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# Stichting Taal naar Keuze

Mini-seminar on the EU-project:

## **Your Language Counts!**

*All languages matter in a multilingual society*

Home Language Education  
in Lower Secondary Schools in Europe

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Experiences and Policies

March 28, 2025, University of Amsterdam,



## SUMMARY



Taal  
naar  
Keuze

Giving the mother tongue - the other language used at home in addition to the national language and/or school language, or **home language - a full place within education**, why do this and how to make it happen? That's what this seminar was about. Teachers from Finland and Sweden, teachers from Leeuwarden and Amsterdam, together with scientists, policy makers and managers, discussed the effects and possibilities. The conclusions are:

1. The society we live in consists of people with different and flexible identities. The variation in languages that comes with this is hardly seen as an advantage within education. **Involving home languages in education provides cognitive and socio-emotional benefits for both students and society.**
2. Allowing home languages into education is guaranteed in the universal rights of the child, in European language policies and in some European national legislation. In Finland and Sweden, as in European and International schools in the Netherlands, home language is a legally established school subject within regular education. **The Dutch Law on Secondary Education (WVO) provides opportunities for this, but does not oblige education providers (schools and boards) to implement it.** Dutch VO focuses mainly on Dutch, English, German and French, and sometimes Spanish and Chinese: this is an imposed language offer that is not related to the home languages and/or the wishes of the learners
3. **Employing teachers and other language experts flexibly within and above school, introducing online education, regulating funding at the municipal, regional and/or national level, and an appropriate organizational structure, these are the prerequisites for reaching the goal: giving the home language - a full place within education.**



A small selection of slides provide the summary below.

For all, or specific presentations, please indicate your desire in the Language of Choice contact form:

[www.taalnaarkeuze.nl/contact](http://www.taalnaarkeuze.nl/contact).



These were the attendees and/or participating agencies.

## Partners & Guest Speakers & Guest Organisations

### *Stichting Taal naar Keuze:*

Karijn Helsloot (director)  
Claudia Pinto (senior coordinator)  
Margaret William (teacher of Arabic)  
Canan Gönençay (teacher of Turkish)  
Matteo Mueller-Thies (trainee)  
Mara Kyrou (coordinator EU-project)

### *ISK Piter Jelles:*

Marsha Olyerhoek - Andringa (team leader)  
Xana Kozak (teacher of English, German & Ukrainian)  
Wakil Nabizada (teacher of Persian/Farsi)  
Ahmad Alhamad (teacher of Arabic)  
Magan Tahir (teacher of Somali)

### *Kohnstamm Institute, UvA:*

Cynthia Groff (researcher)

### *Enheten för flerspråkighet, Uppsala, Sweden:*

Ines Chahbani (teacher of Arabic & French)  
Shahla Edalatian Shahriary (teacher of Persian)  
Abdullahi Ahmed (teacher of Somali)

### *Oman äidinkielen opettajat, Finland:*

Fatma Tuba Araman (teacher of Turkish)  
Viktoriia Taraban (teacher of Ukrainian)  
Faraz Rozhanizand (teacher of Persian)

### *Mercator European Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning*

Jelske Dijkstra (project manager)

### *Representatives of the Council of Amsterdam*

*Samenwerkingsverband Amsterdam-Diemen*

*Goethe Institut Amsterdam*

These were the topics and speakers.

## Seminar program

- A. Project's Introduction by Karijn Helsloot, director stichting Taal naar Keuze
- B. Teachers' Perspectives, Approaches & Pilot Activities
  - a. Pilot Perspectives and Activities in Arabic and Turkish Classes in the Netherlands: Canan Gönençay (Turkish) & Margaret William (Arabic)
  - b. The Swedish Model of HLE & Perspectives from the Persian Classes in Uppsala, Sweden: Ibtissem Ines Chahbani (Arabic & French ), Shahla Edalatian Shahriary (Persian)
  - c. Approaches in the Somali class in Netherlands and Sweden: Magan Tahir & Abdullahi Ahmed
  - d. Approaches in the Persian/Farsi class in the ISK Piter Jelles: Wakil Nabizada
  - e. Perspectives from Finland: Fatma Tuba Araman, Viktoriia Taraban, Faraz Rozhanizand
- C. First Pilot Results (University of Duisburg- Essen), presented by Mara Kyrou (Taal naar Keuze)
- D. Research Insights & Policies on Multilingualism<sup>6</sup>
  - 1. Cynthia Groff (Kohnstamm Institute, UvA)- Benefits of heritage language education on young learners
  - 2. Marsha Olyerhoek (ISK Piter Jelles) - How to implement home languages in Dutch ISK (newcomers' classes)
  - 3. Jelske Dijkstra (Mercator European Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning)- An overview of Mercator projects
  - 4. Matteo Mueller-Thies & Mara Kyrou (Stichting Taal naar Keuze) - EU-Policy analysis of secondary education

# Stichting Taal naar Keuze

An overview of Home Language Education in  
Lower and Upper Secondary Schools

Experiences and Policies from the EU-Project  
and in the Netherlands

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**Dr. Karijn Helsloot**

Director Stichting Taal naar Keuze



These are the partner organizations in the 2-year EU project Your Language Counts!, set up by the Goethe Institute in Sweden.

## Partners in EU-project

1. Finland
  - Familia ry
  - Oman äidinkielen opettajat ry
2. Germany
  - University Duisburg-Essen
3. Greece
  - ELIX
4. Netherlands
  - Stichting Taal naar Keuze
5. Sweden:
  - Goethe Institute in Sweden
  - Uppsala Universitet
  - Enheten för flerspråkighet Uppsala



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Part of the EU project is a 9-month teaching pilot in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, in which teachers share experiences across borders to arrive at a European educational model.

## EU Pilot Overview

Development and implementation of a Heritage Language Education model in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden

- The pilot design is made by the Department of Education, Uppsala University
- The pilot evaluation is executed by the University of Duisburg- Essen
- The pilot focuses on students in lower secondary years (12-16 years old)
- The pilot is executed in school year 2024-2025
- The languages taught are **Arabic, Farsi, Russian, Somali, Turkish** and **Ukrainian**
- In total there are more than 100 students and 18 teachers involved (3 teachers per language)
- Stakeholders in the pilot are school leaders, heritage language educators, education policymakers and families

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In the Netherlands, the newcomer section of Piter Jelles in Leeuwarden is participating, as well as students from the lower school of the Damstede Lyceum in Amsterdam.

## Participating students in Dutch pilot

Damstede Lyceum, Amsterdam and OSG Piter Jelles/ISK, Leeuwarden



	VO - Damstede	ISK - Piter Jelles
Arabic	3	25
Farsi	(2)	14
Somali	-	24
Turkish	5	-
Ukrainian	-	15

Total number of pupils in NL = 86  
Total number of teachers = 7



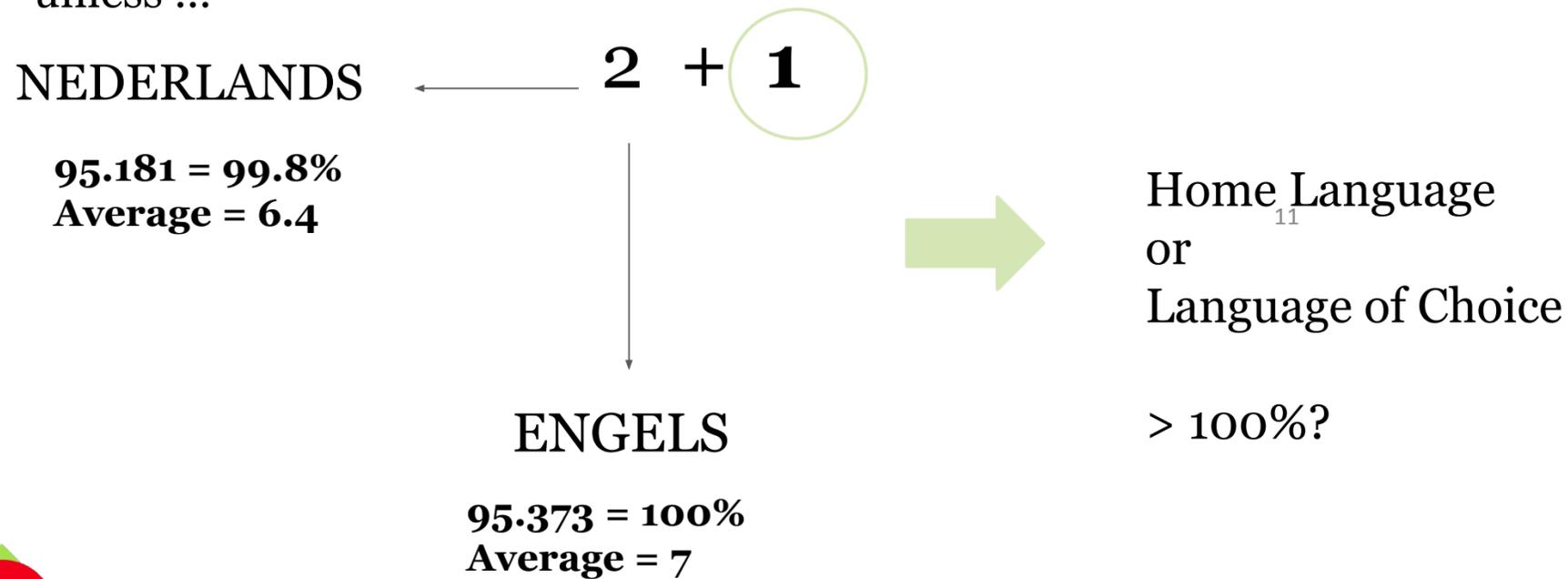
The European Language Policy says that every citizen should be able to use at least three languages. These are the national language and a lingua franca, such as English, and a third language, e.g. the mother tongue/this language if it is different from Dutch or English.

