DOI: 10.12797/Politeja.12.2015.37.08

Maria STOICHEVA
maria.stoicheva@gmail.com
Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski" (Bulgaria)

WHAT POLICY OF MULTILINGUALISM CAN FOSTER EUROPEAN IDENTITY FORMATION?

ABSTRACT By the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, European policies on languages were in a situation of flux. Between roughly 1985 and 2005 there was a relatively smooth development characterized by an implicit and explicit commitment to multilingualism. More recently, however, things have appeared rather less clear cut, both internationally and in individual countries. This paper problematizes the interplay between language and identity, which although not a new issue, takes on particular significance in the mobile, interconnected world of the 21st century. Drawing on the data collected in three major surveys in 2012, it touches upon two major issues: 1) the reality of individual multilingualism in fostering the sense of community among Europeans and as a factor for European identity formation; and 2) broadening of the traditional concept of language policy – from its narrow content as language planning of the national or official language to a broader concept including a wider range of agents, types of activities, level of explicitness and concreteness of application. Is there a need to develop specific language policies "beyond the state" in regions or more commonly in multilingual cities as its natural locus? The paper argues that the essentially liberal world view of multilingualism creating mutual understanding is rather more nuanced when it comes to reflections on the impact of language on identity and on European identity in particular. It also argues for re-scoping and re-thinking of the European model of multilingualism.

Keywords: multilingualism, European identity, language policy, European integration

The beginning of the 21st century marked a stage in the process of European integration, which allowed for the statement that there are components of European language policy of multilingualism. The observation that multilingualism has been at the heart of the European project with the adoption of an institutional multilingual policy was not sufficient in considering that multilingualism was an explicitly developed policy. The European Union (EU) officially presents itself as a multilingual entity and the commitment to multilingualism is central to its functioning. In the Treaties of Rome (1957) it derived from the recognition of the equal values of the linguistic versions produced in the official language of the member states. Starting from the six initial member states' languages, the principle of equality was automatically extended to the official languages of all new member states reaching the number 24 in 2013. It will not be an exaggeration to consider the EU a heroic multilingual endeavour in institutional and political terms without precedence in international relations and among international institutions. The EU thus can be associated with a vision that incorporates multilingualism as respect for linguistic diversity and as capacity of multilingual functioning that is often worded as the European *multilingual dream*. The question we can ask is whether this dream can be considered effectively sustained in political terms in the current stage of development of the European integration process and of the institutional multilingual dynamics or there are signs of its fading away.

It was not too long ago when the EU explicitly developed a strategy for multilingualism drawing a framework of what European language policy is to incorporate and to provide instruments for.[1] It appeared as a specific policy formulation about half a century after the initial multilingual political commitment of the European Communities which upheld fundamental philosophical and cultural values such as equality, human rights and better understanding between peoples. Indeed for years the European Community refrained from developing an overt language policy at Community level or from intervening in areas of language learning or teaching, which were considered to be exclusively the responsibility of the member states apart from the general statement of the equal treatment of all EU official languages. However, there has been a specific interplay between apparent neutrality in policy terms with an assumption of freedom in language use and language choice in the national and international European context, on the one hand, and a commitment to and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity involving political instruments, on the other.[2]

The New Framework Strategy for multilingualism was the first ever document to explore the policy area of language from a European perspective. In its opening words it firmly links language, culture and identity highlighting that *language is the most direct expression of culture; it is what makes us human and what gives each of us a sense of iden-*

1 European Commission, *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, COM(2005) 596 final.

2 For a more detailed overview on the development of various components of a European policy of multilingualism, see L. King et al., *Languages in Europe towards 2020. Analysis and Proposals from the LETPP Consultation and Review*, London 2011.

tity.[3] The issue of identity has become one of the key questions of our contemporary world. It is related to the way we see and experience culture, the bonds to communities, and, more importantly, the way we apply choices and the power to control our lives. It has a particularly vivid role linked with the diversity of the world in which we have to find and interpret sense and meaning. Describing the accelerating pace of innovation and globalization in the rise of network society Castells argues that *along with the technological revolution, the transformation of capitalism, and the demise of statism, we have experienced, in the last quarter of the century, the widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people's control over their lives and environment*.[4]

