



BASQUE

The Basque language in education in France

| 2nd Edition |

| Regional dossiers series |





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Foreword

background The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (formerly Mercator-Education) aims at the acquisition, circulation, and application of knowledge in the field of regional and minority language education. Regional or minority languages are languages that differ from the official language of the state where they are spoken and that are traditionally used within a given territory by nationals of that state forming a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population. For several years an important means for the Mercator Research Centre to achieve the goal of knowledge acquisition and circulation has been the Regional dossiers series. The success of this series illustrates a need for documents stating briefly the most essential features of the education system of regions with an autochthonous lesser used language.

aim Regional dossiers aim at providing a concise description and basic statistics about minority language education in a specific region of Europe. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements, and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects, such as the number of schools, teachers, pupils, and financial investments. This kind of information can serve several purposes and can be relevant for different target groups.

target group Policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a Regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research or as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions in their own region.

link with Eurydice In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national education systems, the format of the regional dossiers follows the format used by Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe. Eurydice provides information on the

administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

contents

The remainder of this dossier consists of an introduction to the region under study, followed by six sections each dealing with a specific level of the education system. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects, and summary statistics. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources with a list of publications.



1 Introduction

language

Basque, or *Euskara*, is a language completely surrounded by Indo-European languages and yet it is totally different. This aspect has interested European researchers for centuries. More recently, also in Japan and the US the interest has grown considerably. The obscure origins of Basque have led to numerous theories to account for its ancestry. It is beyond the scope of this dossier to enumerate such theories¹.

Nowadays, the area where Basque is spoken is called *Euskal Herri* or Basque Country. This area comprises seven historical provinces, four in Spain (Araba/Alava, Bizkaia/Vizcaya, Gipuzkoa/Guipuzcoa and Nafarroa/Navarra) called Southern Basque country or Hegoalde, and three in France (Lapurdi/Labourd, Nafarroa Beherea/Basse Navarre and Zuberoa/Soule). In this dossier we will discuss the situation of the Northern Basque country or Iparralde. Iparralde occupies about two fifths (3,060 km²) of the French *département* Pyrénées-Atlantiques.

population

Of all 262,311 inhabitants in Iparralde², there are 54,648 Basque speakers or 24,7%. The last three sociolinguistic studies (see the table below) show that the number of Basque speakers in Iparralde is diminishing. However, a closer look at the evolution shows that the rate of decline has decreased between 1996 and 2001 with only a 3% reduction, compared to 19% between 1991 and 1996. Although the diminution of Basque speakers in Iparralde has not been stopped the trend is clearly changing; this is particularly interesting given that the population of Pyrénées-Atlantique has increased (particularly between 1996-2001). It has to be mentioned that in Iparralde Basque has never been used by the authorities.

	1991	1996	2001
elebidunak / productive bilinguals	69,132 33.1%	56,146 26.4%	54,648 24.7%
elebidun elebakarrak / passive bilinguals	14,746 7.1%	19,832 9.3%	26,370 11.9%
eraldun elebakarrak / monolinguals	125,018 59.8%	136,414 64.2%	140,562 63.4%
guztira / total	208,896 100%	212,392 100%	221,580 100%

Number of bilingual and monolingual speakers in Iparralde.

Source: Sociolinguistic investigations of the Basque Government 1991-1996-2001.

language status The French political system is based on a single unified state: it is a centralist structure. There is a will for cultural and linguistic uniformity within the state. To this day, France still refuses to ratify the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) as it is not in line with the French constitution. Recently, during the revision of the French constitution for compatibility with the European constitution, the French parliament refused to make the necessary amendments to enable the ratification of the ECRML, for fear of jeopardising the unity of the state. In France, regional languages have no specific status and no official recognition.

For historical reasons that date back to the French Revolution (1789), the obligation to use French and the spread of the French language have been central to the building of France. The French language, associated with the republican movement, symbolised the unity of the country and the equality of its citizens. The development of the French language has taken place to the detriment of other languages. The State has applied methods contrary to the linguistic, traditional, and cultural realities of the population. The substitution of the languages by the French language took place between the end of 19th century and the middle of the 20th century.

French, the language of the Republic, is the only official language in France; the other languages in France are designated “regional languages”, and in the majority of cases the teaching of these languages is based on the goodwill and dedication of parents and teachers.

**status of
language
education**

The recent Law of orientation and programme for the future of the school (*“d’Orientation et de programme pour l’avenir de l’école”* – Loi n°2005-380 du 23/04/2005), called the Fillon Law, has brought a significant change to the place granted to regional languages in the French school system. This Law modifies and replaces the orientation Law on education (*“Loi d’orientation sur l’éducation”* – n°89-486 du 10/07/1989) called *“Loi d’orientation Jospin”*. Three articles of the education code³ concerning the treatment of regional languages have been promulgated after the abrogation of the Deixonne law (1951), such as the Savary circular (1982). The Basque language and culture may be taught for one to three hours a week in schools for public education, if the teacher is willing and able to do so. To that end, extra teaching hours are offered outside the curriculum.

In the Fillon Law, it is possible to learn a regional language in an optional framework only. It is not possible to learn a regional language as a modern language at primary or secondary school. Regional languages will be outside of the core common skills and will only be taught as an option, in addition to the specified curriculum. Furthermore, responsibility for the promotion of regional languages will be within the competence of the region rather than the National Education (see Prospects, p. 37, for further details). This Law affects the entire framework for regional language teaching at public and catholic schools. Although the Fillon Law of orientation has considerably affected the teaching of regional languages as an optional subject, it has not affected the bilingual education model. For the moment there is a transitional situation because although the Law has been passed, the decrees of application have not yet been promulgated. For this reason, it is not yet possible to evaluate the effects of the new

law on the education system. However, this new law is a climb-down in the recognition of regional languages in the educative system in respect to their diffusion and valorisation.

**education
system**

The French education system is largely state-controlled although some decentralisation measures were taken in the eighties. School attendance is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16, but children can be accepted in schools from the age of 2. Curricula have been established for all compulsory school levels. A basic principle is free public education and the opportunity for every young person to take up vocational training before he or she leaves the system. The first three levels of education – nursery, primary, and lower secondary level – are subdivided into five learning cycles. From the age of 2 to 5 children may start with the first learning cycle, followed by the basic learning cycle (5-8), and the consolidation cycle (8-11). Lower secondary education covers the observation (11-13) and orientation cycles (13-15), followed by various streams in upper secondary education. During the period of compulsory education, payment of family allowances to parents is subject to the registration and regular school attendance of their children.