In the Netherlands, the National Board of Tests and Examinations publishes annual data on which languages students complete in secondary education (VO). In conclusion the VO does not take responsibility for complying with the European language policy, 2+1. However, with room for home languages in VO, the minimum number of 3 languages can be indeed achieved!

In examination years in Dutch secondary education there are about one million pupils.

Which languages are examined at school, besides Dutch and English?

European language policy: 1+2 criterium. Maximally **65%** of the students meet this requirement, unless ...



TAAL	Kandidaten		
	Total havo+vwo	%	Average
DUIJS	34.039	<b>35.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>
FRANS	24.281	<b>25.5</b>	<b>6.2</b>
SPAANS	2937	<b>3.1</b>	<b>6.6</b>
TURKS	147	<b>0.15</b>	<b>7.8</b>
ARABISCH	206	<b>0.22</b>	<b>8.5</b>
FRIES	55	<b>0.06</b>	<b>6.4</b>
RUSSISCH	43	<b>0.05</b>	<b>8.7</b>

### Centraal Examen 2024

Bron: [CvTE, Persmap Centraal Examen 2024](#)

Chinese and Italian are also legitimate school subjects, but they have no Central Examination.



The Dutch Education Act says that students in upper secondary school can choose which third language they want to do. Unfortunately, very few schools allow this choice.

## Wetgeving: Uitvoeringsbesluit WVO 2020

### Artikel 2.5. Inrichting gemeenschappelijk deel profielen vwo



- 1 Het gemeenschappelijk deel van een profiel in het atheneum omvat de volgende vakken, met de daarbij vermelde normatieve studielast, uitgedrukt in uren:
  - a. Nederlandse taal en literatuur: 480;
  - b. Engelse taal en literatuur: 400;
  - c. Franse taal en literatuur, Duitse taal en literatuur, Spaanse taal en literatuur, Russische taal en literatuur, Italiaanse taal en literatuur, Arabische taal en literatuur, Turkse taal en literatuur, Chinese taal en cultuur of Friese taal en cultuur, ter keuze van de leerling, voor zover het bevoegd gezag deze vakken aanbiedt: 480;

[Artikel 2.3 Uitvoeringsbesluit WVO 2020](#)

[Artikel 2.5 Uitvoeringsbesluit WVO 2020](#)

The *Taal naar Keuze* Foundation was established in 2019 to help schools offer more languages, to allow students to **choose** which language(s) they want to learn in addition to Dutch and English.



There are **examination programs** for upper secondary, and **language and multilingual programs** for lower secondary. Teachers at the school, as well as, language teachers and linguistic experts carry out the programs.

**Taal naar Keuze gebruikt een hybride onderwijsaanpak, waarbij les en begeleiding plaatsvinden op school én op afstand, over scholen heen. Docenten van buiten én binnen de school doen mee. Het TnK Portal is de beveiligde leeromgeving, alleen toegankelijk voor ingeschreven leerlingen en docenten.**



### Languages in upper secondary

Jonge mensen willen talen leren, *als* ze zelf de talen mogen kiezen. Het laten verzilveren van al aanwezige talenkennis - zoals een thuistaal - is een gouden kans voor de leerling, de school en de maatschappij. Cito ontwikkelt jaarlijks Centraal Examens voor Arabisch, Russisch, Spaans en Turks. Maar ook alleen een Schoolexamen in een andere taal, waaronder Chinees en Italiaans, kan gelden als (extra) examenvak, in het profieldeel en/of vrije deel. School, bekijk de preview van de [Quickscan](#) en [neem contact op](#) om het formulier op school te gebruiken. Voor meer informatie klik op Lees



### All Languages Programme

Taalkundige kennis, over en door talen heen, is hét houvast om diversiteit en kansengelijkheid in basis- en voortgezet onderwijs duurzaam te benaderen. Taal naar Keuze bouwt voort op ruim 20 jaar lesmaterialen meertaligheid en taalvergelijking. *Alle Talen* is het laatste product, met het Europees Talenlabel 2020 erop. Voer het uit als lessen binnen Nederlands, een mvt of Burgerschap, of in een nieuwkomersklas, of start ermee als projectweek of Zomerschool. Voor het PO is er *SJOES*. Voor meer informatie en downloads klik op Lees meer.



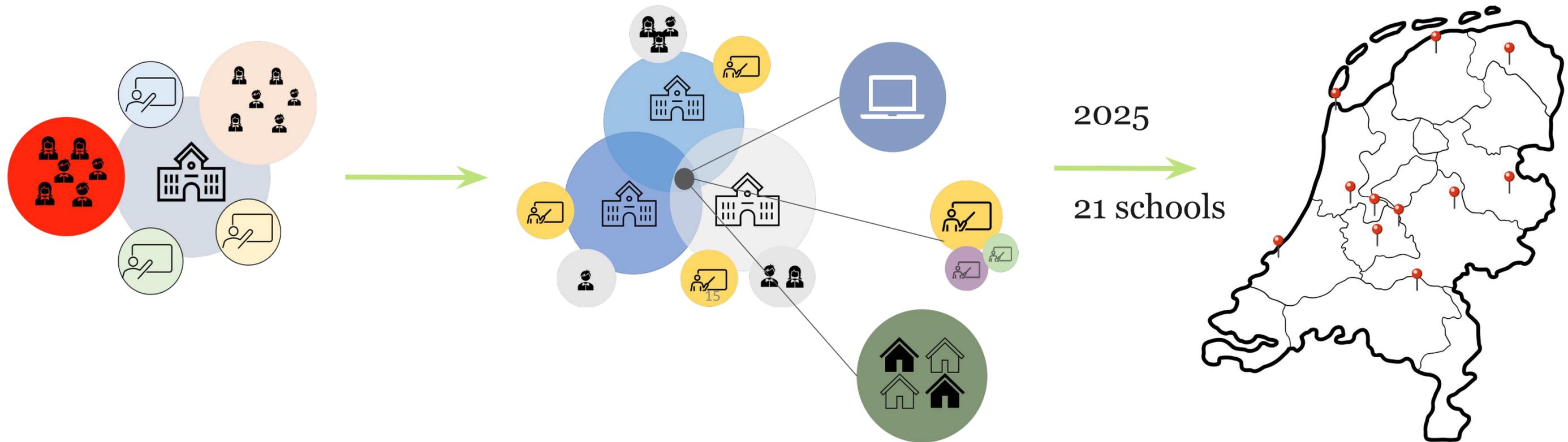
### Languages in lower secondary

Een jaar Spaans of Italiaans, bijvoorbeeld, en dan een jaar een andere taal, dat geeft leerlingen in de onderbouw ruimte om gemotiveerd moderne talen mee te nemen naar de bovenbouw. Taal naar Keuze biedt scholen Startersjaren aan, met ingevloggen docenten én docenten verbonden aan de school. Neem alle onderbouwjaren samen, door alle niveaus heen. Laat de inhoudelijke leerlijnen parallel lopen, door de talen heen - voor binding en feestelijke presentaties. Voor meer informatie en impressies klik op Lees meer.

In 2020-21, 20 the Taal naar Keuze foundation delivered 20 graduates for one school in Amsterdam. By 2025, the foundation works for more than 20 schools across the country, and has guided a total of nearly 300 students to final exams in 7 languages.

Since **2020-2021 TnK** offers 1- to 2-year examination programs in **Arabic, Chinese, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish**

Since **2021, 280 pupils participated in TnK upper secondary language classes**



from exclusively in-school to hybrid education, online and in-school

It is also recommended to offer home language programs already in the lower secondary of VO, in the crucial age phase of 12-15. This way all students benefit from the language skills present in a class. Offer a program like **All Languages**, with a group of school teachers, and link it to Basic Language Skills. See <http://meertaligheid.taalnaarkeuze.nl/lesmateriaal/>.

## Introduction of **All Languages** / Multilingual Programmes

Linguistic knowledge, across and through languages, is the handhold for a sustainable approach to diversity and equity in primary and secondary education.

Growing up with two or three languages daily is increasingly common, due to migration, mixed marriages and the Internet. The mental effort that multilingual acquisition requires from young people deserves support and appreciation within education.

[www.taalnaarkeuze.nl/onderwijs](http://www.taalnaarkeuze.nl/onderwijs)

<http://meertaligheid.taalnaarkeuze.nl/lesmateriaal/>

The main obstacles cited by school leaders for not letting students choose and allow home languages in education are:

1. it doesn't fit the schedule,
2. we don't have teachers,
- and 3. we don't have the money for it.

Solutions are there, but they require revising of the education policy:

1. allow flexible groups and schedules,
2. teach online and allow more outside knowledge,
- and 3. use existing resources differently, and/or seek additional funding.

## Paradigm Shift

### Logistics - schedule

Flexible groups

E.g. 2x per week blocks of

- “Language of Choice”,
- Multilingualism
- Basic Language Skills

### Finances

- Redistribute your Lump sum
  - Reallocate subsidies for

basic language skills, tailored education to talented, special needs, multilinguals ...

