

# Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe: A Position Paper on the MIME Project

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MIME is the acronym of “Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe”. The MIME project was submitted on 31 January 2013 to the Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission, following a call to tender published on 9 July 2012 on “The Multilingual Challenge for the European Citizen”. Combining information gleaned from various official and unofficial sources, we estimate that some 20 projects were in the running for this call. In the spring of 2013, the MIME project received top marks in the evaluation procedure. The aim of this paper is to present the key characteristics of the MIME project, highlighting in particular the cornerstones of its approach to the study of linguistic diversity today.

In Section 1, we begin by presenting the call to tender issued by the European Commission. In Section 2, we characterise MIME’s response to this call, highlighting in particular two interrelated features: first, its genuine focus on the questions raised by the call, rather than on more sectorial interests – let alone some fashionable catchwords; second, its deep and sincere commitment to interdisciplinary work, as opposed to the veneer of interdisciplinarity often encountered in purportedly interdisciplinary projects in the social sciences and humanities. In Section 3, we present the project’s core analytical approach, which rests on the application of the notion of “trade-off” between non-converging objectives. Section 4 is devoted to a presentation of the project’s structural design in six research work packages (WPs), plus one for dissemination and another for management.

In lieu of a conclusion, Section 5 proposes a more speculative discussion on alternative perspectives on linguistic diversity and on the positioning of different types of discourse about multilingualism, in relation with this particular bidding process.

Let us draw the reader’s attention to the fact that this paper is not about the core research question itself (that is, how to deal with the “multilingual challenge” confronting the European citizen), but about how, in a specific institutional and scientific context, the question may be approached through a large-scale research project. Accordingly, the scientific substance of the project is only addressed in general terms, and the bibliography

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is kept to a minimum, it being understood that the full-fledged MIME project proposal rests on a cross-disciplinary selection of several hundred references.

### 1. Reading the call to tender

The European Commission's call to tender for a *large-scale integrating project* on "The multilingual challenge for the European citizen" (SSH.2013.5.2-1; see *European Commission* 2012, 45-46) presents two noteworthy features: first, it poses an extremely wide (almost impossible) range of questions. Second, it pointedly requests an interdisciplinary approach, and does so not merely in vague, generic terms, but by explicitly naming ten academic disciplines. These two interconnected aspects probably go some way towards explaining why the MIME project was selected, and why it has received an exceptionally high rating of 15 points, the maximum achievable.

Consider first the call's emphasis on interdisciplinarity. It explicitly requires (*ibid.*: 46) "interdisciplinary research – drawing on a range of disciplines in the field of humanities and social sciences, such as linguistics, political sciences, sociology, law, history, psychology, economics, educational sciences, philosophy and anthropology [...]"

A crucial feature of this wording is that it does not highlight or prioritise any particular discipline. Most strikingly, it does not assign a leading role to linguistics, and makes no particular mention of applied linguistics.

A little discourse analysis (admittedly of the most informal sort) leads us to observe that the range of specialties often subsumed under the name of "applied linguistics" (often in opposition to structural linguistics) is not even mentioned. The sentence opens up by highlighting two groups of disciplines, namely, the "humanities" and the "social sciences". Interestingly, these are introduced in the text together, as joint rather than sharply separate endeavours. Both are, by implication, presented as *necessary* elements of a bid. Then, although the following list of more specific disciplines begins with "linguistics", it is preceded by the preposition "such as".

While each item in this enumeration, merely by dint of being listed, is given relevance, the use of this preposition clearly dilutes the importance of each item considered individually. "Such as" is a semantically ambiguous lexeme. It may serve as an alternative to "etc.", sparing the author the need to provide an exhaustive enumeration, without diminishing the relevance of any single item in the list. However, it can also mean "for example", suggesting the non-necessary nature of any *individual* item. An alternative interpretation, therefore, could be that as long as most of the disciplines listed are represented in a bid, the presence of every single one is not indispensable. Putting it differently, one or another of these disciplines – including applied linguistics – could be left out. But of course, leaving any of them out would detract from interdisciplinarity of the approach, and in any event, passing over the language disciplines when answering a call on "multilingualism" would, of course, be absurd, since "language" is central to "multilingualism", and the language disciplines are strongly represented in the MIME project. Nevertheless, under either interpretation of "such as", it is clear that "linguistics" is viewed here as one discipline among others; it is by no means presented as the necessary linchpin of a successful bid. In this context, language may be seen primarily as a variable that shapes social, political and economic realities. And as we shall see in the Section 2, there are many ways to ensure a strong focus on language in the context of an interdisciplinary call.

The wording of the call also raises the question of the cooperation between disciplines, since it uses the adjective "interdisciplinary", not just "multidisciplinary". Hence, the combination

of disciplines mentioned must go beyond mere juxtaposition – a key point to which we shall return in Section 2.

The second striking feature of the call is its extremely broad scope. The range of questions to be addressed (called “dimensions” in the text of the call) is staggering. It is useful, if only to convey to the reader just how wide the net was cast, to quote these eight dimensions *verbatim* and in full (*ibid.*: 46; for the purposes of our discussion, we have numbered them “D1” through “D8”). The research project is expected to include:

- D1. Comparative analyses of past and present language-related policies and actions of the EU, single European countries, the Council of Europe and other parts of the world (e.g. USA, Canada, India, China, Australia): What is the comparative advantage of measures adopted by these countries and actors in bringing about a more cohesive society through individual/societal multilingualism and effective communication?*
- D2. Research on past and present coping strategies (e.g. political, social, cultural, educational) of linguistic diversity in situations of language hegemony; research on language as instrument of political power, which might lead to the disappearance of regional or minority languages and cultures or, in the contrary, to their proliferation;*
- D3. Research on how to achieve a balance between the preservation of linguistic diversity (and the associated identity) and the facilitation of effective communication between all European citizens; incorporating the micro-level (monolingual/multilingual citizens), the meso-level (multilingual cities, regions and countries) and the macro-level (multilingual Europe);*
- D4. Assessment of advantages and disadvantages of language teaching at various levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, adult - life-long learning) and of various forms of language learning (family teaching, informal learning in peer groups);*
- D5. Research on multilingual education and learning as well as emerging needs related to enlargement, migration and globalisation;*
- D6. Assessment of new technological tools, new forms of communication, new media and their effect on multilingual competences, as well as suggestions on how to improve systems and mechanisms designed to recognise and certify language proficiency acquired through formal, informal and non-formal learning;*
- D7. Research on the role of translation and interpreting with regard to issues that require a specific public policy, such as the socialisation of migrants (e.g. access to health and social security or the right to interpretation and translation in court proceedings);*
- D8. Foresight on the future of a multilingual Europe in a globalised world, including the contribution of the language industry (translation, interpretation, language technologies, localisation, training of language professionals).*

Here again, it is important to ponder the implications of the contents and wording of the call. Four of them stand out: first, it is obvious that no single discipline can reasonably aim at dealing with all these issues. Second, many of the questions raised are manifestly of concern to disciplines such as political science, sociology or law, requiring the use of concepts that are typically absent from applied linguistics. Third, the very scope of these “dimensions” alerts us to the need to have a very robust analytical framework in order to develop a genuinely *integrating* treatment of the “multilingual challenge for the European citizen”. Fourth, many of the questions raised by these eight dimensions are clearly located at a *macro* level – perhaps to signal the need to avoid confining research to the very *micro* level

that was prioritised in some of the work on multilingualism financed under FP6 – there again, a point to which we shall return later. Putting it differently, we might say that an implicit assumption of the call is that convincing language policies can only be designed if the various social, political, and economic aspects of the multilingual challenge are addressed in adequate depth.

## **2. Meeting the call's demands**

### *Link-up with fundamental concerns and priorities*

Preparations for the MIME project began, within a few days of the publication of the call, with an in-depth examination of the call's eight dimensions. In particular, we attempted to “reprocess” each dimension in our terms while remaining true to its fundamental concerns. This exercise helped us do two things: first, to formulate structural relationships linking together the very varied issues mentioned in the official document, thus providing a basis of the project's analytical framework; second, to identify more precisely the type of inputs that needed to come from different disciplines.

It would be tedious to recall the successive steps of the procedure applied in these preliminary stages of the MIME project; let us simply describe the essential points of the strategy developed for the project as a result of our understanding of the call's concerns and priorities.

