifying both challenges and opportunities inherent in the current context. Language education policy has become more inclusive of late, addressing the full range of languages rather than ‘foreign’ languages alone, and offering opportunities for the mainstreaming of community language provision. However, most provision currently reflects earlier policies which tended to marginalise community languages, and it is likely that much work needs to be done to overcome some of the barriers to effective provision which these earlier policies created. The paper reflects early thinking about these issues from the VALEUR project team, funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages to map current provision and investigate outcomes. (123 words)

Key words: community languages, language education policy, plurilingualism, linguistic diversity

1. Introduction
1.1 Europe’s community languages
This paper reviews current issues affecting educational provision to support the maintenance and development of school-age students’ competences in Europe’s community languages. We chose the term, ‘community languages’, in widespread use in anglophone countries, as an umbrella term for several different categories of language commonly identified in European documentation. These include ‘regional minority’ languages (i.e. languages of well-established communities, such as Breton or Catalan); ‘(im)migrant’ languages, (i.e. languages of more recently established communities, such as Turkish or Panjabi); ‘non-territorial’ languages (e.g. Romani and Yiddish); and ‘sign’ languages (i.e. the various visual languages used by Deaf people across Europe).

We seek to explore what links these languages, rather than what separates them. Much discussion at European level has obscured commonalities, by creating separate categories for which separate policies have then been developed. This approach appears to have favoured ‘regional minority’ languages over the others, on the basis that they form a long-standing part of the European cultural heritage, and also because of the threat of extinction to many such languages. While not wishing to diminish the importance of
these arguments, we argue that other rationales for the maintenance of linguistic diversity need to be included in the debate. Key among these are:

- the right of families and communities to pass their linguistic and cultural heritage on to their children; and
- the resource which plurilingualism represents for the individual and multilingualism for society.

1.2 Promoting plurilingualism
Discussion of the best way to protect and promote both plurilingualism and multilingualism across Europe has intensified in recent years, with a particular focus on educational provision. In 2003, the Council of Europe produced a guide for the development of language education policies (Beacco and Byram, 2003), which presents the principal arguments for enhanced plurilingualism, and identifies the factors relevant to devising the most effective provision. It stresses the need to take account of all languages – not only ‘foreign’ languages (i.e., principally, the national or official languages of other European states) but also the range of community languages in use. The Commission of the European Communities (2003) has published an action plan to promote language learning and linguistic diversity, setting out the main policy objectives and the initiatives proposed to meet these. These plans make clear that ‘the widest possible range of languages’ should be studied, and that Commission initiatives apply to ‘all languages, whether “official” languages or regional languages, minority languages, languages spoken by migrant communities or sign languages’ (p.12).

1.3 Issues affecting the promotion of community languages
Despite this growing commitment to plurilingualism, it is difficult to establish how effective existing provision has been in achieving this goal. In 2001, Eurydice (the EU-funded information network on education in Europe) reviewed the organisation of school-based language teaching in EU, EFTA/EEA and (as of 2001) EU pre-accession countries. This review includes a chapter on provision for community languages, with a more detailed focus on provision for ‘regional/ minority’ languages (and Romani) than on provision relating to ‘migrant’ languages. Sign languages are not mentioned. However, discussion of key issues affecting community language provision such as appropriate start points, curricula, materials, amount of time required for study, options and specialisation, teacher training, or the outcomes of this provision is very limited, in comparison with the information collected about ‘foreign’ language learning. Therefore, although the report represents an important step forward, in terms of recognising the need to address the educational issues affecting all types of language learning, it has little concrete to say.

The lack of detail relating to ‘migrant’ languages in particular is compounded by the failure of member states to implement an EU Directive (1977) to teach both the ‘mother tongue’ and the ‘culture of origin’ to the children of ‘migrant workers. By the mid-1980s

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7 In keeping with European practice, we use the term ‘plurilingualism’ to refer to the individual’s capacity to speak several languages and ‘multilingualism’ to refer to the existence of several languages within a particular social context.