To a large extent the issue of identity is related to the way we understand or give meaning to our lives, the reasons for our behaviours, our senses and emotions and as a meaning providing process it is inseparable from language. There is a double sidedness in the link between language and identity – on the one hand, politics talks about language planning and language choice, but at the same time, it seems we could hardly choose a language we first acquire and in some sense this makes us what we are. 18th and 19th century thinkers (Herder and Humbolt, later Whorf) asserted that different languages were at the core of ethnic and national identities, not merely as symbols but as something that forced us to think differently. Language in this interpretation is at the heart of the understanding of identity and its manifestations. Even if we do not go that far, it is obvious that language can tell a lot about the speaker. Crystal argues that *a major function of language is the expression of personal identity – the signalling of who we are and where we belong*.[5] These signals enter our whole behaviour, become part of the expression of our identity and in some sense are inseparable from the use of language. In a context in which collective identities become so prominent and in a world where we are in a constant claim of who we are, it is not easy to distinguish the identifying function of language from the function of communicating ideas. The reality of multilingualism additionally obscures the distinction.

Symbols and markers of identity become less visible in more and more situations either because they are not any more present or because of their intangibility (values, beliefs, myths). Therefore the one salient marker of identity often is or remains language. This intensifies its power and identifying function. This refers not only to different languages, but to language variations of any type as well.

European integration, along with globalization creates new and rapidly emerging spaces of communication in which people learn to communicate with each other. These spaces effectively enlarge and reform our perceptions of boundaries and potential for community formations. Deutsch argues that a nation is a people who have learned to communicate with each other and to understand each other well beyond the

[3] European Commission, *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism...*

[4] M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, Malden 1997, p. 2.

[5] D. Crystal, *How Language Works. How Babies Babble, Words Change Meaning and Languages Live or Die*, London 2007, p. 466.

mere interchange of goods and services.[6] Authors differ over the particular elements which are crucial for European identity formation. Some stress the role of political and social communication, others of mobility and solidarity, still others of interest aggregation and awareness of benefits, but also of cultural heritage and values. Deutsch himself ceased to regard social communication to be the only key factor in the nation or political community-building process.[7] However, the belief that the crucial factor behind a person's ability and willingness to adopt new/European identity is a more intense level of involvement in the networks of social communication, which is interlinked with social mobility, in the networks of the dissemination of information and political involvement can be considered one of the pillars of European identity formation politics. People are learning to communicate with each other in the EU beyond the mere interchange of goods, services and capital not only within the positive register of attitudes. Language is and must be considered as a basis for communication and thus an instrument of consolidation or creation of a community of Europeans. Equally important, it still is one of the most powerful symbols of nationhood with a sustained intensity of markedness and distinctiveness.

The EU celebrates its (cultural) diversity as a defining feature but this diversity is also frequently regarded as an impediment to the formation of a meaningful European identity as well as a European public sphere. Studies in linguistic anthropology report that the most vigorous formation of socially significant identities are *contexts of (perceived) heterogeneity rather than of (perceived) homogeneity*.[8] The situation in Europe cannot be characterised as a process of ethnic emergence and formation, where conditions of contact pay a significant constituting role. Yet it can be considered *a way of reifying distinctions between people who live in juxtaposition to one another* [...] *or as a way for cultural groups to remain apart, voluntarily or involuntarily, from the de-ethnicizing process of citizenship*.[9]

The emergence of a sense of shared identity across the European Union has become a widely discussed issue nowadays, forty years after the Declaration on the European Identity published by the Nine Foreign Ministers of the nine European Communities Member States in 1973. It is an indispensable concept in political discourse at European level raising the question how it can be fostered. Academics and analysts argue that the European integration process can be hindered and impeded by the lack of identity and thus by support of the citizens for overcoming of the current economic and financial hard times. The question "Is the development of a European identity necessary, or is it possible?" has been continuously re-iterated[10] and the conceptual possibil-

6 K.W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, New York 1953, p. 61.

7 Idem, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, New York 1969.

8 M. Bucholz, K. Hall, 'Language and Identity' in A. Duranti (ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, Malden–Oxford 2004, p. 371 (*Blackwell Companions to Social and Cultural Anthropology*).

