

Who uses foreign languages in Europe?



HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Results from Eurobarometer surveys

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WHO NEEDS LANGUAGES?

Micro and macro perspectives into language education

Research questions:

Who use foreign languages and which languages in Europe?

How socio-demographic factors are related to use of foreign languages?

Who needs foreign language skills?

Are foreign languages really used or just optional skills?

Is English pushing other foreign languages out?

Eurobarometers



Several times a year

1,000 respondents in every member-state and candidate country

Various topics, also languages (1976, 1987, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005)

- Knowledge of foreign languages
- Foreign languages useful to know
- Used foreign languages
- Foreign languages learned

Data used in this paper: Eurobarometer 64.3
(fieldwork November – December 2005)

My earlier research on this topic

Kielitaito Euroopan Unionissa:

Yksinomaan englantia vai monikielisyyttä?

Kielenoppija tänään - Language Learners of Today. AFinLa Yearbook 2006, 315–334.

Evoluo de lingvosocio en la Eŭropa Unio.

Al nur-angla aŭ plurlingva Eŭropo. *Language Problems and Language Planning* 31:3 (2007), 257-279.



INTERNACIA KONGRESA
UNIVERSITATO

61a sesio

Roterdamo, Nederlando
19 – 26 julio 2008

Redaktis: José Antonio Vergara

Universala Esperanto-Asocio

Publika opinio pri utilaj lingvoj en Eŭropa Unio

(Public opinion on useful languages in Europe)
Presentation in World Esperanto Congress
in 2008 (Rotterdam, Netherlands)
Forthcoming in English.

Limitations of the data

Covers only citizens of EU member-states (and candidate countries), at least 15 years old

Minorities, immigrants and remote areas underrepresented

Statistical confidence 1.9 – 3.1%

Based on respondent's own estimation: language skills, frequency of foreign language use

Definition of “a language”: Luxembourgish, Friulian, Provençal, Neapolitan, Sardinian, Low German, Galician, “Other regional language”

Results

Knows at least one foreign language (on level of conversation) 53%

To know foreign languages is very useful (57%) or fairly useful (28%)