The latter could, in our view, be appropriately summarised in the form of three main questions:

1. What are multilingual societies and how do they operate?
2. How is multilingualism in contemporary societies affected by globalisation and by the increasing interconnection and mobility that globalisation implies?
3. What are the best responses, in highly different contexts, to the challenges posed not only by linguistic diversity but by rapid changes in the nature, extent and experience that actors have of this diversity?

In order to answer these questions, the MIME Consortium has adopted four principles that run through the entire project design: (i) interdisciplinarity; (ii) micro-meso-macro orientation; (iii) a focus on policy selection and design as an integrative framework, and (iv) “stakeholder” involvement. A special subsection of this paper is devoted to the implementation of interdisciplinarity in the project. Let us therefore discuss here the other three principles, starting with the integration of levels of analysis.

The MIME project emphasises the integration of different levels of analysis. Conventionally, three levels are distinguished – the micro level, that is, individuals, preferably with some representativeness to ensure that analysis goes beyond commentary of idiosyncratic cases; the “meso” (or intermediate) level, which may be a private- or public-sector organisation (a firm, an administrative division, a university, for example); and the macro level, which refers to society as a whole, often approached as a state or a group of states. Of course, it is useful to make the most of previous research on multilingualism carried out under FP6. However, much of this work displays a markedly micro-level orientation, with a strong, sometimes near-exclusive focus on the fine-grained analysis of processes of (mostly oral) interaction between actors in specific multilingual settings. (Berthoud, Grin and Lüdi, 2013a; Vetter and Rindler-Schjerve, 2012). This emphasis means, correlatively, that less attention has been paid to generalisation across observed cases, to the point of making generalisation almost

impracticable;<sup>2</sup> detailed descriptions of individual linguistic behaviour are legitimate objects of study, but constitute an insufficient basis for the selection and design and language policies at any level beyond individual language use.

Apart from the fact that this focus on micro-level (arguably even nano-level) issues raises rather fundamental questions of conformity with usual principles of scientific research (holding on the notion that the latter normally strives to uncover general laws), this seriously detracts from the policy relevance of the proposals that can be made, because *by definition*, policy applies to a jurisdiction, whether the jurisdiction considered be a small municipality or a supra-national organisation of nation states such as the European Union.<sup>3</sup> No matter the size of the jurisdiction considered, the policy applying to it will concern *many* (potentially innumerable) interactions, involving different people pursuing different goals under different constraints and occurring at different points in time. Therefore, the possibility to generalise is of the essence. It follows that the development of macro-level analyses, using methods suited to this purpose, is becoming increasingly urgent for balanced policy orientation. Relatedly, the focus on oral communication characterising much contemporary research on multilingualism needs to be broadened to encompass written communication, which has always been important and is arguably becoming more so with the development of information and communication technologies (ICT).<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, valid generalisations about the nature and the workings of multilingualism must be anchored in a sound understanding of linguistic practices as they unfold in actual communication. MIME has been designed to build bridges between micro- and macro-level perspectives on multilingualism and systematically spell out the interconnections between them. This requires paying more attention to a frequently overlooked “meso” level, which is the crux of many processes in the dynamics of multilingualism; consequently, much of the practical policy relevance of research propositions depends on the sharpness of our understanding of these meso-level processes. This problem is well-known to geographers, who refer to it using the concept of “scale”: the same phenomenon may look very different depending on whether it is studied at a small, medium or large scale: the constraints, goals and incentives may be different, and what makes sense at the level of the individual actor, or agent, may make very little sense at the level of society as a whole, or at the intermediate level of group such as a political party or a private-sector company.

Moving back and forth between levels also requires a wisely chosen conception of language, languages and multilingualism – one which is able to span the micro, meso- and macro levels and to account for the roles of language in new contexts emerging in the wake of deepening globalisation. In order to do justice to the issues at hand, we often refer to the twin set of

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<sup>2</sup> This disconnect between highly detailed observation and general inference may be due to the use of an epistemologically debatable notion of “situatedness” as requiring obligatory reference to the unique context of each specific interaction. This compounds the limitations due to the fact that (oral) interaction has been elevated, in some strands of research as the main or sole legitimate object of sociolinguistic inquiry. On this question, see Section 3.

<sup>3</sup> The term policy is frequently overused to refer to the officially proclaimed goals of just about any structure; on this view, a private-sector company can be considered as a “jurisdiction”, and the company can be said to have a “policy”. In MIME, “policy” is used in a stricter sense and means *public policy*.

<sup>4</sup> The relative indifference that can be observed, in some of the contemporary applied linguistics research, towards the study of written communication may have to do with a characteristic unease regarding the issue of the legitimacy of norms, which tend to be stronger in written than oral expression.

mutually compatible concepts, namely, “deep” and “complex” diversity. Whereas “deep” (multi-level) diversity emphasises the joint consideration of several levels of analysis, “complex” diversity is “meant to come to grips with a constellation in which cultural identities and social cleavages overlap and intertwine in manifold ways [...] [pointing] at a social and political context in which diversity has become a multidimensional and fluid phenomenon” (Kraus, 2012: 13). We consider the twin set of “deep” and “complex” diversity (which are interlocked in empirical analysis) to offer more scope, precision and analytical crispness than the often invoked “super-diversity” which is “characterised by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on” (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011:1). This enterprise raises difficulties that should not be underestimated, and it is tied to delicate political issues which we must also be prepared to address (May, 2012; Marácz, 2014).

Let us now turn to the role of policy analysis in the MIME project. Against the political backdrop just mentioned, the language challenges confronting globalising societies necessarily raise policy questions that deserve to be recognised as such and handled with appropriate tools for policy selection and design. For example, states have to make decisions regarding the language(s) in which they administer justice, collect taxes, or offer education and training. To all practical purposes, (distinct) languages do exist (constructed as they may be), leading us to approach with some skepticism the notion, currently fashionable in some quarters of applied linguistics, of “languaging” (for an entertaining but devastating critique, see Edwards, 2012). This has implications for the language skills with which citizens need to be equipped, not just for participation in political life, but also for social interaction and access to the labour market. These questions are made more complex by increasingly tight-knit international connections and interdependence, whether these stem from the set of processes commonly referred to as “globalisation” or are the product, in the European context, of deliberate economic and institutional integration. Societies have to make explicit decisions about which language(s) to use, for what purposes, in which contexts and settings, and what should be expected from (or offered to) states, administrations, firms, and citizens in terms of language skills and language use. Again, by definition, public policies need to be generally applicable, which confirms the need for macro-level perspectives. The challenge, clearly, is to develop an approach to language policy that is at the same time sufficiently broad, subtle and flexible to address a wide range of complex issues (including in terms of micro-level communication processes), and yet sufficiently robust to do so in an integrated and consistent way, allowing for macro-level analysis. Developing a strongly policy-oriented approach in this perspective is one of the driving principles of the MIME project.

Finally, we note that both linguistic diversity as a general context, and individual as well as societal multilingualism as a resulting state of affairs, engage institutions (states, regional authorities, inter- and supranational organisations) and citizens at large, whether as individuals, firms, or civil society organisations. Let us collectively refer to all these actors as “stakeholders”; the term is annoyingly redolent of NGO brochures and Eurospeak, but it remains serviceable. Stakeholders have to navigate complex, interconnected demands at many levels (mentioned here without any implication regarding their relative importance), including education and training, family, interpersonal relationships, work and employment, business strategies, production, consumption, and participation in social and political life, all of this in a world that is rapidly changing– also in terms of expectations regarding language skills and language use. Given such complexities, it is advantageous to ensure that research

can benefit from regular feedback from stakeholders. This can increase not just the validity of scientific work itself, but also the likelihood that public policy orientations informed by research, by resonating with stakeholders' experience, will be more relevant. At a subsequent stage, the actual policies, informed by research, that may be adopted by local, national or supra-national authorities, can be more appropriately designed. The MIME project therefore includes a *Stakeholder Forum*, in which is intended to allow feedback from organised actors with important stakes in the responses proposed to the "multilingual challenge". These groups of actors include in particular professional unions (language teachers, translators, interpreters), third-sector organisations involved in migrant integration, and language policy bodies at local, regional or national level. Regular interaction between the MIME research teams and these stakeholders is expected to increase researchers' ability to deliver relevant orientations for use in language policy.

### *The challenge of interdisciplinarity*

Although multilingualism has, in recent years, elicited growing interest well beyond the language disciplines, research on multilingualism has remained somewhat fragmented. With notable exceptions, much of the current research work on multilingualism tends to remain anchored in one discipline or another, or sometimes even within a narrower specialty within a discipline, with only limited attention to concepts and approaches proposed in other disciplines.

