

## **Mercator looks back on a successful seminar on Basque education**

### **Multilingual education in a European perspective**

**LJOUWERT/LEEWARDEN, November 12<sup>th</sup> - The Mercator Research Centre, part of the Fryske Akademy, organised a two-day European seminar on the developments in Basque education and the challenges of multilingual education in Ljouwert last week. Participants were researchers, policymakers, and education professionals from more than twenty different European countries and regions.**

The seminar did not only address multilingual education, but also extracurricular activities that may reinforce smaller languages. Apart from that, on Thursday November 8, the participants visited multilingual schools (English, Frisian, and Dutch) in order to share and exchange knowledge and experiences. This has led to many positive reactions and the first contacts for exchanges between the Basques and the Frisians have already been made.

The education system in the Basque Country is being reformed. The old system with either Basque schools with a little Spanish (model D) or Spanish schools with a little Basque (model A) is not sufficient anymore. Instead the Ministry of Education in the Basque Autonomous Region would like to switch to a model geared to the practice of each school in which three languages can flourish; the smaller language in particular: Basque, but also English and Spanish. The trilingual schools in Fryslân have the same aim, but operate in a different way.

The conference is part of the cooperation between the Mercator Research Centre and the Ministry of Education in the Basque Autonomous Region. The funds that the Mercator Research Centre will receive from the Basques in the coming years will among other things be used for a research project into the added value of multilingual education in the Basque Country and in Fryslân. This seminar is one of the four major activities through which the Mercator Research Centre takes stock of the possibilities and needs for intensification of multilingual education in Europe and Fryslân.

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**Note for the editor, not for publication:**

The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning has been an independent and recognised centre for policymakers, researchers, and educators in the field of multilingualism and language learning for twenty years. The Mercator Research Centre thus contributes to the social cohesion and social durability of multilingual regions in Europe.

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