

# **EPICUR European Model Language Policy**



**EPICUR**  
**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Main Goal EPICUR Model Language Policy.....	3
1.2 Problem Statement.....	4
1.3 Core components of the language policy.....	5

## **LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

2.1 Structural outline language policy: Institutional level.....	8
2.2 Teaching & learning.....	8
2.3 Research.....	14
2.4 Governance.....	16
2.5 Communication.....	18

## **LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL**

3.1 Structural outline language policy: European Universities alliance level..	21
3.2 Teaching & learning.....	21
3.3 Research.....	25
3.4 Governance.....	27
3.5 Communication.....	29





# 1.


## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Main Goal EPICUR Model language Policy

The primary goal of the EPICUR model language policy is to offer and promote a model framework for language governance for European Higher Education Institutions and European universities alliances, with the aim to:

- Enhance the quality of teaching & learning and research;
- Fostering inclusiveness, diversity and accessibility both at the institutional as well as at the European alliance level;
- Preserving the use of national and regional languages in an academic environment
- Furthering European and international collaboration between universities
- Boosting opportunities for physical, blended and hybrid mobility for students and staff

Over and above these immediate gains, EPICUR considers the model language policy to be an enabler for innovation and inclusiveness. The better language governance and the use of languages are embedded into institutional structures, the more room will be created for experimental forms of multiple language use.



In addition, while language governance has an immediate impact on widening access to academic training and research for prospective students and staff, it also enhances the immersion into all aspects of the academic community to those who are already enrolled or employed at a university. EPICUR considers adoption of its model language policy, and the subsequent implementation by at least three members to be an example of structural reforms at the institutional level set in motion by the work of the alliance.

Furthermore, now that over 280 European Higher Education Institutions are members of European Universities alliances, another novelty is the uptake of (parts of the) model language policy by EPICUR's peer alliances. The sharing of these types of resources amongst the alliances will not only help improve the model, it will also contribute to consolidating the alliances as a new mode of European collaboration in the years to come.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Language governance in higher education and in particular the use of English vis-à-vis the use of national or regional languages has been subject to heated debate in several European countries in recent years. In countries like the Netherlands and France, this resulted in national position papers and/or changes in relevant legislation concerning language choice in higher education. Against the backdrop of political and societal concerns regarding language use, language policies have an essential role to play in consolidating the European linguistic diversity and safeguarding accessibility to higher education for young, talented Europeans. A robust language policy outlining the policies regarding languages of instruction, language use in governance and guidelines for language proficiency is an essential prerequisite in achieving this.

EPICUR advocates that a solid policy concerning language governance at institutional and European universities alliance level is a basic precondition for:

- fostering educational quality and research impact and therefore enhancing excellence and performance of European universities
- facilitating innovative learning experiences, also beyond the classroom
- nurturing social cohesion, mutual understanding and inclusiveness
- improving the employability of students and researchers

Furthermore, the need for a language policy at the level of the European universities alliances coincides with the commitment of most first-generation European universities alliances to foster European multilingualism and operate from a sense of shared responsibility in this context. A model language policy at the level of the alliances has the potential to become a cornerstone of the long-term strategy of the European universities alliances, and as such, uptake of the model language policy by other alliances could contribute to achieving systemic change in the context of the European Education Area.

In sum, EPICUR is offering a model language policy for universities at the institutional level as well as at the European universities alliance level to foster quality of education, inclusiveness, excellence and social cohesion. In doing so, EPICUR sparks both structural transformation at the institutional level, as well as systemic change at the European level.

### 1.3 Core components of the language policy

The EPICUR model language policy is designed such that it is applicable for both institutions part of a European universities alliance and for the European universities alliances themselves. Therefore, the EPICUR European model language policy is divided into two main levels: 1) Model language policy at the Institutional level; and 2) Model language policy at the European universities alliance level.

#### 1.3.1 Core areas

Both levels are divided into four core areas based on the main issues that need to be addressed in a language policy: 1) Teaching & learning; 2) Research; 3) Governance; and 4) Communication. Whereas the decision- processes for the first two areas will not only be pragmatic, but intertwine with culture, identity and interculturality and possibly the wish to foster multilingualism as a core concept in the educational and research policies, for the decisions made at governance and communication level pragmatism is key as language is first and foremost used as a means to communicate.

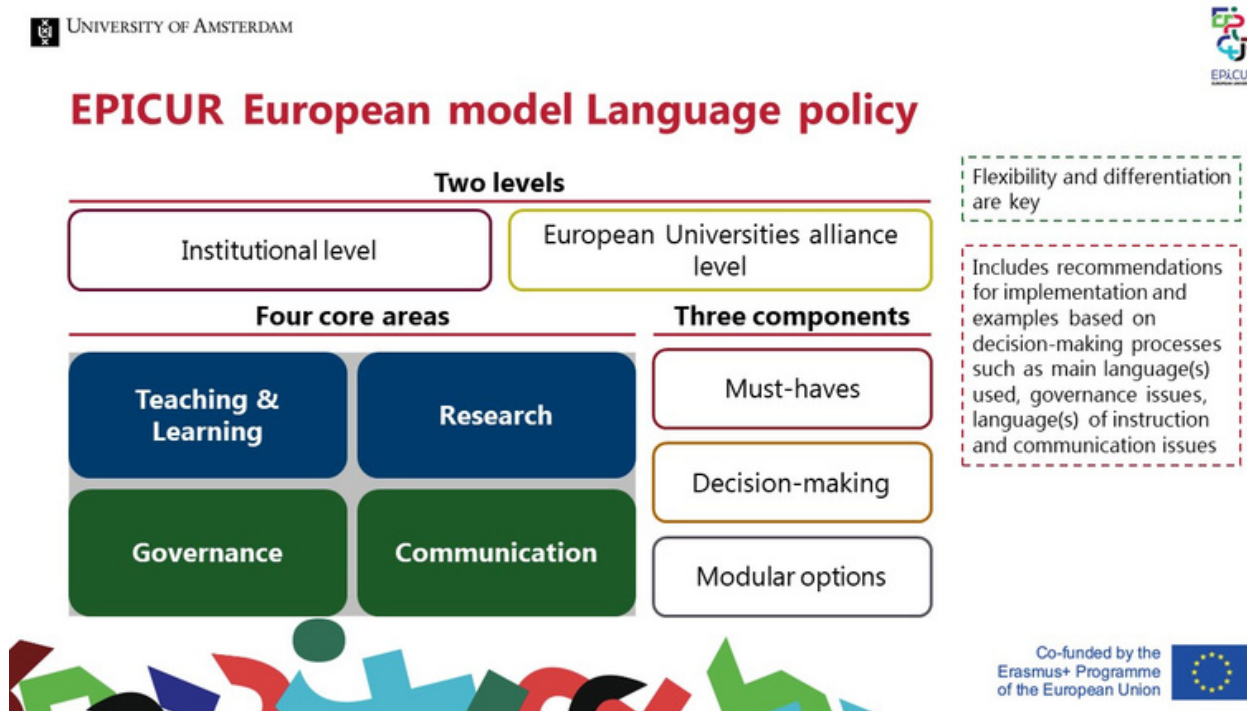


Figure 1 Schematic overview of the components of the EPICUR European Model language policy

