



MIME

Mobility and Inclusion
in Multilingual Europe

First Publishable Summary

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1. Summary description of project context and objectives

The MIME project is designed to address a list of specific questions raised by the European Commission (EC). Listing ten different disciplines, the EC requested an interdisciplinary analysis of the *multilingual challenge facing the European citizen*, spanning a wide range of questions formulated as eight “dimensions”. The latter encompass issues as varied as the rights of “indigenous” minority language speakers, the linguistic integration of migrants, approaches to second- and foreign-language teaching and learning, the potential offered by the language industries in overcoming the “multilingual challenge”, diversity management in multilingual institutions, a discussion of the functions that might be fulfilled by a *lingua franca*, etc. The treatment of these dimensions is discussed extensively in the *MIME Position Paper*, downloadable from the project website on

[www.mime-project.org/
MIME-POSITION-PAPER-V4.pdf](http://www.mime-project.org/MIME-POSITION-PAPER-V4.pdf)

In order to handle this wide range of questions, the MIME project has adopted four general principles:

1. genuine interdisciplinarity;
2. integration of the micro, meso and macro levels in the study of the processes at hand;
3. use of a framework rooted in policy analysis;
4. involvement of stakeholders of European multilingualism.

The project brings together 22 partners from 16 countries representing ten different disciplines, with none holding a majority. The key analytical instrument used in order to lend all these inputs an integrative perspective is the “trade-off model”. The trade-off approach is used in policy analysis and may be applied to any problem where a human society needs to balance commendable, but non-converging goals. Multilingualism is a “challenge” precisely because it points towards goals that aren’t easily reconciled:

1. On the one hand, Europe means to become a strongly integrated union whose citizens can

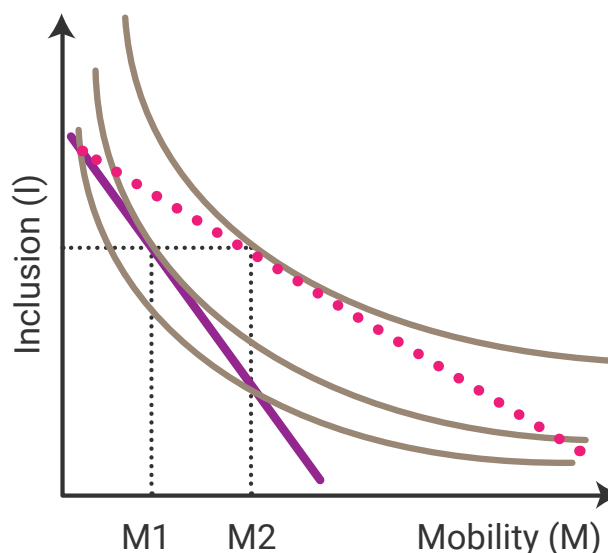


Figure 1. The core assumption of the MIME project is that “mobility” and “inclusion” are not incompatible, but that they do not necessarily converge, and that societies (and even individual citizens) are often confronted with a trade-off between them.

freely move between member states for work, study, leisure or retirement. This is what we call *mobility*, a notion intended to denote more than “migration”, and to reflect the growing multiplicity of motivations and modalities associated with people’s movements.

2. On the other hand, the “multilingual challenge” raises issues of *inclusion*, which refers to the fact that no individual or group (particularly a group defined by linguistic or cultural features) is marginalised, or even excluded from society, or suffers social, political, economic, or cultural disadvantage because of these linguistic and cultural features.

The MIME project builds on the idea that a trade-off problem arises between “mobility” and “inclusion”: on the one hand, an exclusive emphasis on the necessities of inclusion in a specific locale within the Union can result in material or symbolic restrictions on citizens’ mobility. Conversely, more mobility can have a detrimental effect on inclusion, because it may, through the potentially uniformising forces it abets, erode the sense of place associated with different locales within the Union.

At worst, it can cause a negative backlash among citizens who may feel dispossessed of their



sense of place. The aim of the project, therefore, is twofold:

1. to identify, given an *existing set of constraints* that restrict the extent of mobility achievable while preserving a certain level of inclusion and vice-versa, the best balance between the two;
2. to identify policy measures conducive to *relaxing this set of constraints* – in particular, to identify measures or novel combination of measures that can *increase* mobility without impeding inclusion, and *improve* inclusion without restricting mobility.