The MIME project views the FP7 call on multilingualism as a very welcome opportunity to study linguistic diversity in a more open fashion and to cooperate across traditional disciplinary boundaries, not assuming any discipline (let alone a particular school of thought within a given discipline) to enjoy a monopoly on legitimacy. It is the issue itself, namely, "the multilingual challenge" that is placed at the centre of the investigation, and inputs from various perspectives are then brought in and combined in order to better understand it. Obviously, there is a discursive process involved in the very framing of the issue, and this framing embodies the tenets of different disciplines; however, the constraining effects of the idiosyncrasies associated with each discipline are mitigated by the fact that MIME treats them, from the start, as equally legitimate partners in the construction of the research object.

The MIME project, therefore, takes the injunction of interdisciplinarity very seriously. Consortium members come from all the disciplines listed. In addition, MIME encompasses disciplines not explicitly mentioned in the call, with scholars from urban and cultural geography as well as history. Most importantly for the project's internal consistency, almost *all* the team leaders from disciplines other than linguistics have a demonstrated track record, often an entire career, of addressing language issues through the prism of their respective discipline. This lends the Consortium undeniable credibility, with authors who are collectively the authors of dozens of scientific papers, books or chapters of books in areas such as language rights, linguistic justice, the politics of ethnolinguistic diversity, the sociology of multilingual neighbourhoods, the use of translation, interpreting or language technologies in multilingual communication, or the economics of multilingualism. A good balance is maintained between disciplines, with typically one to three teams from each, thus avoiding the hegemony of any, contrary to what was the case in some FP6 projects and networks on multilingualism. Table 1 recalls the main disciplinary orientation of each Consortium member, with reference to each team leader's academic "port of call" – rather than his or her research specialty (although two specific distinctions to be made, first between "political science" and "political philosophy", second between "linguistics" and "translation studies", in order to reflect the relative separation of the areas concerned).

Table 1 also highlights the broad cross-European coverage of the project, with teams from 16 different countries.

TABLE 1: INTERDISCIPLINARY ANCHORING OF MIME RESEARCH TEAMS

<b>Task number</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Core discipline(s) of team leader</b>
1.1	Sciences Po Paris [SCIENCES PO]	France	Political science
1.2	Universiteit van Amsterdam (European Studies) [UVA]	Netherlands	Linguistics & history
1.3	Institute for Minority Rights [MTA-TK]	Hungary	Linguistics [ETHNIC STUDIES]
2.1	Vrije Universiteit Brussel [VUB]	Belgium	Sociology
2.2	Universität Augsburg [UAU]	Germany	Political science
2.3	Universiteit van Amsterdam (Urban Studies) [UVA]	Netherlands	Geography & Political Science
3.1	Università Bicocca di Milano [UNIMIB]	Italy	Linguistics
3.2			Linguistics & Education sciences
3.3	Universidade do Algarve [UALG]	Portugal	Linguistics
4.1	Universitat Rovira i Virgili [URV]	Spain	Sociology & Translation studies
4.2	Univerza v Ljubljani [UL]	Slovenia	Translation studies
4.3	Universität Leipzig [ULEI]	Germany	Linguistics
4.4	Université de Reims Champagne-Ardennes [URCA]	France	Linguistics & Education sciences
5.1	Humboldt Universität zu Berlin [UBER]	Germany	Economics
5.2	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven [K.U.LEUVEN]	Belgium	Political philosophy
5.3	University of Limerick [ULIM]	Ireland	Political philosophy
5.4	Université de Genève [UNIGE]	Switzerland	Economics
5.5	University of Edinburgh [UEDIN]	United Kingdom	Law
6.1	Latvijas Universitate [LU]	Latvia	Political Science



6.2	Université de Genève [UNIGE]	Switzerland	Law
6.3	Universitate din Oradea [UOR]	Romania	Anthropology & Political Science
6.4	Uppsala Universitet [UU]	Sweden	Sociology
6.5	Observatoire de la finance [OBSFIN]	Switzerland	Psychology & finance

In addition, a project partner based in Croatia (partner FFOS in Osijek) coordinates the project’s dissemination activities, in cooperation with an Austrian communication firm. Another project partner, based in Switzerland (partner SCIPROM), focuses exclusively on project management. This division of tasks is intended to enable researchers to concentrate on theoretical as well as policy-relevant scientific work.

### 3. A goal-oriented design<sup>5</sup>

#### *On mobility and inclusion*

The project acronym highlights “mobility” and “inclusion”. There is nothing new about mobility, since migration has been a constant feature of human history. However, 21<sup>st</sup> century migration flows present deeply altered features. Migration may now concern a short period only; it can be back-and-forth, and encompass more locales than just one “country of origin” and one “country of destination”; technological progress in ICT, and the decline in the relative cost (relative to other goods and services) of ICT and travel means that migration no longer carries a sense of irreversibility. The loss of connection with the country of origin is less likely, and it becomes easier, as well as more relevant, to maintain the associated language skills. Therefore, we consider it insufficient to refer to “migration”; we prefer the notion of mobility, which subsumes migration but refers to a more complex reality. Moreover, the term captures both the micro- and the macro-dynamics of migration processes. By “mobility” we mean the fact that actors presenting all types of socioeconomic profiles are increasingly liable to move several times in their lifetime, in various directions, and for various purposes, including of course study and employment, but also retirement, leisure and tourism. Mobility is relevant not only for individuals, but also in the perspective of governance in Europe as a whole, because of the generally accepted correlation between economic competitiveness and the mobility of the workforce, which is one of the “four freedoms” that are central to European construction. To some extent, mobility is a choice; at the same time, it is a choice that actors will increasingly *need* to make in order to take full advantage of life’s chances. Such decisions almost necessarily involve languages, and the “multilingual challenge” for the European citizen and for European society is frequently bound up with issues of mobility that are becoming ever more prevalent.

Language, however, is not just a communication tool, but also a key to social cohesion, itself bound up in complex—and not wholly unambiguous—ways to the issue of social inclusion. Like other facets of culture, language can be used as a resource in defining who you are personally and collectively. Obviously, such processes are not necessarily connected with *one* and only one language. Quite the contrary, many people’s linguistic profile includes

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<sup>5</sup> Much of this section reproduces, with due adaptations, Section 1.1 of Part B of the project proposal submitted to the European Commission on 31 January 2013.

several languages, which allows them to draw on a plurality of resources not only for communication, but also for identity building and for the development of representations of the individual and collective self. The possibilities afforded by the use of multilingual resources are extensive, since languages change over time, both in terms of lexical or phonological features, and in terms of the range of (sociolinguistic) domains in which they are used. Ultimately, a multilingual repertoire may be an asset that facilitates the development of complex identities both at the individual and at the collective level. The MIME project offers an opportunity to examine whether, and under what conditions, this is indeed the case.

This complex relation to language applies not only to persons living in multilingual families or in particularly multicultural neighbourhoods: all learners of foreign languages may well develop a close, even intimate connection with languages acquired through formal, non-formal or informal education, and incorporate these languages not just in their communicational repertoire, but in their personal identity. But what matters here is that language undoubtedly plays a part in two phenomena that are crucial to the management of multilingualism in and by society: people's *inclusion* (or "belonging") into a variety of groups, whether from an "etic" (externally assigned) or "emic" (subjectively experienced) standpoint, as well as aggregate social *cohesion*. These two terms are related in complex ways, and this complexity needs to be unpacked to formulate analytically and ethically sound propositions regarding the multilingual challenge for the European citizen.

Individual actors' sense of inclusion depends on language, both as a communication tool and as a resource through which identity and meaning are constructed. Inclusion—we might even talk of *acceptance*—may be experienced (or not) with respect to groups of various types, including traditional ones such as citizenry, but also more transient ones connected to residence (where changeability is, of course, increased by the mobility discussed above) or to even more fluid communities of practice – when through action, people are led to use and develop certain shared linguistic resources. Inclusion is an issue across situations, as suggested above: these include work and study, social relationships and political participation, and inclusion increasingly requires negotiating matters of language.

#### *Inclusion, identity and social cohesion*

We regard the improvement of aggregate social cohesion as a key aspect of a successful response to the multilingual challenges confronting the European citizen in an age of globalisation. However, we must remain alert to the possible ambiguities of the notion of cohesion, particularly when it is articulated in linguistic and cultural terms. Cohesion can prove inclusive and comforting, but it may also carry exclusionary side-effects. Therefore, social and political institutions need to take great care to ensure that cohesion-enhancing policies remain inclusive. This requires a sharp perspective on the selection and design of public policy measures intended to manage diversity. A multilingual Europe (the third and fourth letters of the MIME acronym) must facilitate mobility *and* be inclusive, with social cohesion resulting from inclusion.

