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Language Policy

White Paper

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Executive summary

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKDROP

The push for internationalization¹ has gathered momentum across European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) over the last two decades. The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the expansion of university access policies, the phenomenon of globalization, or increased migratory movements have spurred on a profound rethinking of the role of foreign languages in a truly international 21st-century tertiary education (Bazo et al., 2017).

In this context, English is widely considered as a *lingua franca* and European HEIs must orchestrate a balance between two seemingly contradictory yet complementary realities: the need for strong English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs, and the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education policies that counter an excessive anglicization of Higher Education.

The universities comprised within the NEOLAIa Alliance seek to attain such a balance between these two crucial circumstances which are shaping the present and future of internationalization at tertiary level. They represent a rich variety of linguistic situations yet are united in their diversity via their firm commitment to internationalization practices, shared challenges, and a common vision of ways forward in this terrain.

The objective of this *White Paper* is precisely to identify those challenges and to signpost ways forward to counteract their potentially adverse effect through the specific tasks, milestones, and deliverables encompassed within Work Package 7. It is hoped that the language policy baseline outlined in this *White Paper* will serve as a bedrock for harmonized language policies across our institutions and will constitute the starting point of the NEOLAIa *Common Charter on Language Policy and Staff Accreditation Criteria*.

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The universities comprised within the NEOLAIa Alliance seek to attain a balance between the need for strong English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) programs and the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education policies that counter an excessive anglicization of Higher Education.

¹ Following de Wit et al. (2015, p. 29), internationalization is understood as “the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society”.

2. CHALLENGES

The mapping² of current internationalization practices across NEOLAIa universities has allowed the identification of a series of concerns which ripple out across eight domains and which dovetail with the main niches pinpointed in the official literature in this terrain:

1. Lack of official language policy.
2. Lack of consistent benchmarking for teacher language proficiency.
3. Absence of methodological training in EMI courses.
4. Dearth of quality assessment frameworks to gauge their functioning.
5. Insufficient incentives.
6. Scant stakeholder buy-in.
7. Research hurdles: attraction of international scholars, issues of publication and presentation in English, and paucity of needs analyses fine-tuned to each specific context.
8. The hegemonic role of English.

3. WAYS FORWARD

Based on this mapping of current practices and concerns within NEOLAIa institutions and on the outcomes of official research, and following the recommendations of the CRUE (Bazo et al., 2017), our institutions envisage a clear-cut set of recommendations, articulated in three main pillars (accreditation, training, and incentives) for each of the three key groups of stakeholders: teaching faculty, student body, and administrative staff.



² The main challenges, best practices, and areas for further work vis-à-vis internationalization practices at each NEOLAIa university have been identified and discussed.

3.1. Accreditation

3.1.1. Teaching faculty

1. Establish common linguistic baseline requirements for teachers to be able to implement subjects through a foreign language.
2. Ensure that this baseline level is adequately accredited through commonly acknowledged official institutions, cutting back on the other mechanisms heretofore established to accredit language level.
3. Set in place a cross-cutting and automatic system of recognition of this language level across NEOLAIa universities.
4. Articulate a common accreditation certificate across NEOLAIa, which teachers need to complete in order to be able to implement subjects through a foreign language.
5. Diversify the range of courses taught in languages other than English via the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university (where they exist).
6. Increase the number of subjects/strands/ full-fledged degrees taught through a foreign language.
7. Expand the number of languages through which these subjects/strands/degrees are offered beyond EMI.
8. Provide common guidelines for Faculties seeking to increase the number of bilingual subjects/strands/degrees to ease their design, accreditation, and implementation process.
9. Create a quality assurance system to guarantee the correct functioning of bilingual subjects/strands/degrees.
10. Sustain and develop national languages in those cases where it is necessary.

3.1.2. Student body

1. Recommend a minimum level of language proficiency to access and/or obtain a Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD degree.
2. Ensure that this baseline level is adequately accredited through commonly acknowledged official institutions.
3. Increase the linguistic offer in foreign languages other than English through the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university.
4. Step up the percentage of credits devoted to language proficiency within official study plans.
5. Establish, where possible, compulsory courses, subjects, or semesters in English within official degrees.
6. Include in the European Diploma Supplement (EDS) graduates' accredited language level, as well as their participation in bilingual itineraries.

3.1.3. Administrative staff

1. Identify and reflect those administrative posts where the use of foreign languages is necessary.
2. Facilitate the accreditation of this personnel's language level through official mechanisms.
3. Contemplate the possibility of including a compulsory linguistic requirement to access or promote within a post of this nature.
4. Increase the linguistic offer in foreign languages other than English through the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university.