#### 1.3.2 Main components

For all four areas, the model language policy distinguishes between three main components: 1) Must-haves; 2) Decision-making processes; and 3) Modular options. The must-haves include issues that need to be incorporated in a language policy and deal with matters that institutions and European universities alliances should in general adhere to. These must-haves include inclusivity and accessibility for all and the responsibility of the university leadership to provide remediation opportu-

nities to its community. The topics under the decision-making process are issues the institution or European universities alliance need to decide upon, e.g. which languages are officially used at the institution or how the hiring policy for administrative staff should look like taking for example the multiple languages spoken at a European universities alliance into account. The modular options include ideas and issues that the institution or European universities alliance can incorporate or adopt, but which are not essential for a proper implementation of the language policy. Figure 1 gives a schematic overview of the main components of the EPICUR European model language policy.

Since all European Higher Education Institutions and European universities alliances are different and have their own needs and wishes, flexibility and differentiation are key. It is therefore not the goal of the model language policy to provide institutions and European Universities alliances with clear-cut decisions and policies. The model is written as a policy guideline or framework in which the relevant decision-making processes have been outlined. The final decisions need to be made by the university leaderships themselves as they know what suits their university best. As such, the model language policy invites institutions and European Universities alliances to think about language use in the context of their own needs, wishes and vision for the future of the university.

#### **Explanation box 1: Flexibility and differentiation when considering language policy decisions regarding governance and communication**

Some institutions may opt for implementing two or more official working languages in their governance structure (e.g. during meetings of university committees), while others may opt for the use of a single official working language. In the former case, the ‘governance’ component can provide helpful guidance on how to implement this. In the latter case, it is important that outcomes of decision-making procedures are communicated in all languages used across the institution, to ensure that all members of the community will have access to this information. This can be described and implemented in the context of the ‘communication’ component.


#### **Example box 1: Universität Bodenkultur Wien (BOKU) – Policy decisions on interculturality and adding “outreach to society” BOKU decided**

BOKU decided to include all issues related to interculturality in the internationalization policy and not in the newly revised language policy. It also decided to combine the topics of governance and communication and add the topic of “outreach to society” in relation to research as the fourth element of their institutional language policy.




## 2.

# LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL



At the institutional level, many European higher education institutions are facing challenges concerning language governance. Developments regarding internationalisation, and questions concerning equity, diversity, inclusiveness and accessibility, of European higher education require well-considered choices on issues including : What is the role of the national and local languages vis-à-vis other languages and English? While in many contexts, English is informally considered to be a ‘lingua franca’, there are often instances, in which academic training and research are conducted in other European languages, which raises the question how to strike the right balance as a European higher education institution that is connected to partners across the globe? How to guarantee quality of education in a bi- or multilingual and international classroom setting? And how to deal with differences in language proficiency at the governance, student and teacher, and research level? Institutions aiming at implementing a language policy need to answer these and other questions in a manner that suits the institution’s vision best. Over and above that, the university leadership should carry strategic responsibility for all aspects of the language policy, and the key decisions made, to steer, guide and support its successful implementation.



## 2.1 Structural outline language policy: Institutional level

Figure 2 provides an overview of the core areas of the model language policy at institutional level. In the next section, the four core areas are further elaborated upon and the must-haves, decision-making processes and modular options are described in further detail.

The model language policy at institutional level comprises two addenda: a template of a step-by-step plan for transition to a different language of instruction for study programmes, and an overview of issues that are key to the successful implementation of institutional language policies, including measures and infrastructure facilitating language support for students and staff.

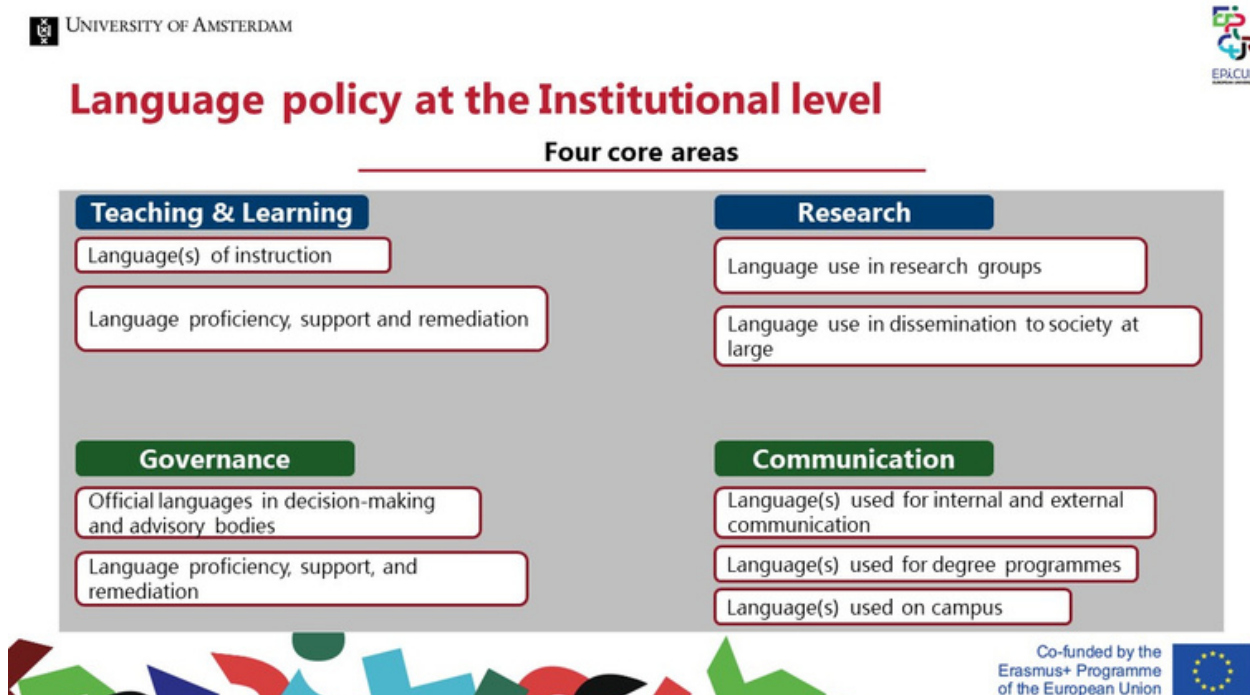


Figure 2 Overview of the EPICUR European model language policy at Institutional level

## 2.2 Teaching & learning

When considering language use in education, decisions need to be made about the language(s) of instruction and the institution's positioning regarding monolingual versus bi- or even multilingual education. Moreover, decision-making needs to be transparent and requirements regarding language proficiency, support and remediation need to be clear before implementation of the language policy is started. Below the must-haves and decision-making processes are described to facilitate the decision making process within institutions, and hence, to enable them to develop a vision regarding language use in the context of teaching & learning.