To know foreign languages is not at all useful: 7%

Use a foreign language **daily** 21%

Use a foreign language **often** (but not daily) 13%

Use a foreign language only **occasionally** 20%

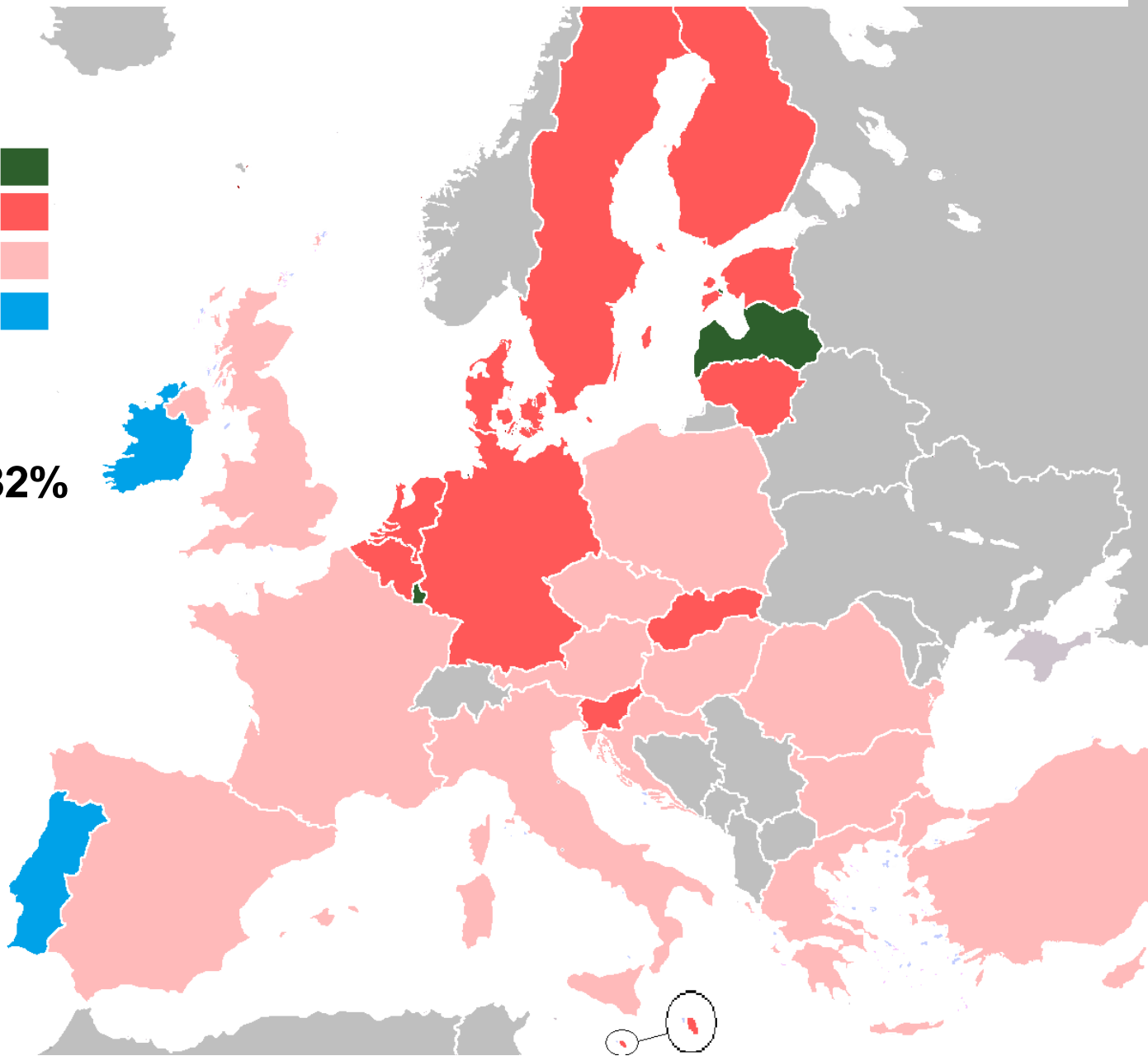
Never use a foreign language 46%

Use a foreign language daily

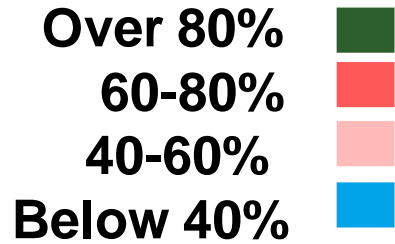


Luxembourg 82%
Latvia 61%
Estonia 50%
Denmark 49%
Malta 47%

Romania 12%
Greece 11%
UK 10%
Ireland 9%
Portugal 5%

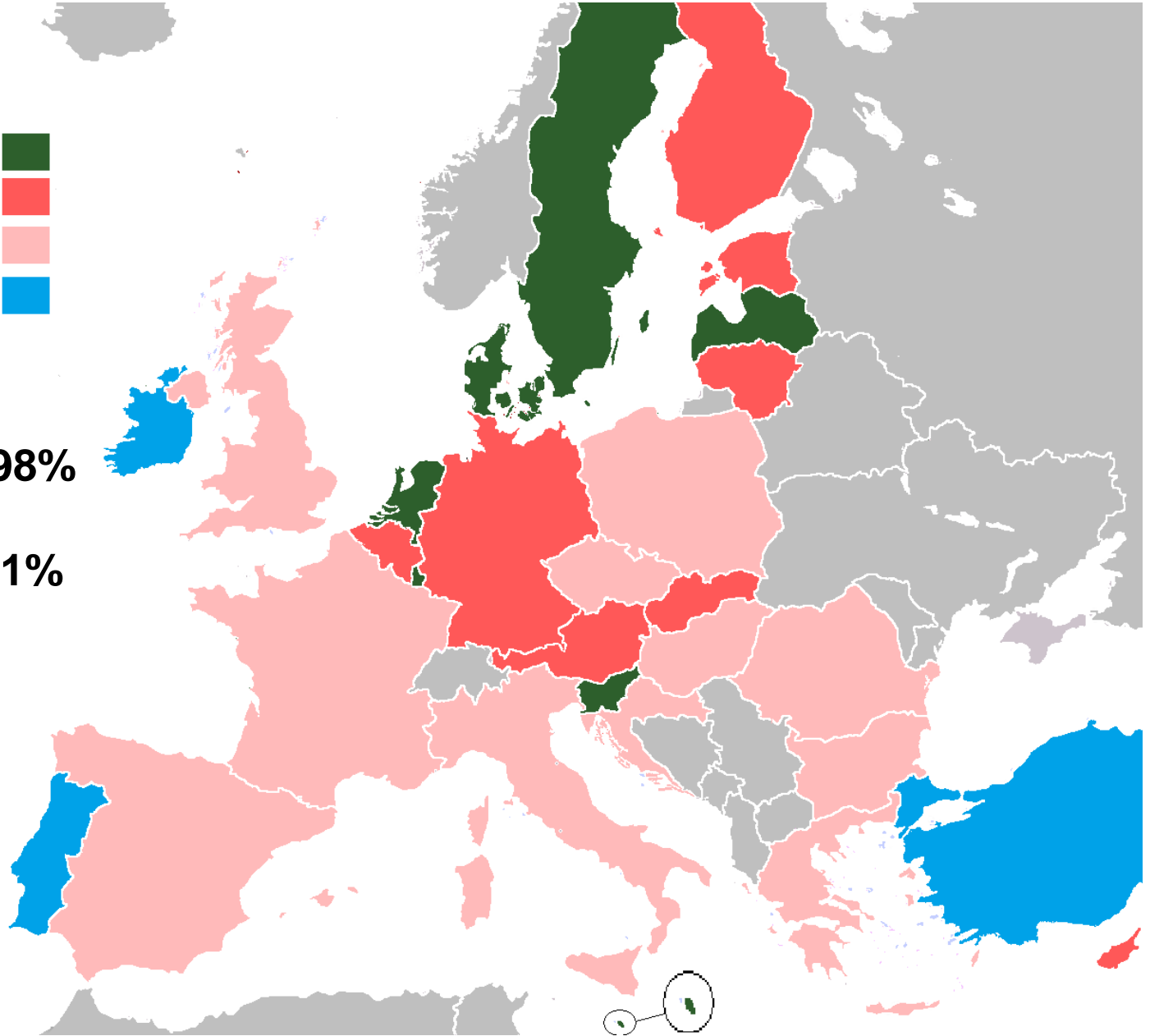


Use a foreign language at least occasionally



Luxembourg 98%
Malta 91%
Netherlands 91%
Sweden 91%

Romania 40%
Portugal 39%
Turkey 33%
Ireland 29%



Most often used foreign languages (%)

	Daily	Often	Occas.	Total
English	10.3	9.9	15.8	36.0
Deutsch	2.7	3.1	6.2	12.0
Français	1.5	2.7	7.7	11.9
Español	1.1	1.3	4.3	6.7