3.2. Training

3.2.1. Teaching faculty

1. Provide continuous in-service upskilling courses for staff implementing or seeking to implement subjects in another language. These courses should cover:
 - Linguistic aspects.
 - Student-centered methodological options and new technological learning environments.
 - The theoretical underpinnings of bi- and plurilingual education.
 - Catering to diversity in plurilingual education.
 - The alignment of teaching and assessment.
2. Set in place counselling and feedback options.
3. Establish a mentoring or shadowing program.
4. Offer extra support in those subjects implemented via another language through the figure of the language assistant.
5. Reinforce all these options in English and also increasingly diversify their development in other foreign languages.
6. Provide increased opportunities to carry out international teaching stays at other universities.
7. Increase and diversify mobility programs that offer linguistic training abroad.
8. Set up cross-institutional Blended Intensive Programs (BIPs) to foster internationalization.
9. Articulate a common quality assessment system of the courses offered.
10. Establish a strong, common recruitment system of visiting professors.
11. Conduct context-specific needs analyses on which to ground tailor-made course offerings.

3.2.2. Student body

1. Increase the offer of tailor-made courses to enhance linguistic and intercultural competence. These should include:
 - Focus on the productive skills and, especially, on oral expression.
 - Pronunciation.
 - Academic writing.
 - Note-taking.
 - Discipline-related courses on academic literacies.
 - Intercultural competence.
2. Offer linguistic immersion courses.
3. Provide complementary language courses abroad.
4. Enhance the mobility offer for students.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

1. Offer specific courses on oral communication.
2. Provide specific courses on written communication.
3. Carry out stays in universities abroad.
4. Promote participation in mobility programs and internationalization at home initiatives.

3.3. Incentives

3.3.1. Teaching faculty

1. Provide extra support in class by language assistants.
2. Offer support and guidance to those Faculties who seek to set up or expand degrees in English or another foreign language.
3. Bolster language revision programs and incentivize publishing in English and other foreign languages.
4. Intensify the amount of training options offered.
5. Increase the opportunities to participate in mobility programs which offer language and methodological training abroad.
6. Incentivize enrolment in these courses for hiring, accreditation, and promotion purposes.
7. Facilitate funding for these linguistic and methodological reskilling courses.
8. Reduce fees for linguistic accreditation tests and ensure language competence certification at each university.
9. Offer financial support for the purchase of materials and resources in the foreign language.
10. Provide, where possible, a salary increase for those teachers involved in bi-/plurilingual teaching.
11. Secure a system of teaching rebates for the implementation of a content subject through EMI or another foreign language in terms of credit recognition.
12. Downsize bi-/plurilingual groups and do not limit the implementation of subjects in the foreign language to a minimum number of students.
13. Prioritize teachers participating in bi-/plurilingual programs in the obtention of competitive grants, courses, or international mobility programs within each university.
14. Expand the number of subjects taught through EMI or another foreign language to entire degrees and implement them irrespective of the participation of foreign students.
15. Heighten information on the assets of bi-/plurilingual information on all levels.



3.3.2. Student body

1. Offer fully subsidized foreign language courses or courses with reduced fees for students who enroll in language courses at their university during their degree studies.
2. Reduce or eliminate fees for language accreditation tests.
3. Provide initiation courses for students who embark on bi-/plurilingual degrees.
4. Set up linguistic support practices for those students participating in bi-/plurilingual degrees.
5. Organize linguistic tandems between foreign and local students and language exchange activities.
6. Promote the celebration of the International Mother Language Day and the European Day of Languages.
7. Prioritize students in bi-/plurilingual degrees in access to Erasmus+ mobility, Erasmus+ practical training, and other international mobility programs.
8. Offer institutional support to increase the teaching of foreign languages by combining students from various study programs in financially efficient groups to take courses in languages other than English.
9. Further promote already-existing international mobility programs such as Key Actions.

3.3.3. Administrative staff

1. Reduce or eliminate fees for language training courses and language accreditation tests.
2. Promote linguistic competence certification among administrative staff at NEOLAIa universities.
3. Include language certification (B2-C1-C2) and course attendance as specific criteria for hiring and promotion purposes.
4. Prioritize personnel with an accredited foreign language level in accessing grants, courses, and international mobility programs offered by our universities.
5. Facilitate the attendance of administrative staff to language accreditation courses during their working hours.
6. Further promote already-existing international mobility programs such as Staff Weeks.