When making official decisions on the language(s) used for teaching & learning, the cultural and historical context of the study-programmes and courses, but also the main learning objectives, outcomes and quality assurance need to be considered. In other words, this means that language policy decisions for education cannot be separated from culture and interculturality, historical context and identity.



## 2.2.1 Language(s) of instruction

### Must-haves

#### Quality of education

Language policies, and language use, always need to be in service of teaching and learning and the institution's degree programmes' learning objectives, outcomes and quality assurance.

#### Study load

The language of instruction, or changing the language of instruction, should not lead to an unreasonable enlargement of the study load, decrease the quality of education, or disadvantage (groups of) students. To ensure this does not happen, admission requirements, learning outcomes and goals, and teacher proficiency and expertise should be clearly defined.

### Decision-making

#### Monolingual, bilingual and multilingual education

When choosing the language(s) of instruction, the very first decision that must be made is the institution's view regarding monolingual, bilingual and multilingual education. Moreover, the drivers (or parameters) for choosing the language(s) of instruction need to be defined. Examples of these drivers are a wish to facilitate a mixed or international classroom, improving students' employability, the institution's specialization, etc.

#### **Example box 2: University of Amsterdam (UvA) – Drivers for becoming a bilingual university**

As a bilingual university, the UvA offers programmes in both Dutch and English. The UvA considers the richly varied composition of its academic community to be a great benefit and works to ensure that all students and lecturers can continually develop themselves during their time at the UvA. Language plays a key role in this process: in addition to giving students and staff access to both existing and new knowledge, learning experiences and research data, it is also the medium by which knowledge is expanded and shared. Language is also the channel that enables exchange of ideas and information and facilitates personal contact among students themselves, between students and lecturers and between all parties on campus. In short, language is a basic precondition for educational quality, facilitation of learning experiences and the entire student experience.

#### The role of the national and regional languages versus other languages

A decision needs to be made about the role of the national, local and regional languages versus the use of other languages at the institution. This is of course also inevitably linked to the internationalisation policy of the institution and the needs, wishes and vision for the future regarding internationalization. Inclusiveness, accessibility, but also students' further (academic) careers should always be considered when making these decisions.

If an institution decides to become fully monolingual, it should consider the role of other (European) languages in academia and develop a view on requirements for students' proficiency in these

languages. An institution might, for example, consider the role that English plays as the de facto “academic lingua franca” and how this influences language use and expectations for education. If the institution decides to offer bior multilingual education, it needs to consider the role of the (two) languages at the institution and how they are related. Again, whatever decision the institution makes, inclusiveness and accessibility for all students, but also teachers, should always be taken into account.”

### **Example box 3: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ATh) - Impact of Erasmus programme on the decision-making process regarding language use**

The Greek language has always been the main language of communication at ATh. From 2000 onwards, ATh’s decision to become an international university and its strong involvement in the Erasmus programme encouraged the use of English across the board. The number of Erasmus students at ATh increased significantly over the years and many official documents had to be translated into English, which has maintained its significance in teaching and communication until today. On the other hand, as Greek is a lesser spoken language, the ATh is trying to maintain the visibility of the Greek language in all aspects of the academic life: instruction, communication, and governance.

### **Example box 4: The example of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (AMU) – Incentives to learn a second language**

All undergraduate students from AMU who take the certificate exam after a language course of less than 120 hours can start learning a second language as a reward, regardless of their programme and major. As the certificate exam is usually passed in English, students may take courses in other languages: German, Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, Latin. Some faculties offer optional classes, parallel to the main language taught, e.g. German for the job market, Latin for everyday life or Italian from scratch. Intensive language courses in English, German, French, Spanish, Italian are offered to AMU students before the start of the Erasmus+ mobility scheme.

### Transparent decision making

When deciding on the language of instruction at the institution, substantiation based on content and factual data needs to be provided on why a certain language of instruction is desirable and how the associated objectives will be achieved. Based on the needs and wishes of the institution, it may vary at what level decision-making about the language(s) of instruction is made. What is, however, therefore paramount is that the university leadership decides what level this is. This could be at the university leadership level, e.g. all study programmes are taught in the national languages, at the faculty level, at the level of the separate study programmes where every programme makes its own well-informed

decisions on language use and language policy to optimally suit their specific content, or even at the course level. If the decision on language use for education is made at levels lower than the university leadership, a step-by-step plan might be used to make clear why a faculty, certain degree programme, etc., chooses and or changes the language of instruction and how. Not forgetting to also carefully consider the costs, benefits, opportunities, risks, pros and cons.

#### **Example box 5: University of Amsterdam (UvA) – Procedure to change language of instruction**

The UvA has developed a detailed roadmap for changing the language of instruction in a specific study programme or track. A prerequisite is an explicit rationale why the selected language of instruction is desirable for the programme or track, based on factual data, and content and teaching related aspects. Approximately two years before the intended start an exploratory study providing reasons for the planned change needs to be submitted. After obtaining approval, a detailed transition plan and concrete action plan is required to assess the central and programme-specific strategic and practical consequences. Once the transition plan is approved, relevant administrative units are notified after which the practical implementation of the change should start 6-12 months prior to the intended start date. The roadmap and the entire procedure is available in the institutional language policy.

#### **Modular option(s)**

##### Supporting bilingual or multilingual teaching

After the institution has decided on the official languages that can be used for teaching, it might want to consider the full integration of bilingual or multilingual teaching in its education and expect from teachers and students to be able to offer and follow courses in more than just one language.

#### **Example box 6: The example of University of Freiburg (ALU-FR) – English language quality screening and certification**

ALU-FR has established a dedicated unit for quality management of English Medium Instruction which offers a range of support services to academic staff. These free services include workshops on lecturing, student interaction, written feedback and presenting research in English as well as tailor-made workshops on classroom observation, one-on-one training, and institute specific classes. English-taught degree programmes conducted in English can be evaluated based on a special procedure and obtain a quality assessment of the linguistic and communicative competencies of its teaching staff.

## 2.2.2 Language proficiency, support and remediation

### Must-haves

#### Attention to language proficiency levels

A certain predefined level, or minimum threshold, of proficiency in the language(s) of instruction of both students and lecturers is vital in order to achieve the desired educational quality level. Based on the context in which the language is used, the required proficiency levels might differ, i.e. is there a need for a high proficiency level, e.g. for educational purposes, or is a pragmatic, e.g. only perceptive, proficiency level sufficient.