Русский	0.8	0.9	1.7	3.4
Italiano	0.3	0.7	2.1	3.1
Other	6.1	3.5	5.6	15.2

Türkçe 1.0%, العربية 0.9%, Nederlands 0.8%, Svenska 0.6%, Polski 0.6%,
 Čeština 0.5%, Català 0.5%, Slovenčina 0.5%,
 “Other regional language” 2.9%, “Other” 3.1%,

Regularly (daily or often) used foreign languages by mother language (%)

Mother l.	Eng.	Ger.	Fr.	Spa	Ital.	Rus	Other	Other, which?
English	---	2.3	4.8	2.2	1.5	0.1	5.1	Regional
German	33.4	---	4.9	1.9	1.4	2.8	4.1	Other
French	20.5	3.9	---	4.3	1.5	0.1	6.7	Dutch, Regional
Spanish	12.1	1.4	5.3	---	1.3	0.4	11.9	Catal., Galic. Regional
Italian	16.4	3.7	6.2	3.1	---	0	17.2	Regional
Polish	20.5	11.0	1.7	0.5	1.3	5.8	8.1	Regional, Other
Romanian	13.4	2.0	4.5	1.0	1.5	0.1	3.3	
Dutch	57.5	25.1	18.6	2.6	1.1	0	5.1	Regional
Turkish	6.8	4.6	0.5	0	0	0.3	6.6	Regional, Arab., Bulg.