- Calculate the costs made because of denial of the HLs / Mother tongues

### Teacher shortage

- Involve others (e.g. non-language teacher with HL knowledge, parents)
- Collaborate and stimulate online teaching

Consider other models, like the ones in SWEDEN and FINLAND



# Stichting Taal naar Keuze

The teaching pilot in the EU project provides many insights. What are teachers doing in the classroom? How do they work together across national borders? And what does teaching do to students?

## Examples from the EU Home Language Education Pilot

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## Teachers' Perspectives & Approaches



These are the characteristics of the Education Model developed from Sweden, Uppsala, based on similar models and contents.

## Pilot Model - Perspectives and Activities

The **Pilot Model for Heritage Language Teaching** is developed by scholars Constanze Ackermann- Boström, Simeon Oxley, Anne Reath Warren, at the Department of Education, Uppsala University

The model is based on four perspectives: **Language, Identity, Interculturality, Knowledge**

The perspectives are translated into **12 activities** that:

- Prioritise students' backgrounds and multilingualism
- Encourage students' discussions on language attitudes and experiences
- Are not typically skill-based or level-based language exercises

# The Perspectives and the Classroom Activities

## 4.1. Language

1. Dictogloss
2. Donut Circles
3. Working with comic strips

These are the four approaches with three different activities each. The teachers in the EU pilot deployed these, in addition to their own approaches. We show a few examples.

## 4.2 Identity

1. Language portraits - [Persian](#)
2. What does my mother tongue actually mean to me?
3. Identity texts

## 4.3 Interculturality

1. Family life around the world
2. Music in my life- Persian- Finland
3. Exploring our hometown - [Turkish & Arabic](#)

## 4.4 Knowledge

1. Working with school subjects - Somali
2. Gap-fill crossword
3. Progressive brainstorming - [Turkish](#)

An example of an activity.

Students of Arabic and Turkish at Damstede Lyceum compared life in the Netherlands with that in their parents' country of origin. They expressed their complex identity.

**Activity** (Exploring our hometown/homeland):

**How is your life in your motherland?**

- Turkish and Arabic heritage language students were tasked with comparing life in ancestral villages in their homeland with urban life in the Netherlands.
- Each summer, these students may visit their (grand)parents' birthplace, where extended family members still reside.
- By creating collages, the students could clearly see the differences and similarities between rural and urban life.
- The activity showed that they have a dual cultural identity, shaped by both traditional and modern environments.
- It also helped them reflect on their own experiences and better understand the connection between their heritage and daily lives.

An example of an activity.

## Somali teachers team

We, the Somali teachers in this project, wondered if it would be possible for our classes to communicate with each other by exchanging letters.

This turned into an engaging activity for learning Somali, and the students enjoyed it while expanding their vocabulary.

A great activity that worked well for us during this project was the collaboration between our students, where they wrote to each other in groups under the teachers guidance. This activity significantly improved their writing skills. Thanks to this project, our student can learn from one another.



An example of an activity.

## Music in my life (with a twist!)

Students interview an adult (e.g., family member, teacher) about meaningful songs or pieces of music. The interviews are shared and discussed in class to compare and reflect on how music connects people to their emotions and identities.

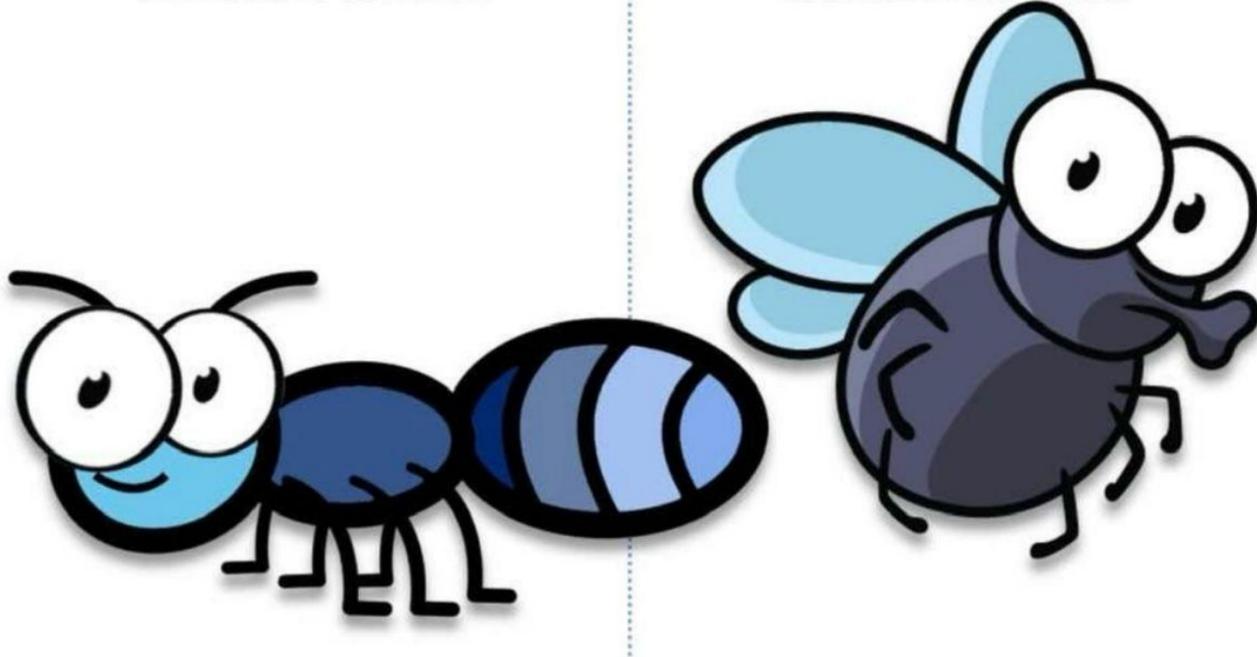
The students liked so much the activity that they extended it by interviewing each other!



Comparing the home language with the school language/national language is a standard practice within lessons.

Activity (Language comparison/ Progressive brainstorming):  
Sayings & Proverbs in Turkish & Dutch with similar meanings

TÜRKÇE	NEDERLANDS
<b>KARINCAYI BİLE İNCİTMEK</b> = geen mier kwaad doen	<b>GEEN Vlieg KWAAD DOEN</b> = sineği bile incitmemek



Wouldn't hurt a fly!

TÜRKÇE	NEDERLANDS
<b>ARMUT DİBİNE DÜŞER</b> = de peer valt niet ver van de boom	<b>DE APPEL VALT NIET VER VAN DE BOOM</b> = elma dibine düşer



The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

In addition to the 4 perspectives and 12 activities being tested in the EU pilot, there are existing teaching materials for home language learning that teachers (can) use. These materials are often digital and available for free. Teaching materials are also made available within the Netherlands and Flanders. See for example [iMat math terms in various languages](#)

## Online teaching packages in Farsi/Dari from Sweden

- **Reading**
- **Writing**
- **Speaking**
- **Communication**



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a Persian language learning website. The browser tabs include 'Meet - swk-exfv-krj', 'Talkpal - دستور زبان فارسی', and 'گرامر زبان فارسی دری | dari'. The address bar shows a URL from OneDrive. The website has a dark blue navigation bar with the following items: 'خانه', 'نصاب تعلیمی', 'تعلیمات عمومی', 'کتابخانه', 'گالری', 'تماس با ما', and 'Centrum för flerspråkighet'. A green arrow-shaped banner at the top right says 'گرامر زبان فارسی دری'. Below this, there are four colored boxes containing lists of topics:

- Red box (left):** ادبیات عامیانه, ادبیات فولکلوری و یا مردمی, ادبیات فولکلور, زبان و ادبیات چیست, فولکلور و ادبیات
- Blue box (right):** زبان های هندو آریایی, فارسی یا دری, زبان دری, نقش زنان در ادبیات معاصر دری افغانستان
- Green box (bottom left):** ادبیات دری در قرون سوم تا ششم هجری, ادبیات دری در قرون هفتم و هشتم هجری, ادبیات دری در قرون نهم و دهم هجری, ادبیات دری در قرون یازدهم و دوازدهم هجری
- Olive box (bottom right):** فعل, زمان های فعل, فعل معلوم و فعل مجهول, فعل مثبت و فعل منفی

The content of Turkish lessons in Finland shows similarities with the new Modern Foreign Languages core objectives that have been made by teachers in the Netherlands under the supervision of the SLO in recent years. The three domains of Communication, Language Awareness and Cultural Awareness can be recognized below.

## **CONTENT HEADINGS of TURKISH LESSONS in FINLAND:**

- **Metaphors / Idioms / Proverbs**
- **Special Days and Celebrations**
- **Reading/ Writing/ Thinking and Speaking Skills**
- **Film and Documentary Reviews**
- **Imagination and Design Studies**
- **Interpretation Activities on Visuals**
- **National Values and Traditions**
- **Art and Science Studies**
- **Cultural Elements and History**
- **Grammar Activities**
- **Poetry and Theatre**

The teachers process their experiences in Moodle, and discuss them with each other in online meetings. The exchanges form the basis for the EU Home Language Learning Platform to be built.

## The European Platform for Heritage Language Teachers, one of the main outputs of the EU-project, is based on discussions and shared practices in Moodle.



### QUESTION 4

by [redacted] - Thursday, 5 September 2024, 3:10 PM

Compare the ways that the HL you teach is used in countries of origin versus in the diaspora. How can discussing these differences contribute to raising sociocultural awareness in the HL classroom?