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it had become clear that few had been successful in implementing it. Consequently, Bekemans and Ortiz de Urbina (1997) identify a shift, from this period onwards, away from compulsory provision of ‘mother tongue’ teaching, towards ‘intercultural education’ for all students. This is intended both to support the integration of children of immigrant origin into host nation schools, and ultimately into European society; and also to tackle racism and xenophobia among the general population. Rather than attempting to enforce compliance with the Directive, the Commission opted to promote intercultural education through Comenius-funded projects. The teaching of ‘mother tongues’ was explicitly identified as a key element of intercultural education; but, given that such provision was effectively optional, and that EU funding was, inevitably, granted to only a small number of projects, this approach can only have had limited impact. To date, there seems not to have been any EU-wide evaluation.

There have been few academic studies comparing provision for community languages across Europe. Extra and Gorter (2001) found none relating to ‘regional minority’ languages, while Broeder and Extra (1998) appear to have conducted the only major study of this kind, in relation to ‘immigrant minority’ languages. Their research showed that the proportion of school-students able to access community language provision varied considerably from region to region, and also from one linguistic group to another. Moreover, rationales for making provision, curriculum models and funding regimes differ substantially across countries, school sectors and linguistic groups. They identified some of the key logistical and conceptual difficulties in making provision. As a result, they argue, more attention has been paid to the development of provision to teach the language of the host country than to community languages. Furthermore, as Extra and Gorter (op.cit.) note, for many educationalists and policy makers, the case for community languages has not been successfully made.

1.4 The VALEUR Project

In view of growing awareness of the importance of plurilingualism, but also of the lack of information on the issues affecting existing provision for community language learning, or its impact, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), a body set up by the Council of Europe to support the implementation of its language education policies, has funded the VALEUR project, to map current provision and investigate outcomes. The project team – the authors of this paper – are in the very early stages of planning the work, and this paper represents some of our initial thinking about the challenges and opportunities now facing providers of community languages education.

In the next section we look at the impact of policy over the last 25 years, and then, more specifically, at issues relating to the resourcing of community languages provision. In the conclusion, we summarise the challenges and opportunities emerging from this analysis of policy and practice.

VALEUR stands for Valuing All Languages in Europe. The project runs from 2004 to 2007, and the authors of this paper, from five European countries, constitute the project team. For further information, please see the project website: www.ecml.at/mtp2/VALEUR

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2. Language education policies and their impact on community languages provision
The present decade has seen commitments at European level and in many European nations, to the promotion of linguistic diversity, seen both as a cultural good and as an economic, social and intellectual resource. Plurilingualism is identified as a key educational goal by both the Council of Europe and by the European Union. In the past, however, language education policy tended to focus on the learning of ‘foreign’ languages (principally the languages of other European states), and policy relating to community languages of all kinds (i.e. ‘regional minority’, ‘migrant’, ‘non-territorial’ and sign languages) developed in a number of different, and unconnected, contexts. Current provision reflects the policy decisions of earlier decades, and is only beginning to adapt to the new developments. Understanding the challenges and opportunities presented by the wider educational, linguistic and policy contexts requires a review of earlier policy and its implementation. In this section, we therefore provide an account of policy and practice over the last three decades, and then return to the present to consider firstly the reasons for the recent paradigm shift, and secondly, its implications.

2.1 Separate policies: 1977-2003
‘Foreign’ languages
What might be termed ‘mainstream’ language education policy in earlier decades focused almost exclusively on ‘foreign’ language learning. On several occasions EU ministers of education recommended that EU school students’ proficiency should be developed in at least two ‘foreign’ languages, starting from an early age (e.g. European Commission, 1995; European Council, 2002). Such statements largely reflected, rather than challenged, language education practice in most EU member states. The learning of at least one, and usually two, ‘foreign’ languages has been the norm across Europe (Eurydice, 2001) with one or two key exceptions such as the UK, where compulsory foreign language learning was introduced only at the start of the 1990s, and is currently under threat.