The preceding point ought to be seen in connection with the notion of identity, because it is largely through processes of identity construction that languages are central to inclusion and cohesion. In our view, identity should not be seen as a static variable characterising an actor once and for all. Rather, it is dynamic and changeable over time, particularly in a "longish" time frame. However, it remains sociologically significant and cannot be assumed away on account of its fluidity, particularly given the symbolic meanings often associated with language; as May (2012) has observed, there is a resilience to identity; it is often connected

to language and languages, which are used as by actors who draw on them as resources for identity construction, individually and collectively.

The MIME project works with complex notions of identity and language, allowing us to take account of changes in the relative degree of fluidity of either depending on the *scale* of analysis considered (thus illustrating a point made in the preceding section). Just as identities are constructed and changeable, “languages” are fluid too, and though they are perfectly identifiable constructs in some contexts (such as the formal translation of an international treaty from, say, German to Latvian), they lack sharp boundaries in other contexts, such as informal interaction in the ticket office of the main train station in a large western European city, which may be characterised by the intensive use of code switching, as shown by research carried out under FP6. This complexity, by the way, exemplify manifestations of what we mean by “complex” and “deep” diversity. We may therefore think in terms of a *continuum* spanning all kinds of communicational situations (Berthoud, Grin and Lüdi, 2013b), ranging from those where “named languages” matter, to those where they matter much less. The challenge is to know when to apply one type of approach and when to apply the other (or *another*) along the continuum.

#### *The mobility-inclusion trade-off*

Mobility and inclusion therefore emerge as two key dimensions of the challenge confronting multilingual European societies. Their salience is put in sharper relief by globalisation, in terms of both urgency and complexity. We can only take the true measure of the challenge when noting that mobility and inclusion may pull in non-converging, potentially opposite directions, reflecting complex processes affecting individual actors and families as well as larger social groups or even societies as a whole. This non-converging pull can be explained with examples, after which we shall turn to one of MIME’s core ideas, namely, that the tension between mobility and inclusion, though real, can be eased significantly through well-designed policies.

First, favouring mobility suggests that actors ought to acquire certain types of skills and that states should adopt corresponding policies. These policies will generally aim at expanding citizens’ language skills in a variety of languages, so as to facilitate access to the labour market across the European Union, and/or providing translation and interpreting services. However, this is not entirely without risks on several counts. Encouraging language acquisition, for the perfectly good reason that it is in citizens’ interest, risks compounding the relative disadvantage suffered by those who, owing to less favourable conditions, have fewer opportunities to broaden their linguistic repertoire and are relatively less successful at doing so. This can prove particularly disruptive if below-average language learning correlates with other negative determinants of socio-economic status such as lower educational achievement. Encouragement to mobility should rest on measures that avoid deepening divides that are already strongly correlated to education and skills, lest mobility prove detrimental to inclusion and (given the linkage we have insisted on just above) social cohesion (Kriesi *et al.*, 2012; Barbier, 2012). Econometric research shows that multilingualism *per se* makes a positive and considerable contribution to a country’s GDP; it is of the order of 9% to 10% in Switzerland (Grin, Sfreddo and Vaillancourt 2010). Such figures suggest that in order to be consistent with the EU’s Lisbon Strategy, encouraging mobility should converge with the promotion of sustainable, multi-faceted multilingualism. Orientation to one sole *lingua franca* (whether the latter is English or any of the other official languages of the EU, and independently of the compatibility of such an orientation with Europe’s commitment to linguistic diversity *per se*) gives rise to another problem: as shown by robust quantitative evidence (see Section 1.2), the labour market rewards a good command of English much

better than a basic or approximate one. Let us observe in passing that this has important implications. In particular, it means that partial competencies, even if dressed up in the garb of “ELF” (for “English as a *lingua franca* as opposed to “English”) is not always a substitute for English aligned on native-speaker norms.. Exploratory statistical analyses (for the purposes of this application) of data from the Adult Education Survey (AES) with over 200,000 respondents, released in 2011 by EUROSTAT,<sup>6</sup> reveal a positive correlation between proficiency in English as a foreign language (FL) and income (the correlation is statistically significant for all EU member states except Hungary). Analysis further shows that English-language skills are lower among the less educated, the old, and people fulfilling domestic tasks (a category correlated with gender). Earlier research in Switzerland indicates that rates of return to fluency in English range from 8% for basic skills to 20% for advanced skills among French- and German-speaking men, controlling for education, experience, and economic sector (Grin, 1999). Inadequate skills in a dominant language can be a source of exclusion, thus directly threatening social cohesion.

Second, encouraging mobility will generally entail other consequences, possibly enshrined in another type of policy, in the form of relaxing the legal provisions that traditionally result in a strong association between a language and a place – quite simply, the exclusive official status granted, in a given territorial jurisdiction such as a member state, to one, occasionally two languages or more. For example, the *Opinion* of the EU Advocate General in Case C-202/11, delivered on 12 July 2012, holds that Article 45 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU), trumps the *Flemish Decree on Use of Languages*, and that consequently, the latter’s provisions regarding the obligation to draft work contracts in Dutch for employees working in Flanders are not necessarily applicable, since such provisions may hamper mobility on the European labour market<sup>3</sup>. If the traditional language-place correspondence puts a brake on mobility, a political choice to encourage the latter might, *prima facie*, suggest loosening the territoriality principle, with potentially major implications for the education system, the workings of local administrations, or norms of consumer information and safety. Such measures would amount to a substantial change in citizens’ linguistic environment, a term by which we mean much more than mere “linguistic landscape” (although the latter is obviously part of the linguistic environment): a linguistic environment (e.g. Grin, 2003) also encompasses, for example, the legal status of different languages with all the attendant institutional implications, their presence in audiovisual and printed media, their relative legitimacy at work or in business, and of course the distribution of skills in different languages among citizens.

Actors place high stakes on their linguistic environments, and regulating the latter always involves a careful balancing of the rights of different groups. These are normally allocated through a combination of two political and legal principles: “linguistic freedom” (in essence, minimal intervention by the state in language matters, beyond selecting the language[s] of government, administration and justice) and “language territoriality” (explicit association of one or more languages with a given territory for the official purposes just mentioned, but potentially also for other domains such as education, business and the media) (McRae, 2009). Therefore, how much alteration of linguistic environments should be considered acceptable if the goal is to facilitate mobility? And what is the potential for conflict attendant to such processes? The “contact linguistics” tradition, developed by the late Peter Nelde, insists that

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/adult\\_education\\_survey](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/adult_education_survey).

<sup>6</sup> See <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?doclang=EN&text=&pageIndex=0&mode=DOC&docid=124983&occ=first&dir=&cid=700610>.

when it comes to language “there is no contact without conflict” (see e.g. Weber, 1999). Without claiming that conflict is inevitable, we must concede that it is not uncommon – a fairly unsurprising observation, in fact, given that Bourdieu and others have long alerted us to the power issues associated with language. Such issues are particularly fraught when the languages in contact do not enjoy the same “strength” (but we might even, at a stretch, use the term “power”) – a term used here as shorthand to refer to the number of speakers, the respective presence of the languages concerned in various contexts or domains, prestige, and legitimacy. This applies, in particular, to regional or minority languages, whose presence in a given jurisdiction is considered *a priori* legitimate; but this also applies, albeit against a different legal and political backdrop, in the case of “immigrant” or “heritage” languages.

Moreover, the continuing presence (and sometimes electoral success) of xenophobic political parties in several member states should give us pause. Specialists in extremist movements often opine that the popularity of such parties is linked to their supporters’ fears, which are fuelled by perceived threats (posed by the presence and visibility of the cultural and linguistic “other”) to the stability of their social, political and cultural surroundings. Unless they are part of a careful and balanced policy design, therefore, measures promoting mobility may stoke such fears, inspire exclusionary attitudes, and the resulting political tensions may be highly detrimental to social cohesion. There again, the non-convergence of “mobility” and “inclusion” reappears.