Size of mother language and use of foreign languages

Size of mother lang.	Use daily	Use often but not daily	Use only occas.	Know, but not use	Not know, not use
Large	16%	12%	22%	6%	44%
Middle	21%	15%	20%	6%	38%
Small	53%	13%	16%	7%	11%

Mother language size:

Large = German, English, French, Italian, Turkish, Spanish, Polish

Middle-sized = Romanian, Dutch, Hungarian, Portuguese, Swedish, Czech, Greek
Bulgarian,

Small = all the others, less than 8 million native speakers in the European Union

Use of foreign languages by profession %

Prof.	Use daily	Use often but not daily	Use only occas.	Know, but not use	Not know, not use
Self-empl.	21	11	22	6	42
Managers	34	19	29	5	13
White-coll.	25	13	28	7	27
Manual w.	18	11	22	7	42
Students	37	24	22	6	11
Unempl.	19	11	19	8	44
Retired	12	8	18	8	54

Regularly (daily or often) used foreign languages by profession (%)

Profession	Eng.	Ger.	Fr.	Spa	Ital.	Rus	other	None
Self-employed	17.7	5.4	5.8	3.1	0.7	1.2	9.7	68.0
Managers	42.5	9.6	7.5	3.1	2.2	3.1	8.5	46.9
White-collar	26.9	8.2	5.1	1.9	1.3	1.3	9.0	61.7
Manual workers	14.7	5.1	3.0	1.7	1.3	2.3	8.2	71.3
Students	50.8	9.9	8.4	5.2	1.2	1.2	11.0	38.9
Unemployed	15.4	4.8	2.5	1.1	0.6	1.8	9.8	70.6
Retired	6.9	2.9	2.6	1.6	0.6	2.0	8.2	80.5

Regularly (daily or often) used foreign languages by age (%)

Age	Eng.	Ger.	Fr.	Spa	Ital.	Rus	Other	None
15-24	36.5	8.4	6.2	4.2	1.0	1.4	11.4	50.6
25-34	26.5	6.5	4.6	2.3	1.2	1.9	9.9	60.9
35-44	21.3	6.5	4.2	2.3	1.1	2.1	8.4	66.9
45-54	17.7	5.4	3.7	1.7	1.1	2.1	7.3	70.0
55-64	11.6	4.3	4.4	2.0	0.9	1.7	9.0	74.5
65-	5.8	2.9	2.4	1.7	0.8	1.1	8.3	81.4
Total	20.2	5.7	4.2	2.4	1.0	1.7	9.1	67.2

Is English pushing other foreign languages out?

Using daily or often	not other for. lang.	other foreign lang.
not english for. lang.	67.2%	12.7%
english for. lang.	12.7%	8.2%

Using daily or often (15-24 years old)	not other for. lang.	other foreign lang.
not english for. lang.	50.6%	13.7%
english for. lang.	20.9%	15.7%

Discussion

Selection of used foreign languages is quite plural

English as the “must” language:

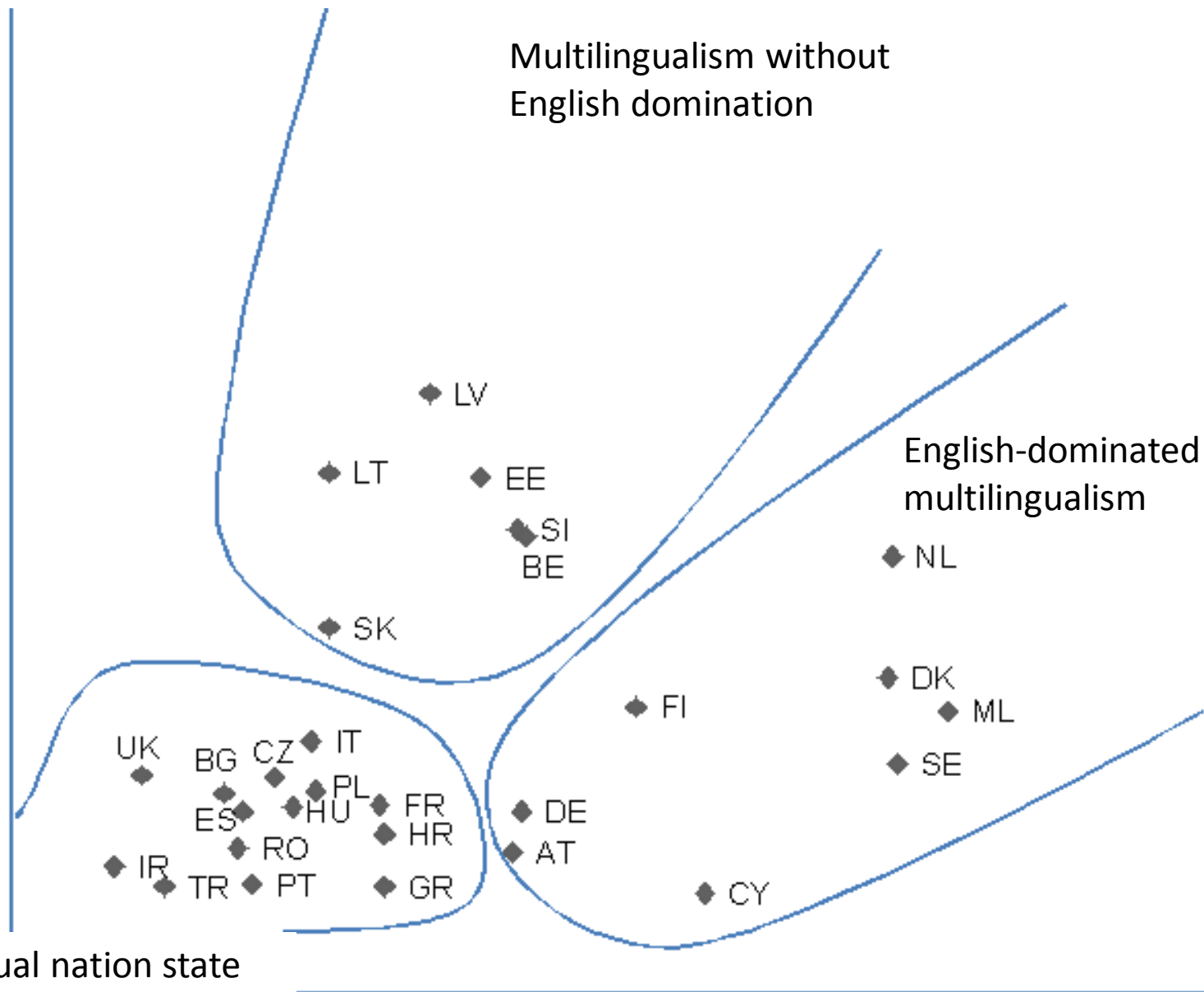
most often used, used also if only basic skills
but not gaining on behalf of other languages

Other languages are usually additional: used often
only, if very good skills; more often used occasionally