‘Regional minority’ languages
Support for the learning of community languages was omitted from these ministerial statements. The European Parliament, however, accepted various resolutions recommending the protection and promotion of ‘regional minority’ languages. These led to the foundation of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages in 1982 to support linguistic diversity in Europe through the provision of information and advice; and of the European MERCATOR Network in 1987, to conduct research into the status and use of ‘regional minority’ languages. In March 1998, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages came into operation. The Charter functions as an international instrument for the comparison of legal measures and other facilities of the EU member states. These developments parallel increased awareness and improved provision for ‘regional minority’ languages in many European states.

The model of provision has tended to be education via the medium of these community languages – such as Frisian-medium education in the Netherlands, Catalan- and Basque-medium education in Spain, Saami-medium education in Finland. Despite this increase in provision for ‘regional minority’ languages in the latter part of the 20th century, concerns remain to be addressed, particularly in relation to teaching materials and teacher supply.

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And for some languages, enhanced provision may have come too late: for example, although there has been great enthusiasm for Gaelic-medium education in Scotland, the latest census data show that the total number of Gaelic-speakers in the country is still in steep decline.

‘Migrant’ languages
There have been fewer such initiatives in the policy domain of ‘migrant’ languages. While the teaching of ‘regional minority’ languages was generally advocated to promote cultural diversity, this argument has rarely been advanced to support the teaching of ‘migrant’ languages. Furthermore, initiatives such as the 1977 directive of the Council of European Communities on Education for Immigrant Minority Children, which called for provision to enable ‘immigrant minority’ children to learn the language of the ‘host’ country but also maintain their ‘mother tongues’, have had limited success. Bekemans and Ortiz de Urbina (1997) argue that the failure of this Directive can be attributed to the cost and the logistical difficulties. Whereas provision for ‘regional minority’ languages can be concentrated in the associated geographical areas, ‘migrant’ languages can be found in many different parts of a country, and in some schools, students may speak many different languages, making it difficult to offer comprehensive provision. Thus, in contrast to ‘regional minority’ languages, there have, until recently, been few examples of education via the medium of a ‘migrant’ language. The norm is to provide language classes, either as part of the school day, or after school hours, sometimes with public funds and sometimes via private or community means.

Some early experiments with education via the medium of a ‘migrant’ language were conducted but failed, largely as a result of limited political support (see Fitzpatrick, 1987, for one UK example). However, more recently, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) – a model of language learning based on Canadian immersion programmes whereby a largely monolingual student body is educated via the medium of another language – has developed as a way of generating higher levels of linguistic competence that can be achieved using traditional methods. In some cases, the CLIL method has been adapted for schools where significant numbers of pupils already speak another language in addition to the ‘national’ language of the country. Bühlner-Otten and Fürstenau (2004) describe such schools in Hamburg, where Italian, Spanish and Portuguese are used as media of instruction alongside German.

Educational provision to support the maintenance and development of school-students’ competences in ‘migrant’ languages is influenced also by the wider political context in Europe. Two challenges in this regard can be highlighted. The first relates to immigration policies. In most European countries, these focus largely on border controls, rather than on developing strategies to support immigrant integration. Policies regarding education and status of immigrant students’ languages are less well-developed and depend on the willingness of each country to embrace multilingualism and multiculturalism. Analysis indicates that education policies are still largely influenced by assimilationist positions and assumptions of monolingualism in most of EU states. The idea that the integration of students with an immigrant background depends only on the level of knowledge of the language of school instruction is still widespread, and promotes the emergence or re-
emergence of assimilationist positions. It is also widely held that provision for community languages is not the responsibility of EU governments but of immigrant communities themselves. This last point leads directly to the second challenge which proponents of community language learning face.

