

Berlin FORUM 2018
The challenges of multilingualism for scientific practice
Brief summary

On November 29th and 30th, 85 people from the academic and scientific worlds came together for the 2018 European Language Council Forum at the Freie Universität Berlin to discuss a highly controversial issue, namely the implications and risks of using a single language (English as *lingua academica*) for research and higher education, and the arguments for promoting multilingual responses within these areas.

The idea is to propose multilingual alternatives on the basis of scientific arguments that demonstrate the importance of multilingualism as an antidote to the stifling of academic and scientific cultures; a means of ensuring the existence of multiple perspectives and, accordingly, maintaining the “density”, depth, richness and quality of knowledge and its communication. This is an argument that applies to scientific practice in its entirety, including the development, sharing, dissemination, transmission and evaluation of new knowledge

The prevailing hypothesis is that conceptual richness lies in the dynamic of the exchanges, comparisons and transferrals that take place, regardless of the status or scientific range of the languages in question. It is a question of finding a way for all languages to contribute to the founding of knowledge in a new type of exchange with the most widely used vehicular languages.

The Forum was an opportunity to share multiple experiences and some very different approaches, whether in terms of research, higher-education teaching or language policy, thereby paving the way for future research projects and information exchange. In particular, it launched a COST Action entitled “The challenges of multilingualism for scientific practice”.

The conferences and contributions of the two round tables not only helped explore the proposed hypotheses, but to illustrate them using numerous examples and experiences, contextualise them historically and anchor them socially, culturally and institutionally. The discussions opened numerous avenues of reflection with the potential to generate new questions in as yet largely unexplored areas of research.

Their quality, both in terms of content and form, as well as the enriched debate that followed, no doubt contributed to the success of the event.