9 Ibid.

10 J. Habermas, 'Is the Development of a European Identity Necessary, and Is It Possible?' in idem, *The Divided West*, trans. by C. Cronin, Cambridge 2006.

ity is conceived in the necessary linking of collective identities and European identity. There are support actions for fostering the European dimension of identities of young people through mobility and exchange programmes involving school children, university students and youth organizations and individuals. European political dimension is also in the focus of joint actions through more information and better understanding of European citizenship. The supplementary character of European identity in relation to national identity has been discussed and thus acknowledged. Risse[11] focusing on ordinary citizens provides arguments from a variety of disciplines and methodologies about the "distribution of Europeanized identities across Europe". Backing similar conceptual assumptions Bruter[12] argues for the emergence of forms of "mass" European identity. Fligstein[13] answered the question "who are the Europeans" echoed in the title of an empirical survey on the affiliations and attitudes in Europe – "New Europeans".[14] It is also important that since 1979 the Eurobarometer surveys have included the objective to "*measure*" European identity by asking respondents regularly the question of whether it occurs to them often, sometimes, or never that they are citizens not only of their country but also of Europe.

Risse[15] addresses the question of *whether a European identity as collective identity of community beyond the nation-state is possible at all* providing empirical evidence of European identity. He argues that the *one relevant objection to the possibility of a European identity* is *the lack of a common European language*. The commitment of the EU to multilingualism, however, presupposes a vision of the EU as a multilingual space where communication does not require a common language. Thus another relevant objection to the possibility of European identity is the reality of Europe and the EU as a "multilingual" space.

The ambiguous interpretation of the European integration process as a way of creating a sense of shared identity and as a way of reifying distinctions was clearly felt in various representations in three projects on language policy conducted by large European partnerships: the study on languages in Europe towards 2020 within the LETPP project,[16] the survey on multilingual Bulgarian students' repertoires[17] and the survey based on 60 interviews within Language Rich Europe project.[18] The attitudes of the

11 T. Risse, *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, Ithaca 2010 (*Cornell Paperbacks*).

12 M. Bruter, *Citizens of Europe? The Emergence of Mass European Identity*, Houndmills 2005.

13 N. Fligstein, 'Who Are the Europeans and How Does this Matter for Politics?' in J.T. Checkel, P.J. Katzenstein (eds.), *European Identity*, Cambridge 2009 (*Contemporary European Politics*).

14 Eurobarometer, *New Europeans*, Special Eurobarometer 346, 2011, at <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_346_en.pdf>.

15 T. Risse, *A Community of Europeans?...*

16 A KA2 Action network "Languages in Europe, Theory, Policy and Practice', see L. King et al., *Languages in Europe...*

17 M. Stoicheva, *Language Policies. Bulgaria-Europe*, Sofia 2011.

18 G. Extra, K. Yağmur, *Language Rich Europe. Trends in Policies and Practices for Multilingualism in Europe*, Cambridge 2012.

respondents generally recorded a level of mismatch between the expectation created by the envisaged model of the European language policy and the current state of art in its realization.

In the mid-90s there were clear indications that the European politics of language appeared to be heating up. The White Paper on education and training *Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society* stated that the *proficiency in several Community languages has become a* precondition *if citizens of the European Union are to benefit from the occupational and personal opportunities open to them in the border-free single market*.[19] The process of bringing to the fore the need for an explicit language policy included the belief that *only through a better knowledge of* [...] *languages* [...] *it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction* [...] *in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation and overcome prejudice and discrimination*.[20] The discourse of the Council of Europe's language policy is very much within the framework of the need of a major educational effort to convert the linguistic diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding. The European Commission's Action plan "Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006", which laid the foundation of the adoption of a Framework Strategy of multilingualism in 2005, represented an ambitious expansion of EU policies into areas of exclusive competence of the member states. It built upon and was justified with a new perspective on the European Union paradigm of free movement of its citizens and better equipping them to take full advantage of the freedom to work or study in another Member State. The policy documents expressed the belief that multilingualism and the principle of equality of languages can be the pillar of a consistent model of creating shared European identity and mutual understanding. This is recorded in the political goal of scoping the multilingual model as "mother tongue plus two" in terms of languages necessary for European citizens in order to understand and communicate in united Europe and in terms of a desirable life-skill for all.