Reciprocally, the promotion of social cohesion, even when carefully designed through measures that maximise inclusion, may obstruct mobility. For example, school systems typically operate through the medium of the local official language. This is a standard component of the institutional arrangements that communities normally adopt to ensure their linguistic, cultural and political reproduction, and one that proves particularly essential in the case of small languages. It is also generally regarded as a good way to integrate both new generations and immigrants in the labour market and social networks of their host country. There again, abundant econometric evidence, mostly in Europe and North America shows that lack of skills in the locally dominant language is a significant determinant of lower socioeconomic status among migrants (Esser, 2006; Chiswick and Miller, 2007). Thus, this arrangement regarding language of instruction in schools is conducive to inclusion and, through inclusion, to social cohesion. However, it presupposes a simple correspondence between one place and one language. As we have seen, this presupposition is likely to prove unsatisfactory in an increasingly mobile world, and a perfectly legitimate focus on inclusion (in turn enhancing social cohesion) may be costly in terms of mobility.

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: in general, more mobility may damage inclusion and cohesion, and a focus on inclusion and cohesion may impair mobility; this assumption will be investigated and evaluated in several of the case studies MIME will produce, and pave the way for the next step in the MIME approach: how can we ease these tensions through well-designed policies?

#### *The principle of cost-reducing strategies*

The foregoing discussion does not warrant the conclusion that mobility and inclusion (and, correlatively, the inclusive form of social cohesion we are striving for) are incompatible. Rather, we understand the call as an invitation to research ways of increasing compatibility between these two seemingly (and sometimes objectively) conflicting goals, both of which, however, are politically, socially and economically relevant. We believe that answers can be

sought in the careful design of language policies and in the competent management of the linguistic facets of other public policies. For example, the well-planned introduction and generalisation of bilingual education can be very effective in broadening actors' linguistic repertoires without compromising people's sense of place.

Yet we need to go beyond the sensible, but unsurprising notion that solutions must be sought in wise and well-informed policy design. The four guiding principles of the MIME project presented in Section 2 are organisational answers to the challenge. However, it is useful to refer to an analytical framework, and we propose to refer to a formalisation of the notion of trade-off, as found, for example, in policy analysis (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004; Weimer and Vining, 2005).

We start out by acknowledging that *both* mobility and inclusion are relevant objectives worth pursuing. All other things being equal, actors are legitimate in wanting, once they enjoy a certain level of inclusion, to have as much mobility as possible; symmetrically, once a certain level of mobility is ensured, they require as much inclusion as possible. The same may be said at the societal level: while ensuring the stability of the political and institutional arrangements that society has chosen through democratic processes, policy orientations ought to be designed in such a way as to offer its members maximum mobility. Conversely, given a certain degree of mobility, they should include measures that maximise inclusion. Mobility on the one hand, (social) cohesion and (individual) inclusion on the other are *objectives*. What restricts the extent to which both objectives can be achieved is the negative relationship between them, as outlined just above: emphasis on one may impair the other, and vice-versa. This amounts to a *constraint* on individual and societal action. Thus, one possible way (obviously not excluding others) of addressing the multilingual challenge to the European citizen and to European society is to think of it as a problem of maximising a combination of objectives under a binding constraint. This approach generates a rationale to orient the search for solutions, and more specifically the quest for "sensible" strategies: at all levels, we should seek to identify ways to *lower the relative cost of mobility* in terms of inclusion and cohesion, and to *lower the relative cost of inclusion and cohesion* in terms of mobility.

Reverting to our previous example, consider a school system that positively contributes to individual inclusion and social cohesion through the use of the local language as a language of instruction. However, it poses a challenge to mobility, in that it raises the question of access to the school system for certain groups of learners such as newly arrived children from mobile families – if they do not already have adequate competence in the language of instruction. This may discourage mobility and/or make it more costly, in material as well as symbolic terms, implying that inclusion has a cost in terms of mobility. Conversely, the choice *not* to uphold the local language as the pivotal language of integration in a given context would damage inclusion and cohesion, implying that mobility has a cost in terms of inclusion and cohesion. Clearly, the particulars will depend on the languages concerned, but the general question remains: how can we lower the "mobility cost" of inclusion and, simultaneously, the "inclusion cost" of mobility?

Looking first at the "mobility cost" of inclusion, it can be lowered by expanding curricular streams and developing one in which (i) thanks to ICT, newly arrived children can pursue the learning process undertaken in their previous country of residence; (ii) thanks to a flexible approach to the very notion of language skills and language learning, these children can more smoothly and progressively move into the local language curriculum; (iii) through an expanded range of electives, these children can maintain and develop skills in – for example

– a “heritage language”, both for purposes of cognitive development and in the event of a return to the previous country of residence (as part of a pattern of back-and-forth mobility). Reciprocally, how can we lower the “inclusion cost” of mobility (or, equivalently, the loss of sense of inclusion that more mobility may entail)? A core task of the project is to ascertain how far, and under what conditions, this can be achieved by making sure that the acquisition of the wide range of language skills required for mobility is non-exclusionary, which means that access to language learning must be facilitated, whether through well-designed partial immersion or through broader access to language learning in adult (continuing) education; another, non mutually exclusive strategy in policy design is the development of quality public-service interpreting and translation, particularly in sectors such as health where dependability is essential. The preceding examples concern the labour market and they can be studied through the situations – the challenges – confronting individual actors. But as pointed out before, the mobility-inclusion trade off also turns up in issues best approached at the aggregate, societal level. Consider for example the case of the international (including intra-EU) free movement of goods and services. The single market is an increasingly influential reality, with some 70% of the total trade in goods in the EU-27 occurring among member states in 2006.<sup>7</sup> However, what requirements should be imposed on firms with respect to the translation of product information such as instructions for use and product ingredients used? The absence of adequate translation into local (usually national) languages, apart from raising potentially serious issues of consumer safety (Amboise, 2011), erodes people’s sense of place and may nurture a backlash against integration; it would be detrimental to inclusion and hence to the type of social cohesion aimed at. But rather than restricting the flow of goods and services, we can restrict the “inclusion cost” of mobility by requiring full translation of product information, while permitting the use of other languages. Of course, the target and scope of a regulation will depend on context, and on the languages concerned, but the challenge flowing from the trade-off appears across different contexts: how to get as much mobility as possible without disruptive implications, and how to we ensure that inclusion-enhancing measures do not stifle mobility. Much of the project, then, addresses the question of how the “inclusion and mobility costs” can be measured, and how we can properly identify what should count as a trade-off worth managing through policy.

Another and increasingly important example is that of the mobility of students, professors and researchers in Europe, in order to create an integrated, Europe-wide higher education space. On the one hand, we observe strong centripetal forces towards the use of English for the sharing of ideas, which is conducive to that common space, particularly for research. At the same time, as shown by commentators such as Lévy-Leblond (1996) and by documents emanating from concerned bodies (e.g. the German *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*, 2011), it is important for higher education not to become disconnected from the societies in which they are embedded, which would be exclusionary, particularly with respect to teaching. The development of careful language policies for universities and research funding organisations, with an eye on both mobility and inclusion, is therefore essential.

Obviously, the issues at hand are immensely complex and offering suitable answers requires analysis going well beyond these simple examples. But the general philosophy is clear: the challenge is to increase the mutual compatibility of potentially conflicting aims through the reduction in the material and symbolic costs of both terms of the trade-off. One intriguing implication of this approach is that it may also help us address the question of the emergence of a sense of “European” identity under an unusual angle [I.E.?], which is be addressed in

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<sup>7</sup> See [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KS-CD-07-001-08/FR/KS-CD-07-001-08-FR.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-CD-07-001-08/FR/KS-CD-07-001-08-FR.PDF).

