

# Structure and Reforms of Foreign Language Education in Europe

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## Questions

1. What is the landscape of foreign language learning in Europe?
2. Is there a correlation between foreign language learning and European identity?
3. What is the causal effect of foreign language learning on political attitudes?

## Background research

Scholars and the 1995 White Paper

- Established a correlation between foreign language learning and European identity and citizenship

The 2002 European Council meeting

- Advanced the “mother tongue + two” formula



In 2014, at EU level, **83.8%** of all students attending primary education **studied** at least **one foreign language** (16.5% increase compared to 2005).

Most reforms were introduced and implemented starting in the **1960s**. Italy, the country with the most dramatic change, underwent significant reforms lowering the age at which the first foreign language was introduced in **1974, 1984, 1994, and 2003**. Italy, France, and Poland introduced a mandatory second foreign language in secondary school.

To understand how foreign language learning affects identity and political behaviour, education structures and foreign language reforms had to be traced back to the first **cohort** who was impacted by these changes.



Literature Review

Cross-country study

Country reports

France

Poland

Italy

### FRANCE

Transition phase 2002 – 2005

The first foreign language becomes mandatory at the age of 8 (8-11) – 1994 cohort

Reform 2005-6 school year

The first foreign language becomes mandatory at the age of 7 in the 2007-8 SY – 2000 cohort

Second foreign language in secondary schools

Since 1998, French pupils learn two languages from the age of 13. At 14, optional version.

### ITALY

1985: institutionalisation of foreign language learning in primary school

2003: foreign language to be taught from 1<sup>st</sup> year (age 6) – 1997 cohort

2004: English is the only mandatory foreign language in primary school

1990: foreign language learning is mandatory (applied in the 1992-93 SY)

1991: foreign language to be taught from 3<sup>rd</sup> year (age 8) – 1985 cohort

Mandatory **second** foreign language is introduced at age 11 (1995 cohort)

### POLAND

First foreign language

- Introduced at age 10 in the 2002-3 SY (1992 cohort)
- Became mandatory at age 7 in the 2008-9 SY (2001 cohort)
- Introduced in pre-primary years since 2014

Second foreign language

- Mandatory or optional (age 16-19) since 2002-3 SY (1986 cohort)
- In the 2010-11 SY the second language became mandatory at age 13 (1997 cohort)