### RE: QUESTION 4

by [redacted] - Monday, 7 October 2024, 3:09 PM

In this regard, I believe that education in the heritage mother tongue, communication with parents/students and offering them a different perspective are very important. A child or young person who is far from their own country may experience interesting difficulties according to their age, different times and environments. Sometimes, coping with these is easy or more difficult. We do some theatrical studies<sup>27</sup> during mother tongue education. For example; I give a fictional event, the basis of the event may be sadness or joy. "In this case, which sentences would you use to express your good wishes to the person in front of you? How would you share the sadness of the person in front of you or how would you celebrate the happiness of the person in front of you?" etc. These sentences, which are the basis of the sociocultural structure, help children feel closer to their country socially and culturally even if they are physically far from their country. Sometimes we do activities with a speaking or writing activity so that they feel like they are a part of the social and cultural structure in the country where their mother tongue is spoken. For example, one of the studies we did a few weeks ago this year was as follows: "Tell us about your Turkish side." First, we talked about the social and cultural characteristics of being Turkish in class and watched a video about it. Then, they did a writing exercise consisting of two items: in the first item, I asked them to make a character analysis about the reasons why they feel Turkish. In the second item, they had to explain which Turkish characteristics their families and people close to them were happy with. I value such studies.

[PERMALINK](#)

[SHOW PARENT](#)

[REPLY](#)



# Stichting Taal naar Keuze

The EU project provides insight on how home language education and home language tutoring are organized in Finland and Sweden.  
How can we do this in the Netherlands?

## The organization of Home Language Education and Study Guidance



In Sweden, home language education is organized at the municipal level. Up to and including the lower secondary level of VO, ages 12-16, each municipality offers it compulsorily. Cooperation between municipalities takes place. It is about education as well as tutoring in the home language! In upper secondary school, interested pupils can take exams in the language as a school subject.

## The Swedish municipalities' job is...

**To coordinate and organize HLE and study guidance in the mother tongue in compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and special schools. To lead a multicultural teaching group.**

See the numbers in students and hours within the municipality of Uppsala, Sweden, regarding home language instruction and tutoring.

## The number of participants in compulsory schools (age 6-16) in the region of Uppsala

Municipal compulsory schools & special schools:

4500 students

Independent compulsory schools & special schools:

950 students

Study guidance in the mother tongue:

300 h/week

## Upper secondary school (15-18) including upper secondary special school

Municipal upper secondary schools & special schools :  
350 students

Independent upper secondary schools & special schools :

200 students

Study guidance in the mother tongue :

7 h/week

Overview translation of foreign grade document :

1-5/year

Depending on the age of the student, instruction takes place in the student's own school or in a centrally located school in the city. Tutoring always takes place at the home school.

## The organization of the classes within schools



### Teaching in schools

Preschool class to year 5 at their home school, outside school hours.



### Centralized groups

Year 6-9 and Upper secondary school. EFF covers students' bus tickets to/from lessons (in case they do not have a municipal buss pass).



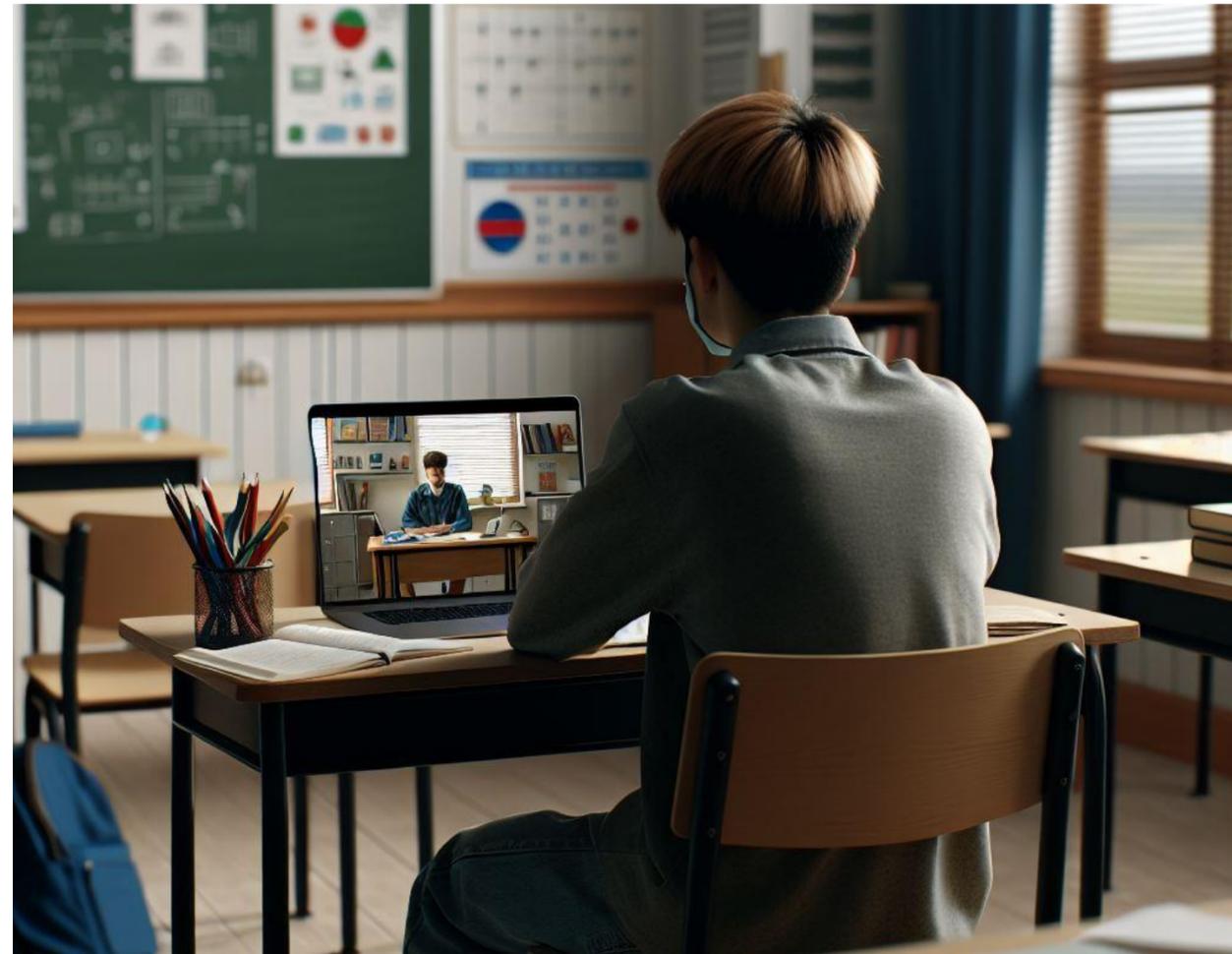
### Study guidance

At the student's home school, during school hours.

Teaching and tutoring are also offered  
ONLINE.

## Remote learning in HLE and study guidance

- Mother tongue instruction and study guidance in the mother tongue are given remotely to other municipalities.
- Clear guidelines are provided in the Education Act regarding how remote learning should be conducted.



As an example, see here the numbers related to teaching and tutoring for Persian/Farsi in Uppsala.

Persian classes  
from pre-school to  
high school and study  
guidance- EFF,  
Uppsala

**2 students in Study guidance**

**3 students in special school**

**26 students in high school**

**65 from pre-school up to 9 grade**

**12 schools to visit per week**



And here we see how much time is given to tutoring Persian/Farsi per week, depending on the number of students in a school.

# Time and locations

Study guidance: the schools request it at their school

1 student/ class: 30 mins  
2 students/ class: 40 mins  
>4 students/ class: 60 mins

High school students gather at a high school in central Uppsala -> one hour

6 to 9 grade gather at a school in central Uppsala -> each class one hour

In Finland, students up to age 14 receive home language instruction twice a week. Groups consist of pupils of varying ages and knowledge levels.

# HERITAGE (PERSIAN) LANGUAGE LESSONS IN FINLAND

Organized by municipalities

2 teaching lessons per week (1.5 hours)

From first to seventh grade

Mixed pupil profile

Age

Language proficiency



Home language instruction provides a variety of benefits, in addition to direct knowledge of the language:

## PUPILS' MOTIVATIONS IN FINLAND

- ❖ Communication with Parents
- ❖ Connecting with family members
- ❖ Sense of community
- ❖ Culture and identity
- ❖ Language Knowledge and Personal Development





# Stichting Taal naar Keuze

Scholars at the University of Duisburg-Essen are responsible for the evaluation of the project: Tatjana Atanasoska, Clarissa Diekmann, Tobias Schroedler, Erkan Gürsoy

**The first results of the teaching pilot are available.**

**All students and teachers will be interviewed a second time end May 2025.**



The first questionnaire was submitted in September 2024 to the then enrolled students, prior to, or at the start of the pilot classes. For the students in the Netherlands, the offer was completely new: within school, they had never received home language instruction before.

## Pre-Evaluation: Student Questionnaires

### Part 1:

- Personal relevance of learning one's HL
- Tasks and activities
- Speaking one's HL in vs. outside of school
- Learning benefit
- Support from the teacher
- Well-being in HL-lessons vs. at school overall

### Part 2: Motivation & Reasons for Participation

- Intrinsic motivation: e.g. personal importance
- Extrinsic motivation: e.g. being able to talk to relatives

Translation  
into all 9 languages



UNIVERSITÄT  
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ESSEN

Offen im Denken

**Mother tongue education from the students' perspective**

This questionnaire is part of the "Your language counts!" project at your school which focuses on mother tongue teaching in three countries in Europe. We would like to find out more about your opinion of the lessons and your reasons for your participation.

Thank you very much for answering the questions. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your answers will remain anonymous and will only be used for scientific purposes.