A particular characteristic of the French education system is formed by the administrative units of education (*académies*). The 28 *académies* roughly correspond to the 22 regions of France. Each *académie* is headed by a director (*recteur*) who represents the Ministry of Education and who is responsible both for the management of primary and secondary schools and for the enforcement of national regulations within the *académie*. Each *département* has a local administration for the national education authorities, the *inspection d'Académie*. The academic inspector (*inspecteur d'académie*) represents the director (*recteur*) in the *département*, and he or she is responsible for all educational services except for higher education. The entire *Iparralde* forms part of the *académie* of Bordeaux, which covers the whole of Aquitaine. Within the territory of the *académie* of Bordeaux two regional languages are spoken: Basque and Occitan.

private and public

In its constitution, France advocates the idea of state education in order to promote the values of the Republic itself. All teachers are paid by the national government through its Public Education Department (*Education Nationale*). Alongside the public education system, there are various categories of private schools. The most common ones are the confessional, Catholic schools, which have signed a simple contract or a contract of association with the state. For institutions with a simple contract, the state pays the teachers' salaries, who are by law considered private employees. The state also monitors the conditions and contents of the educational programmes, as well as teacher training. In most cases, schools have signed a contract of association with the state, allowing them substantial support for teachers' salaries and teacher training. Finally, there are private schools that have not signed a contract with the state. At these schools, the state exerts minimum control (hygiene, health, moral) and their pupils sit the national exams as free candidates. In the private sector, families must pay school fees that vary from school to school. Such schools must adhere to the timetables applied to public education.

bilingual education forms

Bilingual education is available in both public and private schools. In a later section, more details will be given about the teaching methods. In this section, we focus on the *Ikastolas* schools because the organisation of the teaching process is quite special. The schools are immersion schools concerned with the full development of the pupils' bilingual skills by the time they leave school.

The *Seaska* association (which means literally "cradle") was set up in Iparralde as an initiative of parents and teachers who wished to revive the Basque language through immersion education. Analogous initiatives were also taking place in the Hegoalde (Southern Basque country). In 1969 the association launched its first Basque medium school. Nowadays these schools, called *ikastolas*, can be found all over Iparralde. The number of *ikastolas* is still growing. The pedagogical reasons for choosing immersion teaching are that children must be able

to express themselves in Basque and to receive instruction through that language. A necessary condition for this teaching is that both school activities and out of school activities are carried out using Basque. Therefore the Seaska association exerts itself to encourage language development in a Basque surrounding. The Seaska association had to wait until 1982 before receiving funding from the state, when an agreement with the *Education Nationale* was concluded. According to this agreement the Ministry of Education takes responsibility for paying teachers' salaries and for providing their training, and it also establishes the conditions and the content of teaching. The agreement has to be renewed annually. Although formally *ikas-tolas* remain private schools, they are gradually moving towards public education and also receive funding from local authorities such as the *département* and the towns or villages where such schools are set up. Currently some 70% of funding is provided by regional or state authorities. Parents have to contribute financially even though the schools are linked to the public education system through a contract with the government. A lack of sufficient funding means that Seaska is constantly looking for further financial assistance.

administration

There are four administrative levels in France: state, region, *département*, and local community. At state level, the Ministry of National Education has almost total control over educational matters, such as defining educational guidelines and curricula, the approval of diplomas, and the recruitment, training, and administration of staff. The state also issues regulations on questions of management and supervision with which the majority of private schools are required to comply as well. Through the decentralisation laws of 1982 and 1983, the so-called Savary regulations, the French tradition of centralisation changed and the role of the regions, *départements*, and municipalities increased a little. The regions are responsible for building and maintaining the premises of upper secondary schools (*lycées*) and institutes for vocational training. *Départements* have the same responsibility for schools for lower secondary education (*collèges*), and local communities or town councils for nursery

and primary schools. This does not involve any activities concerning the content of the education, which remains with the state.

inspection

The supervision and inspection of the education system is carried out by general inspectors of national education and by general inspectors of administration. The former, for example, visit classrooms and mark teachers on their classroom performance. The latter are more concerned with issues such as the physical organisation and the operation of the schools. They also provide advice and make proposals to the Minister of National Education. Under the authority of the *recteur* of an *académie*, regional and district pedagogical inspectors are charged with evaluating and marking teachers at secondary schools and primary schools, respectively. Since 1982, assistant deputies for regional languages and cultures have been appointed to *académie* inspectors. In 1996, the Ministry of National Education appointed a general inspector for regional languages and cultures to each *académie* for the first time ever. Since 1994 the *académie* of Bordeaux has employed a full-time counsellor for regional languages and cultures to help the inspector of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques *département*. The counsellor has competence in Occitan, and his deputy assists in specific Basque affairs.

**support
structure**

The academic inspection and several advisory bodies in the field of education (the Departmental Centre of Pedagogic documentation [CDDP], the University institute of teacher training [IUFM], the Superior institute for languages of the French republic [ISLRF]) together form the support structure for Basque education.

On July 9th, 2004 the public office of the Basque language (office public de la langue Basque [OPLB] / Euskararen erakunde publikoa) was established in a mutual agreement between the state (represented by the *préfet* and the *recteur d'académie de Bordeaux*), the Aquitaine Region, the department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, the Intercommunal Syndicat of support of Basque

Culture, and the elected representative of the Basque Country. It is important to highlight that this is the first public office in France responsible for promoting a regional language and culture. The principal mission of the OPLB is the conception, definition, and implementation of a public, linguistic policy in support of the Basque language and its focus is on bilingual education.

Besides the official framework, there are voluntary associations, promoting the teaching of regional languages. The Seaska association has been mentioned earlier. *Ikas-bi* (which means: learning two) brings together parents of children in public education who receive bilingual education. The aims of *Ikas-bi* include the creation of positive awareness among parents about the Basque language and the setting up of bilingual sections in public education. *Ikas-bi* works actively towards the realization of these aims and has frequent contact with other associations in several language communities throughout France and abroad. There is also an organization that links parents of children in bilingual sections of confessional schools, called *Euskal Haziak*, which works along the same lines.

The Basque Cultural Institute in Ustaritze is set up to promote the Basque language through the publication of literary works, theatre, youth magazines etc. but has no primary responsibility over educational matters.

The organization *Ikas* unites the teachers of Basque and aims at creating good conditions for the teaching of Basque by organizing monthly meetings in a teacher training college in Eskoriatze (in the Basque Autonomous Community). The meetings promote contacts between Basque teachers of the two communities and facilitate exchanges of teaching methods. *Ikas* has set up a centre for educational information in Ustaritz where teachers from the Iparralde may consult teaching materi-

als, supplied, among others, by the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community. It is also intended that Ikas should publish learning materials. Ikas has four areas of activity:

1. Parents association which collects different documents. First of all, Ikas is a resource centre of documentation in Euskera: the collection comprises more than 16,000 books, video cassettes, magazines, CDs, CD-ROMs, and DVDs. Most of them are dedicated to teachers. The database is complementary to the CDDP of Bayonne, which is accessible online.
2. Edition of Euskaraz schooling manual. There is a department of creation and translation. They edit collections of manuals in maths, history and geography, science and technology. These manuals are produced for teaching in Basque for private and public schools and ikastolas. Editing decisions are made by a commission composed of representatives of teachers and pedagogues, the director of the CRDP (regional centre of pedagogical documentation) of Aquitaine, and the inspection team of the National Education.
3. Children's magazine called "Nanai" for children from five years old. It is a translation and an adaptation into Basque of the monthly French magazine "Toboggan"
4. "Azkarateka Egonaldiak Euzkaraz" activity. It is a school trip in Ascaret organised during the school holiday that provides children with an opportunity to practice the Basque language in a Basque environment (cf. p. 20).