4. CONCLUSION

The present NEOLAiA White Paper on Language Policy constitutes an explicit mission statement on the role of languages, EMI, plurilingualism, and interculturality in Higher Education. It has been based on a thorough mapping of prior internationalization practices within NEOLAiA universities and an in-depth canvassing of the latest specialized literature based on the topic. The document has allowed us to establish the backdrop from which we depart (with five main lines of action being identified within NEOLAiA internationalization plans), to determine the chief concerns affecting language policy at our institutions (which hinge on eight main fronts), and to map out future pathways for progression (on three main axes -accreditation, training, and incentives- and for three frontline stakeholders -teaching faculty, student body, and administrative staff).

NEOLAiA stands for all the actions outlined in the present document and will act upon them via the diverse tasks, milestones, and deliverables envisaged within Work Package 7. It is hoped that the recommendations laid out in this document and the initiatives carried out through Work Package 7 will act as cornerstones for a harmonized language policy across our institutions and will set the basis for the establishment of concrete measures which allow internationalization to continue advancing firmly, steadily, and unfettered within the NEOLAiA Alliance.

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Language Policy White Paper

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKDROP

The push for internationalization has been gaining momentum across European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for nearly two decades. The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the expansion of university access policies, the phenomenon of globalization, or increased migratory movements have spurred on a profound rethinking of the role of foreign languages in a truly international 21st-century tertiary education (Bazo et al., 2017).

The prominent position of English as a hegemonic academic language on the internationalization docket has caused English as a Medium of Instruction³ (EMI) to acquire a strong foothold in many HEIs across our continent. Bolstered by three major drivers (Dalton-Puffer, 2012), EMI has recently been on the uptick, exhibiting an exponential growth that is “unlikely to be reversed for the foreseeable future” (Macaro, 2019, p. 232):

- **Strategic motives:** EMI is considered an offshoot of the Bologna Process (Karakas, 2017; Smit & Dafouz, 2012) and, as such, it aims to attract international students and staff (O'Dowd, 2018; van der Worp, 2017), increase enrollment rates (Tsui, 2018), give international visibility to institutions (Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2018), and thereby improve their prestige in university rankings (Briggs et al., 2018; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Ozer & Bayram, 2019).

- **Pedagogical reasons:** These primarily affect the desire to prepare students for an increasingly international and globalized job market and educational system (Briggs et al., 2018; Bukve, 2018; Karakas, 2017) by increasing their English proficiency while learning specialized content subject (Civan & Coşkun, 2016; Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; O'Dowd, 2018). In addition, increased mobility brings opportunities to develop intercultural competence, which is highly demanded in multicultural societies. Such a competence is commonly developed under the term internationalization at home (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016; de Wit et al., 2015).

- **Substantial drivers:** This final set of motives is essentially pragmatic and is related to the status of English as a *lingua franca*, as they involve equipping students and teachers with the tools they need to understand the latest ongoing research, which is primarily in English, in order to develop transnational investigation and networking (Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016) and promote knowledge transfer (Tuomainen, 2018).

³ Four features are widely viewed as criterial for EMI (Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Pecorari & Malmström, 2018): English is the vehicular language of instruction, there is no methodology ascribed to it, it is primarily associated to Higher Education (HE), and language development is not a primary intended outcome in itself, something which differentiates it from CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) or ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education), which makes it a more appropriate choice for most university settings (Schmidt-Unterberger, 2018).

At the same time, an increased awareness of the need to counter an excessive anglicization of Higher Education (HE) through the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education⁴ (cf. Recommendation CM/Rec 2002-1 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe) has also been gaining traction. Indeed, the *mother tongue* + 2 objective established by the Council of Europe in 2002 has recently been updated, placing the linguistic diversity of European citizens at the core of its policy and fostering the learning of all languages, and not just one's L1 (first language) and English (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2023). In this sense, initiatives such as the Declaration for Multilingualism in Higher Education, drafted by the European Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism (ECSPM)⁵, the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), or the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe, 2020) seek to safeguard and support the use of several languages in research and publications, teaching and learning, and communication, and to secure and fortify plurilingualism, particularly in teaching, learning, and transnational research collaboration.

The universities comprised within the NEOLAIa Alliance⁶ seek to orchestrate a balance between these two crucial circumstances which are shaping the present and future of internationalization at tertiary level. They represent a rich panoply of linguistic situations, which cluster around three main scenarios: deficient English language levels, which sanction a strong push for EMI that does not threaten the L1; an excellent mastery of English which permeates all domains and warrants safeguarding the less-widely spoken L1; and a strong L1 which is nevertheless sought to be protected against the possibility of excessive anglicization.

Despite these variegated language policy considerations, the NEOLAIa Alliance is united in its diversity via its firm commitment to internationalization practices and action plans for internationalization. The latter hinge on five main fronts:

- Anchoring internationalization in curricula by developing multilingual and intercultural training methods, by expanding course offerings in English and other languages (at all levels: Bachelors, Masters, and PhD), and by establishing compulsory semesters/subjects in English for students.
- Offering language-related courses for academics, students, and administrative staff.
- Promoting staff (academic and administrative) and student mobility, both in physical and virtual formats.
- Deepening and broadening institutional partnerships and exchanges worldwide.
- Continuing and expanding international research through scientific cooperation networks.