**Personal information:**

age: \_\_\_\_\_ years      class: \_\_\_\_\_      gender:  male  female  diverse

What is your mother tongue / which language does your teacher teach? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been attending mother tongue classes? \_\_\_\_\_

Since when do you live in Finland? \_\_\_\_\_

**Questionnaire:**

You are going to read several statements. Please choose how much you agree with each statement. Please tick **one option per statement only** (☒ / ☑)

	Your opinion			
	exactly true	rather true	rather not true	not true at all
1. I like mother tongue lessons				
2. I think mother tongue teaching is important				
3. I enjoy the tasks and activities during lessons				
4. I like to speak my mother tongue at school				
5. I like to speak my mother tongue outside of school				
6. I learn a lot in class				
7. I am supported in learning my mother tongue				
8. I feel comfortable at school overall				
9. I feel comfortable in my mother tongue lessons				

**Question 9: Why?**

\_\_\_\_\_

I take part in mother tongue lessons because ...

10. learning my mother tongue is important to me				
11. my family wants me to take part				
12. I can meet my friends				
13. I want to be able to speak well with my relatives				
14. I would like to learn more about my origins				

**I would like to say this about my mother tongue lessons:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your participation!

Part 1

Part 2

Below are the numbers of learners in FI, SW and NL who completed the questionnaire by language in September 2024. In May 2025, the 40 new pupils in NL will also be included.



In March 2025 the total number of pupils in NL = **86**  
Total number of teachers = 7



# Number of Questionnaires

		Country		
		NL	FI	SW
Heritage Language		Count	Count	Count
	Arabic	7	15	3
	Farsi	10	5	8
	Russian	0	13	4
	Somali	12	8	6
	Turkish	4	8	9
	Ukrainian	12	11	5
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>35</b>

in NL there are now 7+21=28

in NL there are now 12+15=27

in NL there are now 86 students

Total: n = 140  
**140** student questionnaires  
(intended goal: 100)

Results:  
Students' feedback is very positive!

The enthusiasm among the students participating in the Netherlands is very high, especially among the newcomers. During the Language Market on March 27, 2025, there was a lively crowd of parents, teachers and students from the Piter Jelles Lyceum.



## Students' Answers (Open Questions):

“Everyone's own mother tongue is a wealth to them and nothing is more important than their own mother tongue and their own culture”

“I think that my mother tongue education is important to me because it makes me unique and I intend to use every little detail in my future”

“I think the lessons are fun and interesting. I will be happy to learn more about my home language in a good way”

“I think it's great fun and I love what we do in the lessons”

“There is a great environment in the classes”

“The teacher is very kind and we have a good time”

“It's the best hour of the week”



Stichting Taal naar Keuze

## Research Insights & Policies on Multilingualism

Cynthia Groff (Kohnstamm Institute, UvA)

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American linguist, Cynthia Groff, affiliated with the Kohnstamm Institute, Amsterdam, highlighted the benefits of home language instruction, referring to her own research findings and those of other scholars.

# Why Your Language Counts: Benefits of heritage language education for youth

*Language ideology, policy and practice  
(and research in The Netherlands)*

Cynthia Groff

*Kohnstamm Instituut*

*EU Mini-Seminar, March 28, 2025*



The switch from monolingual to multilingual has become a reality in more and more schools around the world over the past 10-15 years. The benefits are cognitive/academic, and social-emotional. New languages are learned through the home language. So never exclude their own language, the home language, from this learning process.

## Why? Academic and socio-emotional benefits

### The multilingual turn

- “critique of, and alternative to, still-dominant monolingual theories, pedagogies and practice...”
- Emphasizing “the multiple competencies of bi/multilingual learners as the basis for successful language teaching and learning.” (May, 2013)

### A “positive” turn in heritage language education (Shou & Liu, 2024)

- “shifting the emphasis from linguistic achievement to a more holistic approach that prioritises the socio-emotional wellness of HL learners...”

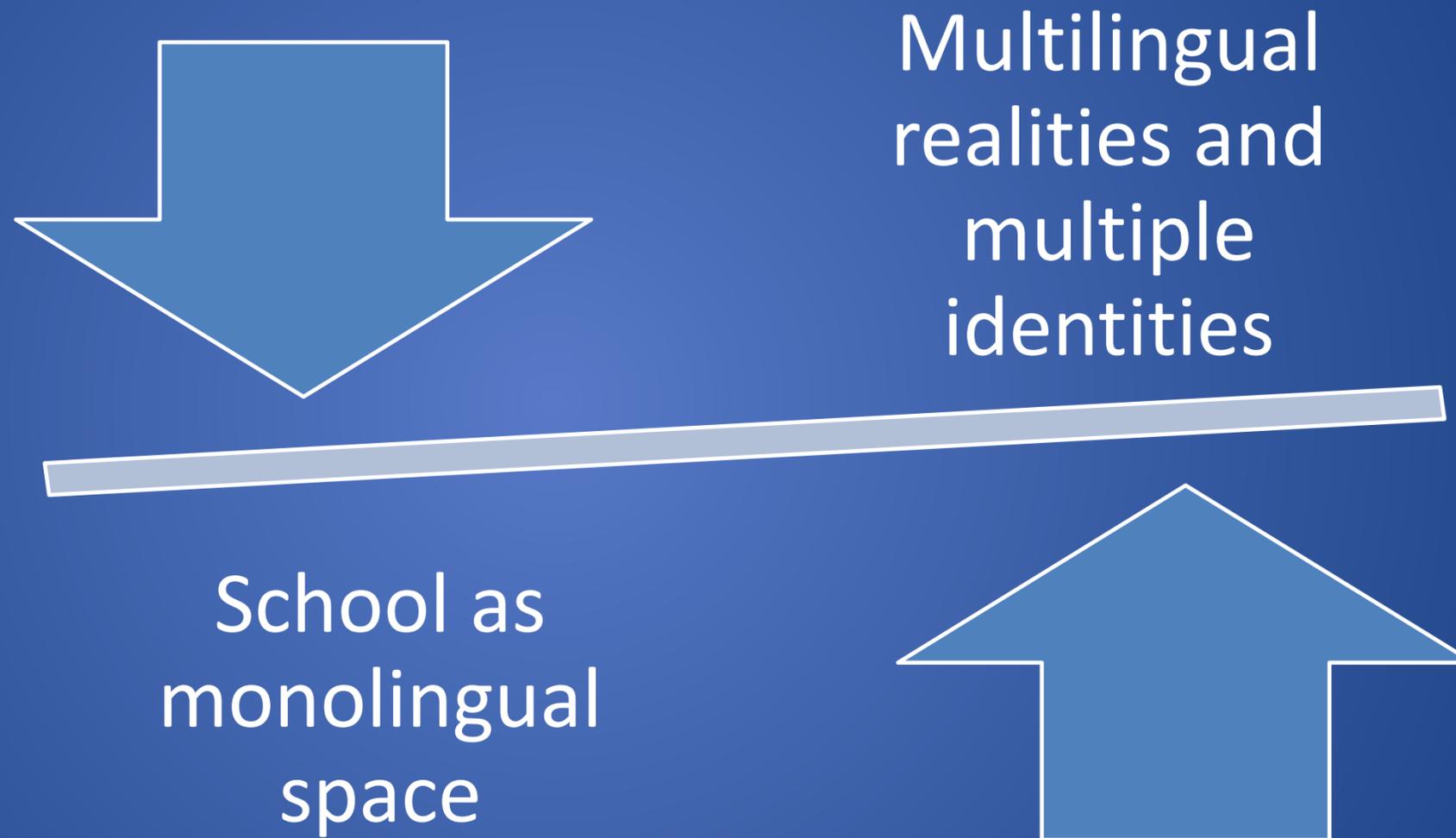
(See also: Cummins, García, Hornberger, Jørgensen)

# We need to open up ideological and implementational spaces

In Dutch education (primary & secondary), the step is still mostly to be taken.

Classrooms are characterized by a population with multiple identities.

Now let's embrace the languages that go with them!



