

English in European higher education, an overview with particular reference to the Netherlands and Flanders

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The provision of higher education in English has become a normal situation on the European continent. That is the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the ACA's report *English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education* (Wächter & Maiworm 2008). The role of English in higher education is particularly pronounced in Northern European countries. Among them, the Netherlands has the largest percentage of programmes taught in English. The share of English-taught programmes is relatively low in the Mediterranean countries.

The study carried out by Wächter & Maiworm provides an overall picture of the situation in 27 European countries. Part of my contribution is devoted to a discussion of their results, conclusions and to methodological aspects of their study.

From the report by Wächter & Maiworm a broad picture can be gained with regard to the situation in individual countries and regions, like the Dutch-speaking part of the Low Countries. A more detailed description of the situation in Flanders and the Netherlands can be obtained from reports published in 2001 and 2007 on the authority of the Flanders-Netherlands Cultural Treaty Commission (CVN). These reports provide data on the use of English as a teaching language at the Dutch and Flemish universities.

My contribution focuses on a discussion of the data presented in the two CVN-studies. The results given in these reports are based on questionnaire-based research. The questionnaires were filled in by the rectors or by other members of the governing body of the university. Their answers provide information about their primary teaching language, the percentage of English-taught programmes, the adoption of a code of behaviour and the objectives for the future.

On the basis of our discussion, we will try to offer a picture of the evolution that has taken place between 2000 and 2007. Furthermore, some arguments for and against the promotion of English as the international language of science and higher education will be examined from the perspective of the available data.

References

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