However, despite these explicit strides taken towards internationalization across the NEOLAIa universities, a common mapping of current internationalization practices has unveiled a clear-cut series of concerns with which internationalization policy is still wrestling in our Alliance and which dovetail with the main challenges identified in the official literature on this front. The objective of the *White Paper* is precisely to identify those issues and to signpost ways forward to counteract their potentially adverse effect. The latter will be premised on three main pillars (accreditation, training, and incentives) for each of the frontline stakeholders at our HEIs (academic faculty, student body, and administrative staff). The *White Paper* will draw to a close by outlining how the proposed lines of action will be addressed via the specific tasks, milestones, and deliverables encompassed within Work Package 7. It is hoped that the language policy baseline outlined in this *White Paper* will serve as a bedrock for harmonized language policies across our institutions and will constitute the starting point of the NEOLAIa *Common Charter on Language Policy and Staff Accreditation Criteria*.

⁴ In line with the *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30), we understand plurilingualism as “the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner”. In turn, intercultural education “aims to provide learners with the competences required to ‘operate effectively as citizens’ in diverse societies (Council of Europe, 2020, para. 2)” (Heggernes, 2021, p. 2).

⁵ Cf. <https://ecspm.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/ECSPM-declaration-for-multilingualism-in-HE-20230417.pdf>.

⁶ Universities of Bielefeld, Jaén, Nicosia, Ostrava, Örebro, Salerno, Suceava, Šiauliai, and Tours (cf. www.neolaiacampus.eu).

2. CHALLENGES

The mapping of current internationalization practices across NEOLAIÁ universities has allowed the identification of a series of concerns which ripple out across eight chief domains and which dovetail with the main niches pinpointed in the official literature in this terrain:

1. A first important area of heed involves the **lack of an official language policy** at NEOLAIÁ HEIs. This absence of a harmonized strategy that provides concrete guidelines has been signposted in the official literature as a major niche to be filled. Indeed, existing studies craft a compelling case (Halbach & Lázaro, 2015; Lasagabaster, 2019; O'Dowd, 2018; Pavón, 2020) for the need to provide a solid top-down push to the homogenization and coordination of language policies, as well as common guidelines for EMI and plurilingualism within universities, both nation-wide and internationally.

2. The **lack of consistent benchmarking for teacher language proficiency** is another recurring deficiency that needs to be addressed. Indeed, multiple procedures are established (e.g., participation in training periods or research activities abroad, presentation of scientific papers) to allow teachers to implement courses in a foreign language without a transparent and official accreditation system. In this sense, there is a lacuna in the establishment of linguistic and methodological accreditation criteria because there are no clear-cut and homogeneous baseline requirements that lecturers should fulfil if they seek to teach a subject through EMI. This deficiency has also come to the fore in recent publications (Briggs et al., 2018; Halbach & Lázaro, 2015; Lasagabaster, 2019; Macaro et al., 2018; O'Dowd, 2018). In line with the foregoing, the need to establish criteria for linguistic accreditation now acquires a particularly sharp relief (O'Dowd, 2018).

3. Another related issue warranting attention affects the **absence of methodological training in EMI courses**, which tend to cater almost exclusively to language skills. The large majority of lecturers are fluent in English, but lack the skills for teaching through EMI. This has equally been ascertained in recent investigations (Ball & Lindsay, 2013; Cots, 2013; Lasagabaster, 2019; O'Dowd, 2018; Pavón & Ellison, 2021; Tuomainen, 2018; Zenkova & Khamitova, 2018). Methodological issues require increased salience because, as Cots (2013) claims, the introduction of EMI entails a significant shift of methodology, with which non-language lecturers might well not be familiar. Thus, language and methodology need to become concurrent pedagogical aims in EMI courses and methodological competence certifications should also be set in place, concomitantly with linguistic ones.

4. Once these programs are implemented, there is also a **dearth of quality assessment frameworks to gauge their functioning**. A common standard should be adopted in this sense, with clear-cut quality control indicators which have been carefully validated and which allow those subjects, courses, or degrees which attain them to obtain an official certificate or quality seal. This once more concurs with the findings of prior studies (e.g., O'Dowd, 2018), which call for the need to guarantee quality control in EMI programs.

