Multilingualism
A Governmental Perspective

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Overview

The Challenge of Public Policies – Theory versus Practice

- The Swiss Situation
- The Swiss Government Language Policy
- Situation in the Swiss Public Administration
- The Revised Regulation – 1 October 2014
- Overview of Aims of 2014 Revision
- Framework for Implementation
- Challenges
- Conclusions

The Needs of Public Policies – Aiming for Good Practice
The Swiss Situation

- Swiss multilingualism is characterized by
  - 17 German speaking Cantons, 4 French speaking Cantons, 1 Italian speaking Canton, 3 bilingual G-F Cantons, 1 trilingual R-G-I Canton

- This situation is the result of
  - a historical process
  - a willingness of 26 Cantons to live together and not through unification

- Swiss identity comes from coexistence and the cohabitation of different languages, cultures and religions
The Five Pillars of Swiss Language Policy

• **Develop** institutional plurilingualism, especially through:
  • translations of official documents
  • procurement policy

• **Promote** official languages (G/F/I) in the public administration

• **Encourage** comprehension and exchange between language communities

• **Support** the bilingual cantons financially

• **Protect and promote** the Italian and Romansh languages and cultures in the cantons of TI and GR
The Swiss Public Administration should be:

- a microcosm of Switzerland
- a mediator between different parties
- active in developing «Willensnation»
Target Values (Art. 7, Regulation)

The representation of the linguistic communities should aim at the following ranges:

- German: 68.5 % - 70.5 %
- French: 21.5 % - 23.5 %
- Italian: 6.5 % - 8.5 %
- Romansh: 0.5 % - 1.0 %

The ranges are based on 2010 Swiss Population Census.
They apply to: the Federal Administration, Departments, Federal Offices, and their top managers.
### Distribution of civil servants (cs) by language, 2008-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of cs</td>
<td>34,293</td>
<td>34,559</td>
<td>35,259</td>
<td>35,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romansh</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Languages usually spoken at work in Switzerland

Languages usually spoken at work, 2013

In number of speakers

- Swiss-german
- German
- French
- English
- Italian

Employed persons, persons interviewed could indicate more than one language.

Source: FSO – Structural survey (SS) © FSO, Neuchâtel 2015
Monolingual plurilingualism?
The Inter-comprehension Strategy (Art. 8, Regulation)

The inter-comprehension strategy within the Swiss public administration allows and requires

• Freedom to choose a communication and work language from among the official ones
• Use of the first language
• Thinking and working in different official languages
• A very good receptive competence of the three official languages

➢ The public administration model is predominantly “multilingually receptive”
Inter-comprehension in reality

Legislative projects 2010-2012

- 76.4% in German
- 16.6% in French
- 7% multilingual F/G

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Why a revised Regulation for the Federal Administration?

• It was difficult to implement the previous regulation because there was resistance to change

• To reinforce multilingualism policy and national cohesion, the Swiss Parliament and the Swiss Government requested a revision of the Regulation

➤ Revised Regulation in force since 1 October 2014
# Overview of Aims of 2014 Revision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIMS</th>
<th>TARGETS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Represent linguistic communities</td>
<td>Reach target values (departments, offices, managers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Redefine recruitment strategy</td>
<td>Guarantee equal opportunities for speakers of all official languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reinforce language skills and training</td>
<td>Harmonize and improve recruitment procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Define new training strategy</td>
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Framework for Implementation

- The recent report *Promotion of Plurilingualism*
  - evaluates plurilingualism policy
  - presents developments of this policy from 2008 to 2014
  - provides the new framework for implementation
Policy & Approach

- Comprehensive and systemic approach
- Assessment of plurilingualism policy
- Transparency by publishing data
From words to actions ...

- Implementing the key points means we can
  - establish a clear set of priorities
  - transform recommendations into practical measures
  - develop a system where plurilingualism becomes a common thread linking implementation of various policies
The role of the Swiss Federal Delegate for Plurilingualism

Following the revision, the Delegate needs to be able to

• intervene in the key processes to promote multilingualism

• lead the implementation and follow-up of policy measures

• link the strategic and the technical levels

• connect the internal, national and international levels
Challenges of Implementation

• Motivate and convince – governing ‘by decree’ is not an option!

• Guarantee
  • the trade-off between ideals and reality
  • the coherence between internal and external strategy

• Turn priorities, aims and objectives into effective, efficient and concrete actions and results

• Build bridges between linguistic regions, external national organizations and the Swiss federal administration
Outlining the Benefits

The new linguistic requirements of the Swiss Confederation as an employer help us to:

• show the added value and the advantages of linguistic skills
• understand their economic value
• reinforce national cohesion
Working together

To reinforce the impact of our internal roles and processes we also need to be active at the international level by:

• sharing good practices

• creating a dedicated network of organisations discharging similar functions involving oversight and promotion (e.g. International Association of Language Commissioners)

• bringing together policy makers and researchers in a specific network (e.g. the recent initiative of Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages)