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## **Crisis and Context**

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### **Abstract**

Being European is to have the advantage of a cultural background of unparalleled variety and depth. It should also mean having full access to knowledge and languages. The purpose of the paper is to make it possible to exploit these possibilities further; the recommendations it contains cannot claim to provide an exhaustive response to the question. Education and training provide the reference points needed to affirm minority identity, while at the same time permitting further advances in science and technology. The independence they give, if shared by everyone, strengthens the sense of cohesion and anchors the feeling of belonging. Europe's cultural diversity, its long existence and the mobility between different cultures are invaluable assets for adapting to the new world on the horizon. The purpose of this paper is to plot out the route to the example of Kashubian minority by identifying the options available to the EU in linguistic education and training. The objective is not to impose common rules, but rather stimulate a broad debate to identify the points of convergence and the actions capable of meeting the current challenges.

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**Key words:** Kashubian minority, education

### **Introduction**

Minorities are disadvantaged ethnic, national, religious, linguistic or cultural groups who are smaller in number than the rest of the population and who may wish to maintain

and develop their identity (Minorityright, 2010). Kashubian [kaszëbsczi (jãzek) / kaszëbizna] is a West Slavonic language spoken in northern Poland in the Pomorskie Voivodship. In some districts [powiaty] of this voivodship Kashubian is used more often: Gdańsk [Gduńsk], Gdynia [Gdiniô], Wejherowo [Wejrowò], Puck [Pùck], Lębork [Lãbörg], Bytów [Bëtowò], Kartuzy [Kartùze], Kościerzyna [Kòscérzna] and Chojnice [Chòjnice]. A specific (yet limited) Kashubian literature emerged in the 19th century with *Xazeczka dlo Kaszebov* by Florian Cejnowa (1817-1881) (Treder, 2007). Since Kashubian is not comprehensively standardised, except for the above-mentioned text, it is often considered as a branch of the Pomeranian dialects or Polish. Therefore it does currently not have the status of a national or ethnic minority in Poland.

## 1. Backgrounds to the study

Although language contact between Kashubian and Polish has already lasted for several centuries, spoken Kashubian clearly differs from Polish dialects and standard Polish. Major differences occur in the fields of phonetics, vocabulary and word formation. However, literary (written) Kashubian is very close to standard Polish due to borrowings and syntactic similarities. In total there are 50 dialectal varieties of Kashubian. Kashubians are a Slavonic tribe descended from the Pomeranians (=‘people living by the sea’) who once settled in the whole territory of Pomerania and who now live in the area between Oder and Vistula. Their eastern neighbours were the Pruzzians. To the South the Pomeranian territory reached the Noteć and Warta rivers. The independent eastern Pomerania at the lower Vistula emerged around the year 1000. Although the Polonians succeeded in gradually penetrating through the Noteć and the Christianisation and church organisation was pursued from the West, eastern Lower Pomerania (also ‘Small Pomerania’ [Pommerellen]) was able to keep its independence until the late 13th century when the dynasty of Samborids ended. In 1309 the region was sold and annexed to the state of the German Order which at that time was an independent political entity. Pomeranians were mentioned in documents until the 14th century. Cassubia was the name of the region around Belgrade on the Parseta River. Since the 15th and 16th century this name has also been used for today’s settlement areas of the Kashubians. From 1466 onwards, eastern Lower Pomerania was ruled by the Polish king until it fell to Prussia in 1772 and became part of so-called “West Prussia”. After World War I the region became Polish again. During the Second World War it was annexed to the Reich District Gdańsk-West Prussia [Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen] and in 1945 became part of Poland again.

## 2. Towards a language learning society in Europe

It is clear that the new opportunities offered to people require an effort from each one to adapt, particularly in assembling one's own qualifications on the basis of 'building blocks' of knowledge acquired at different times and in various situations. *The society of the future will therefore be a language learning society*. In the light of this it is evident that education systems - which means primarily the teachers - and all of those involved in training have a central role to play. The social partners, in exercising their responsibilities, including through collective bargaining, have a particularly important role, as these developments will condition the working environment of the future (Kuc, Szyjko, 2009).