Much of the discussions across Europe during the LETPP project were concentrated around the *new contexts* that currently European politics and in particular the policy of multilingualism faces. Globalization alters economic production and economic processes requiring a global organization through transnational networks. The speed of change of technology has changed radically the way we communicate and expanded the communication space through the internet and social networking. More importantly what is witnessed nowadays and what is acknowledged by scholars and politicians is the unprecedented new type and scope of mobility, which is affecting at an accelerating rate Europe but also all parts of the globe and which produces a significant impact on politics globally and in particular in Europe.

---

[19] *White Paper on Education and Training – Towards the Learning Society*, COM(95) 590 final, 29 November 1995, p. 47.

[20] Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*, Cambridge 2001.

The policy articulated up to the 2005 Framework strategy was further reaffirmed following the same main threads and stressing on the increasing impact of linguistic and cultural diversity in the daily life of citizens of the European Union. The political and institutional discourse emphasises on the linguistic component of the content and the understanding of European identity. Linguistic diversity is one of the European Union's defining features.[21] Respect for the diversity of the Union's languages is a "founding" and "basic principle of the EU" of the European Union.[22] Respect for linguistic diversity is a *"core value" of the European Union*.[23] In the Council Resolution (2008) linguistic and cultural diversity is defined as *part and parcel of the European identity* and *it is at once a shared heritage, a wealth, a challenge and an asset for Europe*.[24] According to the Commission, each of the many languages is therefore considered to add its own, unique facet to a shared European cultural background.[25] The European Commission[26] adds that language must be considered the *most direct expression of culture* and linguistic diversity is an essential element of the EU's motto, "United in Diversity." The public European discourse has strengthened the idea of the reality of the multilingual habitus of the EU. In line with an increasingly more outward vision the European Parliament Resolution of 2009 on multilingualism talks about the importance of *cohabitation in our multicultural societies* and *relations with third countries and between peoples and nations from the most diverse regions of the world*.[27] This signals a process towards broadening and mainstreaming of the commitment to multilingualism beyond the sphere of education and training.

Despite these developments the current situation of the European policy of multilingualism can be characterized as "cooling down" rather than keeping pace with the expectations already created. Recent policy EU documents provide evidence for such a conclusion at the macro political European level. The 2012 European Commission Communication on Rethinking Education locates European politics of language in the "safe" domain of *investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*.[28] This can be inter-

[21] European Commission, *Action plan "Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity" (2004--2006)*, 2003.

[22] Ibid.; European Parliament, *European Parliament Resolution on a "New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism"*, 2006/2083(INI).

[23] European Commission, *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, COM(2005) 596 final.

[24] Council of the European Union, *Council Resolution on a "European strategy for multilingualism"*, 2008/C 320/01, 21 November 2008, p. 2.

[25] European Commission, *Commission staff working paper "Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity"* – Consultation, SEC(2002) 1234, 13 November 2002, p. 5; European Commission, *A New Framework Strategy...*; European Commission, *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*, COM(2008) 566 final.

[26] European Commission, *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe...*

[27] European Parliament, *Resolution of 24 March 2009 on "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment"*, 2008/2225(INI), p. 2.

[28] European Commission, *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, COM(2012) 669 final.