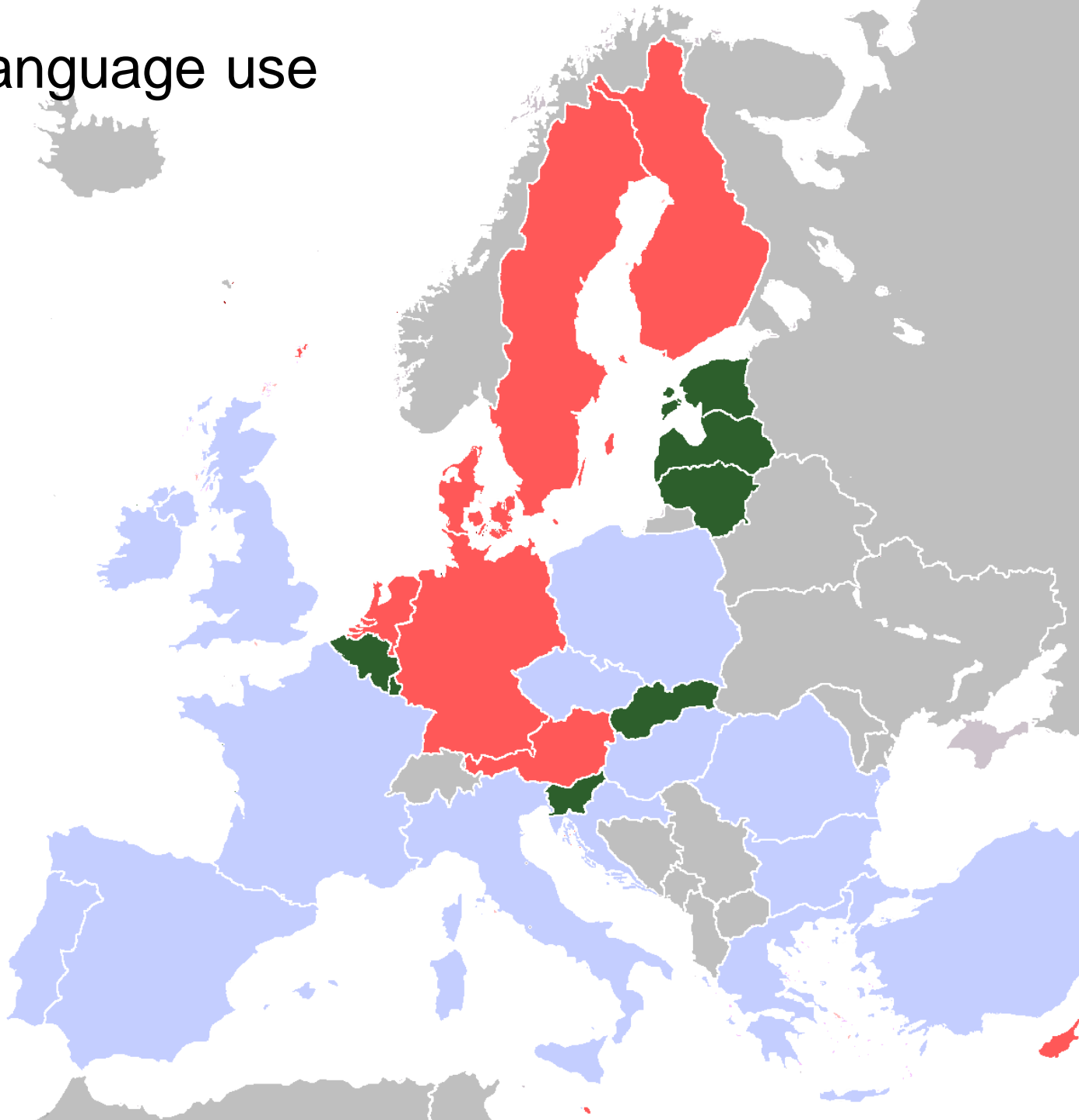
multilingualism for the elite, just English for others?

If the native language is small (less than 10 million
speakers), use of foreign languages is common and
regular

Three language use models



Three language use models



Language skills which are not used

If mother language is a large language: foreign language is often used only occasionally (or not known at all)

If spoken foreign language is Russian (50% not use) or Irish (37% not use)

People with older age or lower professional status use foreign languages less frequently if even they know them

One example:

Finnish mother language, knows Swedish, but does never use: 28% (in comparison: English 9%, German 30%, French 19%, Russian 14%, Spanish 20%)

Conclusion

Half of Europeans use foreign languages regularly or at least occasionally

English is the most often used language, but far from being the only one, and gaining mainly on behalf of no foreign language users

Northern and (partly) Central Europe are dominated by use of English; more plurality in Central Eastern Europe

Foreign language skills are used if they exist: not to use a foreign language if person knows a one is rather unusual

Socio-demographic differences in foreign language use appear mainly with the use of English

Kiitos huomiostanne

Dankon pro via atento

Thank you for your attention

Спасибо за внимание

Tack Gracias Danke Merci Tänan

ありがとうございます