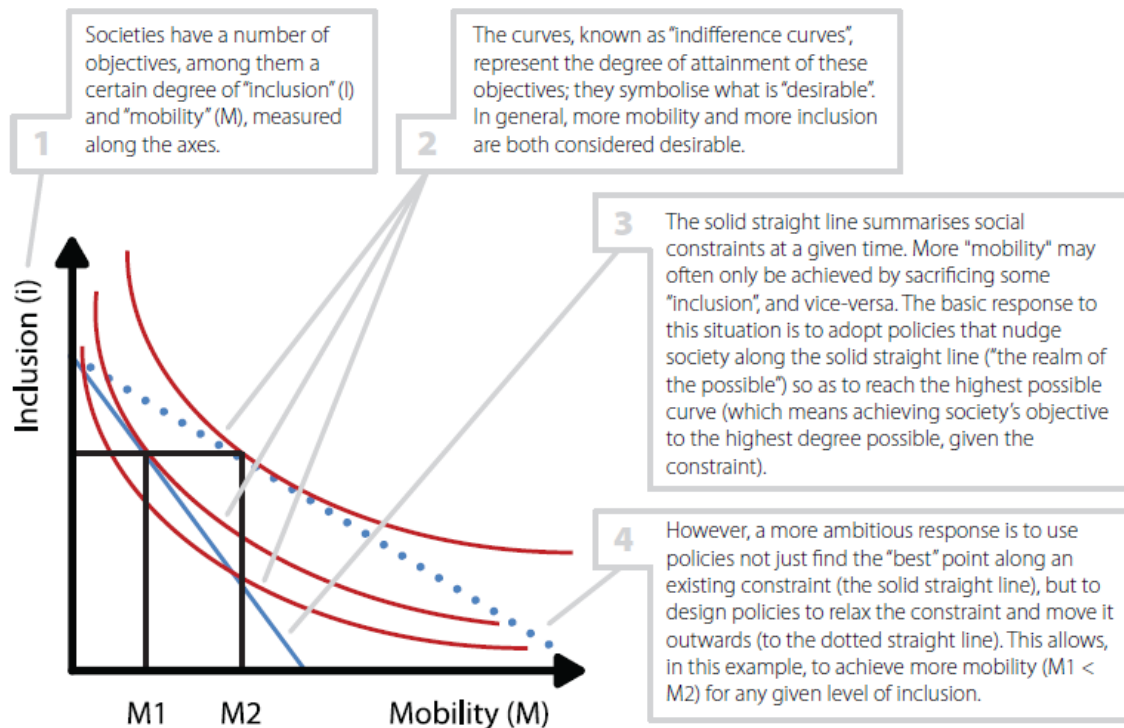
the project's "work package" devoted to "society" (WP2; see below). But the main function of the trade-off model is to provide us with a first, meta-level analytical framework around which research work can be organised, and it is worth devoting a few paragraphs to a more detailed presentation.

Readers familiar with policy analysis will have recognised the underlying analytical model, which is often approached through a well-known graphical treatment combining constraints, which are straight lines circumscribing the realm of the possible, and curves (usually called "indifference curves"), which symbolise the realm of the desirable. The core intuition is that those making choices (whether individual actors, or society as a whole acting through public policy) ought to pick the most *desirable* situation among all the *possible* ones. We deliberately eschew technical discussions here (however, see e.g. Mankiw and Taylor, 2011, Chap. 21, for a very straightforward explanation), in order to highlight the main message: if we find ways (particularly through intelligent policies) to *relax* the constraint, we can expand the realm of the possible, and achieve better (or "more desirable") outcomes. In terms of our discussion so far, this means identifying and implementing measures that increase the compatibility between mobility and inclusion, in order for citizens, and for society as a whole, to enjoy more of both; we have shown above how bilingual education can serve this purpose well.

In a graphical treatment, this idea is rendered through the outward shift of the straight line that symbolises the constraint. A graph is merely one way, among others, to synthesise an analytical proposition. While some readers prefer a treatment in plain words and sentences (as proposed so far) and others, on the contrary, favour formal mathematical approaches, a graph, as a visual strategy, can have broad appeal as a tool providing a pithy summary, in a very directly accessible way, of the interaction between complex notions. The trade-off graph is therefore presented in Fig. 1, and its constituent parts are presented in boxes 1, 2, 3 and 4.



FIGURE 1: THE TRADE-OFF APPROACH



The above treatment is merely a way to synthesise in crisp fashion the extremely complex set of questions raised by the call in its characterisation of the "multilingual challenge", and to do so in a way that generates a consistent approach to begin to answer them. Its main function in MIME is to provide a meta-level framework in which the results of research work carried out through linguistics, sociology, political philosophy, translation studies, law, etc. can be integrated into a policy analysis perspective. Transposing this model to the study of the reality of multilingual Europe, and what orientations may be suggested in practice, requires an in-depth examination meeting the conditions outlined above: interdisciplinarity, micro-meso-macro compatibility, generalisability for policy application, and stakeholder involvement.

#### *Applying policy analysis*

Given the thematic scope of the call on "The multilingual challenge", it would not have been realistic to envision a parallel analysis exploiting to the full the potential and methods of *all* the disciplines that are arguably relevant to the issues at hand. How, then, to develop an interdisciplinary yet manageable approach to the multilingual challenges confronting European society? Our strategy is to use policy analysis as a federating instrument, because the discipline of policy analysis, with its set of targeted concepts, is a very convenient tool for addressing complex macro-level choices that have to be made on the basis of detailed, reliable information about social reality on the ground, while bearing the big picture in mind – as pointed out above, policy requires the capacity to weigh options in general terms. Policy analysis is primarily a method for combining and using knowledge produced in other disciplines. The philosophy of policy analysis animates the European Commission's resource book for the evaluation of socio-economic development (European Commission, 2008).

The specific ways in which a policy analysis approach can be applied to various facets of the questions at hand will vary, because these facets themselves are exceedingly varied. Language-related choices affect (*for example*) the design of institutions (one of the issues addressed in Work package 1), social dynamics in culturally mixed neighbourhoods (WP2), the definition of language curricula in educational systems (WP3), the extent of public support to be granted to public-service interpreting and translation (WP4), and the redistributive implications (in terms of income and socioeconomic status) of language policy choices (WP5), not to mention what we call “frontier” issues, such as the international mobility of retirees or consumer safety (WP6). Nevertheless, across this extraordinarily varied range of questions, a policy analysis approach suggests a way to incorporate and synthesise information.

Complex social objectives typically carry both advantages and drawbacks. This is, for example, the case of environmental quality: it delivers various benefits in terms of health and quality of life, but securing a cleaner environment also carries costs. Note that in this approach, non-material or symbolic benefits and costs are just as relevant as material or financial ones. Likewise, linguistic diversity generates both benefits and costs or, more generally, advantages and drawbacks. A very common feature of advantages and drawbacks is that the latter tend to rise at an increasing rate, while the former rise at a decreasing rate (there again, environmental quality provides a good illustration). To make the point plain, consider the example of a stream that needs cleaning up. We would start by implementing the cheaper clean-up strategies, and progressively have to introduce the costlier ones, because each successive improvement in water quality is likely to be technically more complex. Reciprocally, starting in the initial situation with a very dirty river, the first improvements in water quality will have an important (positive) impact; however, if the river is already very clean, the benefits from making it totally pristine are likely to be more modest.

In basic policy analysis, this approach would be used, firstly, to collect information on the advantages and drawbacks, both material and symbolic, in order to determine a “best” (or “optimal”) level—whether an optimal level of environmental protection, or an optimal degree of recognition, protection and promotion of linguistic diversity. Policies would then be adopted accordingly, in order to progressively move towards this socially optimal level. This might imply an increase in diversity (for example, expanding the range of languages used as languages of instruction in the education system) or a decrease of diversity (for example, reducing the range of languages into which rarely used official forms are systematically translated).

However, one additional use of this analysis is of crucial importance to the MIME project, because it suggests *another* way of approaching the multilingual challenge to the European citizen and to European society. Indeed, in-depth knowledge of what linguistic diversity means “on the ground” can serve not only to identify the benefits and costs of diversity. It can also serve to identify conditions for *lowering* the (aggregate, social) cost of diversity – thus converging with the “trade-off” analysis presented earlier. If, through an in-depth understanding of *how* diversity creates material and symbolic costs (also because of *prejudice* or lack of information regarding linguistic or cultural difference), then we are also equipped with knowledge to imagine policies to *reduce* the costs of diversity (including subjectively perceived costs), exactly along the lines of our previous discussions of “trade-offs”. Increasing the *benefits* of diversity also makes policy sense, but since it is often the mirror image of the reduction of its material and symbolic costs, we shall, in what follows (and also to avoid repetitions) focus on the notion of reducing costs. Summing up, the idea is

to investigate how policy can also be used to lower the material and symbolic costs associated with an existing state of affairs. This perspective, of course, is of particular importance when dealing with xenophobic tensions that need to be defused. One important challenge for the project will be to make progress in the development of a systematic perspective on the identification and measurement of symbolic costs.

Let us once again insist that this is a meta-level framework destined to accommodate the broad range of more detailed analyses that the various disciplinary perspectives represented in the project will contribute; we return to this point below. Nevertheless, it helps to explain how we intend to make interdisciplinarity work, having established that interdisciplinarity is an incontrovertible necessity and that we need some way to operationalise it.