#### Professionalization of teachers and intercultural competencies

It is important to pay sufficient attention to the professional development of teachers to facilitate and support language education in all languages the courses are taught in, including the national or regional languages. As using a language always requires awareness of the intercultural context, the institution should create or maintain a portfolio of training modules focused on intercultural competencies of both teachers and students.

### Decision-making

#### Language proficiency of lecturers and students

The institution must either adhere to applicable (national) laws and regulations and/or make a decision and be clear about the expected language proficiency of the lecturers in the language(s) of instruction but also, when applicable, in other languages that play a role at the institution. This also holds for requirements regarding the language proficiency of the students.

#### Remediation

It is vital that the leadership of the institution decides and makes clear how she will deal with remediation from the start. When implementing the language policy, attention needs to be paid to deficiencies and remediation, for example via the institution's language centre, to make sure all students and teachers are able to reach, and maintain, the required proficiency levels.

### **Example box 7: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ATh) - Preparing incoming international students with an online Greek course**

The School of Modern Greek Language of ATh offers free courses of Modern Greek language and culture to incoming Erasmus students which is supervised by the Faculty of Philosophy. All Erasmus students can choose from a two week, a semester or an on-line course. The Faculty of the School has a rich teaching experience and is also involved in the production of teaching materials. You can find an introductory video at the following [link](#).

### **Example box 8: University of Amsterdam – Offering Small Private Online Course in Dutch to international students**

The UvA introduced a new Small Private Online Course (SPOC) in Dutch for newly arrived international students in 2020 which is very practical and contains many short video's. SPOC M(aster) Y(our) Dutch, or in short MY Dutch, is an online introductory course which teaches basic Dutch organized by over 20 themes from daily student life, such as public transport, book stores, UvA student card, course catalogue, lecturers, and student associations and cafes in Amsterdam. The Institute for Dutch Language Education (INTT) at the University of Amsterdam, offers this unique online Dutch course and a wide range of courses for international students and staff.

### **Modular options**

#### Define proficiency levels: Decent language proficiency levels vs. pragmatic language proficiency levels

An institution might decide to offer courses in (mostly) one language, e.g. the national language. A further consideration the institution might then make is whether students and teachers are expected to have a certain level of proficiency in other languages not used for education, but that are relevant within the institution and possibly also in the further careers of the students and teachers. Similarly, when the institution decides to become bilingual, or even multilingual, a view on the language proficiency in all (two) languages needs to be developed. What is the role of the languages used for education at the institution, and which proficiency levels in all (two) languages used for education are expected when, for example, a study programme is taught in one of these languages?

#### The international classroom

Teaching in multiple languages might mean that the institution will have an inflow of international students and teachers and students will increasingly have to deal with education in an international classroom setting. To ensure and improve the quality of education, the institution could consider implementing the concept of the international classroom.

### **Explanation box 2: How to define the international classroom?**

Although there are many slightly diverging definitions of the international classroom, in general the international classroom is a dynamic learning space in which the curriculum is transformed in such a way that students and staff from a wide range of socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds are encouraged to acquire a broad academic perspective and diversity amongst the student population is considered an asset.

### Example box 9: Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) – Automatic Simultaneous Translation Service for University Lectures

Since 2012, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) has installed the lecture translator to translate lectures for foreign students. Similar to subtitles in films, students can read the lecture on a computer screen in real time in the original language and translations into one or more other languages simultaneously. The system is installed in four lecture halls at KIT and a mobile version is also available. KIT scientists continue to work on achieving adequate translation of technical terms, and on the automatic adaption to new languages. Currently German lectures can be translated into English and French and English lectures into German, French and Spanish.

## 2.3 Research

When making decisions about language policies for research, the languages used in academia and the institution's research environments will need to be taken into account. Decision-making might happen at the executive level of the institution, but could also be left to faculties or research groups based on their needs and wishes and considering inclusivity and accessibility for all research and supporting staff. Finally, the institution has a national public role that should be considered in the language(s) used for dissemination of the results.

### 2.3.1 Language use in research groups

#### Must-haves

##### Decision-making process

In the decision-making processes, issues like English as the current “academic lingua franca” and the international setting of the research environments, but also the language(s) used for publications and the international careers of the researchers will be important factors to consider. However, the official languages used, at whatever governance level this is decided, should always allow for inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity.

##### Language proficiency, support and remediation

All researchers should be proficient enough in the relevant languages spoken at the institution to be able to fully engage in all research activities, feel included, and have access to all relevant communication and information. This also implies that the institution offers remediation and support to researchers who do not feel competent enough in the languages spoken, e.g. via the language centre, and provides relevant information in all main languages used at the institution. Similar to language proficiency in education, the institution must of course adhere to applicable (national) laws and regulations.

#### Decision-making

##### Monolingual, bilingual or multilingual language use

As is the case for language use in education, the institution should have a clear view when it comes to monolingual, bilingual or multilingual language use for research activities. Based on the needs and wishes of the institution, it may be decided that decision-making is left to faculties, research groups, or other levels of governance.

### Example box 10: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ATh) – Use of other languages in research

ATh academics prefer to publish in English in order to reach the wider academic community. From a practical point of view, English is usually the lingua franca in international conferences, workshops and scientific meetings organized by ATh. Doctoral dissertations can be written in a language other than Greek, either because the candidate is an international student or because the candidate wishes to make his/her research results more accessible to a wider academic community. Greek law from 2017 also allows, in terms of collaboration with a European Institution, the co-supervision of the PhD dissertation. Since in this case, the candidate is considered to be a student of both universities, the dissertation may be written in either of the two languages and the candidate is required to provide an extensive summary in the other language.

### Remediation

#### Monolingual, bilingual or multilingual language use

From the start, the institution needs to make a clear and coherent decision on how it wants to offer remediation for researchers who feel they are not proficient enough in the language(s) used at the research institutes, but also at the institution in general.. Preferably this is decided in consultation with the research institutes.

### 2.3.2 Language use in dissemination to society at large

#### Must-haves

##### Access to research results to the wider public

Universities have a national public role as knowledge institutes. As such, access to research results and academic publications should be made publicly available in the languages relevant for the wider public, e.g. the national and regional language(s). Accessibility of academic results for the wider public is pivotal to raise public awareness of academic research and its relevance for society.

#### Decision-making

##### Translating research results for access to the wider public

The decision-making body at the research level should decide about the languages used for dissemination of research results to the wider public. This should be based on the languages relevant for the country the institute is situated in, e.g. taking into consideration the role of the national and regional languages.