2 Pre-school education

- target group** The public education department (*Education Nationale*) finances schooling for two to six-year-old children, either in *classes enfantines* within the primary school, or in separate nursery schools, *écoles maternelles*. Pre-primary schooling is optional in France, although 99% of children aged three attend such pre-primary schools. It is important to note that most pre-primary schools are combined with the primary schools to offer primary education.
- structure** The schools are divided into three sections: lower, middle, and upper, according to the pupils' age and level of development. The lower and middle sections form the first learning cycle, while the upper section, together with the first two years of primary school, forms the basic learning cycle.
- legislation** The framework of the Fillon law on education (*Loi d'Orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école Fillon*) of April 23, 2005, states that every child at the age of three should be admitted to a nursery school near to his/her home, although this is not an obligation. In rural areas there are peripatetic teachers to cater for a minimum number of pupils. There are 26 teaching hours per week. As laid down by law, teachers at pre-primary level receive the same training as teachers in primary schools. This law allows regional languages and cultures to be taught for one to three hours per week, if the teacher wishes to volunteer and, of course, is able to do so.
- language use** The language used depends on the institution. At most play-groups, nursery schools, and infant classes in state schools, French is the medium of instruction. In nearly all pre-school provisions in Pyrénées-Atlantiques French is the medium of instruction. About one third of the pre-schools make use of the legal option of spending one to three hours a week on regional languages and cultures. In activities outside of school, Basque is used to a lesser extent. There are bilingual classes in both the private and public education system.

Ikastola pre-primary schools have appeared using the method of linguistic immersion since 1969. In these pre-primary schools (*ama eskola*) all activities are carried out in Basque. The pre-reading activities are carried out in French, those used to prepare for mathematics in Basque.

A less demanding pace for Basque is in bilingual public and catholic schools where teaching is carried out half of the time in French and half of the time in Basque, depending upon the subject.

Comparing the last ten years, there has been an increase in the number of pupils learning Basque. Currently, 64.5% of the pre-primary sections in Iparralde are conducted exclusively in French compared to 80% ten years ago, indicating an increase in the use of Basque.

**teaching
material**

Instruction material in Basque is prepared mainly by the teachers, but some associations or private organizations produce and distribute such materials, e.g. an audio-visual method. Teaching material for the *ikastolas* is being developed and purchased by Seaska itself, sometimes in collaboration with *ikastolas* in Hegoalde.

statistics

	initiation	bilingual	immersion
public pre-school	410	1,488	-
catholic school	54	697	-
Seaska	-	-	567
total	464 (5.10%)	2,185 (24.10%)	567 (6.30%)

Number of pupils in Basque language pre-school education in 2004-2005

Source: OPLB and Inspection d'académie des Pyrénées-Atlantiques (2005)

Out of 284 pre-primary and primary schools in the Basque Country (9,056 pupils in total)

- 55 public schools and 6 catholic schools use the initiation model: 21%;
- 66 public schools and 30 private schools use the bilingual model: 34% (10 of them have developed teaching totally in Basque during the first two primary years);
- 20 Seaska schools use the immersion model: 7%.

3 Primary education

- target group** Primary school (also called elementary school) is compulsory and free (in public schools) for every child in France from the age of six. Primary schooling lasts five years on average, until pupils are eleven years old. The length of schooling can be increased or decreased by one year depending on the knowledge gained by the child.
- structure** Since 1995, the programmes for pre-primary and primary schools have been integrated into the new primary school that consists of three learning cycles. The first two years make up the first learning cycle, followed by the basic learning cycle, which starts with the last year of pre-primary school and lasts up to the second grade of primary school. The last three years of primary school form the consolidation cycle. In the first of these learning cycles, stress is put on general development and discovery; in the second, the main focus is language acquisition, and in the third cycle various subjects are taught to prepare pupils for access to secondary school (*collège*).
- legislation** Primary education is governed by the framework law on education of 23 April 2005 that establishes its organisation and functioning. Primary school attendance is free of charge and allows pupils to make use of and develop their cognitive and sensitive skills in manual, physical, and artistic activities. The elementary school comprises five classes with 24-26 hours of teaching per week. National curricula only exist for compulsory subjects. As mentioned above, the law allows regional languages and culture to be taught from one to three hours per week, depending on the teacher.
- language use** As is the case in pre-primary education, most primary schools only use French. It is in primary schools that the majority of pupils learns Basque, based on different linguistic models. Categorisation according to language use corresponds globally to the models used in Hegoalde⁴, but the categories are less static. In most Basque schools, *ikastola* schools, Basque is present

almost everywhere, also in outdoor activities (cf. model D). There are also public and private schools that have bilingual streams (cf. model B). In some schools Basque is taught as a subject (similar to model A). As stated above, however, most schools only use French.

Basque as a subject

In Iparralde elementary schools are allowed to carry out the teaching of Basque. The *ikastolas* teach most Basque per week, up to the same level as French (3-9 hours). In bilingual schools the amount of Basque as a subject is at least one hour per week.

Since the seventies there have also been schools where Basque is offered only as a subject, for 3 hours per week. It should be noted that the aim of these schools is not to develop bilingualism in the children. As the teaching of Basque remains quite isolated with the language only taught as a subject, it only serves to provide an awareness of the language.

Basque as a medium of instruction

The *ikastola* primary schools mainly use Basque as a medium of instruction, and French is introduced at the age of 7 for three hours per week, steadily increasing to 9 hours at the end of primary education. It is the aim of *ikastola* schools to develop a balanced bilingualism at the end of primary education. At the *ikastolas* special attention is given to the geography and history of the Basque Country. Children can attend either French language *collèges* or the *ikastola collège* after finishing *ikastola* primary school.

Bilingual education is offered in Basque medium streams in public and catholic primary schools. In public bilingual streams Basque is used for 12 hours per week, which amounts to almost half of the teaching time: Basque is used for mathematics (6 hours/week), geography (1), sciences (2), physical education (1), the Basque language itself (1), and partly for arts (1). In bilingual streams classes are normally split: the pupils in the

French language sections remain with the same teacher, those in the bilingual section are taught by a Basque teacher. In bilingual streams at Catholic schools analogous teaching schemes are used, but the choice of the language of instruction for each subject is more dependent on the teacher.

An interesting phenomenon is the *stage intensif*, organized by both Ikas-bi and Euskal Haziak. During the summer children from the bilingual streams visit a centre in a completely Basque speaking village, in Azkarate/Ascarat or Arrangoitze/Arcangues to play games and do activities. Outdoor activities make the children aware of their cultural environment and the language closely fits in the setting with the village people who only speak Basque. The *stage intensif* also helps communication with peers participating from all over the Basque Country. Moreover, during the school year, whole classes are transferred into these centres and they follow a more traditional Basque immersion scheme during 3-5 days. The number of children accommodated in this way is some 800 per year in the centre of Ikas-bi.

