

ZORANA SOKOLOVSKA: LES LANGUES EN DÉBAT DANS UNE EUROPE EN PROJET

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Antony **Hoyte-West**, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland,
antony.hoyte.west@gmail.com

Review

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Even for those who do not work directly in the field of languages, the Council of Europe and its language policies have had a significant and wide-ranging influence on the lives of millions of Europeans since the end of the Second World War. In her first monograph, *Les langues en débat dans une Europe en projet* [Language debates in the making of Europe], the sociolinguist Zorana Sokolovska, assistant professor at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, delves into the relevant supranational debates and discussions that have shaped the Council of Europe and its language policies between 1949 and 2008. In addition to using sociolinguistic approaches, Sokolovska also integrates insights from anthropology and discourse analysis to highlight the fundamental role that the Council of Europe has played in creating and promoting a common European identity through the prisms of language and plurilingualism. Separated into six chapters, together with an introduction and conclusion, the book is based on the author's doctoral thesis, which received the 2017 dissertation prize awarded by the European Parliamentary Association.

The opening chapter provides an overview of the theoretical aspects underpinning the work, which include an analysis of the links between languages, nations, and institutions through the lens of power and (post)nationalism, accompanied by a sociolinguistic panorama of the international institutions. In terms of discourse analysis and ideologies, the author indicates the relevant keywords utilised in the work, which are: *language*, *linguistic diversity*, and *plurilingualism*.

In chapter 2, the author explores the anthropology of the Council of Europe itself. Accordingly, she describes the events that preceded the organisation's foundation in the immediate post-war era, as well as necessary information about its legal status. The bipartite structure of the organisation – consisting of a Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, together with a Secretary General – is also

outlined, as are the Council of Europe's various specialised committees and commissions. This overview is supplemented by analysis of the Council of Europe's institutional archives, which the author uses to provide the foundation for the selected discursive events that are the object of the analysis – i.e., those fundamental debates central to the research focus of the work.

In addressing the role of languages as part of Europe's common heritage, the third chapter of the work presents the 1954 European Cultural Convention as a means of promoting cultural cooperation in the immediate post-war era. As such, the author draws attention to relevant debates which took place on institutional multilingualism within the Council of Europe itself, outlining the reasons which justified its choice of French-English bilingualism; this can be compared, with the broader official language policy adopted by the precursors of the modern European Union institutions. The chapter continues by presenting notions of a common European identity through language, before early – but ultimately unsuccessful – attempts to offer Esperanto as a neutral institutional language are also outlined.

The fourth chapter of the book presents and analyses the Council of Europe's relevant debates relating to language pedagogy. Here, the importance of language learning and the practical promotion of plurilingualism is highlighted, as well as what these factors represent for wider Europe. As a consequence, the author observes changes in how languages have been taught – including moves towards a learner-centred approach – as well as how European language policy has evolved to focus more prominently on linguistic diversity. As such, this has led to greater awareness that language policy does not merely deal with official and national languages, but also the full range of Europe's diverse linguistic heritage.

Indeed, the latter is the point of departure for the work's penultimate chapter, where regional and minority languages are the principal focus. With the fundamental role of the Council of Europe in the development of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages being well-known, the author provides insights into debates relating to the construction and legitimisation of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity in this regard, with particular attention paid to the relevant legal framework. Therefore, key perspectives on this important and historic initiative for the linguistic topography of modern Europe are provided.

In the sixth and final chapter of the book, the relevant Council of Europe debates underpinning the concept and development of two further major contributions are outlined: the Common European

Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has had an immense impact on the learning, teaching, and testing of languages across the globe, and also the European Day of Languages. With the latter now an annual event celebrated on 26 September, Sokolovska details how this motor for social cohesion through multilingualism came about, notably as a successor to the European Year of Languages (2001), as well as through the expansion of the Council of Europe to include many new member states after the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. The work concludes by summarising the complex relationship that Europe has with its languages, and how these debates are reflected at the institutional level, thus highlighting their importance in the pursuit of a European linguistic ideal.

To conclude, this innovative volume provides an in-depth analysis of a hitherto understudied area. The author reveals behind-the-scenes information about the debates, events, and perspectives relating to the key debates on plurilingualism which have shaped modern Europe. In a masterful way, the work draws together different scholarly domains, and thus is of interest not only for sociolinguists, but also for specialists in political science, history, and related disciplines. In summary, Zorana Sokolovska's *Les langues en débat dans une Europe en projet* is an important contribution to the literature that richly deserves to be translated into other languages that richly deserves to be translated into other languages.