Since the 1960's, Community action in education and training has had significant results in terms of cooperation, exchanges of experience, supporting innovation and the development of training products and materials. It has also boosted decisively European mobility of students and people in training. It has also contributed to the promotion of learning Community languages and to the development of communication between European citizens (Szyjko, 2009b). The basis is the concerns of every European citizen, young or adult, who faces the problem of adjusting to new conditions of finding a job and changes in the nature of work. No social category, no profession, no linguistic difference is spared this problem. Languages are also the key to knowing other people. Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe. Learning languages also has another important effect: experience shows that when undertaken from a very early age, it is an important factor in doing well at school (Hrehová, 2009). Contact with another language is not only compatible with becoming proficient in one's mother tongue, it also makes it easier. It opens the mind, stimulates intellectual agility and, of course, expands people's cultural horizon. Multilingualism is part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society. Language learning and linguistic diversity are fundamental to the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme under the Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig and Leonardo Programmes. The 'transversal' part of the programme funds other actions to promote language learning, with actions focused on the teaching and learning needs of several educational sectors. A labour force with practical language and intercultural skills is crucial for economic growth and better jobs, enabling European businesses to compete in the global market place (Hrehová, Cehlár, 2007). Multilingualism can also contribute to personal development, reinforce social cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue, creating opportunities to discover other values, beliefs and behaviour (EC Europa, 2010). In order to make for proficiency in three Community languages, it is desirable for foreign language learning to start at pre-school level. It seems essential for such teaching to be placed on a systematic footing in primary education, with the learning of a second Community foreign language starting in secondary school. It could even be argued that secondary school pupils

should study certain subjects in the first foreign language learned, as is the case in the European schools. Upon completing initial training everyone should be proficient in two Community foreign languages. With the Educational Reform, English has achieved the status of compulsory foreign language from primary to upper secondary school. Other languages remain far behind in the quantity of teaching and learning and it is still too early to see the results of the introduction of a second language in the lower secondary school. Another aspect to be considered is how starting English at the beginning of primary school will affect the future development of students' English learning. Since the status of foreign languages in compulsory education has been reconsidered with the Reform, consequences for the range of languages offered within the framework of a general teaching / learning school system should be taken into consideration as well. In this way, 'plurilingual education clearly has a role to play in safeguarding, enhancing the value of and enriching linguistic diversity in a particular place.' It is no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or for those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility. In line with the resolution of the Council of Education Ministers of 31 March 2010, it is becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue. The Commission regrets the fact that job and changes in the nature of work. No social category, no profession, no linguistic difference is spared this problem.

Languages are also the key to knowing other people. Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe (Szyjko, 2008). Learning languages also has another important effect: experience shows that when undertaken from a very early age, it is an important factor in doing well at school. Contact with another language is not only compatible with becoming proficient in one's mother tongue, it also makes it easier. It opens the mind, stimulates intellectual agility and, of course, expands people's cultural horizon. Multilingualism is part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society. Language learning and linguistic diversity are fundamental to the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme under the Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig and Leonardo Programmes. The 'transversal' part of the programme funds other actions to promote language learning, with actions focused on the teaching and learning needs of several educational sectors. A labour force with practical language and intercultural skills is crucial for economic growth and better jobs, enabling European businesses to compete in the global market place. Multilingualism can also contribute to personal development, reinforce social cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue, creating opportunities to discover other values, beliefs and behaviour (EC Europea, 2010). In order to make for proficiency in three Community languages, it is desirable for foreign language learning to start at pre-school level. It seems essential for such teaching to be placed on a systematic footing in primary education, with the learning of a second Community foreign language starting in secondary school. It could

even be argued that secondary school pupils should study certain subjects in the first foreign language learned, as is the case in the European schools. Upon completing initial training everyone should be proficient in two Community foreign languages. With the Educational Reform, English has achieved the status of compulsory foreign language from primary to upper secondary school. Other languages remain far behind in the quantity of teaching and learning and it is still too early to see the results of the introduction of a second language in the lower secondary school. Another aspect to be considered is how starting English at the beginning of primary school will affect the future development of students' English learning. Since the status of foreign languages in compulsory education has been reconsidered (Szyjko, 2007c) with the Reform, consequences for the range of languages offered within the framework of a general teaching / learning school system should be taken into consideration as well. In this way, 'plurilingual education clearly has a role to play in safeguarding, enhancing the value of and enriching linguistic diversity in a particular place' (Benson, 2002).

It is no longer possible to reserve proficiency in foreign languages for an elite or for those who acquire it on account of their geographical mobility (Szyjko, 2007a). In line with the resolution of the Council of Education Ministers of 31 March 2010, it is becoming necessary for everyone, irrespective of training and education routes chosen, to be able to acquire and keep up their ability to communicate in at least two Community languages in addition to their mother tongue. The Commission regrets the fact that the importance of this commitment was reduced, the Member States limiting its effect by using the words "if possible".