**teaching
material**

Teaching material is developed by the individual associations, with the help of their teaching staff: Seaska has a long tradition, but the bilingual schools also develop material for several subjects (e.g. “Bat, bi, hiru” a mathematics course, developed by Ikas-bi). Ikas should be seen as an overall publisher that is responsible for making material available for all three categories of schools. The quantity of learning material from the Hegoalde is limited as the curricula are too different to import material without adaptation. Pedagogical magazines have a growing influence, such as “Xirrixta”, the monthly magazine in Basque for the age group of 4-8 years, first published in 1992 (as an adaptation of the French magazine *Toboggan*). It is funded and published by the Basque Cultural Institute.

statistics

	optional/ modern language	bilingual	immersion
public school	774	1,602	-
catholic school	82	799	-
Seaska	-	-	820
total	856 (5.6%)	2,401 (15.8%)	820 (5.4%)

Number of pupils in Basque language primary education in 2004-2005

Source: OPLB and Inspection d'académie des Pyrénées-Atlantiques (2005)

There are 15,170 pupils in primary school, 30% of whom receive Basque teaching.

There are 55 public schools and 6 private schools that use an optional model, about 21% of all schools in Iparralde. Furthermore, there are 66 public schools (29 in 1996) and about 30 private schools with bilingual sections, 34% of all schools. Finally, there are 20 Seaska run Basque primary schools, of the ikastola type (13 in 1996), 7% of all schools.

Comparing this with the figures from 1996 the number of pupils having Basque classes has increased significantly over the last ten years with a strong development of the bilingual model.

4 Secondary education

- target group** Secondary school is for children from 11 to 18 years old and admission is free in public schools. Secondary education is compulsory until the age of 16. The teaching is done by one teacher as in primary school, but each academic discipline is taught by a different teacher.
- structure** Secondary education is divided into two levels. The lower level (*collège*) has four grades for 12 to 15-year-olds, is compulsory for everyone, and gives access to either vocational education or to the upper level (*lycée*). In the last year of *collège* pupils can choose to specialise in either humanities or technology. The *lycées* (16 to 18 years) form the upper level of secondary education. There are three main streams for general education: literary, scientific, and economic. Other types include technical *lycées* (subdivided into several specialisations) and vocational *lycées* (to which agricultural *lycées* can be added). They all prepare pupils for the *baccalauréat* or for a technical certificate.
- legislation** With the introduction of the law of 11 July 1975, *collèges* were created allowing for education of a general nature within the compulsory system. The *collèges* have the status of local public institutions. Weekly teaching adds up to 22-28 hours. The *lycées* are non-compulsory secondary schools leading towards a *baccalauréat*, and they give admission to higher education. Weekly teaching time varies between 29.5 and 31.5 hours. An official measure has been taken allowing a regional language to be studied during the *baccalauréat*. The regulations for sitting the *baccalauréat* for a regional language are based on the Law Deixonne of 11 January 1951 and the Circular Bayrou of 7 April 1995.
- language use** **Basque as a subject**
With the new Law of orientation (*Loi Fillon*) there is a lack of clarity regarding the possibility to take a regional language as a second modern language in the project text for the *college* diploma (*brevet des collèges*) and whether it will still be pos-

sible to have Basque as a second or third language at the *baccalauréat*. Basque may be chosen as a second or third modern language or as an optional subject, but its weight in establishing the final grade will be reduced. Teaching time is generally at least three hours in *collège* and 2.5 hours in *lycée*.

It is interesting to observe the level of competence in Basque of those who pass the *baccalauréat* exams. This is considerably higher than the level of Occitan by pupils who follow Occitan lessons. The reason for this may be that students who attend the *ikastola* schools influence the Basque figures positively. Such schools do not exist at secondary level for Occitan.

Basque as a medium of instruction

There are three *ikastola collèges* in Cambo, Ciboure and Saint-Just-Ibarre and one *Ikastola Lycée* in Bayonne that use Basque as a vehicular language for various subjects (mathematics, sciences, history) according to a programme and schedule required by the *Education Nationale*. In bilingual streams at *collège* 15 hours are taught through French and 12 hours through Basque per week, with a different teacher for each language and with some important subjects taught in Basque (like history and geography). The quantity of teaching through Basque is roughly the same in catholic and public schools. Since 1997 it has also been possible to take the *baccalauréat* for history and geography in Basque.

teaching material

Information about the use and availability of teaching material in Basque in secondary education is not available.

statistics

	initiation / modern language		bilingual		immersion (Seaska)
	<i>collège</i>	<i>lycée</i>	<i>collège</i>	<i>lycée</i>	<i>collège</i>
public education	562	212	425	137	477
catholic education	516	110	374	29	176
total	1,400		965		653

Number of pupils in Basque language secondary education (2004-2005)

Source: OPLB and Inspection d'académie des Pyrénées-Atlantiques (2005)

collège

During the school year 2004-2005, 18.3% of all pupils in *collèges* took Basque classes.

In the public school sector, there are 17 *collèges* offering Basque lessons. Six percent of the pupils have bilingual lessons and 8% optional lessons. There is an important difference between the number of pupils at secondary schools and primary schools having lessons in and of Basque (respectively 15% and 25% considering the two pedagogical models). The OPLB explains this with three reasons: the effect of the regular augmentation of the bilingual teaching, the continuity between primary school and secondary school is not guaranteed, and some pupils do not choose to follow this curriculum in the *collège*.

In the catholic school sector, there are 19 *collèges*, 13 of which offer Basque lessons. 8 catholic schools offer bilingual teaching.

lycées

In the school year 2004-2005, 664 (9.1%) pupils took Basque classes at lycées. This figure is low in comparison with the *collège* (2,530 pupils) and the primary schools (4,077 pupils).

The division of the pupils across the different models is as follows:

- 322 (4.4%) in the optional model;
- 166 (2.3%) in the bilingual teaching model;
- 176 (2.4%) in immersion education in the Seaska secondary school.

