

From the President

Wolfgang Mackiewicz
Freie Universität Berlin, DE

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First of all, I should like to invite all our members and all other readers of this Bulletin to our European Year of Languages 2001 Conference, to be held at the Freie Universität Berlin (DE) on 28-30 June. The Conference is set to be one of the main events of EYL2001.

In *Bulletin 6*, I mentioned that I had submitted, on behalf of the Freie Universität, an application for support for the Conference project within the framework of the EU's EYL2001 Initiative. I am glad to report that the application was successful and that preparations for the Conference have been going ahead as planned. The Scientific Committee of the Conference project, comprised of FUB's vice-president with special responsibility for the humanities, the co-ordinators of the Conference workshops, and representatives of the associations supporting the project, held its first meeting in Berlin in early February. A young graduate, Silke Pillinger, was hired at short notice, to help with Conference preparations at FUB. In addition, my own Centre assigned a secretary to the project. A special Conference website, created by Sietze Looijenga, was launched early in the new year, and a Conference flyer and announcement were mailed to all our members, the members of the CRE and the EAIE, national agencies and authorities, European student associations, university, academic, and professional associations, and the social partners, to mention just the most important addressees. The fact that we have been at pains to reach out to as many pertinent institutions and organisations as possible is an indication of what the Conference is to be all about. We want policy-makers and decision-makers to become fully aware of the language-related responsibilities and duties of higher education institutions, and we want them to reflect, together with us, on action to be taken. To that extent, the Conference is even more ambitious than the first two CEL/ELC conferences.

The Conference will, of course, provide a unique opportunity for making the CEL/ELC more widely known, especially outside the language community. We are producing a new CEL/ELC flyer for the Conference, in which we highlight the projects launched from within the association. I hope that as a result of the Conference and of the publicity expected to be generated we shall attract a substantial number of new members - an absolute must if we want to widen the range of our activities.

The financial support pledged by the European Commission does not, of course, cover the entire cost of the Conference project. Again, the Freie Universität Berlin (DE) is making a substantial contribution. In addition, we have high hopes of attracting additional funding from national and private sources.

Workshop on universities and language policy in Europe

One of the Conference workshops will be devoted to the theme of *Universities and language policy in Europe*. The main CEL/ELC input to the workshop will be a revised version of the policy document prepared last year by a small-size task force chaired by Anne-Claude Berthoud (Université de Lausanne, CH). The first draft was presented for discussion at a workshop conducted at the Freie Universität Berlin (DE) on 15-16 December. Workshop participants included Sylvia Vlaeminck, Head of the Language Policy Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture, Johanna Panthier of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Division, Francis Goullier, Inspecteur général at the French Ministère de l'éducation nationale - France had the EU Presidency at the time -, Maurizio Gotti, President of Cercles, Manya Klemencic, director of the European Student Information Bureau, Thomas Vogel, President of the German Association of Language Centres, as well as representatives of the German Ministry of Education and Research, the German Academic Exchange Service, EAQUALS and of a number of universities from the region. The CEL/ELC was represented by the members of the Task Force and of the Executive Committee and a number of Board members. The workshop was officially opened by Vice-president Klann-Delius, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the Freie Universität Berlin; FUB supported the workshop generously. The comments on the draft document made during and after the workshop are being taken into

consideration by a small-size drafting committee engaged in preparing a revised version for the Conference. The revised text will be made available to all Conference participants.

Thematic Network activities

The Dissemination TNP was successfully concluded on 31 October and the final report submitted to the European Commission on 31 December 2000. The preparation of the major document that was to be produced as part of the project is in its final stages, and it is hoped that a draft version of the document will be ready at the time of the Berlin Conference. The document is directly related to the themes of the Conference and the workshops.

The new fully-fledged Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages, TNP2, was officially launched at a two-day meeting held in Berlin on 17-18 November 2000, at which the work plans of the three sub-projects and the structures of the national reports to be prepared by the members of the three sub-project Scientific Committees were discussed and agreed. The meeting was a new experience in the sense that there were a substantial number of colleagues present representing partner universities in Central and Eastern Europe. Another new development was the fact that in a number of cases experts from the same country or geographical area decided to hold 'regional meetings' to discuss the reports being prepared. It has to be admitted, however, that the start-up of the new Project has not been without problems. For example, a number of experts, notably experts from countries in which procedures for the assessment of academic performance are in place or are being introduced, withdrew before or shortly after the launch of the Project. This reflects a more general problem. For one thing, work carried out within European co-operation projects is not regarded as research and, because of this, does not 'count'; for another, many universities still seem to be unaware of the fact that the results produced by TNPs can be of direct benefit to them in their endeavour to introduce improvements and innovations into their own programmes. Clearly, we are still confronted with a structural problem. It remains to be seen whether the new trend whereby rectors' conferences are becoming directly involved in European co-operation projects will bring about a marked change in this respect.