### **3. Legal status of bilingualism**

The EU has a positive policy towards regional and minority languages, enshrined in Article 22 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, which states, "The Union respects cultural, religious and linguistic diversity"(). The European Parliament has adopted a series of resolutions promoting action on regional and minority languages. A regional language is a language spoken in an area of a nation state, whether it be a small area, a federal state or province, or some wider area. Internationally, for the purposes of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, "regional or minority languages" means languages that are:

1. traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and
2. different from the official language(s) of that State.

Although article 35 of the Polish Constitution grants Polish citizens of national or ethnic minorities the freedom to preserve and develop their own language, customs, traditions and culture, this only applies to the Kashubians in the context of special rules

which give them regional language community [*społeczność posługująca się językiem regionalnym*] status. However, Kashubians now participate in all social fields again, e.g. as representatives (approx. 150 in the Pomorze Voivodship, seven members of parliament); or scientists, authors and persons involved in the cultural sector. Kashubia and the Kashubian culture are vital issues in politics, and votes from Kashubians in parliamentary and other elections (e.g. institutions of self-administration) often decide the fate of candidates according to their policy on the Kashubian minority.



**Fig. 1.** Map of Native peoples, ethnic groups in Europe (Eurominority map)

The purpose of a bilingual education programme set up in Kartuzy schools is to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills through a programme of structured language learning and cognitive development, enabling children to operate successfully in their native, state and national language (Kaszubian, 2010). The program provides a strong foundation in the first language (mother tongue), adding second (e.g. national) and third

languages (e.g. English) enabling the appropriate use of both/all languages for life-long learning. Bilingual education is rather multicultural, with learning beginning in the child's known environment and bridging to the wider world. The bridging process allows children to maintain local language and culture while providing state and/or national language acquisition and instruction. This process provides learners with the opportunity to contribute to national society without forcing them to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage (Szyjko, 2009).

Until the late 1970s the use of mother tongue in education was only found outside the formal system. Programmes were developed to help adults achieve a basic level of literacy in mother tongue using a primer-based approach. The use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in the 1980s focused mostly on out of school children; those with no access to school, or those in pre-primary outside the formal system. Even though as far back as 1953 UNESCO suggested that children should be given the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue, it was only in the early 1990s that Multilingual Education programmes such as those described above have been incorporated into both the formal and non-formal systems in some countries. By 2009, UNESCO published a position paper which stated that:

*“UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.”*

*“UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies” (Unesco, 2010).*

#### **4. Linguistic diversity**

At European level, the attention for multilingualism and plurilingualism has been increasing over the last years. In 2005, the European Commission issued its first communication on multilingualism, stating: ‘The Commission’s long-term objective is to increase individual multilingualism until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his mother tongue (Kom, 2005). The Council of Europe has been engaged with Europe’s language richness for a long time. The Council’s language education policies are aimed at the promotion of plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, democratic citizenship, mutual understanding, and social cohesion. Of these fields, plurilingualism is given particular importance, e.g. in the 2007 document *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*. Plurilingualism, in the terminology of the Council of Europe, refers to the life-long learning process in which an individual becomes capable of using a repertoire of language varieties and language related competences of different kinds and levels.

In order to support plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe developed several tools and instruments. One of the best known is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, often referred to by the abbreviations CEFR or CEF, published after a period of piloting in 2001. The Common European Framework of Reference is intended to provide a common basis for language learning, teaching, and assessment across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive manner communicative competences, necessary skills, knowledge, and situations and domains in language learning. Since the descriptions of the CEFR are not related to a specific language, it is not only a valuable instrument for the comparison of language proficiency levels, but it can also facilitate the communication about language learning and teaching in the different languages that are used in Europe. In March 2007, the Mercator Research Centre published *The Development of Minimum Standards for Language Education in Regional and Minority Languages* (Krumm, 2007). In this report, a description is given of the minimum conditions and minimum provisions required in regional and minority language education. The recommendations in conclusion of the report include an advice to the Council of Europe to stimulate the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for the description of education goals and for the production of teaching materials in regional and minority language education. In this sense plurilingualism is opposed to multilingualism (Little, 2007), a term that the Council of Europe reserves to refer to the situation of a society in which different languages are spoken, but where the individual citizens are not necessarily plurilingual. This use of the terms plurilingualism and multilingualism is not generally adopted, as the quotation from the Communication on Multilingualism of the European Commission shows. In this study, the terminology of the Council of Europe will be preserved, with the exception of quotations, in which sometimes the term multilingualism will appear as referring to personal multilingualism, i.e. plurilingualism. The Common European Framework of Reference was originally developed for foreign language education and has mainly been used for this purpose since its introduction. However, it is also used for second language learning: textbooks for second language learners in Europe often mention the intended learning goals in terms of the CEFR, and the language proficiency levels of the framework are used in some European countries in languages tests for immigrants.

