

# Multilingual Education in Europe

## 1. Introduction

European education systems promote the teaching of several national, foreign and, to a lesser extent, regional languages to facilitate communication and social cohesion. Most of the students speak more than one language at home. While teachers help them learn majority and high-status languages, they may not encourage them to exploit and develop all of their linguistic resources, which may include features of their home languages (Sierens & van Avermaet, 2014). To distinguish between the various languages used at school, the Council of Europe differentiates between regional, minority and migration languages, the languages of schooling, and foreign languages. These languages can be both taught as a subject and be the language(s) of instruction. In line with this complexity, multilingual education is an umbrella term referring to the planned use of multiple languages in education with the aim to develop multilingualism and multiliteracy.

On account of this broad definition, the term “multilingual education” includes different educational programs and pedagogies (content and language integrated teaching, translanguaging, linguistically and/or culturally responsive pedagogy) and may present different aims (e.g. language awareness, development of competence in several languages). Nevertheless, all programs and pedagogies are founded on students’ right to use and learn multiple languages in parallel. They are also based on the understanding that a language is not a standardized native-speaker-driven construct with well-defined national/regional borders, but a multimodal tool and a resource for social practice and meaning-making (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015). This recent development in language education has been termed a “multilingual turn” (Conteh & Meier 2014), and presents research that emphasizes the need to shift from monolingual to bi-or multilingual ideologies and approaches.

The present entry defines key concepts relating to multilingualism and plurilingualism before describing educational programs that promote multilingualism and typical pedagogies used to these effects. It closes with a summary and indicates possible directions for future research and practice.