5 Vocational education

- target group** Vocational education is offered to pupils after completion of the lower secondary school (*collège*), at age 15-16 as an alternative to academic education. Pupils can study for a professional certificate over a two-year period, preparing them to enter professional life. Alternatively, they can continue their studies to prepare for a vocational *baccalauréat*. The objective of this career path is to provide pupils with a professional qualification allowing quick employment in a professional career upon leaving the school system.
- structure** At secondary level, there are various vocational streams within the *lycée* leading to: a certificate of professional aptitude (C.A.P.: *Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*), a certificate of vocational studies (B.E.P.: *Brevet d'étude professionnelle*), or to a vocational *baccalauréat*. Education at this level includes a number of general subjects, half the teaching being dedicated to general subjects, the other half to professional skills. After the *baccalauréat*, a student can continue towards higher vocational and technological education in order to prepare within two years' time for the certificate of advanced technician. Preparation for this certificate can be done at an apprenticeship training centre with the cooperation of an employer who offers training on the job. Full responsibility for vocational education now lies with the regional authorities.
- legislation** A characteristic of the French education system is the responsibility of the Minister of National Education to make sure that every young person (from the age of 16) is offered vocational training before leaving the education system. In 1993, this resulted in a law introducing regional plans for the development of vocational training (Circular 93-154, 12 March 1993).
- language use** The teaching of a regional language is optional in the *Classes Préparatoires aux Grandes Ecoles* that prepare the access to Special State Institutes for Engineers or the Civil Service and to the Brevet of Higher Technological or Vocational Technicians.

teaching material Information about the use and availability of teaching material in Basque in vocational education is not available.

statistics

	public school	catholic school
optional	0	12
bilingual	0	11

Numbers of pupils in Basque language vocational education (2004-2005)

Source: OPLB and Inspection d'académie des Pyrénées-Atlantiques (2005)

In the school year 2004-2005, only 23 out of 3,274 students in vocational education took Basque classes: less than 1%.

6 Higher education

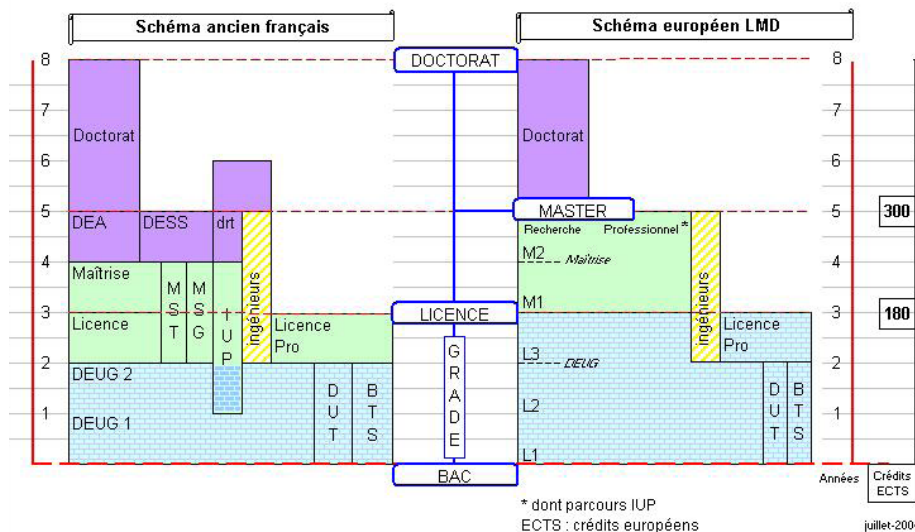
structure

Universities, University Institutes of Technology, and the Special State Higher Institutes (*Grandes Ecoles*) make up higher education in France. Applicants for all forms of higher education pay a basic fee, but they may also be eligible for financial assistance by the state.

The development of a European higher education system aims at permitting and facilitating the exchange of students, teachers and researchers across the European continent. A new structure for the higher education system, called the Licence-Master-Doctorat (LMD), is increasingly being implemented in France. The first cycle is the Licence, lasting three years; the second cycle is the Master, in a further two years, and the third cycle is the Doctorat (PhD) – in three years.

SCHEMA DES ETUDES SUPERIEURES EN FRANCE

Hors santé



The Inter-university department of Basque Studies (DIEB - *Département interuniversitaire d'étude Basque*) of Bayonne is the only place in France that offers students the Basque Studies *Licence*, a bachelor's degree with high specialisation in Basque language, literacy, and civilisation. The curriculum is organised jointly through the universities of *Pau* and *Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux 3*, where it is also possible to prepare a PhD in Basque Studies.

After obtaining the Basque Studies Licence students can choose to continue their studies with a Masters at the Research Centre *IKER-UMR 5478 (CNRS, UPPA, UB3)*, the only scientific centre completely specialised in Basque language and texts.

The primary objective of the *Licence* of Basque studies is to prepare future teachers, particularly for primary and secondary schools, but also for organisers and managers for whom this training is currently highly recommended in subjects such as press and audiovisual; translation and interpreting; art and spectacle; interregional and cross-border relations; heritage development; cultural development, etc.



legislation

There is no relevant information regarding legislation on higher education.

language use

The core of the curriculum is founded on language (general linguistics, grammar, Basque language lexicology, Basque text history) and literacy (classic and contemporary Basque texts, initiation to literacy criticism). There are also classes in Basque geography and history, sociology, French literacy and languages (English, Spanish, Occitan, and Latin).

Students entering the DIEB must have an excellent level of competency in the Basque language.

The *licence* provides the possibility to prepare the certificate of aptitude for teaching at secondary level and the entry exam for

teaching at the primary level (this specific exam tests proficiency in Basque and the capacity to teach French and Basque).

teacher training Since 1991, the training of teachers for both primary and secondary levels has been provided by university teacher training institutes (IUFM - *Institut universitaire de formation des maîtres*). These institutes are linked to the universities and prepare future teachers over a period of two years. Candidates must have completed three years of post-secondary education before being admitted to an IUFM. The only IUFM that provides Basque teacher training is in the territory of the *Académie* of Bordeaux.

In these institutes primary and secondary teachers are trained for both public and private schools. Future teachers of the Basque language are trained at the IUFM of Aquitaine.

primary training

In order to be appointed as a teacher at primary level, one has to pass several tests. Some of these tests are optional, such as the test on regional languages. A serious complaint is that there are no facilities to prepare for the exam for regional languages during teacher training. This specific training for primary school teachers should have been offered in IUFMs since 1997, according to the Bayrou memorandum, however, this has not yet been implemented.

In the case of Basque in Iparralde this is the only training carried out through the medium of Basque. Generally speaking, there is a great lack of teachers who are able to teach several subjects through the medium of Basque. In the meantime, teachers at bilingual sections and peripatetic teachers at primary schools normally hold a DEUG (Diploma of general university education) in Basque before entering the IUFM.

Seaska teachers, the federation of Basque schools, are trained in the superior institute of languages of the French Republic (ISLRF) in Montpellier. The Catalan schools, *Bressolas*; Breton

schools, *Diwan*; Occitan schools, *Calendretas*; Alsacien schools, *Zweitsprachigkeit*; and *Ikastolas* were grouped together to establish the ISLRF. This institute is a training centre for teachers that prepares them for the competitive recruitment procedure within the framework of the ministerial order of 21 September 1992. As is the case in the IUFM, students enter this institute after the *licence*, and the teacher training programme also lasts for a period of two years.

secondary training

Since 1993, secondary teachers of Basque have been appointed by the *Académie* of Bordeaux. The CAPES (certificate of aptitude for teaching at secondary level) for the subject of Basque can be prepared at IUFM Aquitaine, after a student has obtained a university degree in Basque. Aspiring teachers can sit for this exam after one year of attendance at the IUFM. Specifically those teaching history or geography at bilingual secondary schools through Basque should hold a *licence* and a CAPES in Basque alongside a qualification in their main subject.