In many parts of Europe, provision for community languages has developed in the context of enseignement de langues et cultures d’origine (ELCO). This approach, usually managed by the ‘home’ countries, was based on the premise that children of immigrant parents would eventually return to their country of origin. Although this is no longer the objective, these kinds of programmes, and the approaches they implicitly involve, still tend to reflect the assumption that children need to acquire the linguistic competence and cultural knowledge of their peers in the country of origin, expectations which are increasingly unrealistic and irrelevant to their future lives. In countries where ELCO programmes remain the responsibility of ‘home’ countries, provision for community languages is available only via bilateral agreements between ‘host’ and ‘home’ countries, and therefore ‘host’ countries do not feel the need to include provision in their own education systems and curricula. They thus fail to recognise the prevalence or significance of linguistic diversity in their school populations, and implicitly promote a monolingual norm.

‘Non-territorial’ languages
Languages such as Romani and Yiddish are sometimes referred to as ‘non-territorial’ languages in European documentation because their speakers are not associated with a particular country or region. Labelling languages ‘non-territorial’ (and indeed ‘migrant’) indicates how important the association of language with place remains in the mindset of many policy-makers, and thus reveals a major barrier to understanding the linguistic shift brought about by the age of globalisation and mobility – for which nomadic populations such as the Roma could be said to be forerunners.

Romani and Yiddish appear to be the only languages labelled ‘non-territorial’ in policy documents. However, there is little information about policy and provision for either of these languages. There are now very few speakers of Yiddish: It is estimated that there were some eight million Yiddish speakers in Europe before the second world war, but that the number today, further decimated by emigration to the Americas and Israel, and by a lack of interest in passing the language on to the younger generation, is in the tens of thousands (Weinstock and Sephiha, 2003). It is likely that the only European schools in which Yiddish continues to be taught to children are those serving Hassidic populations, for which Yiddish continues to be the vernacular. In 1996, the Council of Europe issued a series of recommendations to protect Yiddish language and culture in Europe, but these do not include provision for teaching the language.

Estimates suggest that there are around 4.6 million speakers of Romani in Europe (Halwachs, 2003). Bakker (2001) provides a summary of policy statements from the 1980s onwards, in support of Romani culture and language, arguing for the teaching of Romani and Romani-medium education, most recently the Council of Europe in 2000. Despite this, Bakker also reports very limited educational provision for the language in
the (pre-enlargement) EU member states, noting in particular that there appeared to be no secondary provision at all.

‘Sign’ languages

The number of sign languages in use across Europe is unknown. Like spoken languages, sign languages emerge naturally, wherever Deaf\(^9\) communities are found. In some parts of Europe, the languages have been – or are in the process of being – standardised and recognised as national sign languages; but many local varieties are also found. It is estimated that around half a million people within the EU are sign language users (Krausnecker, 2003).

As with the other community languages, policy in relation to provision for the learning of sign languages has been marginalised throughout the latter part of the 20\(^{th}\) century. There has been a long struggle to have sign languages recognised as languages, and therefore to be included in language policy initiatives, rather than in disability policies. Despite a European Parliament resolution in 1987 calling on member states to recognise sign languages, a subsequent resolution on linguistic and cultural minorities (1994) did not mention them. Although sign languages could be considered to be included (by virtue of the fact that they are not specifically excluded, unlike ‘migrant’ languages) under the Council of Europe’s Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, none of the countries which have ratified the charter have included them in the list of protected languages. Sign languages still do not appear in mainstream language education policy documents. However, there is now some evidence of greater recognition of the need to develop educational policy for sign languages. A Council of Europe report (2003) The Protection of Sign Languages in Member States of the Council of Europe recommends that member states make provision for education in sign languages to deaf people, and train teachers in sign languages, in preparation for working with deaf and hearing-impaired children.