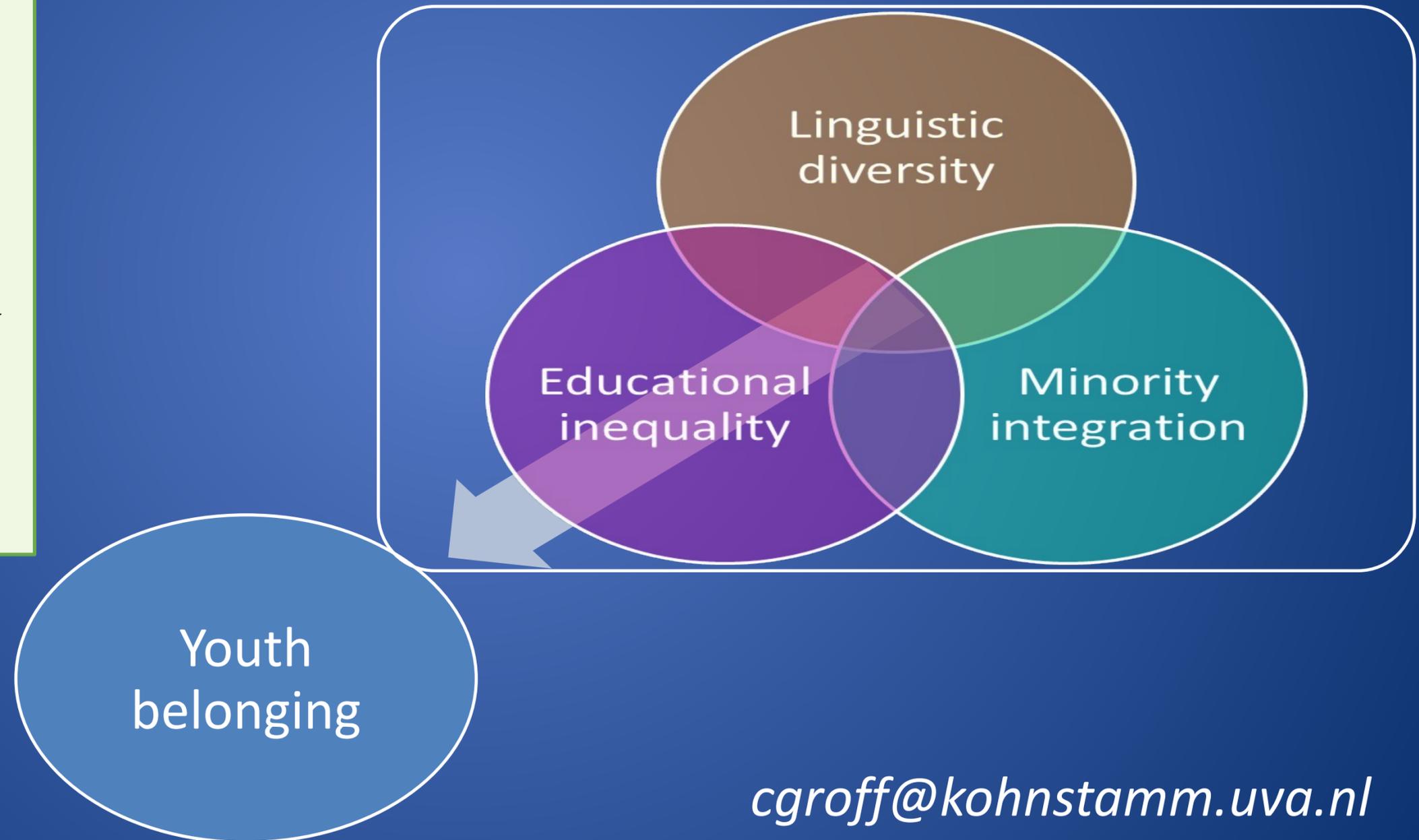


# Voices of Belonging

Multi-ethnic and multilingual students feel left out when only part of their identity is seen as positive at school.

Instead, young people feel at home when all their voices are heard. The denial of linguistic diversity reinforces opportunity inequality and disintegration of minorities.

In the intersectionality of the three, **inclusion** occurs.



*cgroff@kohnstamm.uva.nl*



Stichting Taal naar Keuze

## European Policies on Multilingualism

**Jelske Dijkstra** (Mercator European Centre on  
Multilingualism and Language Learning)

**Matteo Mueller-Thies & Mara Kyrou** (Stichting Taal  
naar Keuze)



Linguist and project manager, Jelske Dijkstra, presents Mercator, European Research Center on Multilingualism and Language Acquisition, located in Leeuwarden. Migrant languages also fall within Mercator's research area.

# Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning

## Mission:

acquisition and inventory, research and study, dissemination and application of knowledge in the field of language learning at school, at home and through cultural participation.

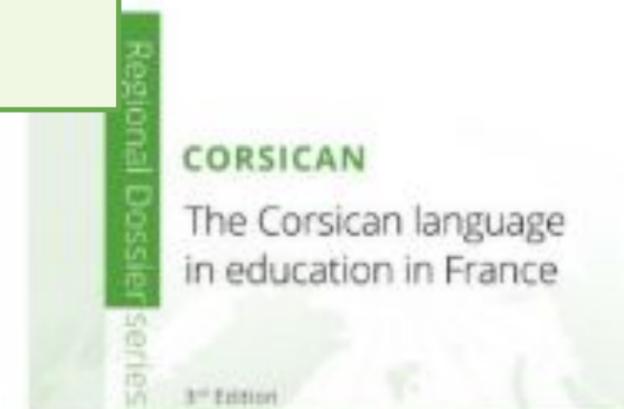
- Founded in 1987
- Part of Fryske Akademy
- Special focus on regional and minority languages in Europe
- Migrant languages



Mercator develops so-called language dossiers: there are 40 on European regional and minority languages.

# Regional dossiers

- Information about **regional** and **minority languages** in the **school system**
- Collaboration with **local experts**
- All relevant information: policy, support, statistics, etc.
- Resources Resources that trigger **opportunities** and **challenges** to stimulate policy development and public debate



# Lingotell: Restorying

- Restorying: the process of transforming a traditional story
- What do you get out of it? Language, identity, message
- What do you adapt (stereotyping?) and what will be the new form? (Comic, theatre play, poem)



And the information on Mercator's Wiki is also of great value in supporting the teaching of home languages in European schools. <https://wiki.mercator-research.eu/>

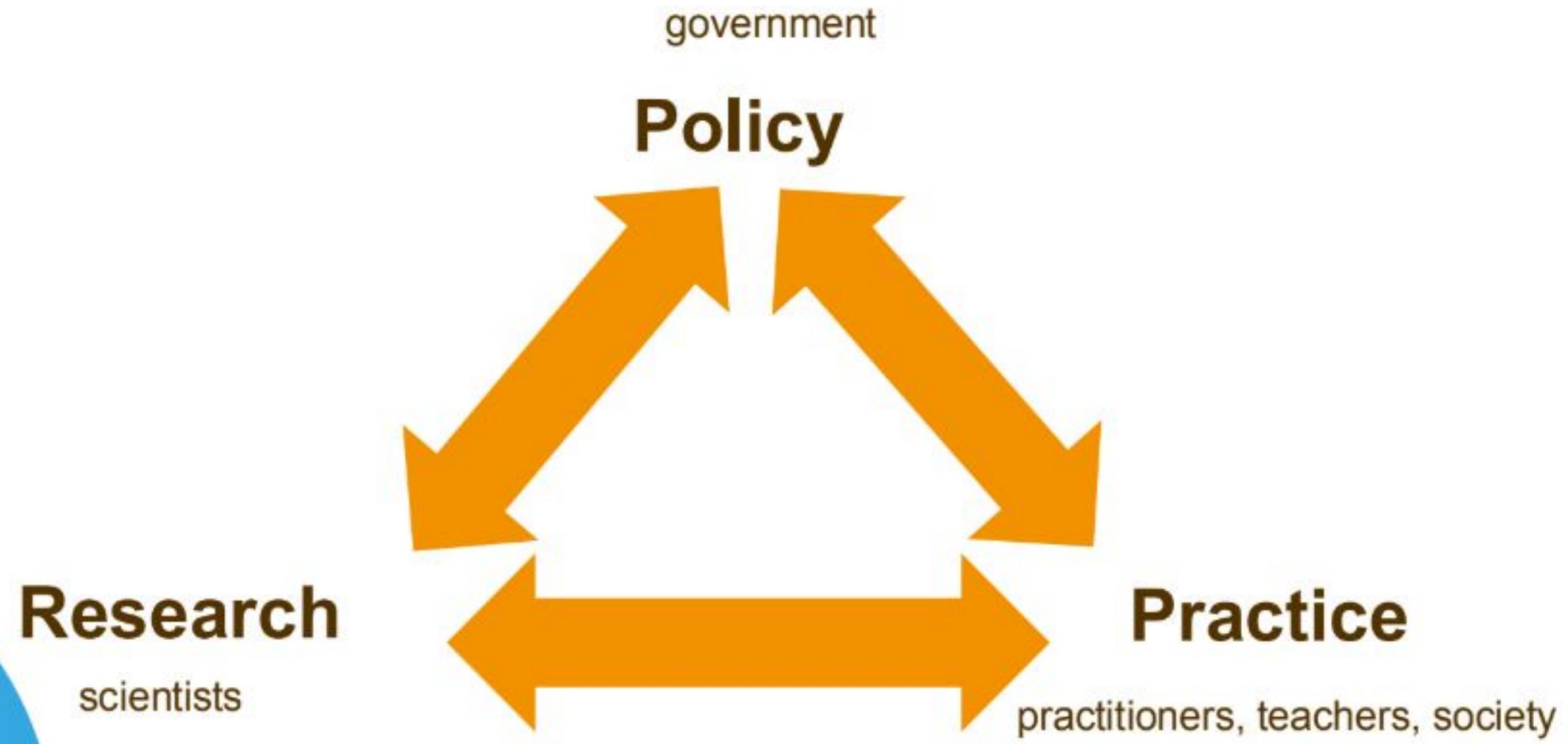
# Wiki's on Minority Language Learning



Wiki on  
Minority Language Learning

- Supplement to the Regionale Dossiers:
  - Information on regional or minority languages, but those that have and (very) small place in the school system
  - Eg: Bildts in the Netherlands; Saterfries in Germany
- Online platform with information:
  - Language vitality, policy, education, materials
- The Dossiers and Wiki cover in total 84 languages!

Mercator focuses on research, practice and policy regarding regional languages within Europe. To allow all home languages within education, i.e. the mission of Your Language Counts!, the same three areas are included.



Part of Your Language Counts! is **dissemination**, informing educational (policy) bodies within EU countries about the results of the project. To what extent do language **legislation** and language teaching **practices** within individual nations already match the project vision of giving home languages a place in mainstream secondary education? Stichting Taal naar Keuze is in the process of figuring it out.

