

## From the president

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Once again, I have to start by apologising to all our members for the delayed publication of the Bulletin. In many ways, the delay reflects the fact that those holding office in the CEL/ELC have been engaged in other time-consuming activities related to the CEL/ELC. It is about these activities that I am going to write to you today.

### **European projects co-ordinated from the Freie Universität Berlin**

Since late last year, we here in Berlin have been engaged in the co-ordination of two major European projects: the DIALANG Project (Phase 2) for the development of diagnostic tests in 14 languages on the Internet and the Project for the exploitation and dissemination of the results of the Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages I (1996-1999).

Both projects are well documented on the respective websites, which are accessible via the CEL/ELC web site. Here I would just like to emphasise the complexity of the projects. In DIALANG the building of the Phase 2 partnership, support for the piloting programme, the exploration of prospects for the commercialisation of the system being developed, and the preparation of the renewal application have taken up considerable amounts of time. In the Dissemination Project it was tasks like the integration of new partners in Central and Eastern Europe, the introduction and presentation of a new approach - the synthesising of project results under politically relevant headings - and the preparation of the Brussels Conference and of a major document (see report below) that required considerable attention. At the same time, I am glad to say that both projects have aroused considerable interest across Europe, thereby giving the CEL/ELC added visibility.

Another major undertaking was the preparation of the grant application for a new Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (TNP2), especially since we had to find a large number of new partners - not only in CEE, but also in the EU/EEA. TNP2, for which we hope to be given the green light any day now, has 102 partners in all the participating countries. It is structured into three sub-projects: Curriculum innovation, New learning environments - the European learning space, and Quality enhancement in language studies. Each sub-project has its own Scientific Committee, whose members are drawn from countries across Europe. The main tasks in year 1 will be the preparation of national reports regarding the three themes, based on structures currently being drafted by us here in Berlin, and of initial recommendations. The project will be officially launched at meetings of the Scientific Committees and the Co-ordinating Committee to be held at the Freie Universität Berlin on 17-18 November 2000. We shall be at pains to disseminate interim results throughout Year 1, and I would like to extend an invitation to all member institutions not yet involved in the new TNP to come forward and express their interest. We are keen to involve as many institutions as possible.

On 2 October 2000, I submitted, on behalf of the Freie Universität Berlin, an application for support for the planning and organising of a major conference at Community level as part of the activities to be carried out during the European Year of Languages 2001. The CEL/ELC is a partner in this project. What we have in mind is to turn the 3rd CEL/ELC Conference to be held on 28-30 June 2001 at the Freie Universität Berlin into a major effort in awareness raising. We want to increase awareness among universities of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and of their responsibility for educating students for European citizenship and for preparing graduates for the European labour market through targeted promotion of multilingual and intercultural competence. To this end, we shall invite a substantial number of leaders of universities and faculties to the Conference.

In the Dissemination Project, TNP2 and the EYL2001 project we co-operate with influential European organisations: the Academic Co-operation Association (ACA), the Association of European Universities

(CRE), the European Association for International Education (EAIE), and the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA).

Piet Van de Craen (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, BE), member of the CEL/ELC Executive Committee and CEL/ELC Secretary, was tied up for weeks on end last year and during the first half of this year by the preparation of two grant applications: for the joint development of a university programme at advanced level in Multilingual Education (ALPME), co-ordinated by the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (ES), and for a major research project on multilingual education (MULTCHAL) to be carried out under the 5th Framework Programme and co-ordinated by the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE). I would also like to take this opportunity gratefully to acknowledge Piet's contribution to the planning and organising of the Brussels Conference.

### **CEL/ELC activities outside European projects**

In December last year, the Freie Universität Berlin and the CEL/ELC jointly organised a workshop on Independent Language Learning. Seven experts from across Europe, five of them from CEL/ELC member institutions, presented examples of good practice. Results of the workshop found their way into the application for TNP2 and were incorporated into one of the chapters prepared for the TNP2 document.

In March this year, the first meeting of the Task Force on European Language Policy convened by the CEL/ELC Executive Committee, was held at the Université de Lausanne (CH). The Task Force, which is chaired by Anne-Claude Berthoud of the said University, is preparing a policy document on higher education and European language policy, the first draft of which will be presented for discussion at a workshop to be conducted at the Freie Universität Berlin on 15-16 December 2000.

The CEL/ELC project for the piloting of the European Language Portfolio in the higher education sector in Europe, co-ordinated by Brigitte Forster Vosicki (Université de Lausanne, CH), was successfully completed in July this year. The Final Report prepared by Brigitte is now available at the CEL/ELC website.