preted as a retreat from the initial wide scope of the strategy of multilingualism. Linguistic challenges are articulated in terms of employability, competitiveness and free movement of workers (in particular mobility of young people). The Communication makes a very critical conclusion of the pace and level of reaching the target defined by Heads of State of "mother tongue plus two" (Barcelona European Council, March 2002). Drawing upon the first European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) the accompanying Staff Working Document on Languages makes the assessment that *despite investment in many countries, education systems in a number of member states are still not efficient enough to cope with these challenges*.[29] Another key finding is that *the outcome of foreign language learning in Europe is poor*.[30] The evidence quoted in the Communication 2012 and its Staff Working document referring to two countries (France and the UK) shows a rather low percentage of pupils reaching the level of independent user of one foreign language at the end of secondary education.[31] This is either the only foreign language studied at this stage of education or it could be the first foreign language offered at school education with a sufficient number of classes so as to ensure the attainment of level B1 (the first independent level according to the language competence levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). In France only 14% of all pupils reach the level of an independent user of one foreign language at the end of lower secondary education, and in the UK this is only 9%.[32] Although the range of proportions of students reaching the independent level varies between 82% (for Malta and Sweden) and 9%, the ESLC average shows a rather unsatisfactory proportion of only 42% of tested pupils who reach a level of independent user in their first foreign language. This seems quite far from achieving the objective of benefiting from the teaching of two foreign languages at school as set by the Barcelona European Council of 2002. The time span of 10 years during which investment were made and supplementary policy actions were undertaken at European level to support member states in teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age is an additional disappointing factor. The Communication calls for faster reform, based on new methodologies and technologies for teaching both the first and second foreign languages, with a view to reaching the target defined by Heads of State of "mother tongue plus two" and for closing the gap of the language skills deficit in a allegedly multilingual European space of education and work.

There is evidence from other sources that raises issues related to the picture of the pace and the reality of Europe as a multilingual space for communication. Eurobarometer surveys, for example, show a discrepancy between the general approval of multilingualism and the individual choice of adopting it as a motive for personal development.

[29] European Commission, *Staff working document "Language competences for employability, mobility and growth"*, SWD(2012) 372 final.

[30] European Commission, *Rethinking Education...*, p. xx.

[31] European Commission, *Staff working document "Language competences...*, p. 27.

[32] *Source*: First European Survey on Language Competences: Final Report. Average of listening, reading and writing.

On the one hand, 88% of the Europeans think that "knowing languages other than their mother tongue is very useful" and even more for the future of children and young Europeans (88%).[33] It can be concluded that there is a public consensus on the need and utility of foreign languages in contemporary European society, which can be interpreted as correlated to the representation of Europe as a multilingual habitus. However, the majority of Europeans do not describe themselves as active learners of languages – 23% have never learnt a language and 44% have not learnt a language recently and do not intend to start.[34]

The possible explanation is in the interplay of two concepts in people's motivation, in particular the concept of usefulness of a foreign language and the anticipation of an immediate necessity in learning and using a foreign language. For example, the survey reports that among the respondents who state a capacity to use a foreign language only a quarter (24%) use their first foreign language every day or almost every day and a similar proportion use it often. This leaves space for a considerable daily routine, even in the transformed contemporary society, without the pressing need of foreign language skills. The proportion radically drops when it refers to the second and third foreign language. From this point of view the barriers to language learning can have a slightly different explanation. Lack of motivation (quoted as a barrier by 34%[35]) can have a shift of weight towards the lack of immediate necessity that can motivate people. Lack of time (reported to be considered a barrier for 28%) can also be interpreted as a notion of a routine of daily work and life that does not require use of foreign language and confirms a capacity to fully operate without it. This raises the issue of how multilingual Europe is. It seems that Europe remains a monolingual habitus for a considerable part of the European citizens. Multilingual practices are far from becoming a part of the daily routine of large groups of European citizens. Deutsch argues investigating the political communities and the North Atlantic area that there cannot be an effective nationality shifts unless the probability of interacting with a person from a different nationality is equal to that of interacting with a co-national.[36] It can be agreed that it refers with the same power of argument for the current situation in the EU. It is implausible to consider that there can be an effective shift in feeling European unless the probability of interacting with a person from a different Member state is equal to that of interacting with a co-national. And this should be considered as a probability factor because, as already pointed out, the context of perceived heterogeneity under condition of contact has also the effect of reifying distinctions between people and cultural groups that remain apart.

The multilingual picture becomes even more diverse with the data for the member states. Some of the examples provide a very interesting perspective for analysis of the interrelationship between language education policy and the outcomes in terms of the

[33] Eurobarometer, *Europeans and their Languages*, Special Eurobarometer 386, 2012, p. 7, at <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf>.

[34] Ibid., p. 55.