The former catholic *Centre Pédagogique Régional* in Toulouse gave specific attention to regional languages, but now all teachers are trained at the IUFM. This also holds true for the Seaska teacher training, which is now being carried out by the IUFM.

in-service training

In-service training courses for primary school teachers are organised in the “*Département* Plan for the in-service training of Teachers”.

As to in-service training for secondary level teachers, there are training courses, mostly in summer for teachers at *collèges* and *lycées* organized by a committee, which depends upon the *Académie*. Every year a two-week course on regional languages is included. The contents of these training sessions are decided by the teachers themselves. Teachers who wish to teach in *ikastolas* also attend the IUFM.

statistics

registered	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
CRPE ext. normal public/catholic	9	7	1	4	2	1	21
CRPE ext. special			28	26	30	36	25
CRPE 2° int. spécial			8	9	7	10	30
CRPE ext. catholic (Toulouse)				1	4	3	
CRPE 2° int. public				1	0	0	
Concours 3° voie				2	1	0	
TOTAL	9	7	37	43	44	50	76
registered CAPES	10	10	11	11	6	7	5
registered BAC LV2/LV3			103	108	140	97	154
registered BAC facultatif test			65	67	89	75	77
TOTAL			168	175	229	172	231
Post							
CRPE ext. Spécial+liste comp.			8+1	7+1	7+2	7	10
CRPE 2° int. spécial			5	4	3	1	4
CRPE ext. Spécial Seaska			2	4	0	4	0
Capes (pub.+ catholic)	2	3	3	3	1+1	1+1	1+1
TOTAL	2	3	19	19	14	14	16

Table 1: Data on teachers in training at Primary Teacher level (CRPE) and Secondary Teacher Level (CAPES)

Source: J. Sarraillet, Chargé de Mission d'Inspection Pédagogique en Basque (2006)

In the special CRPE: students have a written examination and a compulsory oral examination.

In the normal CRPE: students have an optional oral examination.

2003 - 2004	first year	second year	third year	master
	22	10	12	20
total	64			

Table 2: Students in Basque studies at the university of Bayonne in 2003-2004

Source : EKE - Euskal Kultur Erakundea / Institut culturelle Basque (2004)

Many students from Iparralde, some 5,000, follow their university training outside the area.

7 Adult education

Adult education is mainly based on private initiatives, sometimes integrated in programmes of community based activities. The Basque association AEK (Alfabetatze Euskalduntze Koordinakundea - coordination of literacy training in Basque) is in charge of the process of creating a greater awareness of the Basque language in all seven Basque Provinces. The courses are open to native Basque speakers who wish to perfect their ability in communicating through their mother tongue, and also to non-Basque speaking persons who wish to learn the language of the area they live in.

Since 1981 evening classes, or *Gau Eskola*, have experienced a good deal of success. In 2004-2005, there were 25 permanent teachers and 60 voluntary teachers catering for 1,200 adults enrolled in all three levels in 20 *Gau Eskola*. There are evening courses and day time courses at the rate of 4 or 6 hours per week, between October and June (120/180 hours). In addition to the 20 *Gau Eskola* in the Basque country, there are also centres in Pau, Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Paris.

Moreover, specific courses have been organised for council workers from different localities and also for the civil servants of the *Conseil Général* (Departmental Council) since 2004. There are also special courses at the professional level and summer schools, which normally take up 14 days. In the area where frenchification has taken place more fiercely, the coastal area, AEK has encountered most favourable opinions towards the basquisation process, especially among persons aged 20-405. The most important aim of AEK is to create surroundings where Basque is a normal means of communication.

Teaching is organised in different levels, targeting three different groups of learners:

initiation: an initiation into Basque for people with no prior knowledge of the language.

perfection: for people who have spoken the language at home and have lost the practice.

alphabetisation: for people who want to perfect their language skills, improve their writing, read without difficulty, and have a good level of Basque.

As a recognised representative by different authorities in charge of the Basque country, AEK has conventions with the locality, the Department, the Region, the State or Basque government who provide funding to carry out its actions. A specific convention with the Southern Basque Country includes a work plan for Basque language training offering each beginner the possibility to have the first 90 hours of tuition for free.

In 1973, AEK organized the first Basque Summer University (*Udako Euskal Unibertsitatea*) in Bayonne, which contributed to more and more people attending the courses in Iparralde.

8 Educational research

According to a study carried out by the Public Office for the Basque Language (OPLB) the number of pupils having a bilingual education (hour parity or immersion) in pre-schools and primary schools of the Basque Country have more than doubled between 1993 and 2004 (+111%); from 2,907 to 6,149. This rise is the result of the increasing teaching capacity (from 168 teachers to 226 in eleven years). It is also due to the increase in the number of schools offering Basque language lessons (passing from 70 in 1993 to 112 in 2004).

Comparing the statistics between primary level and secondary level there is a problem in terms of the teaching capacity and the ability to provide a continuing curriculum from primary to secondary level. This is why the first step of the pluriannual programme, *Horizon 2012*, of the Public Office of the Basque language will focus on teaching capacity needs in secondary schools. In order to do this, the OPLB aims to at least double the capacity of bilingual classes. To achieve this the OPLB concludes that 10 of the 25 existing schools teaching Basque must increase their capacity, 8 new schools must provide Basque teaching, and 21 or 22 teaching posts must be created at a rate of 4-6 per year.

9 Prospects

The school institutions are not at all able to answer the demand for places, but they have tried to schedule a development plan depending on available funding.

As has been explained in the introduction, France has not ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This failure to acknowledge regional languages seriously harms the promotion and protection of regional languages in France. During the last decades, under pressure from associations and the population, the government has not refused the right to this education. Due to increasing pressure, the French government is obliged, in practice rather than by law, to develop a general schooling system for regional languages.

The development of a linguistic policy in favour of the Basque language in France is the result of a long and progressive process, following the acknowledgment of the decline of Basque and the need to address the situation. This realisation meant that for the first time the Basque language was officially placed at the centre of a territorial project (1996/1997) in the framework of the development of the Basque Country (project: *Pays Basque 2020*). This whole process has allowed the first structuring of a linguistic policy in the French Basque Country in the form of the Basque Country specific agreement (*Convention Spécifique Pays Basque*). The Public Office of the Basque Language (OPLB) was officially opened on 8 December 2004 in Bayonne, in cooperation with the French State and the Regional Council.

The first phase of the multi-annual programme for 2005/2006 was a period of transition from the Specific Agreement / Public Contracting Authority (*Maîtrise d'ouvrage Publique: MOP*), which allowed the setting of objectives as the basis of linguistic policy. As a priority the OPLB is focusing on the implementation of an agreement with the National Education on assessing the current educational situation and defining a multi-annual

programme for increasing teaching supply aimed at guiding action and budget choices from 2007.