Issues relating to educational provision for sign language learning differ in some respects to those affecting other community languages – although we would argue that these differences are not so great as to require separate policy development. A key issue is ensuring that deaf children have sufficient opportunities to become fluent sign language users, particularly in cases where their parents are not sign language users (90\% of deaf children are born to hearing parents) and where they have few opportunities to meet other deaf children. This can occur when they are sent to ‘mainstream’ schools, isolated from other deaf children, and encouraged to attempt to communicate in a spoken language, or via intermediaries (e.g. ‘communication support workers’). Deaf children who attend specialist schools tend to learn sign languages from other children, whether or not it is the policy of the school to encourage the use of sign language (Turner, 2003).

In the absence of Europe-wide policy, different countries have developed their own approaches to provision for sign language learning. For example, in the Netherlands, in 1996, the Ministries of Education and Welfare undertook an extensive review of

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\(^9\) Conventionally, ‘Deaf’ (with capitalisation) is used to mark the cultural groups people who use sign languages belong. Without capitalisation, ‘deaf’ refers to people with a hearing impairment.

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provision which led to recommendations for bilingual education in Dutch Sign Language (NGT) and Dutch for deaf children and higher educational programmes to train teachers fluent in NGT to work in these schools (v.d. Bogaerde and Schermer, 2004). In contrast, in Norway, a review in 2003 of the status of Norwegian Sign Language (NSL) has been accompanied by a decision to close down specialist schools and transfer children to local schools where, it is argued, there will be little or no opportunity for deaf children to learn NSL (Greftegreff, 2004). Sweden offers courses in Swedish Sign Language as a ‘foreign’ language in mainstream schools, and the British Deaf Association is seeking similar status for British Sign Language (British Deaf Association, 2003).

2.2 Integrated policy: 2003 onwards
A more inclusive vision of community languages is discernible both at Europe-wide level and at national level from around 2000 onwards. We might formally date the shift to 2003, when the Council of Europe Guide to Language Education Policies and the EU Action Plan were published. These present community languages as part of the wide range of languages which school students should be learning. The Guide to Language Education Policies (Beacco and Byram, 2003) provides a detailed rationale for this shift.

What prompted this change? One explanation is the growing challenge which English – the ‘global language’ – represents for all other languages in Europe. Some now believe that English will become a Europe-wide ‘lingua franca’ and also the dominant language in both high prestige domains, such as science, and popular culture. Commentators are divided as to the advantages or disadvantages of this development. For example, Phillipson, who, a decade ago, drew attention to the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), has recently written about the dangers which an English-only Europe represents for the maintenance of European cultural and social values (Phillipson, 2004). Others take a more positive view. House (2003) has argued that it is necessary to make a distinction between ‘languages for identification’, for which a wide range of languages across Europe will continue to be required, and ‘languages for communication’, a role for which English is well-suited, providing that the implications of a lingua franca in this context are well defined and understood. Brutt-Griffler (2002), in seeking to provide a ‘unified theory of world English’, argues that the reason for the wide and rapid spread of English across the world lies not in imperialism or neo-colonialism, but rather in the emerging need for a ‘world language’ to facilitate wider communication across communities and nations.

Language educators, however, are concerned that those who speak English as their first language will learn no other languages at all, while those with other first languages will be keen to learn English, but no other languages, and that this will have a range of detrimental effects. The Guide to Language Education Policies in Europe thus argues that linguistic diversity is a defining feature of Europe and that plurilingualism, already a reality for many European citizens is something to which all should aspire. It is from this position that the policy of ‘1+2’ languages (i.e. the ‘mother tongue’ or ‘first language’ and two additional languages, which should include both ‘foreign’ and ‘community’ languages) derives.