## EU-Policy Analysis in Secondary Education

### Gaps between legislative intent and educational reality

**Matteo Mueller-Thies & Mara Kyrou**  
**Stichting Taal naar Keuze**



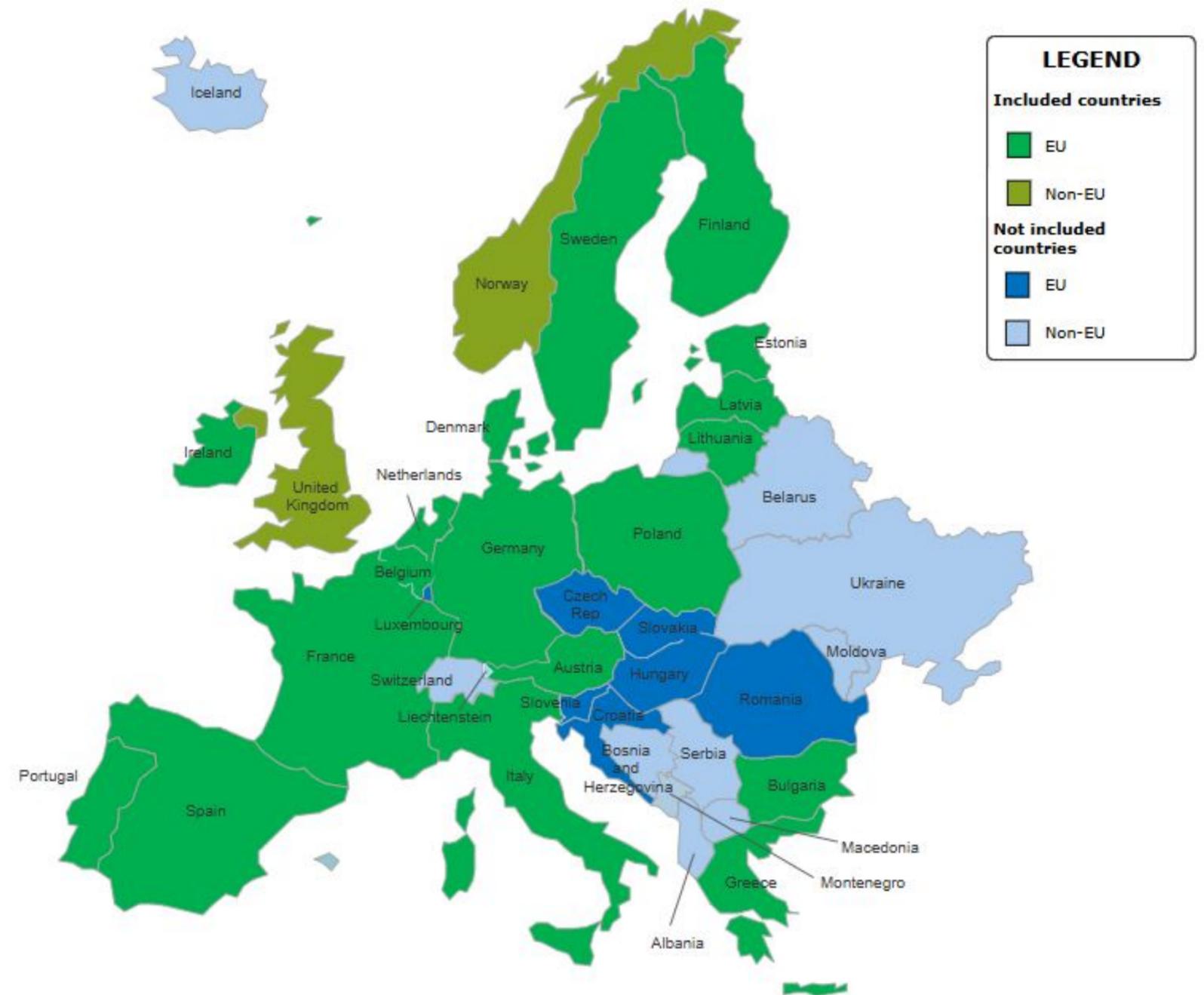
Taal  
naar  
Keuze

Websites of legislative education agencies in 21 European countries were searched for policies on multilingualism and home languages.

Multilingualism as a core EU-value:

- **1+2** as minimum language goal
- **Different realities:** Countries retain sovereignty over educational policies, creating variation
- **Challenges:** Resource and teacher allocation & Increasing dominance of English, with other languages losing ground
- **Objective:** Examine legal frameworks and real-world applications of modern language policies
- **Scope:** 21 European countries

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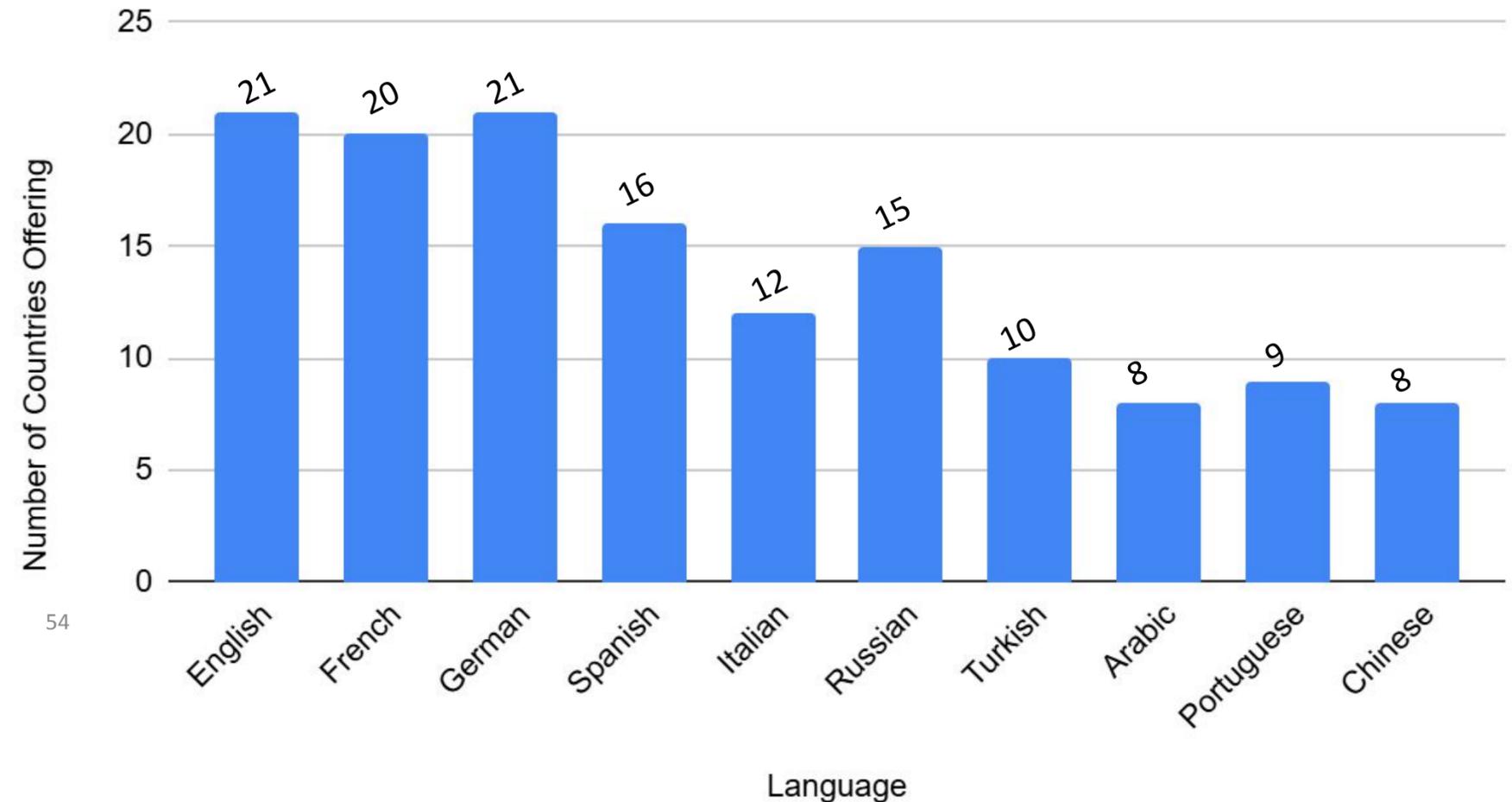


Some languages are taught in all EU countries, others in only a few. A broad multilingualism policy does not automatically mean that the practice is also equal. The Netherlands on paper offers 8 languages in addition to Dutch and English, but in practice it boils down to the well-known modern foreign languages, German and French.

## Key Findings

- **Range:** Every country mandates at least one modern language — typically English, French, German. From a few core languages in Greece & Portugal to over 40 options in France, Norway, Sweden.
- **Policy vs. Practice:** Policies promote multilingualism, but implementation varies.
- **Factors:** Economic capacity (higher GDP countries tend to offer more language options). Internal language politics.

