

Chapter 7

The EU Language Policy as a Tool

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) is a multilingual union, which has 27 official languages. There is no other international or regional organisation that has so many official languages. Since its very beginning, the official languages of the member states are the official languages of the EU. The multilingualism of the EU is not just about the official languages of the EU but also because of the numerous indigenous regional and minority languages. The language policy of the EU can be traced back to the Treaty of Rome and the first regulation. Since then, the language policy of the EU has changed parallel with the developments and changes within the EU and in the world. First, it was evaluated as a tool for personal development and integration, but with the changes in the globalized world, it became a tool to increase the competitiveness of the EU, which can be seen as a soft power at the international level. This chapter aims to show the changing role of the EU's language policy and its current status as a powerful tool in the knowledge-based economies at the international level.

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is a *sui generis* Union. It has many characteristics, which make the EU unique, and its Language Policy is one of them. The EU is a union with 24 official languages, and it is the only union, which has so many official languages.

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The language policy of the EU has changed and enriched since the Treaty of Rome where the foundations of the language policy were laid. Then, the official languages of the EU were just 4 and today with each enlargement it has become 24. There are also many indigenous regional and minority languages, which are components of European multilingual identity. The founding treaty and the EU's first regulation, Council Regulation No 1/58, which was especially about the official and working languages and their use, show the importance given to this policy area. The language policy of the EU has been supported in many ways within the EU with different objectives. In this chapter, the objectives like sustaining its motto "unity in diversity" and making young people more competitive and may be not just the young people but also the Union itself will be noted clearly (European Commission, (n.d.)a) and tried to be explained how they have been supported and with what aim.

In international affairs, actors use different policies to gain power; some prefers to use soft co-optive power and others prefers hard command power policies. In general, the EU is seen and evaluated as a soft power, which prefers to use soft power resources such as cultural attractions, ideology and international institutions to achieve wanted outcomes (Nye, 1990, 167). In this chapter, it is aimed to see if the language policy of the EU can be used as a soft power tool for the EU to be able to gain more power or to be more competitive as an actor in the globalized world. This is an important question because while language can be seen and evaluated as a power, the EU is not a monolingual actor. It has many official languages, and this is an important point, which makes the subject complicated because of the languages, such as English, French, German and Spanish, which have a more dominant place within the EU. However, the EU has a language policy, and it has been supported seriously and it should have some outcomes both within and outside the EU.

In this chapter, after stating power and soft power, information about the EU is given to clarify it as a *sui generis* union and its language policy is defined as it is one of the features which makes the EU *sui generis*. Here, to be able to make comparison the United Nation (UN) is also mentioned in terms of its official languages. Then the historical development of this policy is given briefly to be able to see the developments and find out how it and its scope have changed since the beginning. As a last point, it is focused on the role of language policy within and outside the EU as a tool in the globalized world. It is aimed to show the changing role of its language policy and the current status of it. Besides, it is also aimed to point out how EU as a soft power uses its language policy to sustain social integration within the Union and gain prominence in the changing world.

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