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Despite this more positive orientation towards community languages, it is unarguable that the growing reach of English represents a major challenge for other languages of all descriptions. In addition to the widely discussed risk that globalised media, culture, consumption, etc. will lead to the extinction of some languages (Crystal, 2000; Nettle and Romaine, 2000; Dalby, 2002), there is a possibility that ‘language wars’ between languages may break out, leading to attempts to establish hierarchies of language (such as the development of concepts such as ‘large’ and ‘small’ languages and moves to define their scope) and further marginalisation of community languages. Thus a pro-active approach remains important. Those concerned with community language provision need to take advantage of a favourable policy climate to argue for the mainstreaming of provision in schools, whereby students’ achievements in the language are recognised and can count towards university entrance or as career-enhancing skills, as happens with ‘foreign’ languages. In particular, it could be argued that one way of achieving the current EU goal for all citizens to speak one ‘mother tongue’ language plus two ‘other’ languages would be specifically to include community languages as an option (either as a ‘mother tongue’ or as one of the ‘other’ languages). Taking this as their starting point, Broeder and Extra (1998) have elaborated the concept of priority languages for primary schools, to help identify the community languages for which curricula, teaching methods, and teacher training programmes should be developed. They suggest that similar ideas could be worked out for secondary schooling where learning more than one language is already an established practice in most countries. Priority languages would thus be accorded formal educational status alongside the national language and the ‘foreign’ language.

Globalisation may offer other opportunities. Commentators have noted that there are productive tensions between ‘globalisation’ and ‘localisation’. While global marketing promotes world-wide consumption of commercial brands, cultural products, etc., it also seems to lead to a re-evaluation of the local, both for the local population and for tourism (a major industry in much of Europe) where holiday-makers are increasingly looking for what is different or ‘exotic’ in comparison to their own lifestyles. Such trends are potentially positive for community languages, in that they may come to be identified with what is distinctive about a local culture or community. Aspects of the revival of Gaelic in Scotland have capitalised on such perspectives. Although it might seem to be the case that ‘regional minority’ languages are in a better position than other types of community languages to benefit from localisation, the development of a wide range of festivals across the UK, celebrating cultural diversity (with a focus on Asian, African or Caribbean communities) indicates that there is potential for other languages to do the same.

3. Resourcing community languages provision

In practical terms, what has been the impact of policy over the last quarter century on provision for community language learning? In this section we focus specifically on the resources currently allocated to provision and consider whether these are sufficient to support the achievement of plurilingualism.

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3.1 Time for language learning

As we have seen, some community languages – principally certain ‘regional minority’ languages – have become media of instruction in certain regions. Students attending such schools therefore receive high levels of exposure to the language, in a variety of academic contexts. But such cases are the exception. For most community language students, school-based provision, if available, is very limited, rarely exceeding two hours per week. The limited number of contact hours and the fact that the classes usually take place after the full mainstream school day makes the learning and teaching task very challenging. Furthermore, the group commonly consists of students with varying backgrounds and skills in the language, and the time and attention available for the individual student may be insufficient to enable him/her to acquire the desired linguistic competence.

Teachers may compensate for this by asking parents and other community members to assist in teaching children the language outside school, thus providing much more extensive exposure. Well-organised communities which succeed in instilling a strong commitment to community language learning among themselves and among children can achieve impressive amounts of extra-curricular learning.

Some countries have created opportunities for community language learning within foreign language curricula. For example, in the UK, examination syllabi cater for some 20 community languages, using the same model as for ‘foreign’ languages. Community languages can thus be timetabled and taught in secondary schools as mainstream subjects, although the number of students concerned is small. In 2003, around 23000 students sat GCSE examinations and around 5000 sat A-levels (CILT, 2004). However, there are no statistics to identify how many studied these languages as school subjects and how many were external candidates, having been prepared for the examinations in community or private classes.

3.2 Financing provision

In many countries, the amount of public funding to pay for teachers, materials and premises is limited or non-existent. In the UK, despite the development of examination syllabi mentioned above, most provision for community language teaching remains the responsibility of communities themselves, although municipalities may support provision through free accommodation, grants for teaching materials etc. (Edwards, 2001). Where communities are unable to secure such support or to fund community language teaching themselves, provision may be marginal, irregular or lacking completely.

