

Defining Language Policy and Planning

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Prof. Fabri provided the definitions required to navigate the conference's theme. He viewed language through dual lenses: as a formal cognitive system (involving phonology, syntax, and semantics) and as a functional social tool (encoding culture, history, and identity). In the context of globalisation and Malta's rapid demographic shifts, he argued that a *laissez-faire* approach is insufficient; deliberate policy is required to protect the national language.

Fabri elaborated on the terminology of the field:

- **Language Policy:** This refers to the "what"—the official decisions, laws, and regulations that determine the legal status of languages and linguistic rights. It comprises linguistic practices, ideologies, and management actions.
- **Language Planning:** This refers to the "how"—the implementation of policy. It is categorised into four distinct types:
 1. **Status Planning:** Determining the legal role of a language (e.g., sustaining Maltese an official EU language).
 2. **Corpus Planning:** The internal development of the language, such as standardisation of orthography and the creation of new terminology for technology and science.
 3. **Acquisition Planning:** Managing how the language is taught and learned in schools and by adults.
 4. **Prestige Planning:** Enhancing the language's value and image, combating the "cultural cringe" where the native language is seen as inferior to a global language like English.

The Maltese Context

The National Council for the Maltese Language (*Il-Kunsill Nazzjonali tal-Ilsien Malti*), established by the 2005 Maltese Language Act, is the body responsible for this work. While it has succeeded in areas of orthographic standardisation (the spelling rules of 2008 and 2018) and administration guidelines, Fabri noted it has

not yet fulfilled its central mandate of creating a comprehensive national strategy. He attributes this to limited resources, a lack of full-time experts, and political interference that undermines autonomy.