

Setting up a WordPress multilingual site with Polylang



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Requirements

Polylang requires PHP5 and WordPress 3.1 or higher.

Installation

- Download the latest version of [Polylang](https://polylang.org/)
- Extract all the files.
- Upload everything (keeping the directory structure) to the `/wp-content/plugins/`` directory.
- Activate the plugin through the 'Plugins' menu in WordPress.

Creating the languages

Polylang does not come with any languages. You have to create them yourself but it is very easy. Go to the languages page found in the WordPress settings menu. For each language, you have to fill three fields.

- Full name: it is the name which will be displayed on your site. For example: English, Français, Deutsch, Italiano.
- Locale: it is the code used by WordPress for each language. **It is very important to enter the exact WordPress locale for the language**, otherwise the theme translation will not work. It is generally made with two lower case characters, an underscore, and two upper case characters. For example: en_US, fr_FR, de_DE. There are however some locales made with only two lower case characters.
- Language code: this code will be used to build the url. It is best to use the (lower case) 2-characters ISO 639-1 language. For example: en, fr, de.

Don't forget to click on the 'add language' button.

Redo the operation for all languages you need for your site. There is no limit for the number of languages.

Options

- Default language: it will for example be used when someone visits your homepage for the first time.
- If you are installing Polylang on an existing site, an option will be displayed in red: **There are posts, pages, categories or tags without language set. Do you want to set them all to default language ?** You can check this to quickly set up the language for all existing posts, pages, categories and post tags. It will also work for custom post types and custom taxonomies. It is important to note that the URL for posts, pages, categories, or tags is not modified.
- Detect browser language: check this option and when someone will visit your homepage for

the first time it will be displayed according to his browser preferences. If his browser preferences do not include any language of your site, the default language will be used.

- URL modifications:
 - Keep /language/ in pretty permalinks: the monthly archives URL will look like:
<http://www.yoursite.com/language/en/2011/11/>
 - Remove /language/ in pretty permalinks: the monthly archives URL will look like:
<http://www.yoursite.com/en/2011/11/>
 - Hide URL language information for the default language allows you to hide language information only for the default language. In this case the monthly archives URL in the default language will look like:
<http://www.yoursite.com/2011/11/>

Don't forget to click on the 'save changes' button.

WordPress localization (l10n)

By default, WordPress comes only with English. For all other languages, you need to get the corresponding .mo file. You can find all WordPress language files at:
<http://svn.automattic.com/wordpress-i18n/>

You then have to upload these files to the `/wp-content/languages/` directory

Theme internationalization (i18n) and localization (l10n)

This step is very important otherwise your theme will not be translated when displaying posts or pages in a language different than your WordPress default language.

Check with the theme author that the theme is internationalized (meaning that it is ready for translation) and localized (meaning translated) to the languages you need. If it's not the case, either you have the possibility to ask him to do the work (great!) or you will have to do it yourself. I won't rewrite existing documentation so please refer to the [codex](#).

I18n means editing php files of your theme and requires limited programmer competence. L10n means only creating a new .po and .mo file and requires only linguistic competence. I personally use 'poedit' to do this.

Check that your theme includes the following line (or something similar) in the file header.php:

```
<html <?php language_attributes(); ?>>
```

This line must be placed just after the DOCTYPE line and above the `<head>` line.

It is not mandatory but I understood that some browsers and robots use this line to detect your page language.

Widgets

Go to the widget pages and add the language switcher widget to your sidebar. There is currently three options.

- Display language names
- Display flags
- Display as dropdown

If you uncheck both “Display language names” and “Display flags”, the widget will display language names. If you check “Display as dropdown”, flags will not be displayed whatever you checked “Display flags” or not. The widget will display languages only if there are existing posts or

pages in that languages.

Some flags are supplied with the plugin. However, you may want to use other flags. For each language, the plugin will look for the file locale.png in the 'local_flags' directory. For example, if the locale is en_US, it will look for en_US.png. Don't use the 'flags' directory as your modifications may be overwritten by future releases.

The language switcher will try to find the translated page. If not it will link to the homepage in the right language. A known issue in v0.4.x is that if you check "Display as dropdown", the widget will never look for the translated page and will always link to the homepage in the right language.

For all widgets you have now the possibility to choose to display it for all languages (default) or only one language. Use the language dropdown list at the bottom of the widget options to set up this.