### *General methodology*

The MIME project brings together practitioners from a dozen disciplines, and the methodological inputs will be accordingly varied. Therefore, it is not possible to describe “the” methodology to be applied to the project. However, a general approach can be outlined here.

Each team operates in accordance with the concepts and instruments of its core discipline: after all, the point of interdisciplinarity is not to erase differences between disciplines, but to take advantage of what they have to offer, and all components of the MIME project are expected to stand on their individual scientific merits and be relevant *within* their respective disciplinary traditions. However, in order to deliver the type of integrated policy-relevant knowledge described here, the research procedures designed within each work package and each task also aim to:

1. identify the perceptions, meaning and roles of *mobility* in the processes examined and assess its importance;
2. identify the perceptions, meanings and roles of *inclusion* in these processes, taking account, in particular, of the complex links between inclusion and social cohesion, and assess their importance;
3. assess the nature, workings and empirical importance of possible trade-offs between mobility and inclusion in these processes;
4. identify features of these processes that lend themselves to policy intervention that can help increase the compatibility between mobility, inclusion and cohesion;
5. assess the advantages and drawbacks (whether symbolic or material) of these changes;
6. spell out the types of policy interventions concerned in the area under scrutiny (for example, depending on work package: regulatory change regarding the language(s) of administration, *with regard to different solutions within the range of duties* that this administration discharges; remodelling of neighbourhood-level integration programmes; curricular innovations in schools; support to various modes of community-based interpreting; etc.);
7. identify the broader contextual conditions that must be present for such policy interventions (political, social, educational, communicational, ethical, legal, etc. depending on the type of issue analysed) to be effective;
8. keep alert to the needs of comparative analysis throughout the steps listed here.

Depending on the task considered, the research work carried out by the different MIME teams may be mainly theoretical-conceptual, mainly empirical, or both.

#### **4. Structural design**

The project is organised in eight work packages: six for research, one for dissemination and training, and one for management. Although describing each in detail is not possible here, if only because it would result in an excessively long paper, we can characterise each of them as follows. For each description of work packages 1 through 4, the opening sentence describes the core missions, and the bullets the connections with other work packages (the positioning of work package 5 being slightly different).<sup>8</sup>

##### *Work package 1: “Politics”*

Work package 1 is devoted to a comparative review of political and institutional experience in different linguistically diverse countries in dealing with their internal diversity. In connection with other work packages, its goals are to:

- provide a contextual, macro-level backdrop to the analysis of societal dealings with linguistic diversity;
- define the political conditions under which education systems operate, including what goals they are and could be expected to meet, with what level of resources;
- explain how political conditions contribute to shaping the frequency and modalities of interaction as well as the use of various communication strategies in administration and public life;
- lend political, institutional and historical anchoring to the development of policy proposals.

##### *Work package 2: “Society”*

This work package focuses on the sociological study of linguistic diversity as experienced by social actors in their everyday life, particularly at the local level of the city and its neighbourhoods, and in the construction of individual and collective identities. In connection with other work packages, its goals are to:

- examine how these social processes echo, at the micro and meso levels, the political and institutional arrangements studied in WP1;
- study the ways in which these processes give more specific substance to different educational needs and opportunities;
- help to highlight the full range of mediation and communication practices and signals strategies that could be further supported and developed for smooth and inclusive social interaction;
- provide the information needed to ensure the social relevance and embeddedness of policy proposals.

##### *Work package 3: “Education”*

Work package 3 is devoted to the re-examination of language teaching and learning in an integrated, systemic perspective on the education system and curriculum design, making room for micro-level processes in connection with macro-level contextual aspects. In connection with other work packages, its goals are to:

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<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing (January 2014), the project’s website is not yet operational; more extensive information on the project will, however, be available from May 2014 on [www.mime-project.org](http://www.mime-project.org).

- inform about the operations of language teaching as part of the education system, which is one of the strategically most important areas of state sovereignty (and one which states never leave unaddressed);
- complement the sociological analysis of inter-group relations and positioning, in which education conditions play a key determining role for the shaping of endo and exo representations;
- explain how far and for whom different types of skills can be developed through the education system in order to facilitate the use of various communicational strategies;
- provide the indispensable information for language education policies to rest on a realistic vision of the role of schools.

#### *Work package 4: “Mediation”*

This work package focuses on the interconnected analysis of communication strategies including translation, interpreting, the use of *lingue franche*, the development of *intercomprehension* (receptive skills) among related languages, and the potential of technological development in the more effective use of these strategies. It emphasises their role in mediating between linguistically diverse actors. In connection with other work packages, its goals are to:

- clarify the range of communicational instruments available in the political and institutional operations of local and national authorities;
- assess the contribution of different communicational tools in multilingual settings, taking account of their possible use in ensuring harmonious inter-community relations and integration of internationally mobile persons;
- exemplify possibilities for novel educational strategies to be put to a wider range of uses;
- inform the range of policy proposals that can be made for the formulation of a complex architecture of language policy (“CALP”).

#### *Work package 5: “Policy”*

Owing to the project’s emphasis on policy relevance, work package 5 plays a crucial role in MIME. The reconstruction of language policy in the perspective of public policy analysis and the formulation of policy orientations aims at formulating complex language policy combinations resting on the joint use of differentiated strategies in differentiated regimes. It also:

- draws on the knowledge generated by all the preceding WPs and provides an integrative framework to use their inputs in a policy-relevant perspective;
- feeds back into the political, sociological, educational and communicational understanding of “multilingualism-in-society”, by connecting the processes at hand with key evaluative criteria such as efficient allocation of material and symbolic resources, and distributive justice across members of society;
- generates proposals regarding local, national, regional, and international institutional arrangements regarding language; neighbourhood-level approaches to the management of linguistic diversity; evaluative tools for the selection and design of language education policies at the level of education systems; criteria for the targeted application of different, but efficient and fair combinations of communication strategies in different contexts;
- checks the legal conditions for the application of suggested policy orientations (a key aspect of ensuring the relevance, for various groups of stakeholders, of the scientific propositions generated by the project).

### *Work package 6: “Frontiers of multilingualism”*

A particularly creative feature of the MIME project is its “Frontiers” Work package. A set of short, independent studies (sometimes starting it out from deliberately bold assumptions) enables us to consider, in relation nonetheless with the integrative analytical framework of the MIME project as a whole, hitherto largely unexplored issues, namely:

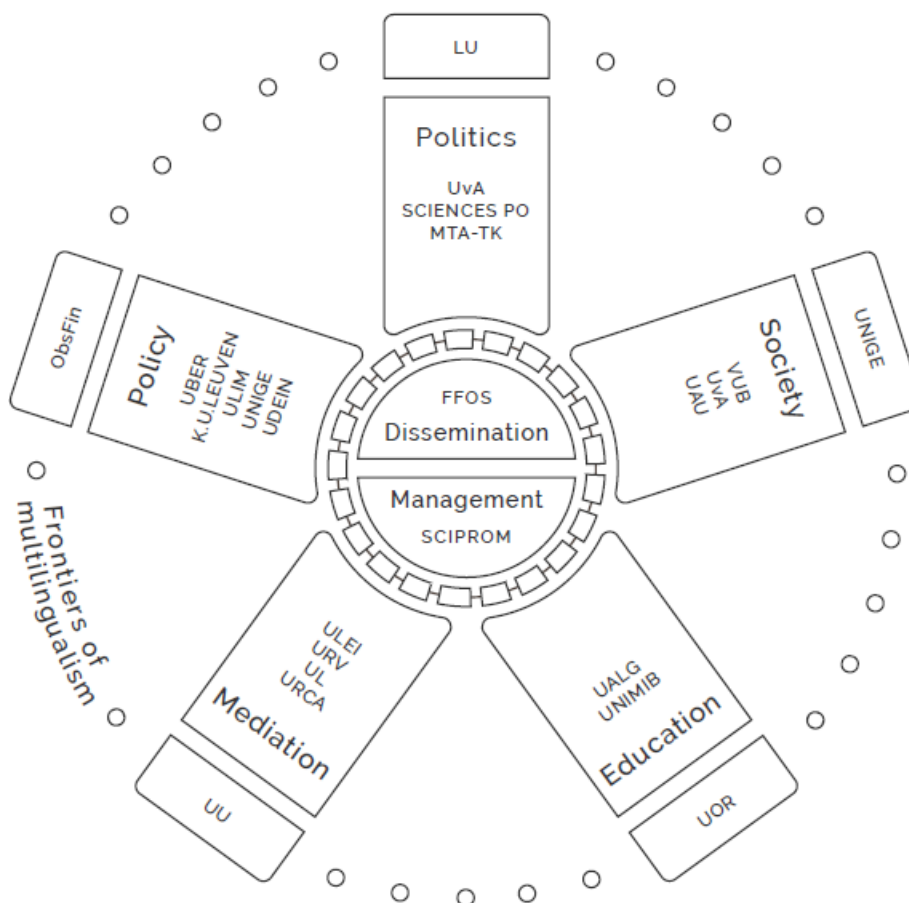
- the role of language and multilingualism in the (re-)definition of geopolitical security;
- the implications of globalisation for citizens’ rights and safety as consumers in a multilingual Europe;
- the language challenges, but also the specific contributions of Roma communities across Europe;
- the communication needs, in terms of language skills and facilities, resulting from the north-south mobility of retirees in an increasingly integrated Europe;
- the connections between creativity and multilingualism, and their possible use for the prevention of financial crises.