5. Another oft-cited challenge plaguing current internationalization practice within NEOLAIa pertains to **incentives** to create and participate in programs taught through another language. Very few incentives can be tracked across our institutions, mainly reduced to financial aid for teaching staff mobility and accreditation exams, and minimal acknowledgement in the annual teaching plan. A recent study conducted at the University of Jaén (Pérez Cañado, 2020) has found lecturers clamored for six main types of incentives. To begin with, they would like extra support in class, especially by native speakers of the language who can act as language assistants and can also help correct their written materials. Lecturers were also vocal about the need to intensify training, especially at advanced levels and through intensive courses. This goes hand in hand with the need for increased mobility programs: teachers explicitly asked for greater funding for language and methodological training abroad. Economic incentives equally came to the fore, both in terms of salary increase and gratuity of language courses and language proficiency exams. Teaching rebates were also actively demanded, as they consider this type of teaching should be assigned a greater weight in credit recognition, accreditation, and promotion purposes, and decisions to downsize bilingual groups. Finally, it is also interesting to note that teachers mentioned their desire to extend EMI courses well beyond individual subjects with foreign students: they would like to see them spill over into entire degrees with Spanish students, thereby favoring internationalization at home (in line with what Beelen & Jones, 2015 and Dafouz & Camacho-Miñano, 2016 advocate). This echoes the claims made by Schmidt-Unterberger (2018) to scale up incentives for participants in bilingual programs at tertiary level.

6. Related to the afore-mentioned incentives is the question of **stakeholder buy-in**. There is still resistance to offering EMI or courses in other languages. In addition, a low participation rate in these training initiatives has also been documented across NEOLAIa institutions. And vis-à-vis the student body, the added value of a program offered in another language of instruction is not always manifest and a lack of motivation has been ascertained when it comes to applying for an Erasmus+ mobility. Thus, increasing the information flow on the multifaceted assets of internationalization should figure prominently on the future NEOLAIa agenda.

7. Research is another front on which additional effort is required. Three main hurdles have been documented in this respect: the attraction of international scholars and researchers, issues of publication and presentation in English beyond the national sphere, and the paucity of needs analyses fine-tuned to each specific context, which, in turn, allow tailor-made courses to be set up in response to those diagnosed needs. This is once more in harmony with research outcomes which point towards the need to align EMI courses with real training needs, as there is a documented mismatch between the actual needs of target academic situations and what is actually provided by EMI training programs (Jiang et al., 2019). More tailor-made training courses are thus advocated to ensure a success-prone implementation of EMI.

8. A final issue which requires heightened attention pertains to the **hegemonic role of English**. Limited possibilities are documented for frontline stakeholders to learn foreign languages other than English, the need to diversify the spectrum of subjects taught through other foreign languages is reported, and assertions are made for strengthening national official languages while advancing the international profile of our institutions through instruction in English. This again chimes with recent official documents, which sound a note of caution as regards the exclusive use of English in teaching, research, publishing, and networking in Higher Education, in detriment of official/national, regional, or minority languages (ECSPM, 2024), as well as other foreign languages.

3. WAYS FORWARD

Based on the mapping of current practices and concerns within NEOLAIa institutions and on the outcomes of official research canvassed in the previous section, let us now signpost ways forward in addressing these niches and articulating a common language policy for our Alliance. The latter will be articulated in three main pillars for each frontline stakeholder (teaching faculty, student body, and administrative staff), following the recommendations of the CRUE (Bazo et al., 2017): *accreditation* (linguistic, methodological, and program), *training* (within which research considerations will also be subsumed), and *incentives* (within which information will also be an essential strand). NEOLAIa strongly vouches for the establishment of a **common, official, harmonized, and explicit language policy across our institutions**, whose foundation should be underpinned by the following recommendations:

3.1. Accreditation

In line with the deficiencies identified in the previous heading vis-à-vis the lack of benchmarking for language proficiency, the absence of methodological accreditation, the challenge posed by the creation of new bi- and plurilingual subjects/strands/degrees, and the dearth of quality assessment criteria, this initial section sets forth a series of clear-cut recommendations to provide a unified, top-down push to accreditation issues across our institutions.

3.1.1. Teaching faculty

1. Establish common linguistic baseline requirements for teachers to be able to implement subjects through a foreign language. This minimum level should ideally be a C1⁷.
2. Ensure that this baseline level is adequately accredited through commonly acknowledged official institutions (e.g., Cambridge, Trinity, ACLES, APTIS), cutting back on the other mechanisms heretofore established to accredit language level (except for being a 'native' speaker of the language).
3. Set in place a cross-cutting and automatic system of recognition of this language level across NEOLAIa universities.
4. Articulate a common accreditation certificate across NEOLAIa, which encompasses not only general linguistic, but also academic language, as well as theoretical, methodological, diversity-sensitive, and evaluation aspects which teachers need to master and complete in order to be able to implement subjects through a foreign language.
5. Diversify the range of courses taught in languages other than English via the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university (where they exist).