Navigation menus

If your theme supports navigations menus. You can create one menu per language in the Wordpress menus page. Then go the language settings page and affect the right menu to each language. Don't forget to click on the 'save changes' button.

Translating categories or post tags

It is very important to set the language for all categories and post tags, otherwise they won't be displayed. Translating categories and post tags is however not mandatory.

To set the language, just choose it in the dropdown list below the description field. Once the language is set, new options appear to set the translations.

Language
English ▾
Sets the language

For each language, all categories with no translation are available in a dropdown list. Just choose the translation you need if available.

Translations

Language	Translation	Edit
Deutsch		
Français	<input type="text"/>	

[Add New Category](#)

The operation for post tags and custom taxonomies is the same.

Translating posts or pages

It is very important to set the language for all posts and pages, otherwise they won't be displayed. Translating posts and pages is however not mandatory.

To set the language, just choose it in the dropdown list in the Languages box on the top right of the 'edit post' panel. Once the language is set, new options appear to set the translations.

Languages

Post's language:

Français ▾

ID of posts in other languages:

Language	Post ID	Edit
Deutsch	<input type="text"/>	Add new
English	<input type="text"/>	Add new

For each language you have three options:

- Do nothing if you don't want to translate your post.
- Fill the “Post ID” field with the post id if the translation is already existing. To get the id of a post you can for example click on the “Get shortlink” button. You will get something like: `http://www.yoursite.com/wordpress/?p=xxx` where xx is the id of the post you are currently editing.
- If you want to create a new translation, just click on the “Add new” link in the right language.

The operation for pages and custom post types is exactly the same.

Choosing the admin language

You can choose the admin language (it's independent of the default language) in the personal options sections of the Users → Your profile settings page.

Removing Polylang

If you deactivate Polylang, all what you have done is kept in memory in your database. If you delete Polylang using the link in the plugins panel, all your data related to languages and translations will be lost. But all your posts, pages, categories and tags will be kept intact except the language information. It means for example that all your posts will be accessible at the same url as before.

Frequently asked questions

The language filter is lost when using the search form

Your theme uses the template searchform.php (as Twenty Eleven does) or hardcoded the search form and JavaScript is disabled. Unfortunately Polylang currently does not support this. So you have the following alternatives to get the things work well:

- Use the 'get_search_form' function and place your custom search form in functions.php as described in the [codex](#). The plugin also works well if you use the default search form provided by WordPress.
- Enable JavaScript (unfortunately you can't control this for your visitors so the first solution is better)

I activated the plugin and my posts are not displayed any more

You MUST define a language for all your posts and pages otherwise they will not pass the language filter...

I activated the plugin and my categories and post tags are not displayed any more

You MUST define a language for all your categories and post tags otherwise they will not pass the language filter...

Is Polylang compatible with multisite ?

Not yet.

Is it possible to use a static front page ?

Yes. You have to create one front page per language. Set translations as usual and then go to the WordPress 'Reading settings' panel. Check 'Front page displays a static page' and choose one of the page you have just created (the language doesn't matter). Do the same for posts page.

Is it possible to display a language switcher without using the widget ?

It is possible to get a language switcher where you want in your theme without using the widget. For this, you can simply add in your theme the following instruction:

```
do_action('the_languages', $args);
```

\$args is an optional array parameter. Options are:

- 'dropdown' => displays a list if set to 0, a dropdown list if set to 1 (default: 0)
- 'show_names' => displays language names if set to 1 (default: 1)
- 'show_flags' => displays flags if set to 1 (default: 0)
- 'hide_if_empty' => hides languages with no posts (or pages) if set to 1 (default: 1)

Can I use my own flags for the language switcher ?

Yes. You have to use PNG or JPG files and name them with the WordPress locale. For example, en_US.png. Then upload these files in the /polylang/local_flags directory. Don't use the /polylang/flags directory as your files may be overwritten when updating the plugin.

Polylang does not come with a lot flags. Where can I find other flags ?

There are many sources. I included some of the [famfamfam](#) flags which I renamed.

How to know the current language in the theme ?

WordPress provides at least two function for the theme or plugin author to know the current language:

- `get_locale()` returns the WordPress locale in the format en_US
- `get_bloginfo('language')` returns the locale in the format en-US

Note the difference between '_' and '-' in the two functions.

You can look at the following forum topics:

- [Return the current language as variable for your template](#)
- [How to translate/switch specific contents on templates](#)