In addition, Work package 7 “DATE” (for “Dissemination, Awareness, Training and Exploitation”) coordinates all the dissemination and training activities, in cooperation with specialist professionals, thereby allowing the research work to reach the public at large as rapidly and efficiently as possible. It also animates the *Stakeholder Forum*®, where representatives of professional associations, private sector companies and public sector institutions active in the field of multilingualism can exchange with researchers about their needs, and react to the progress of the research work.

Finally, WP 8 is the centrally positioned “Management” work package, which ensures the smooth operations of what is, of necessity, a complex project addressing a wide range of questions. Work package 8 is run by a private company specialised in providing support to researchers in the submission and running of projects to the European Commission.

The identity, analytical framework and organisational design are summarised in the MIME Cartwheel. The MIME Cartwheel (which is protected by a Creative Commons license) serves a large number of purposes within the project and for its outside communication. The standard version uses six rainbow colours (WP1: red; WP2: orange; WP3: yellow; WP4: green; WP5: blue; WP6: purple), plus black for Work packages 7 and 8; for the purposes of this paper, however, we use a black-and-white version of the Cartwheel, where the acronyms are those of the participant institutions (Fig. 2).

FIGURE 2: THE MIME CARTWHEEL



## 5. Closing discussion

The first key element in the design of the MIME project is its interdisciplinarity. Although Peled (forthcoming) rightly notes that much of the research on interdisciplinarity is of recent vintage and was published in the 1990s and 2000s, it has been in fashion since the 1970s and it has given rise to a considerable amount of sharp commentary (for an early account, see Coenen-Huther, 1989). Since then, the term has been bandied about so often as to become rather hackneyed. It often turns up in research endeavours where interdisciplinary research remains aspirational or tokenistic – when it is not a mere afterthought, like a button hastily pressed in a project application to win the support of a funding committee.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, interdisciplinarity remains a powerful intellectual posture and, arguably, a necessary condition for policy relevance, and it is highly commendable that the Directorate-General

<sup>9</sup> Much could be said about the ambiguity of the academic establishment regarding interdisciplinarity. Though often presented as a condition of access to research funding in the social sciences and humanities, *appointment* committees for university positions are notoriously resistant to the notion. Similarly hostile attitudes can often also be observed in the evaluation and selection policy of scientific journals, probably because interdisciplinarity constitutes one of the most direct challenges to the gatekeeping practices that can often be observed in academia.

for Research and Innovation of the European Commission has stressed its importance, not least in its new funding scheme, *Horizon 2020*.

A genuinely interdisciplinary approach, however, requires more than just lining up good scholars from several disciplines. It needs an integrative framework that cannot be improvised, and requires familiarity (typically acquired over a long period) of the interface between the humanities and the social sciences. As pointed out before, the MIME Consortium has been able, in this respect, to bank on the fact that about three quarters of the team leaders come from disciplines other than linguistics but had longstanding practice in the application of their discipline to language issues; the others are linguists themselves, with orientations encompassing structural linguistics and sociolinguistics. Let us note that an interdisciplinary project also requires a true balance between the disciplines represented. A second, closely related, but distinct point is that of familiarity with the concepts and literature of other disciplines, which leads us to draw attention to the problem of self-referentiality. Precisely because they have been dealing with language issues for many years, the political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, education specialists, lawyers and economists involved in the MIME project routinely read (and quote) work by sociolinguists – and by each other. Thus, when they approach “language in society”, they do so with a certain awareness of the issues at hand and the concepts with which they can be studied, and their work is often published in edited volumes on language issues. This, of course, in no way replaces formal linguistic expertise, but it helps to access it – particularly when this awareness is, as is usually the case, combined with a sincere passion for languages and linguistic diversity. This openness is reflected in the bibliographies of MIME Consortium members’ published work, which systematically include literature from two or three disciplines, often more, and breeds a stimulating *culture of openness*.

This culture, however, might not be as widespread in applied linguistics. This is obviously not a general rule, and sociolinguistics numbers many specialists who are shining examples of interdisciplinary openness and curiosity – some of them are represented among the MIME partners or in the project’s Advisory Board. Nevertheless, in this respect, the experience of some FP6 research is eloquent. Many of the papers and reports produced in integrated projects or networks financed under FP6 come from core applied linguistics (a term used here in a broad sense), and contain nary a reference to anything outside a specific speciality or school of thought. At best, a passing reference will be made to a couple of classics in sociology. This creates a strong impression of self-referentiality, which is diametrically opposed to the spirit of interdisciplinary openness required by the call.

While self-referentiality may be unproblematic (and perhaps quite justified) in the examination of some specific topics (say, turn-taking by people with different linguistic profiles in a work meeting), it is obviously inadequate for some other enterprises. Consider for example the assessment of general language education policy scenarios, and the production of recommendations in this respect. Public policies raise questions of comparison and choice, in which the pros and cons of alternative scenarios have to be rigorously identified and weighed against each other. This requires specific concepts and methods that applied linguistics does not provide, and this is where one may reasonably expect sociolinguists to invite specialists from other disciplines to team up with them. Let us take another (and reciprocal) example: when a political scientist or an economist is commissioned to assess reform plans affecting foreign language education in primary schools, her strong suit is the design of a general evaluative framework for the weighing of the advantages and drawbacks of these reform plans. However, the pedagogical detail that *may* be needed to be taken into account for their proper assessment is something that she



will, in general, not be equipped to study. In this case, a sensible political scientist or economist will enlist the help of a specialist in language education, lest what she says remains banal, if not plain wrong. All this sounds like basic common sense. However, the literature on multilingualism published over the past ten years contains an abundance of titles on language “policy”, originating in applied linguistics but showing little apparent concern for what the term “policy” implies.

The third and last point is also related to the preceding one. It concerns a possible misinterpretation of the call. Let us briefly return to the sentence, quoted above, about interdisciplinarity, but including the clause that immediately follows the list of disciplines: the Commission calls for “*interdisciplinary research – drawing on a range of disciplines in the field of humanities and social sciences, such as linguistics, political sciences, sociology, law, history, psychology, economics, educational sciences, philosophy and anthropology – in order to close the gap between multi- and monolingual citizens and to improve employability and cohesion*”.

The reference to “employability” and “social cohesion” points to economic and social realities and their relationship to linguistic diversity. In other words, if these realities are to be seriously considered, the project logically could not be a purely, or even mainly (socio)-linguistic one. The call was about the “multilingual challenge” in its many dimensions – not about the sociolinguistics of this challenge.

All evaluation procedures contain an element of chance or even arbitrariness. The researchers who have never encountered rejection (of an innovative project, of a carefully crafted paper) are those who have never submitted anything. Stepping back from the particular situation at hand, how can we assess the experience of bidding for the SSH.2013.5.2-1 on “The multilingual challenge for the European citizen”?

We may first observe that although the MIME project does address a very wide range of questions (as requested by the call), others could not be included under the financial and organisational constraints at hand. Another point that the MIME project coordination is acutely aware of is that there may well be, in Europe, a surfeit of talent: there are many bright colleagues whom we could not invite to join the project, owing to these same limitations. Nevertheless, the implementation of the project (2014-2018) opens up new possibilities. In particular, some of the events planned as part of the project design provide opportunities for meeting and exchange, in particular with colleagues who could not be invited to become project partners, or were themselves involved in competing bids. It is our hope, therefore, that these opportunities will be used, for the greater good of interdisciplinary research on multilingualism.

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