

*‘Mother tongue plus two’: chimera or attainable objective?*

The European Union’s (2003) stated long-term language competence goal<sup>1</sup>, based on the Barcelona Objective, ‘is to increase individual multilingualism [or plurilingualism] until every citizen has practical skills in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue’. The paper will consider how successful this monolingual approach to language education has been, particularly in light of the fact that English has become the de facto vehicular language of the European institutions themselves. It will examine the challenges posed by it, with a particular focus on countries or regions with populations of speakers of lesser-used languages such as Irish, Welsh, Catalan and Finnish. Finally, it will discuss the role of lesser-used languages in the linguistic diversity debate and whether modern education systems can successfully accommodate both indigenous linguistic heritage and modern foreign language learning.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2003). 449: *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004 – 2006*. <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:c11068&from=RO>> accessed 10 May 2015.