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Publication date
2018
Document Version
Proof
Published in
The MIME vademecum

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
Grin, F., Conceição, M. C., Kraus, P. A., Marácz, L., Ozoliņa, Ž., Pokorn, N. K., & Pym, A. (2018). Conclusions and Key Results. In F. Grin (Ed.), *The MIME vademecum: Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe* (pp. 26-27). MIME Project.

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Download date:17 Nov 2026

Conclusions and Key Results

The MIME project generates a wide range of research results providing orientations for the selection and design of language policies in Europe. Let us begin by highlighting four major conclusions, from which general policy orientations may be derived.

1

Multilingualism can't be left to itself, and laisser-faire isn't an option. Language policies are an unavoidable facet of governance; they are necessary and justified. Language is deeply intertwined with political, social, economic and cultural processes affecting individuals and groups. Not only do different responses to diversity result in higher or lower levels of well-being across society, but they also translate a more or less just distribution of resources. Furthermore, evidence suggests that policies encouraging individual multilingualism and embracing societal multilingual yield material and symbolic benefits that exceed their costs, and are conducive to more fairness in society. Information about the positive effects, for society as a whole, of policies that accommodate and support diversity, must be disseminated more broadly and systematically.

2

Mobility and inclusion are for everybody; it follows that policies must rest on a comprehensive view of mobility and inclusion. Such a comprehensive vision is necessary in order for linguistic diversity to be experienced positively also by citizens who are not particularly interested in it or concerned by it. Therefore, supporting people's mobility across the European Union must come along with arrangements facilitating the inclusion of mobile persons and groups into the local language(s) and culture(s). Inclusion on local terms helps making others' mobility non-threatening; it generates the sense of safety that empowers residents to make space for newcomers, including the diversity that these newcomers can contribute to local society.

3

Well-designed policies combining mobility and inclusion are often complex, but they are necessary and possible. Combining mobility and inclusion is not easy and there is even a tension between them, since facilitating mobility alone risks undermining inclusion into local society, with its specific linguistic and cultural features; conversely, emphasising inclusion only ignores the challenges of mobility, whose significance increases together with globalisation. Thus, when selecting measures that encourage inclusion, priority should go to those that do not hamper people's capacity to move across the European Union for work, study, leisure, or retirement. Symmetrically, when selecting measures that facilitate mobility, priority should go to those that guarantee the conditions needed for the linguistic and cultural features of each locale to blossom, with their specific dynamics and (often multilingual) uniqueness

4

Social cohesion emerges from the balanced combination of mobility and inclusion. Mobility expands the range of opportunities available to citizens; inclusion nurtures people's sense of place and safeguards the specificity of different locales in Europe. Achieving this balance, and designing intelligent language policies for this purpose, is arguably one of the conditions that must be met in order to allow a regeneration of the ideal of European integration in times of globalisation and change.

These four conclusions rest on the research findings which the reader can discover in the 75 entries that follow. These findings are arranged in six thematic categories:

1

Language policy as a public policy, whose focus is on advancing knowledge on the principles that should guide the selection, design and evaluation of language policies in order to make them effective, cost-effective, and equitable, as they address the "multilingual challenge of the European citizen" (entries 1 through 12).

2

The politics of language, where we look in particular at how existing constitutional, legal and regulatory arrangements regarding the position of European languages can be improved to ensure better cohesion through a fine-tuned balance of rights and practices between different languages (entries 13 through 26).

3

The handling of **linguistic diversity as a social issue**, which is key to defining the position of people who speak different languages. The project sheds light on how contemporary changes affect people's choices regarding language use, how language features mesh with the formation of group identity, and how this is reflected in the visible features of the space in which we live (entries 27 through 40).

4

The principles that should govern the **steering and language practices of education systems**, including at tertiary level, in order to address Europeans' language needs and equip them with the tools needed for mobility, but also ensure that mobility isn't disruptive and, in combination with measures reinforcing inclusion into local societies, improves the resulting cohesion of Europe (entries 41 through 55).

5

The **optimal use of mutually complementary strategies for communication** in multilingual settings, encompassing classic ones like translation and interpreting, but also machine translation, the use of different lingua francas, and the development of receptive skills in languages closely related to one's first language (entries 56 through 65);

6

An exploration of the **frontiers of multilingualism** through a set of pilot studies on little-explored special topics. These topics include the (geopolitical) security implications of diversity, the linguistic requirements of consumer protection, the potential of the Roma's historical experience with linguistic diversity for suggesting unexpected approaches to the challenges of multilingualism, the particular language needs of internationally mobile retirees, the connections between individual multilingualism and creativity, and the implications of linguistic diversity for responding to financial crises (entries 66 through 72).