The project is organised in eight “workpackages”. The first five (WPs 1 through 5) respectively focus on political, social, educational, communicational, and policy issues. WP6 (“Frontiers of multilingualism”) contains pilot studies on little-explored facets of multilingualism. WP7 is devoted to dissemination (an important feature of the MIME project) and WP8 to management.

2. Description of work performed and main results

The core concepts (mobility, inclusion, trade-off) defined and stabilised before the submission of the project have been revisited in interdisciplinary perspective. Furthermore, the notion of cohesion has emerged as an outcome of the *balanced combination of mobility and inclusion*.

Given the wide range of issues studied, the work of the 25 participating teams cannot be reported in detail. The highlights, however, can be summarised as follows, by workpackage and tasks

WP1 studies language, society and power under the following angles:

- ★ Comparative analysis of the framework for minority rights in China and India; preparatory work for a US study.
- ★ Comparative historic-political study of the Turkish and Polish communities in France, the Netherlands, and Sweden.
- ★ Review of approaches to minority language rights at the international level and case study on the implementation of international standards.

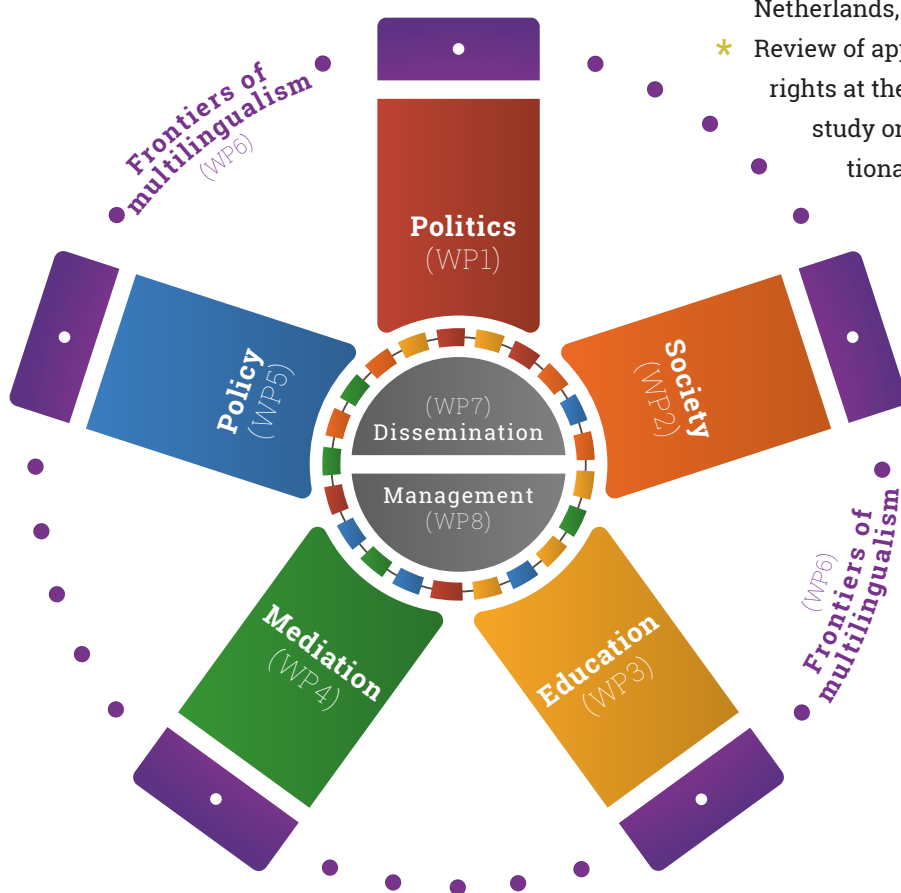


Figure 2. The identity, analytical framework and organisational design are summarised in the MIME Cartwheel



WP2, is devoted to mobility, identity and social cohesion, and offers:

- * Characterisation of mobility in legal and motivational terms and application to the Flemish-speaking periphery of Brussels.
- * Development of a template for the study of individual and collective identity building based on the concept of “complex diversity”.
- * Review of “urban multilingualism” emphasising the interplay between residential segregation, gentrification, socio-economic exclusion, otherness and “othering” processes, etc.

WP3 focuses on language teaching and learning, using the following approaches:

- * Review of educational policies and practices at European and national levels with a comparative perspective on Germany, the UK, Italy, France, Spain, and Finland.
- * Synthetic assessment of research on non-formal and informal language learning; planning of case studies on migrants, students, and international corporations.
- * Study on languages in Higher Education (HE), highlighting the ambiguous meaning of “internationalization” in 23 HE institutions.