The recognition, by the state, of the Basque language as a linguistic reality of the Basque territory in the Pyrénées-Atlantique in terms of bilingual education is an important step in the recognition of regional languages in France. However, it is important to focus on the new Law of Orientation (Loi Fillon) that will actually reduce the possibilities for regional language teaching. This will have a negative effect on the non-bilingual teaching models by marginalising them in the curriculum.

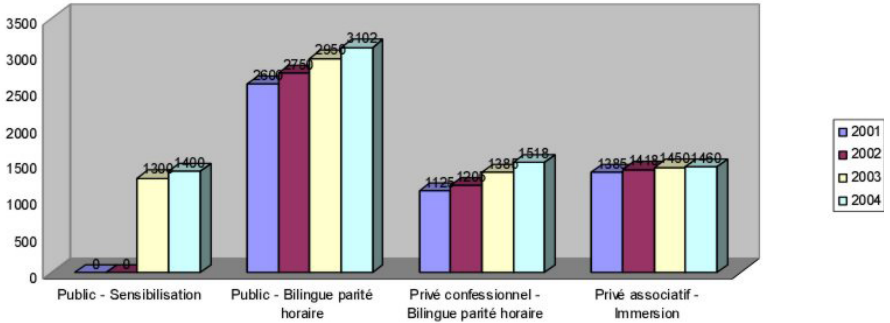
Although it will still be possible to learn a regional language it will no longer be possible to have it as a modern language in the third cycle of primary school. In the secondary school it will not be possible for the *baccalauréat* to have a regional language as a facultative option nor for it to be evaluated like another language. Concerning the *Concours* to be a teacher in primary school it will no longer be possible to choose a regional language as a “normal” option; it will now be facultative. There is also a significant decrease in the number of places for the Basque CAPES.

Regional languages will now be considered outside of the core knowledge base and will only be taught as an optional language, and responsibility for their promotion will return to the regions. Although the bilingual model will not be affected by the new Law of Orientation (Loi Fillon), the initiation model will suffer a set back causing a further devaluation of regional languages.

Although the new policies to promote the Basque language in France, through OPLB, are positive for future development, the effects of the new law of orientation are worrying as they could further devalue regional languages in the French education system.

10 Summary statistics⁶

Number of pupils in Basque language education in primary school from 2001-2004



Number of pupils in Basque bilingual and immersive education in 2004

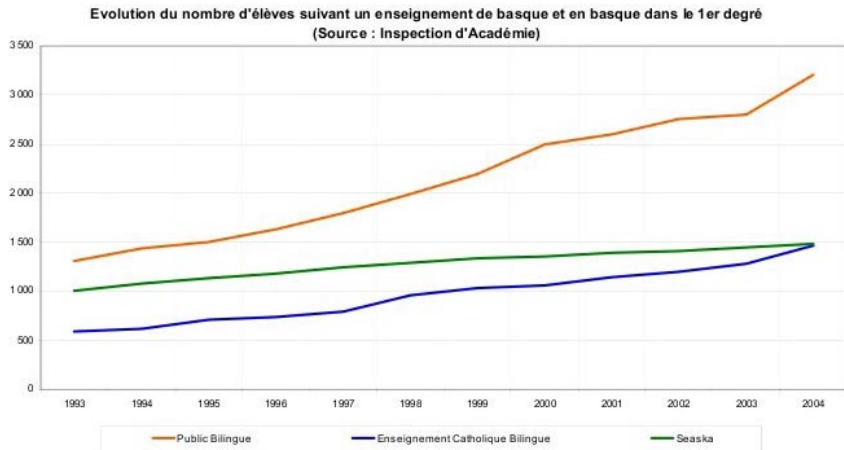


	total number of pupils	public	catholic	Seaska
pre-primary	2,752	1,488	697	567
primary	3,221	1,602	799	820
total 1st level	5,973	3,090	1,496	1,387
lower secondary school (collège)	1,276	425	374	477
higher secondary school (lycée général & technologique)	342	137	29	176
vocational school (lycée professionnel)	11	0	11	0
total 1st and 2nd level	7,602	3,652	1,910	2,040

Number of pupils in Basque initiation and optional education in 2004

	total number of pupils	public	catholic	Seaska
pre-primary	464	410	54	
primary	856	774	82	
total 1st level	1,320	1,184	136	
lower secondary school (collège)	1,078	562	516	
higher secondary school (lycée général & technologique)	322	212	110	
vocational school (lycée professionnel)	12	0	12	
total 1st and 2nd level	2,732	1,958	774	

Numbers of pupils in Basque language (pre-)primary education from 1993 to 2004



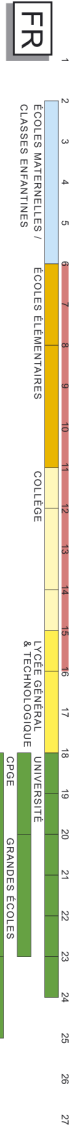
Development of teaching of / in Basque from 1993 to 2004

	PUBLIC bilingual			CATHOLIC bilingual			SEASKA immersion		
	<i>posts</i>	<i>schools</i>	<i>pupils⁷</i>	<i>posts</i>	<i>schools</i>	<i>pupils⁷</i>	<i>posts</i>	<i>schools</i>	<i>pupils⁷</i>
1993	44.0	31	1,309	25.0	22	593	69.0	17	1,005
1994	47.5	34	1,440	23.5	22	613	72.0	17	1,079
1995	50.5	36	1,500	23.5	24	712	77.0	17	1,129
1996	53.5	38	1,632	24.5	24	734	79.0	17	1,183
1997	56.5	41	1,792	26.0	21	793	80.5	17	1,246
1998	60.5	44	1,985	28.0	25	962	82.5	17	1,292
1999	65.5	50	2,196	29.0	25	1,033	84.0	17	1,333
2000	73.5	53	2,500	31.0	24	1,062	87.5	18	1,355
2001	76.5	54	2,600	33.5	27	1,146	91.0	18	1,393
2002	84.0	59	2,750	38.0	28	1,200	92.0	18	1,413
2003	88.0	61	2,800	40.5	30	1,283	92.0	19	1,450
2004	91.0	64	3,205	42.0	30	1,464	93.0	18	1,480

Endnotes

- 1 See for historical development of the theories around the Basque language: Intxausti, p. 136 ff.
- 2 For figures about speakers, which refer to first language speakers and bilinguals, see Siadeco (1989).
- 3 Loi n°2005-380 of 23 April 2005: Article L121-1; Article L312-10 and Article L312-11 in the 'journal officiel' of 24 April 2005.
- 4 The classification of models as to the position of Basque in Hegoalde is: X (no Basque at all), A (only the subject of Basque through Basque), B (half the teaching time through Basque), and D (every subject, except Spanish respectively French, through Basque).
- 5 See: Siadeco (1989).
- 6 All statistics have been taken from the Academic Inspection of Pyrénées-Atlantiques and from the Public Office of the Basque Language (OPLB) (2004).
- 7 Including pupils from early nursery school.