[35] Ibid., p. 8.

[36] K.W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area. International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, Princeton 1957.

number of foreign languages that citizens are able to speak well enough to hold a conversation. There is a significant imbalance in the outcome of language teaching and learning among the countries included in the Eurobarometer 386 survey. Some countries perform particularly well and show notable increases in the proportion of respondents saying that they are able to speak at least one foreign language well enough to hold a conversation. On the contrary, in other countries the proportion has decreased notably despite implementing education policies supporting language teaching and learning and providing conditions for teaching and learning of two foreign languages in the educational system. It should be noted that the years between the two surveys are years of registered further implementation of the policy of teaching of at least two foreign languages in the educational systems of the EU member states. However, there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of respondents saying that they are able to speak at least one foreign language at the functional communicative level *only* in three EU countries: Austria (+16 percentage points to 78%), Finland (+6 points to 75%) and Ireland (+6 points to 40%).[37] More EU member states register a decrease that ranges from 17 to 7 percentage points (mostly countries from Eastern Europe). The decrease in the proportion of respondents in the countries of Eastern Europe able to speak at least one foreign language can be explained with a radical language shift in the language education policy marked by abandoning the compulsory teaching of Russian or other foreign languages in the educational system. However, a decrease is also observed in other countries like Portugal and Italy which comes to a level below 40%. It is interesting that the UK falls within this group although the education policy does not provide for compulsory foreign language teaching neither at primary nor at secondary educational ages.

Drawing upon the surveys on the topic of Europeans and their languages, the conclusion can be made that the reality of multilingualism in Europe is rather diverse and nuanced. In LETPP we argued that this can be explained with the different interplay between necessity and the challenge of language contact, which is of varied intensity in different parts of Europe with specific background, language teaching traditions and reality of practical multilingualism. There is a formal aspect of the processes undertaken at European level that can be qualified as language policy and the same time there are implicit language policies in the plural that represent language practices of the habitual models of language choice and the dominant language beliefs and ideologies. The plurilingual context creates a much more variegated context for languages that challenges or supports identity formation. This is increasingly the case since formal education is challenged by informal learning. In the absence of well thought out and conceptualized plurilingual education, the "street" imposes models of translanguaging and new kinds of learning that are more visible and influential in language learning than in other areas of knowledge. The educational challenges include other aspects of this linguistic diversity as classrooms are increasingly becoming multilingual environments. However, this is not a general rule but has its own loci of high concentration. There is a general agreement on the issue that language competences are key dimensions of modernizing Europe. Finding

[37] Eurobarometer, *Europeans and their Languages...*, p. 15.

that *the outcome of foreign language learning in Europe is poor*[38] is a chilling *ground breaking evidence* that shows a significant deficit in young people's capacity to provide for access to the 21st century, which is undoubtedly multilingual.

The solutions that the Commission identifies draw on the first time ever, empirical evidence on the ability of young Europeans to communicate across borders, their attitudes, expectations and exposure to foreign languages, as well as teaching methods and approaches in this field. It represents an approach which conceptualises language policy as the acquisition of competence representing the driving force and core of explicit and implicit language policy. The objectives of language policy are spelt explicitly in stepping up work on language competences by proposing an EU benchmark on language competence. The targets of attainment are defined by using an approach combining the *outcomes* of learning in the first foreign language, and the *quantity* of pupils learning a second foreign language. They are presented as the objective *by 2020, at least 50% of 15 year-olds should attain the level of independent user of a first foreign language (compared to the present 42%); and by 2020, at least 75% of pupils in lower secondary education should study at least two foreign languages (compared to the present 61%).*[39]

The competence benchmark can be considered among the factors that may be conducive to the evolution of a sense of European identity since improving our ability to communicate in a shared language (or languages) might help overcome some of the problems of the process of formation and promotion of European identity. However, if we look closer at the set target, it will be clear that it is a compromise with the stated equality of European languages and the policy of multilingualism that does not differentiate between more and less important languages. The data on the language offer in the educational systems clearly shows that English is the main foreign language that students learn in general and vocational upper secondary education. There is a permanent trend of increase in the offer of English as foreign language in schools across Europe amounting to more than 80%.[40] The domination of English is exemplified with more than 90% of students studying it as the first foreign language in countries such as Italy, Latvia and France. This effectively translates the target as a political objective of reaching an independent level of English as the main driving force for enhancing intra-EU communication. The second component of the benchmark target is less specified and of supplementary character since its role in intra-EU communication is not clearly identified.