WP4 studies different communication strategies and the mediation effects involved:

- * Identification and operationalisation of variables affecting the adoption of translation technologies by speakers.
- * Integrative analysis of *Public service interpreting and translation* (PSIT) and the conditions of its use by actors in different types of multilingual settings.
- * Broad-based analysis of the notion of *lingua franca* and review of manifestations of different *lingua francas*.
- * Analysis of *intercomprehension* (IC) and the conditions that increase or reduce its use over time.

WP5 focuses on policy selection, design and evaluation, including:

- * Formal modelling of processes of language acquisition, intergenerational language transmission, and language use.
- * Analysis of the principles of linguistic justice with a focus on the territoriality principle and its relevance for the equal recognition of different constituencies.
- * Investigation of the “equality of what” debate and its applications to language policies.
- * Development of an integrated framework for “complex language policy” through a matrix approach to language policy choices.
- * Analysis of legal norms in order to identify the adaptations required for a broad, consistent language policy to rest on a sound legal footing.

WP6 explores novel, under-researched questions through independent pilot studies covering:

- * Identification and assessment of linkages between multilingualism and geopolitical security.
- * Appraisal of Roma culture and language in order to identify transferable elements of experience that may help meet the “multilingual challenge”.
- * Development of an analytical framework for the study of the language needs and strategies of mobile retirees, with a focus on Swedish speakers in Spain.
- * Investigation of the existence, magnitude and significance of a statistical relationship between creativity and multilingualism.

WP7 focuses on connecting the MIME project with the outside. To this end:

- * A first stakeholder meeting has been organised in Ljubljana, with a focus on translation and interpreting.
- * A very active website has been developed in cooperation with the management team (WP8).



- * The first MIME doctoral school is in preparation.

3. Expected final results and potential impacts

With its emphasis on the development of a set of mutually consistent approaches for dealing with the “multilingual challenge”, the MIME project is exceptionally ambitious in its thematic scope and interdisciplinary range.

The knowledge that the MIME project has been designed to generate is expected to make for genuine advances in the management of linguistic diversity, not only because of the factual results it has begun to produce, but also because of the radically novel way in which this knowledge is processed and organised. The MIME project does not aim at replicating approaches used in earlier EC-supported research on multilingualism (e.g. by providing detailed descriptions of the linguistic practices of actors at the micro level). Rather, MIME addresses multilingualism across the micro, meso and macro levels as a form of a permanent tension between “mobility” and “inclusion”. This tension is analysed across areas of social and political organisation reflected in the project’s workpackages, and a balanced combination of mobility and inclusion is seen as key to the emergence of a cohesive, resilient European society.

The project may be seen as requiring research to jump through two successive hoops. The first one, described above, is one in which all the teams have to go through the exercise of reinterpreting their topic (pertaining to the political arbitration of potentially opposing interests, social interaction, language education, communicational strategies or policy selection and design) in terms of mobility and inclusion, and of the non-convergence between the two. Once this step is completed, the teams can proceed with considerable autonomy, so as to allow for the most productive and unfettered use of the repository of conceptual and methodological expertise of their respective disciplines.

At the time of writing (late summer and early autumn 2015), the MIME teams have by and large completed this exercise (that is, they have jumped through the first hoop) and moved on to the targeted exploitation of their disciplinary expertise. Near the end of the project, however, they will all need to jump through a second hoop, namely, the reformulation of their results in terms of policy orientations. At that future stage, proposed public policy orientations – most specifically focused on language(s), others indirectly addressing language issues but nonetheless relevant to the “multilingual challenge” – will be put forward. However, in order for these orientations to constitute a consistent approach to the management of Europe’s linguistic diversity, they will need to be reformulated according to a federating template referring to mobility and inclusion. The policy orientations stemming from the project will suggest policies for increasing mobility at a given level of inclusion, or improving inclusion at a given level of mobility, or both. This way of processing the research results will generate the organised body of compatible, policy-relevant propositions that constitute the MIME project’s ultimate goal.

The policy-oriented research work described above is complemented by an elaborate strategy, managed by WP7, for dissemination, awareness and training including, in particular, regular contacts with professional organisations (translators, language teachers, specialists of migrant integration, language planning offices). All the project activities are reflected in the website managed jointly by WP7 and WP8. The website also provides extensive information on additional scientific activities and policy discussions that the MIME project can serve to inspire.





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