In some countries, community language teaching may have public funding, but this may often come with strings attached. Anecdotal evidence from the UK suggests that some local education authorities make financial support for complementary schools teaching community languages dependent on these schools also providing additional English classes, as this is seen by the authorities as the more pressing need.

Teaching may be financed by consulates or embassies of source countries. This is so particularly in France, Belgium, Spain and some German federal states (Extra & Gorter,
In these cases, the national government is not concerned with the organization of community language teaching, or the selection and employment of teachers. This arrangement can be problematic, particularly in situations where there are political or cultural differences between communities and the country of origin. For example, the Chinese government is keen for children of Chinese origin to learn Putonghua (Mandarin) and provides resources to support this. However, most Chinese communities in Europe speak Cantonese.

Finally, there are countries where strong state commitment has helped to build an extensive community language teaching system. In these countries, provision may be funded by national, regional or local authorities. This is true, for example, for the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Poland. In Finland, for example, the state has allocated a certain allowance (80-90% of the costs) to the municipalities, based on the reported hours of teaching. The local authorities have to provide the remainder. In some countries, public support does not cover all languages. In Poland, the state restricts support to ‘national minority languages’ such as German or Ukrainian, and ‘ethnic minority’ languages, such as Silesian and Ruthenian.

The example of Sweden shows how vulnerable the state support system can be in times of economic recession. In the 1990s, when economic deficits grew for the municipalities, active resistance to community language teaching by municipal politicians and local school representatives created a situation in which over the course of ten years the entire infrastructure was dismantled (Lainio 2001). In the Netherlands, provision is also currently under threat, as the state funding abruptly ended in August 2004, and responsibility now rests with municipalities.

3.3 Materials and curricula
Since the early days of community language teaching, the lack of teaching materials has constituted a significant obstacle. While the materials may abound for some groups, such as speakers of EU languages, materials for many other community languages are still limited or non-existent. The shortage of materials is a particular problem for languages without an established written form, such as Romani. To date, some materials in Romani have been produced for a number of Romani dialects, mostly by enthusiastic Roma and seldom with the support of local or state funding (Bakker 2001).

For some community languages the situation has recently improved. For example, a co-operative project involving Sweden, Finland and Norway has tackled the shortage of materials for north Saami. There are now textbooks for each grade level in Saami and mathematics. For other subjects, however, textbooks are only occasionally available. There have also been some international projects focusing on the development of teaching materials. At the end of the 1990s, for example, a Comenius project was designed to produce teaching materials for four community languages: Moroccan Arabic, Rifian Berber, Turkish and Kurdish (Caubet 2001).

Technology has greatly improved minorities’ access to resources. With the help of the internet, newspapers, radio programmes and other materials from the countries of origin...
are available for teaching purposes. Some communities can also receive TV programmes in their language by satellite. As McRae (1999) has pointed out, the ongoing media revolution works in two directions: spreading larger languages globally, but also supporting smaller, more fragile language minorities.

For community language teaching, text books published in the country of origin can be a resource but also a problem. These books have been written for pupils with extensive exposure to the language and for a curriculum that is being used in the educational system of that country. If the books are imported, it is possible that curricula and syllabi devised in that context are imported at the same time. Therefore, a common problem for many community language teachers is that they try to cover a curriculum devised elsewhere, with much less time and with students whose levels of linguistic competence are much more varied than would be likely in the country of origin. These curricula and syllabi are unlikely to be appropriate for children learning their community languages in a multilingual context and on an extra-curricular basis. They need a separate curriculum and teaching materials based on that curriculum. The Common European Framework of Reference for language learning may provide new opportunities in this regard as has been proposed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (2001).