Education system in France



- Pre-primary education – ISCED 0
(for which the Ministry of Education is not responsible)
- Primary – ISCED 1
- Lower secondary general – ISCED 2
(including pre-vocational)
- Upper secondary general – ISCED 3
- Post-secondary non-tertiary – ISCED 4
- Tertiary education – ISCED 5A
- Allocation to the ISCED levels: ■ ISCED 0 ■ ISCED 1 ■ ISCED 2 ■ ISCED 3 ■ ISCED 4 ■ ISCED 5B
- Compulsory full-time education
- Part-time or combined school and workplace courses
- Compulsory work experience + its duration
- Pre-primary – ISCED 0
(for which the Ministry of Education is responsible)
- Single structure – ISCED 1 + ISCED 2
(no institutional distinction between ISCED 1 and 2)
- Lower secondary vocational – ISCED 2
- Upper secondary vocational – ISCED 3
- Tertiary education – ISCED 5B
- ISCED 1 ■ ISCED 2
- Compulsory part-time education
- Additional year
- Study abroad

Source: Eurydice.

References and further reading

regulations

Deixonne Law (51-46 of 11.1.51)

Allows optional courses in regional languages for one hour per week at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, depending upon the inclination of teachers and parents.

Haby Law (75-620 of 11.7.1975)

Article 12 says the teaching of regional or minority languages may take place at school.

Circular Savary (76-123 of 29-3-76).

Circular allowing the employment of pedagogic advisers for regional or minority language teaching. Dating back to 1982 (circular 82-261), the Savary circular confirms a state commitment to the teaching of regional languages, but on a voluntary basis. In this circular, setting up bilingual classes is made possible with a minimum of 12-15 children in rural areas and 20 in an urban setting.

Decision (“Arrêté”) of April 15, 1988

“Programme du Baccalauréat”

Loi Toubon (Law 94-665)

article 21

Circular Bayrou 95.086 (7/4/1995)

Determines the regulations that make regional language teaching official.

Articles L312-10 and L312-11 of the Educational Code

BO special (special Official Bulletin) of July 13, 2000

Circular 2001-166

“development of regional language teaching in primary schools, collèges and lycées”

BO of September 13, 2001

Circular 2001-167

Determines the organisation of bilingual education.

“modalities for the implementation of bilingual teaching with parity timetables”

BO of September 13, 2001

Decree 2001-733 of July 31, 2001

“creation of an academic council for regional languages and cultures”

BO of September 13, 2001

Decision of January 3, 2002

Creation of the special “*concours*” for the recruitment of primary teachers in regional languages.

Circular 2002-104

“recruitment and training of primary and secondary teachers in regional languages”

BO special of May 9, 2002

Decision of April 19, 2002

nomination of the “*academies*” in which an academic council for regional languages is created

BO *special* of May 9, 2002

Loi Fillon

Law n°2005-380 of 23rd April 2005, orientation and programme for the future of schools (*d'orientation et de programme pour l'avenir de l'école*)

Decision of May 12, 2003

relative bilingual education in regional languages with parity timetable in primary and secondary schools in regional language sections

J.O. n°120 of May 24, 2003, p. 8900

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Decision of May 10, 2005

Organisational rule for *concours* [...] regional language and culture are optional subjects.

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Other websites on minority languages

- Mercator** **www.mercator-central.org**
General site of the Mercator-project. It will lead you to the three specialised centres:
- Mercator Research Centre** **www.mercator-research.eu**
Homepage of the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. The website contains the series of Regional dossiers, a database with organisations, a bibliography, information on current activities, and many links to relevant websites.
- Mercator-Media** **www.aber.ac.uk/~merwww/**
Homepage of Mercator-Media. It provides information on media and minority languages in the EU.
- Mercator-Legislation** **www.ciemn.org/mercator**
Homepage of Mercator-Legislation. It provides information on minority languages and legislation in the EU.
- European Commission** **http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages/langmin/langmin_en.html**
On the website of the European Commission information is given on the EU's support for regional or minority languages.
- Council of Europe** **<http://conventions.coe.int>**
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.
- Eurydice** **www.eurydice.org**
Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The sites provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

EBLUL

www.eblul.org

Homepage of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. This site provides general information on lesser used languages as well as on projects, publications, and events.

EuroLang

www.eurolang.net

EuroLang provides coverage of the concerns felt in the minority language regions in the European Union. EuroLang is EBLUL's news service.

What can the Mercator Research Centre offer you?

Mission & goals The Mercator Research Centre addresses the growing interest in multilingualism and the increasing need of language communities to exchange experiences and to cooperate in a European context. It is based in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the capital of Fryslân – a bilingual province of the Netherlands – and hosted at the Fryske Akademy (Frisian Academy). The Mercator Research Centre focuses on research, policy, and practice in the field of multilingualism and language learning. The centre aims to be an independent and recognised organisation for researchers, policymakers, and professionals in education. The centre endeavours to favour linguistic diversity within Europe. The starting point lies in the field of regional and minority languages. Yet, immigrant languages and smaller state languages are also a topic of study. The centre's main focus is the creation, circulation, and application of knowledge in the field of language learning at school, at home, and through cultural participation.

Partners During the twenty years of its existence, Mercator Education has cooperated with two partners in a network structure: Mercator Media hosted at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth and Mercator Legislation hosted at the Ciemen Foundation in Barcelona. The Mercator Research Centre expands its network in close cooperation with a number of partner organisations working in the same field. This cooperation includes partners in Fryslân, as well as partners in the Netherlands and in Europe. The provincial government of Fryslân is the main funding body of the Mercator Research Centre. Projects and activities are funded by the EU as well as by the authorities of other regions in Europe with an active policy to support their regional or minority language and its culture.

Research

The Mercator Research Centre develops a research programme on the basis of the data collections available. Research activities focus on various aspects of bilingual and trilingual education, such as interaction in multilingual classrooms, language proficiency in different languages, and teachers' qualifications for the multilingual classroom. Whenever possible, research will be carried out in a comparative European perspective. A good example of this approach is the study 'The Development of Minimum Standards on Language Education in Regional and Minority Languages' (2007). Research results are disseminated through publications and conferences in collaboration with European partners.

Conferences

The Mercator Research Centre organises conferences and seminars on a regular basis. Important themes for the conferences are: measurement & good practice, educational models, development of minimum standards, teacher training, and the application of the Common European Framework of Reference. The main target groups for the Mercator Research Centre are professionals, researchers, and policymakers from all member states of the Council of Europe and beyond.

Q&A

Through the Question and Answer Service available on our website (www.mercator-research.eu) we can inform you about any subject related to education in minority or regional languages in Europe.

Available in this series:

Asturian; the Asturian language in education in Spain
Basque; the Basque language in education in France (2nd ed.)
Basque; the Basque language in education in Spain (2nd ed.)
Breton; the Breton language in education in France (2nd ed.)
Catalan; the Catalan language in education in France
Catalan; the Catalan language in education in Spain
Cornish; the Cornish language in education in the UK
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