Number of Countries Offering



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Chart 2. 10 most frequent languages taught in the 21 analyzed national educational systems

## Legal Acts vs. Reality

- **Legal Premise:**

- Encourage diverse language education
- Protect and promote linguistic minorities
- Offer equal opportunities regardless of linguistic background

- **Reality:**

- Persisting negative attitudes and stereotypes
- Depends on resource and teacher availability<sup>55</sup>
- Lack of political interest and official initiatives
- Might contend with internal language policies (e.g. Belgium)

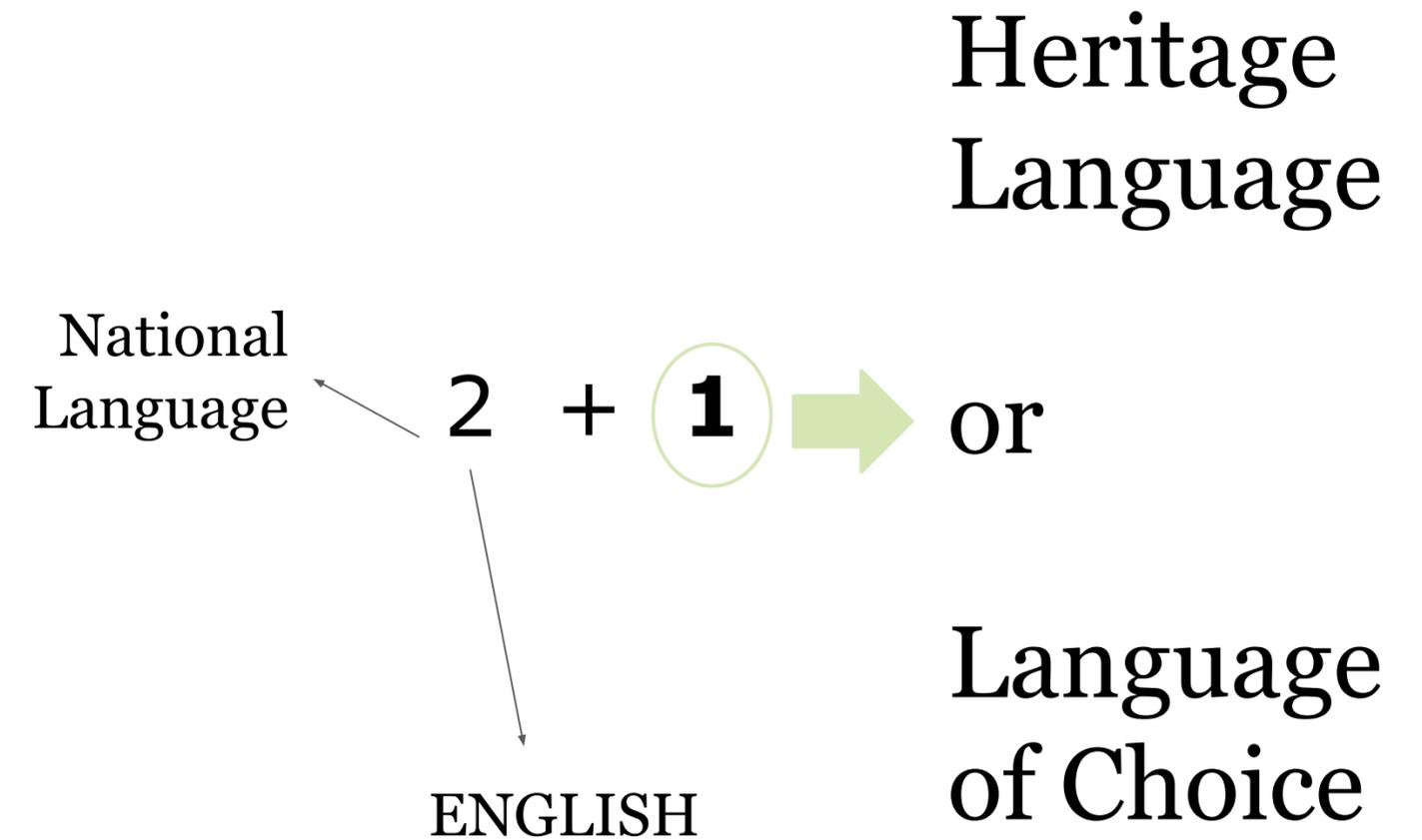
Despite the legal mandate to support linguistic diversity, protect linguistic minorities and avoid language discrimination, the following persist:

- prejudices about certain languages,
- underfunded inclusive language policies, the politics of looking away prevails.

Reverse the European language model, from 1+2 to 2+1, i.e. every European citizen leaves secondary school with a minimum of three languages on their diploma: the national language (e.g. Dutch) and a lingua franca, e.g. English (or another European national language) + the home language (when other than 1 and 2) or a language of their choice.

## "1+2" vs. "2+1" Language Model

- **1+2 Model:** Two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue
- **Proposed "2+1" Model:** Prioritize learners' motivation and cultural background:
  - Major/Dominant Language (National Context)
  - Bridge Language (Facilitating European/Global Communication)
  - Heritage/Choice Language (Cultural/Personal Development)



The recommendations are:

1. allow all languages in lower secondary education through Basic Language Skills (see [The Dutch and the other languages: together at school](#)).
2. allow home languages as a school subject, with grades and a final exam.
3. deploy teaching staff broadly, and use online support.

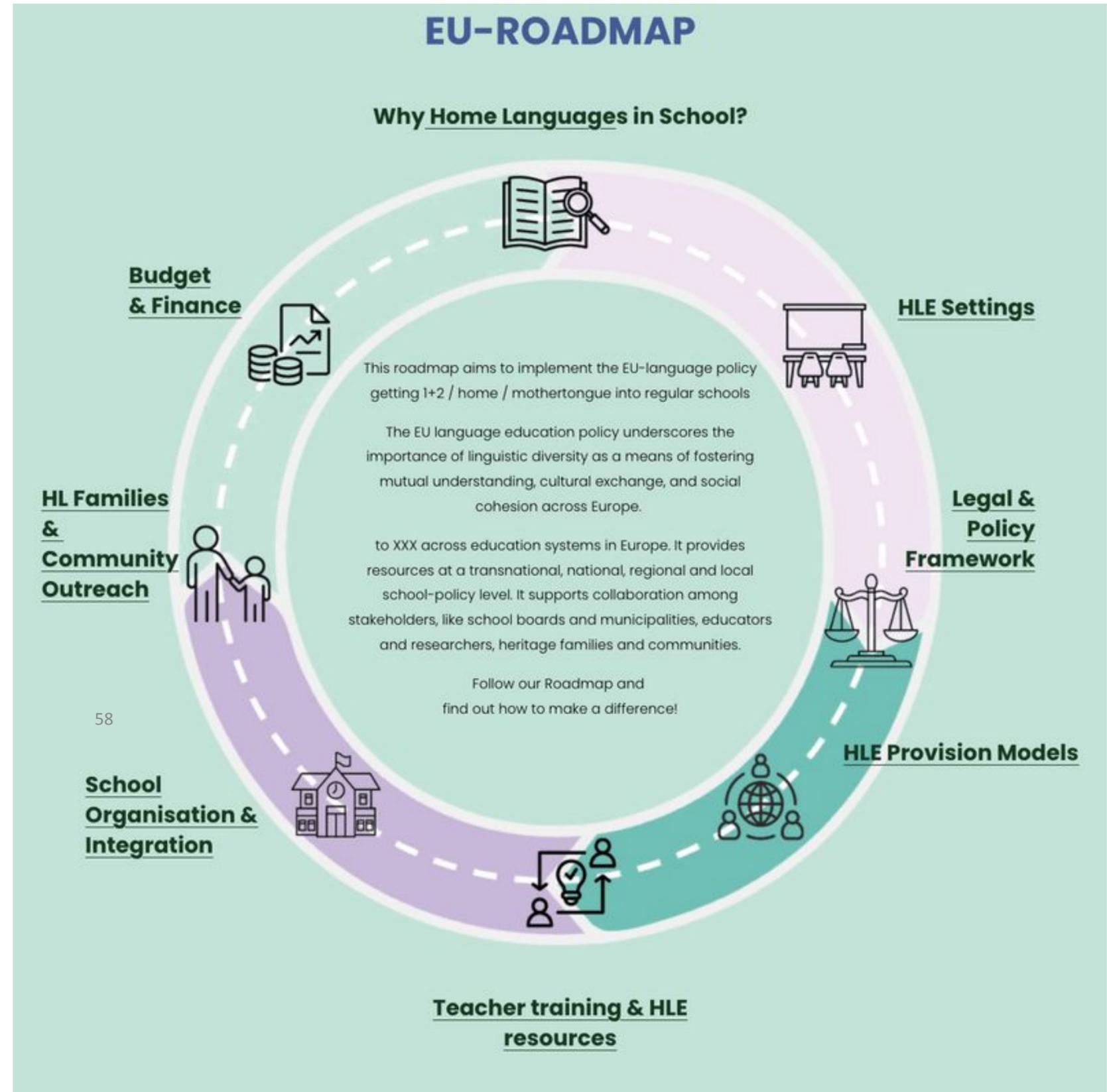
## Recommendations for home language education in secondary schools

- **Multilingualism:** as a classroom approach embracing students' full linguistic repertoire
- **Language Programs** based on the model for equal opportunities:
  - home languages in education
  - credits & examination programs
  - study guidance- providing support specifically targeted at students with different home languages
- **Strategic investments:**
  - teacher training
  - hybrid learning- new resources, e.g. digital platforms to consolidate teacher availability and materials
- **Raise Awareness:** Rectify negative stereotypes and attitudes, e.g. languages are not only national and official languages

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In summary, the end products of the EU project are

1. a digital Platform for language teachers in Europe,
2. a Roadmap, a quick itinerary, for policy makers, school leaders and other stakeholders, and
3. a digital Handbook with insights and depths for education educators, teachers and scholars.



Want to know more? Want to receive all or a specific presentation?  
Contact Taal naar Keuze Foundation at [info@taalnaarkeuze.nl](mailto:info@taalnaarkeuze.nl).  
And go to one of the web links below.

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