3.4 Teacher education and supply
The success of community language teaching depends heavily on the supply of properly educated teachers. In many countries, it is difficult or impossible for community language teachers to acquire the necessary qualifications in the ‘host’ country. At the same time, qualifications from the ‘home’ country may not be recognised within the educational system of the ‘host’ country. Some countries seek to solve the problem by opening new educational tracks for those wishing to obtain the necessary qualifications. Quality standards set for community language teaching in some states can present a major challenge for teachers, but can also bring new opportunities by increasing the professional value of the instruction.

In the Netherlands, a major change in policy made significant changes to the demands made of teachers of community languages. In 1999, provision at primary level shifted so that besides intrinsic goals (learning the home language), auxiliary goals (supporting the learning of Dutch) were put forward. Community language teachers now required a good level of competence in Dutch language, as efficient communication with regular classroom teachers was an important feature of the provision, and they therefore had to attain a certificate in Dutch. Teachers were also encouraged to participate in training programmes focused on the support role. The policy shift thus presented a challenge for community language teachers, but also the opportunity to enhance provision. The fact that increasing numbers are acquiring professional competence in Dutch offers greater opportunities than before to bridge the gap between instruction in Dutch and in the community language. However, with the ending of the state funding for this provision in August 2004, many qualified teachers may lose their jobs or have to retrain for other positions.
In Poland, where officially, before 1989, there were no ‘minorities’ or ‘migrants’, there has been a remarkable revival in interest in community languages in recent years. Groups are now keen to be identified as ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ minorities, as this brings additional rights guaranteed by the new constitution passed by the Polish National Assembly in April 1997. Provision for community languages (of ‘national’ and ‘ethnic’ minorities) within the formal schooling system has developed rapidly over the last decade and is now well-established. Core curricula have been provided by the Ministry of National Education and Sport, locally authored versions have been prepared, the Ministry supports printing of teaching materials, and experts are working on examination standards for the new ‘Matura’ in 2005, enabling community languages to be chosen as exam subjects.

The situation after 1989 created an immediate and rapidly growing need for qualified teachers of community languages in Poland. Several universities and teacher colleges, both public and private, reacted to this by launching new tracks to bring educated teachers into the growing market. What seemed to be a major problem a decade ago is now close to resolution. According to a report for the school year 2002-3, published by the Polish Ministry of National Education and Sport, 77.2% of all community language teachers at primary level, 79.7% at lower secondary and 96.1% at upper secondary level have acquired a university degree, as expected of qualified language teachers (Awramiuk 2003).

4. Conclusions

Providers of community language education today face a number of challenges and opportunities. We have identified a significant shift towards a more inclusive policy stance, whereby ‘regional minority’, ‘migrant’ and ‘non-territorial’ languages are beginning to be seen as legitimate elements within national and Europe-wide language education policies. Sign languages are yet to be formally included, although there are indications of greater awareness of their claim to be so. As a result of this shift and the changing attitudes it represents, there are greater opportunities than ever before to argue for enhanced educational status for community languages: for example, to place them alongside ‘foreign’ languages in the mainstream curriculum, or to expand existing community language medium education or bilingual education, drawing on the success of CLIL methods.

However, the challenges to be overcome should not be underestimated. All languages, including community languages, are threatened by the growing dominance of English. It may not be easy to achieve popular acceptance of the need for and value of ‘plurilingualism’, as conceptualised by the Council of Europe. Furthermore, current provision for community language learning still largely reflects responses to earlier, ‘separatist’ policy which privileged (relatively speaking) some community languages compared to others, but marginalised virtually all from the mainstream curriculum. Thus much provision continues to be after made school hours, by teachers whose qualifications and expertise rarely receive formal recognition, with resources which are often inadequate or inappropriate. There are signs of change, as the policy shift begins to have an impact. The mainstreaming of provision, investment in effective resources, and the formal training and recognition of teachers appears to be on the increase, although there

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have been a number of setbacks. The question of whether provision is developing, or can be developed, to the extent of meeting the ambitious European goal of recognising and enhancing the plurilingualism of all citizens, is one which the VALEUR project will seek to address. (6176 words)
References

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