The multilingual habitus of the EU reality is effectively narrowed and the addition of a second benchmark for the percentage of students learning a second foreign language does not sufficiently back the political statement that "English is not enough", which has been widely exploited in public and political discourse. The new economy, mobility and the power of Internet enables the proliferation of multilingual communication, but it also

[38] European Commission, *Rethinking Education...*, p. 3.

[39] Ibid., p. 5.

[40] Source: Eurostat, UOE. Trends in percentage of students learning English, German and French in pre-vocational/vocational and general upper secondary education (ISCED 3) in 2004/05, 1006/07, 2009/10.

greatly encourages and in turn facilitates the reality of English as a lingua franca that we must confront and consider today. The policy makers should not be suspected of creating conditions for excusive support of English. This outcome is produced largely by the fact that the multilingual habitus or reality in Europe is still predominantly operationalized as reaching certain level of language competence in a bounded language. It is languages that are measured, they are offered and studied, and their spread is surveyed. This approach to investigating issues of multilingualism and multilingual reality and practice has its limitations. One significant effect is that it limits the number of languages that are included in the surveys. The first Eurobarometer survey 2001 was limited to data related to four European languages: English, French, German and Spanish. The second Eurobarometer survey of 2006 changes the perspective from exploring the categorization of the four languages to the concept of "number and range of languages known". However, the discreet presentation and analysis of the main categories related to languages are also limited to the top ranked languages. In addition to the four initially surveyed languages in the 2001 Survey, the only new language that joins the group is Russian.

The wide application of this approach of ranking languages has the effect of narrowing the concept of multilingualism, which becomes associated with the capacity to use functionally a widely spoken language from a very limited group. The limitation is language specific, since it is a matter of fact that in terms of access to communication possibilities and the potential for interaction these languages provide for the widest possible opportunities. The rationale of the use of this approach is in the identification of the optimal conditions for interaction with people and resources in a global perspective. Thus the concept of multilingualism is globally biased and oriented excluding to a large extent the local or domestic situation and ranking global interaction capacities to the detriment of locally valuable communication channels. The main question is whether we should be content with this delimitation of the study and exploration of multilingualism with its exclusionary and inclusionary decisions related to the scope of languages in surveys related to multilingualism.

The approach considerably obscures the actual linguistic and communicative multilingual reality in Europe, representing it in an abstract and static way as a set of languages at the disposal of the speakers. The notion of linguistic competence does not refer solely to reaching an independent or other level in a particular language but also to the capacity to use language in which the bounded concept of languages as separate does not hold or is hard to sustain. This phenomenon of language interaction is more salient in multilingual settings and contexts that demonstrate a high level of intensity and contact and can be observed in the patterns of multilingual repertoires in these settings.

The understanding of past policies, of practice in many countries and of the opinion of scholars and practitioners led us in LETPP to the conclusion that there is a need for re-scoping of the multilingual model.[41] It needs re-scaling in order to address the issues not only of competitiveness and skills but of identity and cohesion and of the plurilingual asymmetry of individual repertoires.

[41] L. King et al., *Languages in Europe...*, p. 34.

It has become common to talk about super-diversity since Vertovec[42] used the term to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything previously experienced in a particular society. Over the past twenty years globally more people have moved from more places to more places; wholly new and increasingly complex social formations have ensued, marked by dynamic interplays of variables. BBC online quotes data in 2009 that at the start of the 21st Century, one in every 35 people is an international migrant. They make the remarkable comparison that if they all lived in the same place, it would be the world's fifth-largest country.[43] I argue that the term super-diversity is not readily applied to a variety of settings and situations in EU member states. However, there are specific loci of multilingualism and multiculturalism that represent a model for the anticipated future of super-diversity. And these are the European multilingual cities. They represent specific level and area of multilingual practices, challenges and constraints but also of solutions and opportunities that enjoy some autonomy and are less constrained by national policies. The language factor in European identity formation will not be well understood unless we explore the impact (positive or negative) of living in a large city or town on European identity formation. These loci of super density of diversity are to be central in developing a more relevant and effective language policy as a determinant factor for European identity formation.