## 2.4 Governance

Decisions about language use at the governance level, i.e. the level where all executive decisions are made, should be an integral part of an institutional language policy. Well-considered decisions are pivotal as this allows for inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility for all people working or studying at the university including the executive staff and university bodies. As mentioned before, in contrast to teaching & learning and research, at the governance level, language is mainly used as a means to communicate and thus has a much more pragmatic function. The context in which the language is spoken will play a big role.

### 2.4.1 Official language(s) in decision-making and advisory bodies

#### Must-haves

##### Inclusivity and accessibility for all

Inclusivity and accessibility for all groups at the institution should be key in the decision-making process about which language(s) to use at the governance level. It is important to avoid situations in which selecting the language(s) to use will be problematic for or exclude certain groups who are less proficient in these languages.

#### **Example box 11: Universität für Bodenkultur Wien (BOKU) – Internal governance structure**

BOKU has adopted an institutional language policy since 2012 and is currently revising its new policy with elements from the EPICUR model language policy. From the start BOKU installed an internal committee representing all relevant stakeholders within BOKU which directly advises the rectorate on language issues. The internal committee consist of students, teachers, research staff, professors and supporting and policy staff.

#### Decision-making

##### Official language(s) used for decision-making

The university leadership must make clear and transparent decisions, preferably in consultation with relevant university bodies, on the official language(s) used for decision-making. This includes a view on the role and use of the national and regional language(s), other European languages, and English as the academic "lingua franca".

#### **Explanation box 3: How do national laws or institutional regulations impact the decision-making processes at the governance level**

The Toubon law (1994/1996) in France recognizes the right of French citizens to express themselves, to receive relevant information in French and makes the use of French mandatory in public services and establishments of the French State. National laws impose legal limitations for French universities to teach and communicate in other languages but French.

In Germany it is also governmentally regulated that the official language used for governance issues needs to be German.



## Modular option(s)

### Translations and parallel language use

If the institution feels that it cannot provide full inclusiveness and accessibility for all its staff, students and teachers, it might be beneficial to consider the use of translations, translation tools and parallel language use, i.e. a mutual agreement that all parties at least understand all languages (officially) spoken at the institution, which permits everyone to speak in the language they feel most comfortable in.

### **Example box 12: University of Amsterdam (UvA) – Official languages used for decision-making, official meetings and documents**

The UvA as a bilingual university encourages and facilitates all groups to actively participate in representative advisory councils and boards. It aims to avoid situations in which selecting Dutch or English will become problematic for or exclude certain groups that are less proficient in either of the two languages. Therefore, all UvA's formal agreements, such as regulations, codes and statutes, are available in both Dutch and English. Parallel language use is preferred within representative advisory councils: this means that participants can speak Dutch or English during official meeting in accordance with their own language abilities and preferences.

## 2.4.2 Language policy, support and remediation

### Must-haves

#### Language proficiency levels

All relevant staff, but also all other university members, should be proficient enough in the official language(s), to be able to actively participate in governance structures. Inclusivity and accessibility should be key. The institution must of course adhere to applicable (national) laws and regulations.

#### Remediation

From the start, the institution has a responsibility to offer executive staff language support and remediation when necessary.

#### Being part of a European University alliance

Being part of a European University alliance, the increased international setting because of this, and the main language(s) spoken in the alliance, should be taken into account when providing support and remediation, but also in the requirements for language proficiency, and intercultural competencies, of the executive and administrative staff.

### Decision-making

#### Language proficiency

A decision must be made about the required language proficiency levels for all relevant staff at the governance level, but also for all people involved in the different decision-making bodies. When relevant and based on the context in which the language is spoken, receptive language proficiency, passive multilingualism or translation tools might be useful to implement.

## Remediation

The institution needs to make a clear and coherent decision on how it wants to offer remediation for all relevant staff and people involved in decision-making bodies who feel they are not proficient enough in the language(s) used at the governance level. Preferably this is decided in consultation with the language centre at the institution and implemented at the start of the implementation of the language policy.

## 2.5 Communication

Decent and clear communication at the institute is pivotal for a well-run university and to be able to allow for inclusiveness and accessibility. As such, certain pre-conditions should be met and, based on these, decisions made. Similar to language use at the governance level, language at the communication level is mostly used as a means to communicate in.

Communication, as elaborated on in this section, refers to how the university community, but also relevant external partners, prospective students, etc., are contacted and in which languages relevant information is shared. This requires different decision-making processes than at the governance level. However, as also mentioned before, some institutions might decide to take the two areas together as, for example, this reflects the internal organization better.

### Must-haves

#### Communication in all official languages used at the institution

All internal communication and information provision should allow for full inclusion and accessibility. This includes official policy documents, consultations about the institutional plan and decision-making processes, information provision about unforeseen circumstances like the Covid-19 pandemic, but also signposting, newsletters etc.

#### Translations and standardised translation lists

When necessary, native speakers should be appointed for translations and where applicable standardised translation list should be provided.

### Decision-making

#### Language(s) used for internal communication

Based on the need to allow for full inclusiveness and accessibility, the institution should decide on the language(s) used for internal communication, taking into account all official languages used at the institution.

#### **Example box 13: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (ATh) - Communication**

ATh has not adopted an institutionalized language policy yet, but intends to develop one. At the moment, the university website (for all Faculties and Departments) is written in both Greek and English, although English language is officially the language of communication when it comes to international affairs and administrative documents. Transcripts for Erasmus as well as for ATh students are provided in English on request.

### Language(s) used to communicate about degree programmes

When communicating about the degree programmes and information and support for students, the institution should decide whether it is more sensible to provide this in the main language used in the degree programme or in the main language(s) used at governance level.

### Language(s) used for external communication

A decision must be made about the language(s) used for external communication taking into account the language(s) used for education and research, e.g. for prospective students and researchers.

### Language(s) used on campus

To allow for inclusiveness and accessibility, an official decision needs to be made about the language(s) used on campus, which should include language(s) used at (virtual) on-campus support facilities and communication materials such as signposting, catering etc.

#### **Example box 14: University of Strasbourg (UNISTRA) - Inclusive communication**

A large part of the UNISTRA staff speaks only French, but a mapping of the languages mastered by administrative staff was carried out in September 2020 (on a voluntary basis). Based on the language skills of the staff, stickers will be given to the different staff to indicate the languages spoken in the different departments. The main goal is to allow international students to easily identify administrative staff who can support them in their own language.

### **Modular option(s)**

#### Flexible language use in external communication

An institution might consider some flexibility in making available communication materials in a language that is not an official language at the institution, in case there is a clear need to do so. For example, when reaching out to specific target groups, such as peer research groups in a certain field of study or prospective students from foreign countries.

#### Documents, communication and information provided at the European University alliance level


To allow for full inclusivity and transparent decision-making and communication, the institution might consider providing relevant documents, communication and information from the European Universities alliance in the national, or regional, language(s) of the institution.






