

The Integrated DYLAN Project

The DYLAN Integrated Project addresses the core issue underlying topic 3.3.1 of Call FP6-2004-Citizen-4: whether and, if so, how a European knowledge-based society designed to ensure economic competitiveness and social cohesion can be created within a European Union that is linguistically more diverse than ever. The overarching objective of this project, which builds on an initiative of the European Language Council, is to demonstrate that, in this respect, the linguistic diversity prevalent in Europe is potentially an asset rather than an obstacle.

Applying a variety of scientific methods and approaches, the project will assess communicative situations involving speakers of different languages in a range of relevant institutional and professional contexts. It will show in what ways and under what conditions the distinct modes of thinking and acting carried by different languages can promote the creation, transfer and application of knowledge. This implies, however, that citizens are able to understand and exploit these different ways of reasoning, as well as different ways of controlling, dealing with, and resolving problems.

One of the preconditions for such processes to occur is that citizens become multilingual. Therefore, the project will provide support for the EU's orientations to language education, and particularly for the view that foreign languages constitute one of the most important "new basic skills" citizens need in order to take an active part in the creation of a European knowledge-based society. It will also identify and assess the benefits of multilingualism for the management of knowledge in Europe.

A new concept of multilingualism for a variety of professional and institutional contexts will be developed against a historical background.

Multilingualism is regarded as a resource whose complexity goes well beyond the standard "1 + >2" model. The idea that, in a functional perspective, communication begins by choosing between discrete linguistic varieties will be questioned, and the role of a plurality of languages (including English) will be explored in terms of both efficiency and fairness. Theoretical work will be complemented by extensive empirical research on three *terrains* (companies, EU

institutions and educational systems) that are of particular importance because they are loci of key processes in language dynamics (see section B.4). This choice of terrains will also enable us to investigate a relevant range of European languages and to develop comparative perspectives. The results will allow us to formulate appropriate proposals for decisions in language planning and language policies in Europe. The DYLAN Integrated Project aims to provide relevant analytical tools and empirical findings for various groups of users, notably: (i) political decision makers and civil servants within European institutions and state administrations with decision-making responsibilities regarding language policy and planning; (ii) actors involved in identifying and implementing effective communication strategies in companies; (iii) foreign language teachers and (iv) researchers working on new approaches to linguistic diversity in society. With respect to this latter point, the DYLAN project will not only generate targeted theoretical and empirical knowledge providing stepping stones for future research, but also map out new avenues for the work of others, including in the context of research networks established with support of the European Commission.