### **Co-operation with European institutions and organisations**

In addition to co-operation on the projects mentioned above, colleagues from CEL/ELC member institutions have been invited by European institutions to serve as experts in one capacity or other. Brigitte Forster Vosicki (Université de Lausanne, CH) attended, at the invitation of the Council of Europe, a number of transnational meetings on the piloting of the European Language Portfolio (ELP). I myself have been invited by the Council of Europe to join, as an expert, the European Validation Committee charged with validating ELP proposals submitted by various institutions and organisations.

The European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, invited me to join an expert group convened in response to a major initiative taken by the French Government for the promotion of European mobility among young people and teachers and trainers.

Thomas Fraser (Université Charles-de-Gaulle - Lille III), member of Executive Committee and CEL/ELC Treasurer, delivered a keynote speech at the annual conference of one of our member organisations, the Panhellenic Federation of Foreign Language School Owners (PALSO) held in Athens in late August.

### **Meetings of the Executive Committee and the Board**

Following the elections conducted at the 2nd CEL/ELC Conference, the Executive Committee held a total of three meetings which were devoted to an evaluation of the Conference, the planning of the 3rd Conference, the formation and remit of the Task Force on European Language Policy, the future of the Bulletin, and information policy, including a drive for attracting new members. In particular, the Executive Committee agreed that the focus of the Bulletin needed to be sharpened. Greater emphasis will from now on be given to European co-operation, and members will be invited to write about the results and outcomes of European projects undertaken by them. The Board met at the Université de

Lausanne (CH) in June and discussed these and more general issues. It was recognised by the Board that the CEL/ELC needed to become even more visible than it has become over the past three years. We need to prepare and publish annual activity reports and we need to prepare a document setting out our policies and activities for the next few years.

The Executive Committee will hold another meeting in Berlin immediately after the December workshop, and both the Committee and the Board are to meet in Århus in February 2001.

### **The Secretariat at the Freie Universität Berlin**

I am sure it will not surprise anyone when I say that the projects and other activities which I have told you about have constituted a major challenge to all of us here in Berlin. We still do not have appropriate ancillary staff looking after the affairs of the association, which explains, for example, why dissemination has remained a weakness. And yet we shall only be able to obtain a firmer financial basis if we can attract additional members. I very much hope that our European Year of Languages Conference will bring a major breakthrough in this respect.

A number of people that worked for us at the time of the publication of Bulletin 5 have since left, among them Meike Hilbring. Sietze Looijenga, assistant project manager of the dissemination project, has continued to look after CEL/ELC affairs in his spare time; he has been supported in this by a number of young graduates hired on a contract basis. Gabriella Jacobsen, who left us after she had given birth to her third son, is about to return to the team; she will be especially involved in preparations for the 3rd CEL/ELC Conference. I should like to thank all members past and present of our team for their co-operation and support. I should also like to thank Angela Chambers (University of Limerick, IE), Vice-president and chair of the Publications Committee, for preparing the current issue and working on the next issue of the Bulletin at a time when she herself and members of her family were encountering severe health problems. A special thank you has to go to Sofie Van den Bussche (Brussels), who has devoted considerable time and energy to the planning and organising of a number of meetings at no expense to us and who is from now on going to play a major role in the production of the Bulletin.

Finally, I should like to single out three member institutions for special thanks: the Université de Lausanne (CH), the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BE) and the Freie Universität Berlin (DE). The Université de Lausanne generously hosted two Task Force meetings and the Board meeting. In particular, it met all the expenses incurred in connection with the Board meeting, including the travel expenses. Without this support, the Board meeting would have knocked a deep hole into our finances. The Vrije Universiteit Brussel has repeatedly played host to CEL/ELC meetings and provided food and drinks. The Freie Universität Berlin has continued to support the CEL/ELC substantially. To give just two examples, it funded the workshop on Independent Language Learning last December and it will fund the workshop on Language Policy in December this year.

I very much hope that in spite of the financial constraints within which our universities have to operate, other member institutions will also find ways of supporting our activities. I am saying this, because there are indications that the CEL/ELC and its projects are beginning to impact at an institutional level. It was not by chance that at the Brussels Conference in September a number of speakers called for the development and implementation of institutional language policies - a suggestion that is already being taken up by a number of member institutions. In the past few years we have focused on thrashing out concrete proposals for innovative policies, programmes, and provision. We need to continue doing this. And we now also need to convince institutional decision-makers and policy-makers of the soundness of our ideas. The European Year of Languages 2001 will be decisive in this respect.