# 3.

## LANGUAGE POLICY AT THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES ALLIANCE LEVEL



The concept of a European universities alliance is by definition multilingual as it comprises partner universities coming from multiple countries with different national and regional languages. Naturally this poses questions and challenges concerning language governance. The multilingual, intercultural and European environment and questions concerning equity, diversity, inclusiveness and accessibility, require well-considered choices on issues such as: How to deal with, and preferably also foster, the multilingual environment of the alliance? How to guarantee quality of education in a multilingual international classroom? And, similar to the institutional level, how to deal with differences in language proficiency at the governance, student and teacher, and research level? European Universities alliances implementing a language policy will need to answer these and other questions in a manner that suit their needs, wishes and vision for the future best. For a successful implementation, the European Universities alliance's leadership needs to carry the strategic responsibility for all aspects of the language policy and the key decisions made.



### 3.1 Structural outline language policy: European universities alliance level

Figure 3 gives an overview of the core areas of the model language policy for the European universities alliance level. In the next section, the four core areas are further explained, and the must-haves, decision-making processes and modular options are described. As can be seen, the model language policy at the European Universities alliance is on some points similar to the model at the institutional level. There are, however, also some concrete differences which mainly pertain the European and international context of the alliance.

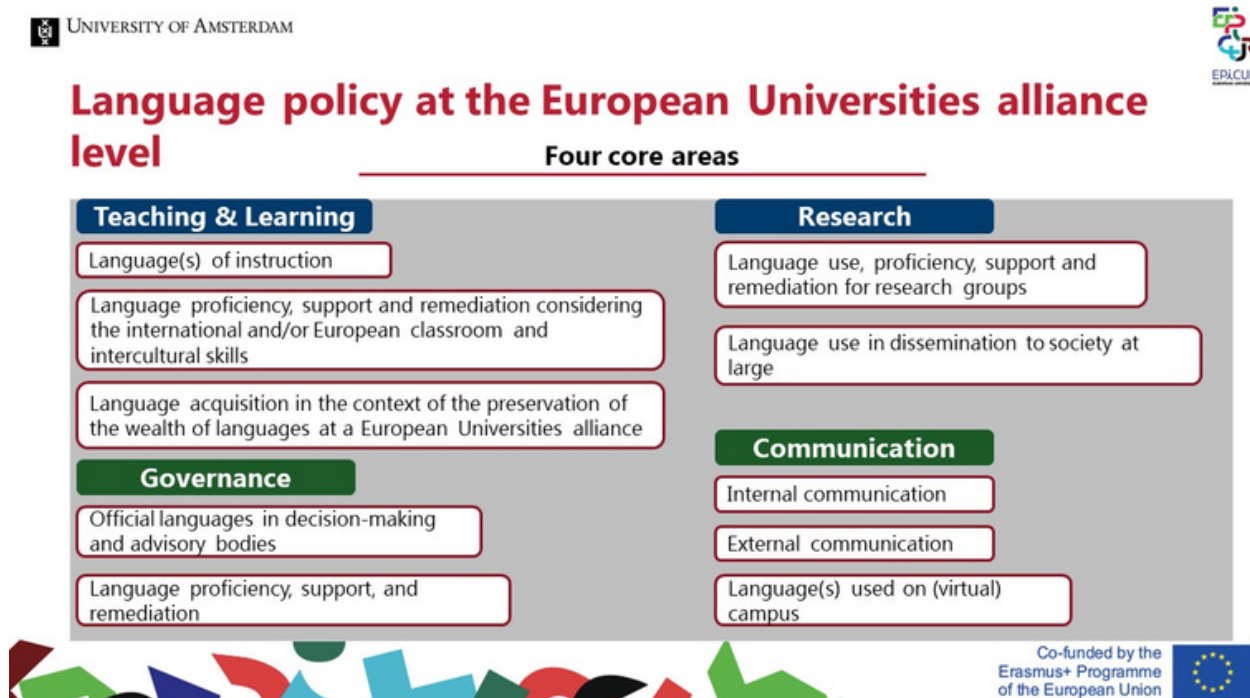


Figure 3 Overview of the EPICUR European model language policy at European Universities alliance level

### 3.2 Teaching & learning

When considering language use for education, decisions need to be made about the language(s) of instruction and the alliance's positioning regarding monolingual versus bi- or even multilingual education. Within the international and European context of the alliance, where many cultures and identities come together, historical contexts, interculturality and the international context are important factors to consider when deciding on the language(s) of instruction.

Moreover, decision-making needs to be transparent and requirements regarding language proficiency, support and remediation need to be clear before implementation of the language policy is started. Below the must-haves and decision-making processes are describe to facilitate the decision-making process within European Universities alliances, and hence, to enable them to develop a vision regarding language use in the context of teaching & learning.

As mentioned also before and similar to teaching & learning at the institutional level, when making official decisions on the language(s) used for teaching & learning, the cultural and historical context of

the study-programmes and courses, but also the main learning objectives, outcomes and quality assurance need to be taken into account. In other words, this means that language policy decisions for education cannot be separated from culture and interculturality, historical context and identity.

### 3.2.1 Language(s) of instruction

#### Must-haves

##### Quality of education

Language policies, and language use, should always be in service of the European universities alliance's educational learning objectives, outcomes and educational quality assurance.

##### Study load

The language of instruction should not lead to unreasonable enlargement of the study load, decrease the quality of education or disadvantage (groups of) students and/or teachers. Admission requirements, learning outcomes and goals, and expected teacher proficiency and expertise should be clearly defined.

##### Inclusion, equity and diversity

The majority of European universities alliances will be inherently multilingual. Inclusion, equity and diversity should always be considered when making policy decision with regards to language use in education.

#### Decision-making

##### Monolingual, bilingual or multilingual language use

A decision needs to be made on the language(s) used in education and for instruction. Based on the needs and wishes of the European universities alliance, it may vary at what level decision-making about the language(s) of instruction is made. This could be at the university leadership level, at the faculty level, at the level of the separate study programmes where every programme makes its own well-informed decisions on language use, or even at the course level.

#### **Explanation box 4: Decision-making for language use in education based on practicality**

Especially in a multilingual environment, the practicality of the use of the chosen language for education needs to be indicated. For degree programmes and courses focussing on a specific language or region, this might be easier to indicate than for education in other areas, where in an international setting English might often be the most practical language to use. However, for some study programmes, such as for example medicine, it might be pivotal to also know the national / regional languages as these will be the main languages used in interactions with patients.

### The role of the national and local languages vs. Other languages used in education

In a European universities alliance, many national and local languages will be official languages used for education at the institutional level. A decision needs to be made what role these languages play in education at the alliance level taking into account that not all partners might be able to offer courses in a specific language of instruction to the same extent. The same holds for any other language, such as English as the current 'lingua franca' used in academia.

