

2023 ECSPM  
SYMPOSIUM

## THE SOCIAL ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

Developing the civil society's awareness  
and impacting policies on the role of  
multilingualism in education

22-24 March 2023



# *PANEL: The role of universities in bridging research on multilingualism*

## ***BILINGUALISM MATTERS – NewCitizens***

active since September 2013 at the Center of Excellence LINGUISTIC OBSERVATORY OF ITALIAN SPREAD AMONG FOREIGNERS AND IMMIGRANT LANGUAGES IN ITALY at the University for Foreigners of Siena

«Strong need to make the latest, research-based evidence on multilingualism and language learning available and accessible to families, communities, and professionals **in education**, health or policy» (BM website).

Italy a natively plurilingual country (De Mauro, 1975), but one in which a monolingual ideology dominates, particularly in schools.

The target of our BM are the new citizens and their languages, mainly in education



## Activities

Information to families, **teachers, educators, and administrators** on issues related to bilingualism.

«Our work aims to raise awareness of the positive effects of maintaining languages of origin, disseminate good practices to support bilingualism, and change attitudes towards the bilingual dimension present in many families and territories».

(Siena\_BM\_website)

## Projects



Erasmus + "TEAM: Teacher Education About Multilingualism"



**Teacher Training**  
**Operational proposals for plurilingual education in schools**  
**Research on plurilingual practices**



## Focus of my presentation

“how to create an environment where impact derived from linking research (such as that produced in the various BM centres) to societal issues is visible and effective?”.

universities are increasingly expected to perform a role in local development behaving as civic institutions (Kempton et al., 2021; Benneworth et al., 2017)



activities regarding their engagement with the outside society (Perkmann et al., 2013)

Knowledge-Based Economic Development

**quadruple helix model** - four component: **university**, industry (**a social enterprise**), **government** and the public, consisting of **civil society** (Carayann, Campbell 2009)

The framework aims to bridge the gaps between innovation (new ways of thinking) and civil society, and emphasizes a societal responsibility of universities, in addition to their role of educating and conducting research.



Also the humanities can be crucial in this regard (Etzkowitz et al., 2012)

The concept of *Engaged Humanities* is slowly emerging in foreign language education (e.g., Spanish studies in the US) associated with strategies to increase the relations and the engagement with the local communities, especially when this latter are composed by immigrants (e.g., Latinos communities in the US)



positive impact on the social wellbeing of immigrants' local communities and on local development in general (Abbott, 2018).



## quadruple helix framework

1. **university** : institutionalisation of the so-called 'third mission' of universities
2. **social enterprise**: activities of a BM branch at local level
3. **government**: political role of BM

**CRITIQUE MASS to produce IMPACT in civil society**



# 1. University and 'third mission'

## Weakness

this role, in addition to teaching and research, is not well recognised, especially in the process of universities' assessment

«Research assessment practices should induce a research culture that recognises collaboration, **openness**, and **engagement with society**, and that provides opportunities for multiple talents» (CoARA, 2022, p. 12)

«Openness corresponds to early knowledge and data sharing, as well as open collaboration including **societal engagement** where appropriate» (p. 9).

Value **diverse activities** (knowledge transfer activities, training and mentoring of researchers, **public engagement actions**, actions that contribute to a positive research culture, **engagement with key stakeholders** e.g. patients, professionals, political decision-makers) (p.20)



## 2. Social enterprise: the activities of BM branch at local level

Weakness: how a **critical mass of people** can be reached and informed of the various BM activities.

Proposal

**Create a strong network** among the various branches in a country

The case of Italy

Trento Siena Milano Napoli Bologna Urbino

Research on bilingualism with different approaches and targets (Education – Language acquisition – Bilingual brain Language disorders etc.)





### 3. Government: the political role of BM

There is a strong need to be heard at local, national and EU level

Eg. The case of Italy , where the tension between monolingualism - at the level of national norms and in the educational context - and multi-/plurilingualism is not resolved (or at most is accepted if the other language involved is English)

The current government is trying to include reference to the Italian language as an official language in Italy in the Constitution (which to date is not present, and for good reasons)

This decision will produce a negative impact on students with immigrant backgrounds (among others) and will reinforce monolingual policies in schools

BM should assume and exercise a stronger political role

**Create a strong network** with other associations who are working on this topic