⁷ The fifth level in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR), corresponding to an advanced mastery of the language.



Accreditation

It is paramount to set up standards which are mutually recognized among the members of the Alliance.



Training

Training programs should be set up on discipline-specific literacy and communicative interactional competence.



Incentives

Accreditation and training must be supported by incentive programs aligned with the possibilities of each institution.

6. Increase the number of subjects/strands/ full-fledged degrees (at all levels: Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD) taught through a foreign language.
7. Gradually expand the number of languages through which these subjects/strands/degrees are offered beyond EMI.
8. Provide common guidelines for Faculties seeking to increase the number of bilingual subjects/strands/degrees to ease their design, accreditation, and implementation process.
9. Create a quality assurance system to guarantee the correct functioning of bilingual subjects/strands/degrees by validating a series of indicators that will determine their adequate implementation, guide inexperienced teachers in the initial development of their subjects, and allow the attainment of a quality seal in cases of full realization of those criteria.
10. Sustain and develop national languages in those cases where it is necessary, safeguarding, promoting, and strengthening the first language and striking a balance with the promotion of study programs in English and other foreign languages.

3.1.2. Student body

1. Recommend a minimum level of language proficiency to access and/or obtain a Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD degree. Ideally, it should be a B1, B2, and C1, respectively, although certain degrees can also require a higher level.
2. Ensure that this baseline level is adequately accredited through commonly acknowledged official institutions (e.g., Cambridge, Trinity, ACLES, APTIS).
3. Increase the linguistic offer in foreign languages other than English through the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university and tie it to international mobility itineraries when possible.

4. Step up the percentage of credits devoted to language proficiency within official study plans.
5. Establish, where possible, compulsory courses, subjects, or semesters in English and/or other foreign languages within official degrees.
6. Include in the European Diploma Supplement (EDS) graduates' accredited language level, as well as participation in Erasmus+ or related initiatives, in order to award greater visibility to the added value of official language competence through these initiatives.

3.1.3. Administrative staff

1. Identify and reflect those administrative posts where the use of foreign languages is necessary.
2. Facilitate the accreditation of this personnel's language level through official mechanisms, particularly in the case of administrative staff involved in internationalization initiatives or in touch with foreign language speakers due to the nature of their posts.
3. Contemplate the possibility of including a compulsory linguistic requirement (B2 or C1, depending on the service provided) to access or promote within a post of this nature.
4. Increase the linguistic offer in foreign languages other than English for administrative staff through the Modern Language Centers associated to each NEOLAIa university.

3.2. Training

In direct response to the niches identified vis-à-vis linguistic and methodological development and research issues, this next major heading proposes a series of action lines on which to premise training-related decisions within a common language policy. They are once again grounded on the latest specialized literature, which has unveiled the need to step up training, particularly on two areas of language proficiency: discipline-specific literacy (Jiang et al., 2019) and communicative interactional academic competence (Kim et al., 2018). These could be assimilated to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) or Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1999) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1999), both of which should be firmly embedded in EMI programs. In addition to linguistic issues, other important aspects should be part and parcel of EMI teacher provision courses (Dafouz, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Among them, methodological training, materials review and design, simulated instruction of model EMI cases through authentic micro-teaching situations, extra support in class by highly competent speakers of the language, feedback provision from experts, and opportunities for reflective practice on ideological and identity issues relating to the lecturers' self-image are all mentioned. In line with the foregoing, the following recommendations are issued for each cohort:

3.2.1. Teaching faculty

1. Provide continuous in-service upskilling courses for staff implementing or seeking to implement subjects in another language. These courses should cover:

- **Linguistic upgrade:** This upgrade should affect not only general language, but also communicative interactional academic competence and discipline-specific literacies. Pronunciation and productive skills should also figure prominently in this course offer.

- **Student-centered methodological options and new technological learning environments:** Task-based language teaching, project-based learning, problem-oriented learning, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, flipped learning, gamification, ICTs options, and learning landscapes should all be included. Pedagogical spaces should also be articulated to allow teachers to share their concerns and experiences, learn from the best practices of others, and practice in authentic micro-teaching situations in the foreign language.

- **The theoretical underpinnings of bi- and plurilingual education:** A solid theoretical grounding should be provided on the differences between CLIL, ICLHE, and EMI; national policy frameworks; and empirical evidence to help heighten information on bilingual education and debunk false myths which are proliferating around it.