### Transparent decision making

The European universities alliance leadership has the responsibility to decide at what level, e.g. leadership level, study programme level, course level, decisions on official language(s) of instruction are made. A clear and transparent decision-making process is necessary based on content and factual data irrelevant of which level these decisions are made.

### **Modular option(s)**

#### Differentiation in language(s) of instruction

Every separate programme / course makes decisions on language policies that optimally suit their specific content and optimize the learning experience irrelevant of the main language(s) used at the European Universities alliance in general.

#### Tools and parallel language use

The use of translation tools and parallel language use is considered.

## **3.2.2 Language proficiency, support and remediation considering the international and/or European classroom and intercultural skills**

### **Must-haves**

#### Attention to language proficiency levels

Quality assurance is of utmost importance. A certain predefined level, or minimum threshold, of proficiency in the language(s) used for education should be defined for both lecturers and students in order to achieve the desired educational quality level.

#### Inclusion and integration of international staff and students

A balance should be found between the inclusion and integration of all staff and students. All staff and students should feel included and nobody should have certain benefits over others due to the languages they speak. Offering proper remediation opportunities from the start is of importance.

#### Teacher professionalization and the international classroom

Attention to professionalization of teachers to facilitate and support the international classroom and/or European classroom, intercultural skills and language education is needed.

### **Decision-making**

#### Monolingual, bilingual or multilingual language use

A decision needs to be made on the expected language proficiency levels and intercultural skills of lecturers and students. Lecturers should be able to teach in the language(s) used for instruction at an adequate level. Students should be able to express themselves adequately in sometimes complex

group discussions. For both groups, this means not only that a sufficient language proficiency is expected, but also adequate intercultural skills.

### Remediation

From the start a decision needs to be made on how remediation for both students and teachers, including for students who have the cognitive ability and determination to take part in an academic study but are hampered by deficiencies in other areas, is offered. The responsibility of offering adequate remediation opportunities lies with the alliance's leadership.

### Modular option(s)

#### Introducing the concept of “variable geometry”

Not all partners in the alliance can and/or have to offer courses in all official language(s) of instruction at the alliance level. Based on the possibilities and availability, some institutions might offer courses in only one or two of the official languages. The partnership is then based on cooperation and complementarity.

#### **Example box 15: The example of EPICUR Alliance – “variable geometry” in practice**

The concept of “variable geometry” is implemented in the mobility strategy for the EPICUR language pilot programmes. This means that not all partners have to contribute to the EPICUR Language & Culture courses to the same extent and in the same way. For example, the courses offered are not necessarily taught using the same language of instruction but based on the language of instruction of different partner universities. However, the courses will always be open to all students from EPICUR partner universities (according to the admission criteria). The mobility strategy is developed on the basis of cooperation and complementarity.

### 3.2.3 Language acquisition in the context of the preservation of the wealth of languages at a European universities alliance

#### Must-haves

##### The wealth of languages at the alliance level

The wealth of languages at the European universities alliance is fostered and supported. The importance of maintaining the wealth of European languages and the significance of this for the preservation of European culture and identities is acknowledged when decisions on official language use for education are made.

#### Decision-making

##### Preserving the national and local languages as official academic languages

The alliance's leadership needs to make a decision on the importance of preserving all national and local languages as academic languages at the alliance level.

##### Acquiring an extra language spoken in the alliance

For students, the mastery of at least one other European language next to English and their native language could be considered as a central ambition of the European universities alliance. A decision needs to be made on the expectancies from students on acquiring an extra European language when studying at the European universities alliance.



## Modular option(s)

### Acquiring an extra language for teachers

Teachers should be proficient in at least one other European language next to English and their native language.

### Incentives for language learning

In the implementation of the language policy the incentives for European language learning are considered.

#### **Example box 16: EPICUR students incentives for language learning explored**

EPICUR student incentives for language learning are explored via a survey which aims to establish an overview of student incentives and to understand students' perceptions of language learning in general. The data collected will serve as a basis for promotion of language learning among future EPICUR students. The results are expected to be available in Winter 2021 and will be incorporated in the EPICUR mobility strategy for (small) European language degree programmes and language learning.

## 3.3 Research

When making decisions about language policies for research, the languages used at the European universities alliance's research environments will need to be considered. This should include languages used during outreach activities, community service projects and in connections with stakeholders outside of academia. Decision-making might happen at the executive level but could also be left to faculties or research groups based on their needs and wishes and considering inclusivity and accessibility for all research and supporting staff. Finally, the European universities alliance has a public role that should be considered in the language(s) used for dissemination of the results. In general, the European and international context in which research at the European universities alliance is conducted, always needs to be considered in all language policy decisions and in the implementation of the language policy at the research level.

### 3.3.1 Language use, proficiency, support and remediation for research groups

#### Must-haves

##### Inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity

The official languages used should always allow for inclusiveness, accessibility and diversity. All researchers should be proficient enough in the language(s) used and communicated in to be able to fully engage in all research activities, feel included, and have access to all relevant communication and information.

##### Remediation

It is the responsibility of the alliance's leadership to offer remediation and support to researchers who do not feel competent enough in the languages used in the research groups and in the alliance. When applicable, researchers should have the opportunity to acquire other European languages relevant to their research and work.

## Modular option(s)

### Acquiring an extra language for researchers

Researchers should be proficient in at least one other European language next to English and their native language.

## 3.3.2 Language use in dissemination to society at large

### Must-haves

#### Access to research results to the wider public

The European university alliance has a public role in Europe as a knowledge institute. Access to the research results and academic publications should be made publicly available in the languages relevant for the wider public and the responsibility for this lies at the leadership level of the alliance. Accessibility of academic results for the wider public is pivotal to raise public awareness of academic research and its relevance to society.

### Decision-making

#### Language(s) used for making research results accessible to the wider public

A decision needs to be made on which languages are used to make research results and academic publications accessible to the wider public. The main languages spoken at the alliance, but also the local and national languages of the partner universities should be considered when making the decision.

## Modular option(s)

### Cooperation with external stakeholders in research projects

For many research groups working in the context of the European Universities alliance, cooperation with external stakeholders and community service projects will play a big role. This does, however, also mean that it will be important to take into account the local languages used by these stakeholders.

### **Example box 17: The example of a Horizon 2020 project– Disseminating knowledge about minority and endangered languages and cultural diversity through research**

An example of disseminating knowledge about minority and endangered languages and cultural diversity through research and popularising research findings is the EU-funded project “COLING – minority languages – major possibilities”. The key goal of this project funded under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie RISE scheme within HORIZON 2020 is to promote and develop sustainable measures for language revitalization and maintenance. The project will deliver an online platform dedicated to various aspects of linguistic and cultural diversity, a serious game to support learning of (lesser taught) languages, guidelines for creating innovative spaces dedicated to the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity and a joined publication of related research articles. The Language Diversity Week was organized by the COLING project to celebrate the International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019. The programme included language revitalization meetings and discussion panels with experts and activists, a photo gallery exhibition and the Event of Diversity. In addition a workshop for kids on the Maya culture and glyphs and the ‘In our own words’ film festival was held. Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (AMU) is one of the project partners.