In conclusion, I would like to go back to the initial question in the beginning of this paper. What policy of multilingualism can foster European identity formation? My understanding is that identity in formation is a function of mobility, interaction and communication. Multilingualism and linguistic diversity is a key factor and determinant of European identity formation and of vitalizing of national and regional languages in the European context. The legitimation of the policy of multilingualism is dependent largely on the capacity to foster European identity formation. It will serve its role more effectively if it compares persons rather than tests and languages, if it draws on the exploration of multilingual repertoires that mirror the multilingual habitus of Europe in its dynamics and if it broadens its scope and does not restrict it to formal processes undertaken at European level or the area of "language governmentality". It will be better informed if it invests in better understanding of the new contexts of super density of diversity, e.g. the multilingual networks and the multilingual cities of Europe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bruter M., *Citizens of Europe? The Emergence of Mass European Identity*, Houndmills 2005.

Bucholz M., Hall K., 'Language and Identity' in A. Duranti (ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, Malden–Oxford 2004 (*Blackwell Companions to Social and Cultural Anthropology*).

[42] S. Vertovec, 'Super-diversity and its Implications', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (2007), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>.

[43] I owe this example to Lid King.

Castells M., *The Power of Identity*, Malden 1997.
Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, Cambridge 2001.
Council of the European Union, *Council Resolution on a "European strategy for multilingualism"*, 2008/C 320/01, 21 November 2008.
Crystal D., *How Language Works. How Babies Babble, Words Change Meaning and Languages Live or Die*, London 2007.
Declaration on European Identity, Copenhagen, 14 December 1973.
Deutsch K.W., *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, New York 1969.
Deutsch K.W., *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality*, New York 1953.
Deutsch K.W. et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area. International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, Princeton 1957.
Eurobarometer, *Europeans and their Languages*, Special Eurobarometer 386, 2012, at <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_386_en.pdf>.
Eurobarometer, *New Europeans*, Special Eurobarometer 346, 2011, at <http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_346_en.pdf>.
European Commission, *Action plan "Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity" (2004-2006)*, 2003.
European Commission, *Commission staff working paper "Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity"* – Consultation, SEC(2002) 1234, 13 November 2002.
European Commission, *Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment*, **COM**(2008) 566 final.
European Commission, *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, COM(2005) 596 final.
European Commission, *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, COM(2012) 669 final.
European Commission, *Staff working document "Language competences for employability, mobility and growth"*, SWD(2012) 372 final.
European Parliament, *European Parliament Resolution on a "New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism"*, 2006/2083(INI).
European Parliament, *Resolution of 24 March 2009 on "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment"*, 2008/2225(INI).
Extra G., Yağmur K., *Language Rich Europe. Trends in Policies and Practices for Multilingualism in Europe*, Cambridge 2012.
Fligstein N., 'Who Are the Europeans and How Does this Matter for Politics?' in J.T. Checkel, P.J. Katzenstein (eds.), *European Identity*, Cambridge 2009 (*Contemporary European Politics*).
Habermas J., 'Is the Development of a European Identity Necessary, and Is It Possible?' in idem, *The Divided West*, trans. by C. Cronin, Cambridge 2006.
King L. et al., *Languages in Europe towards 2020. Analysis and Proposals from the LETPP Consultation and Review*, London 2011.
Risse T., *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*, Ithaca 2010 (*Cornell Paperbacks*).

Stoicheva M., *Language Policies. Bulgaria-Europe*, Sofia 2011.
Vertovec S., 'Super-diversity and its Implications', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 6 (2007), at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870701599465>.
White Paper on Education and Training – Towards the Learning Society, COM(95) 590 final, 29 November 1995.

Maria STOICHEVA is Associate Professor and Jean Monnet Chair in interdisciplinary studies at the Department of European Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski" (Bulgaria).