- **Catering to diversity in plurilingual education:** In order to attune teaching to the new concept of diversity in bi- and plurilingual education, which transcends mere special education needs to also encompass different learning styles, achievement levels, learning paces, and socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (cf. Pérez Cañado, 2023), training needs to be provided on diverse types of scaffolding, cooperative learning techniques, the deployment of different types of groupings and learning modalities, support in materials creation or adaptation, and design of tiered-level activities.

- **The alignment of teaching and assessment:** Finally, the differences between evaluation, assessment, and testing should be examined, and a systemic-functional approach to assessment should be capitalized on in order to evaluate academic and disciplinary literacies concomitantly. Diversified evaluation instruments should also be examined and opportunities for reflective practice should be provided.

2. Set in place counselling and feedback options for inexperienced teachers or those who seek to be observed by advisors in order to receive recommendations on their teaching.

3. Establish a mentoring or shadowing program, whereby more experienced practitioners in

teaching content through language accompany and follow those who are just starting out or require greater guidance in this terrain.

4. Offer extra support in those subjects implemented via another language through the figure of the language assistant, who will provide three-pronged support: they will oversee materials design and contribute to their revision, be a source of updated BICS and adequate pronunciation, and act as a gateway into the cultural dimensions of the societies associated with the language concerned.
5. Reinforce all these options in English and also increasingly diversify their development in other foreign languages.
6. Provide increased opportunities to carry out international teaching stays at universities in order to observe best practices, participate in international teaching experiences, and develop joint teaching projects.
7. Increase and diversify mobility programs that offer linguistic training abroad.
8. Set up cross-institutional Blended Intensive Programs (BIPs) to foster internationalization through the creation of Professional Learning Communities and the fostering of technology-enhanced student-centered methodologies.
9. Articulate a common quality assessment system of the courses offered via externally validated surveys (cf., e.g., Pérez Cañado, 2020) in order to tweak or retool them as necessary in future iterations.
10. Establish a strong, common recruitment system of visiting professors in order to attract high-quality international scholars and researchers.
11. Conduct context-specific needs analyses on which to ground tailor-made course offerings for all frontline stakeholders, employing common instruments (cf., e.g., Pérez Cañado, 2020) and methodological triangulation (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, and observation protocols).

3.2.2. Student body

1. Increase the offer of tailor-made courses to enhance the linguistic and intercultural competence of the student body. According to the latest research and common mapping, these should include:

- Focus on the productive skills and, especially, on oral expression, general language for carrying out oral presentations, and specific classroom language for interaction.
- Pronunciation.
- Academic writing.
- Note-taking.
- Discipline-related courses on academic literacies pertaining to the subjects being taught through the foreign language.
- Intercultural competence.

2. Offer linguistic immersion courses.

3. Provide complementary language courses abroad.

4. Enhance the mobility offer for students.

3.2.3. Administrative staff

1. Offer specific courses on oral communication to address queries telephonically, serve international students, and interact with visiting professors.

2. Provide specific courses on written communication to offer academic information via email, write up administrative and academic documents in the foreign language, draw up information brochures in the foreign language, or translate web contents.

3. Carry out stays in universities abroad to observe and collaborate in administrative tasks related to internationalization processes.

4. Promote participation in mobility programs and internationalization at home initiatives in order to involve this cohort in internalization at our universities, ensuring staff who have not participated in these programs are prioritized so that all staff members are given an equal opportunity to benefit from a mobility period.

3.3. Incentives

Finally, setting up a robust incentive program is pivotal within any language policy endeavor in order to promote languages for internationalization. In direct response to the mapping and research outcomes on this front, as summarized in the CHALLENGES section, the following concrete incentives are advocated within NEOLAIa for each of the key cohorts. They hinge on seven main fronts: support, training, mobility, economic incentives, teaching rebates, expansion of EMI programs (and other languages), and information.

3.3.1. Teaching staff

1. Provide extra support in class by highly competent speakers of the language who can act as language assistants and can also help correct written materials.
2. Offer support and guidance to those Faculties who seek to set up or expand degrees in English or another foreign language.
3. Bolster language revision programs (of academic texts, final reports, contracts, patents, project applications, research outcomes, and any other documents related to teaching, research, or knowledge transfer) and incentivize publishing in English and other foreign languages in order to boost the international production and dissemination of research.
4. Intensify the amount of training options offered, especially at advanced levels and through intensive courses.
5. Increase the opportunities to participate in mobility programs which offer language and methodological training abroad.
6. Incentivize enrollment in these courses for hiring, accreditation, and promotion purposes.
7. Facilitate funding for these linguistic and methodological reskilling courses.

8. Reduce fees for linguistic accreditation tests and ensure language competence certification at each university.

9. Offer financial support for the purchase of materials and resources in the foreign language for teachers who participate in bi-/plurilingual itineraries.