The three subproject Scientific Committees have now held their second meetings, and all is set for the preparation of the three synthesis reports envisaged in the project proposal. Initial results produced by the three Scientific Committees are to be presented in some of the Conference workshops.

The renewal application for Year Two was sent to Brussels on 1 March.

DIALANG

DIALANG was one of the highlights of the opening event of the European Year of Languages 2001 held in Lund (SE) on 18-20 February. Charles Alderson (University of Lancaster, UK), Scientific Co-ordinator of the project, and myself gave a Power Point presentation, and an improved version of the prototype developed in Phase 1, put on display in the European Commission's exhibition area, aroused a high level of interest. Participants from all over Europe had the opportunity to obtain expert information from five members of the project team.

As was to be expected, a project of this magnitude and complexity is bound sooner or later to run into difficulties. One of our principal problems is finding organisations across Europe willing to participate in the piloting of DIALANG test items. I wrote to all our members earlier this year inviting them to help with the piloting, which is absolutely essential for quality control and for the calibration of test items against the Council of Europe scales. Further details of the piloting programme are available at the DIALANG Project website (www.dialang.org).

DIALANG will figure prominently at the Berlin EYL2001 Conference, and we hope that through the DIALANG workshop and the presentation of DIALANG products at the Conference exhibition, knowledge about and interest in the project and system will increase even further. There can be no doubt that DIALANG has the potential of becoming the centrepiece of language learning in secondary, higher, and adult education.

The aims underlying the DIALANG assessment system have much in common with those associated with the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio. I am glad to announce that Cercles and the CEL/ELC have joined forces to develop an ELP for the higher education sector, which will contain a special DIALANG section. I should like to take the opportunity to gratefully acknowledge Brigitte Forster Vosicki's (Université de Lausanne, CH) leading role in this important new project.

Internal business

The CEL/ELC Board held a meeting in Aarhus (DK) on 10 February 2001. The meeting was generously hosted by the Handelshøjskolen i Århus, where Karen M. Lauridsen had made excellent practical arrangements. The Board dealt with four major topics: the draft document on language policy in Europe prepared by the CEL/ELC Task Force, the Berlin EYL2001 Conference, amendments to the statutes, and the future of our association. I shall report on the results of the Board's deliberations at the next General Assembly. At my suggestion, the Board decided to ask M. Domenico Lenarduzzi, former Deputy Director General of the Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture, to do us the honour of becoming the CEL/ELC's first honorary member. He will be officially awarded this honour at the Berlin EYL2001 Conference. At a moving ceremony held on the occasion of M. Lenarduzzi's retirement in Brussels on 27 March 2001 and attended by a large number of people from the area of education from across Europe, President Prodi conferred on him the title of Directeur général honoraire.

The CEL/ELC's 3rd General Assembly will be held during the Berlin EYL2001 Conference on Friday, 29 June, at 16:00 hours. Invitations are soon going to be sent to all members. The President's *rapport moral* and the Treasurer's financial report apart, the General Assembly will be asked to agree to a number of amendments to the statutes regarding elections to the Board and the Executive Committee and honorary membership; the Board considers the amendments to be essential to the proper functioning of the association. In addition and in line with the statutes, there will be elections to the Board, as the term of office of half of the Board members expires at the end of June.

Four years ago, we met in Lille to launch our association. Since then we have in many ways achieved more than most of us would have hoped to be able to. In particular, the projects launched by and from within the CEL/ELC have attracted a lot of attention both in Europe and overseas and have brought about re-orientation in higher education policies and practices. The European Year of Languages 2001 is a unique opportunity to present the results of our work and reflections to a wide range of policy-makers and decision-makers inside and outside academia. At our launch Conference in Lille I expressed the view that higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe. At the Berlin EYL2001 Conference we shall not just repeat this message, but we shall show in very concrete terms what universities do, can do and should do to exercise their language-related responsibilities arising from their traditional educational remit, from the construction of a European area of higher education, and from European integration in general.

I very much look forward to seeing you all in Berlin in late June.