## 3.4 Governance

Decisions on language use at the governance level, i.e. the level where all executive decisions are made, is an integral part of a language policy. Well-considered decisions are pivotal as this allows for inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility for all people working or studying at the alliance including the executive and administrative staff and university bodies. As mentioned also before, in contrast to teaching & learning and research, at the governance level, language is mainly used as a means to communicate and thus has a much more pragmatic function in which the context in which the language is spoken will play a big role. Consequently, an excellent proficiency level in all languages used is often not needed. However, everyone should always feel that he / she is proficient enough to be able to fully engage and communicate in the language(s) used. Decisions on the main language(s) used, remediation opportunities, but also translation tools, or passive multilingualism etc., should therefore be considered.

### Example box 18: The example of Eucor European Campus

Eucor – The European Campus is a trinational alliance of five universities in the Upper Rhine, a border region between Germany, France and Switzerland. Eucor promotes language and intercultural skills and actively uses the 2 national languages during official (board) meetings. During Eucor board meetings between rectors and vice-rectors each participant speaks his/her own language (either German or French) facilitated by a translator. The meeting minutes and formal decisions are always available in both (German and French) languages. In some work meetings, attendees also speak in their own language without a translator because everyone is proficient in both languages. In other meetings for practical reasons only English is spoken. For official (external) communication, such as the website and flyers, 3 languages are used: French, German and English.

### 3.4.1 Official language(s) in decision-making and advisory bodies

#### Must-haves

##### Inclusiveness and accessibility for all

The official languages used should always allow for inclusiveness and accessibility for all and a cohesive management of the European universities alliance. This should be key in the decision-making processes on which language(s) to use at the governance level. Selecting the official language(s) used should never be problematic for or exclude certain groups, or benefit certain groups and not others.

##### Language as a means to communicate

At the governance level pragmatism is key and the language(s) used should be chosen based on this. Language is first and foremost used as a means to communicate. At the teaching & learning and research areas, language intertwines with culture, identity and interculturality.

## Decision-making

### Official language(s) used for decision making

The alliance's leadership should make clear and transparent decisions on which languages are officially used at the governance level. Preferably this is done in consultation with all parties implied in the governance of the alliance.

### The role of national, local, other European languages and English

A view needs to be developed on the role and use of the national and local languages officially used in the governance at the institutional level of the partners in the alliance, but also on the role of other European languages and English, which is the current academic "lingua franca".

## Modular option(s)

### Translations and parallel language use

If the alliance's leadership feels it cannot provide full inclusiveness and accessibility to all, it might consider the use of translations, translation tools and parallel language use or passive multilingualism.

### **Example box 19: The example of EPICUR Alliance – The concept of passive multilingualism after a language check**

During an EPICUR multilingualism subgroup meeting in which everyone spoke their native language, the concept of passive multilingualism was used after they realised that all attendees had at least a passive understanding of French, Italian and English. It turned out to be much more beneficial to start the meeting with a language check and allow attendees to choose in which language they would like to speak and not only consider English as the only language of communication.

## 3.4.2 Language policy, support and remediation

### Must-haves

#### Language proficiency levels

All executive and administrative staff, but also all other member of the alliance, should be proficient enough in the language(s) used to be able to actively participate in all governance issues. What level of proficiency is needed should be decided upon and communicated in a transparent manner.

#### Language as a means to communicate

At the governance level pragmatism is key and the language(s) used should be chosen based on this. Language is first and foremost used as a means to communicate. At the teaching & learning and research areas, language intertwines with culture, identity and interculturality.

## Decision-making

### Decision-making process

Sufficient remediation and language support should be available to make sure all executive and administrative staff, but also all other groups, are able to attain the necessary language proficiency levels. Decisions need to be made on how remediation is offered to all who need it.

### Hiring policy

A decision needs to be made about the hiring policy at the European universities alliance regarding language proficiency levels. Non-native and most probably multiple languages will be used. This will require more from the executive and administrative staff in terms of language proficiency than is usually the case at the institutional level. The manner in which this is considered when hiring staff needs to be decided on.

### **Modular option(s)**

#### Language check and the use of multiple languages in management and executive meetings

It is important to make sure that during management and executive meetings everyone feels comfortable with the language(s) used in order to support inclusivity and a safe and comfortable work environment. A yearly “language check” that verifies whether everyone still feels comfortable with the language(s) used at certain (executive) meetings might be helpful to ensure this. When a language check indicates that not all participants feel comfortable (enough) in the language spoken, the use of passive multilingualism or a switch to the use of two languages might be beneficial to have everyone engage in the best possible way.

#### Acquiring an extra language for executive and administrative staff

Executive and administrative staff should be proficient in at least one other European language next to English and their native language.

## 3.5 Communication

Decent and clear communication is pivotal for a well-run European universities alliance and to be able to allow for inclusiveness and accessibility. As such, certain pre-conditions should be met and, based on these, decisions made. Similar to language use at the governance level, language at the communication level is mostly used as a means to communicate in. In the international (virtual) environment of a European Universities alliance this does mean that the alliance’s leadership, via the communication offices, need to take the responsibility that information is provided in all, for the alliance’s internal and external community, relevant languages.

Communication, as elaborated on in this section, refers to how the university community, but also relevant external partners, prospective students, etc., are contacted and in which languages relevant information is shared. This requires different decision-making processes than at the governance level. However, similar to the institutional level, some European universities alliances might decide to take the two areas together as, for example, this reflects the internal organization better.

### **Must-haves**

#### Translation lists and alliance ‘vocabulary’

Agreements on the use of standardised translation lists and vocabulary are essential to ensure smooth communication channels and common understanding.

## Decision-making

### Internal communications

Based on the need to allow for full inclusiveness and accessibility, the institution should decide on the language(s) used for internal communication, taking into account different needs at different member institutions.

### External communications

A decision must be made about the language(s) used for external communication considering the target groups the alliance would like to reach, including (prospective) students, researchers, policy makers and other universities.

### Language(s) used on (virtual) campus

To allow for inclusiveness and accessibility an official decision needs to be made about the language(s) used on campus, which should include language(s) used at on-campus support facilities and communication materials such as signposting, catering etc., but also communication on the virtual platforms needs to be considered.

## Modular option(s)

### Flexible language use in external communication

An institution might consider some flexibility in making available communication materials in a language that is not an official language of the alliance, in case there is a clear need to do so. For instance, when reaching out to specific target groups, such as peer research groups in a certain field of study or prospective students from foreign countries.



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