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe is now in the process of exploring, in a new activity named *Languages of School Education*, the possibilities to account also for the mother tongue(s) of language users in the form of a European reference tool. It should be stressed explicitly that there is no intention to apply the CEFR to mother tongue education. The new to develop framework of reference will take into account, besides the foreign languages, the languages taught as a school subject, as well as the languages that are used as a medium of instruction. The CEFR might in the future become part of this larger framework, but at the same time it can serve as a model for the new framework on Languages of School Education. This study aims to pay attention on the necessity of further

elaboration of the recommendations of the Mercator report on Minimum Standards with respect to the CEFR and to reflect on the position the framework could fulfill in regional and minority language education (Alderson, 2009). For this purpose, a literature study was conducted and an investigation made of the actual application of the Common European Framework of Reference in several regional and minority language areas in Europe. Given the limited time available for this investigation, the nature of the research is explorative and not comprehensive. Nevertheless, the results can be seen as a first step towards accounting for regional and minority languages in the use and development of European reference tools for languages like Kashubian one in our case.

## 5. Current challenges

The internationalisation of pedagogy, the global context of technology and, above all, the arrival of the information society to languages education, have boosted the possibilities of access to information and knowledge for people, but at the same time have as a consequence changed work organization and the skills learned. This trend has increased uncertainty for all and for some has led to intolerable situations of exclusion.

Education and training will increasingly become the main vehicles for self-awareness, belonging, advancement and self-fulfilment for minorities like Kashubians. Bilingual education and training whether acquired in the formal education system, on the job or in a more informal way, is the key for every minority member to controlling their future and their personal development. Language education and training remain one of the determining factors in equality of opportunity. Education systems have already played an essential role in the emancipation and the social and professional advancement of minorities. Education can and must contribute further to the crucial equality between men and women in general. Immaterial investment and getting the best out of our human resources will improve competitiveness, boost jobs and safeguard social achievements on the regional level (Jager, Meer, 2007). The individual's place in relation to their fellow citizens will increasingly be determined by their capacity to learn foreign languages and master fundamental knowledge (Hrehová, Bofiková, 2009). The position *of everyone in relation to their fellow citizens in the context of knowledge and skills* therefore will be decisive. This relative position which could be called the *"learning relationship"* (Szyjko, 2007d) will become an increasingly dominant feature in the structure of the European Union's societies. The ability to renew and innovate will depend on the links between the development of knowledge in research and its transmission through education and training. In all this, communication will be essential both for generating and disseminating local ideas. The future of the EU and its development will depend largely on its ability to manage the progress towards this new society. The objective is to make it into a just and progressive society based on its cultural wealth and

diversity. There is a need to whet society's appetite for education and training throughout life. There needs to be permanent and broad access to a number of different forms of knowledge. In addition, the level of skill achieved by each and everyone will have to be converted into an *instrument for measuring individual performance* in a way which will safeguard equal rights for minorities as far as possible. There is no single pattern for all to follow throughout their lives. Everyone must be able to seize their opportunities for improvement in society and for personal fulfilment, irrespective of their ethnic origin and educational background. This particularly applies to Kashubians to enable them to make the most of the general education provided by regional schools. Kashubians should be given the chance not just to catch up, but to gain access to new knowledge which could help to bring out their abilities. Given the diversity of national situations and the inadequacy of global solutions in this context, proposing a model is not the answer. This would be doomed to failure given the pivotal role of the individual in the construction of the learning society and the social and cultural diversity of Poland. Despite the difficulties that exist concerning the application of the Common European Framework of Reference to regional and minority language education (Concil of Europe, 2001, 2005), the framework has many benefits to offer. If it is used not in a prescriptive way, but as a descriptive reference document as it was intended to be, it provides valuable possibilities for differentiation and precise description of learning goals. These are vital aspects to increase the effectivity of regional and minority language education and, as a result, also the level of language proficiency of the students.

Adaptation of the CEFR for Kashubian language education will be a great challenge. If the framework, however, can be an instrument to increase language awareness and language learning motivation of students, to offer teachers the possibility of differentiation between mother tongue and second language learners in the same classroom, and to refer to language proficiency levels in an internationally comparable manner, the work will be amply rewarded with many worthwhile benefits for all those involved in the teaching and learning of regional and minority languages for the benefit of the truly United Europe.

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