10. Provide appropriate working conditions and, where possible, a salary increase for those teachers involved in bi-/plurilingual teaching.

11. Secure a system of teaching rebates for the implementation of a content subject through EMI or another foreign language in terms of credit recognition.

12. Downsize bi-/plurilingual groups and do not limit the implementation of subjects in the foreign language to a minimum number of students.

13. Prioritize teachers participating in bi-/plurilingual programs in the obtention of competitive grants, courses, or international mobility programs within each university.

14. Expand the number of subjects taught through EMI or another foreign language to entire degrees and implement them irrespective of the participation of foreign students, thereby favoring internationalization at home.

15. Heighten information on the assets of bi-/plurilingual information on all levels (linguistic, content, cognitive, motivational), debunking false myths, for the entire university community to ensure stakeholder buy-in.

3.3.2. Student body

1. In those NEOLAIa universities where this does not already happen, offer fully subsidized foreign language courses or courses with reduced fees for students who enroll in language courses at their university during their degree studies.

2. Reduce or eliminate fees for language accreditation tests, preferably B1 or above.
3. Provide initiation courses for students who embark on bi-/plurilingual degrees taught through EMI or another foreign language at each university in order to provide them with the communicative toolkit they require to succeed in the program.
4. Set up linguistic support practices for those students participating in bi-/plurilingual degrees throughout their entire development.
5. Organize linguistic tandems between foreign and local students and language exchange activities.
6. Promote the celebration of the International Mother Language Day (21st of February) and the European Day of Languages (26th of September).
7. Prioritize students in bi-/plurilingual degrees in access to Erasmus+ mobility, Erasmus+ practical training, and other international mobility programs.
8. Offer institutional support to increase the teaching of foreign languages by combining students from various study programs in financially efficient groups to take courses in languages other than English.
9. Further promote already-existing international mobility programs such as Key Actions.

3.3.3. Administrative staff

1. Reduce or eliminate fees for language training courses and language accreditation tests.
2. Promote linguistic competence certification among administrative staff at NEOLAIa universities.
3. Include language certification (B2-C1-C2) and course attendance as specific criteria for hiring and promotion purposes.

4. Prioritize personnel with an accredited foreign language level in accessing grants, courses, and international mobility programs offered by our universities.
5. Facilitate the attendance of administrative staff to language accreditation courses (preferably B2 or above) during their working hours.
6. Further promote already-existing international mobility programs such as Staff Weeks.



4. CONCLUSION

The present NEOLAIa White Paper on Language Policy constitutes an explicit mission statement on the role of languages, EMI, plurilingualism, and interculturality in Higher Education. It has been based on a thorough mapping of prior internationalization practices within NEOLAIa universities and an in-depth canvassing of the latest specialized literature based on the topic. The document has allowed us to establish the backdrop from which we depart (with five main lines of action being identified within NEOLAIa internationalization plans), to determine the chief concerns affecting language policy at our institutions (which hinge on eight main fronts), and to map out future pathways for progression (on three main axes -accreditation, training, and incentives- and for three frontline stakeholders -teaching faculty, student body, and administrative staff).

NEOLAIa stands for all the action lines outlined in the present document and will act upon them via the diverse tasks, milestones, and deliverables envisaged within Work Package 7. To begin with, our initial milestones (**two symposia on language policy**) will target an increase in the formation reaching stakeholders in this terrain for greater buy-in, will foster the pooling of research on this front and the reinforcement of international research networks, and will encourage discussion on how to reach a measured balance between EMI and plurilingualism. In turn, issues of benchmarking of linguistic and methodological competence on the part of teaching staff will be targeted via the **Common Charter on Language Policy and Staff Accreditation Criteria** which is envisaged as our second milestone. Training on the five main identified fronts will be addressed thanks to a **Common Accreditation Certificate for Plurilingual Education** (deliverable 2), which will comprise five 20-hour modules and will also work towards the official certification and accreditation of the linguistic

and methodological competence of teachers participating in EMI programs across our universities. Support for these practitioners will ensue through the **LAEP (Language Assistant Exchange Program)**, which will be piloted concomitantly to the Common Accreditation Certificate, thanks to which two language assistants per country will offer linguistic, cultural, and materials support for EMI subjects throughout all our HEIs. And, finally, the **LACE (Language and Cultural Exchange Program)** will favor the teaching of languages other than English via our universities' Modern Language Centers, capitalizing on the long-term stay of language assistants via the LAEP.

It is hoped that the recommendations laid out in this document and the initiatives carried out through Work Package 7 will act as cornerstones for a harmonized language policy across our institutions and will set the basis for the establishment of concrete measures which allow internationalization to continue advancing firmly, steadily, and unfettered within the NEOLAIa Alliance.

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