

IAMLADP: Inter Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications. Information Note to Universities

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IAMLADP is a UN body made up of mainly UN and UN Agencies but now extended to many other main international organisations (IOs) including the EU Institutions. It is the only forum of its kind and brings together Language and Conference Services of the IOs and therefore largest employers of language staff in the world.

In July 2001, at the IAMLADP Plenary Meeting in Geneva, Noel Muylle, Director, SCIC, was asked to set up and chair a new Working Group on Training of Language Staff (WGT) in five key areas: translation, conference interpreting, editing, précis-writing and proof-reading. The results of the WGT's findings were submitted in the form of an "Interim Report" to the 2002 IAMLADP Plenary Meeting in Vienna. The report was unanimously approved and a mandate given by the Assembly to the WGT to take further the findings of the first year's work, by studying, in particular:

- Editing and proof-reading: here the object is to complete the work undertaken but not completed under last year's mandate, relating it to university course contents and training in these areas;
- Staff exchanges: it was felt by many respondents last year that such exchanges were beneficial both to IOs and to the staff members concerned. Several IOs have already undertaken exchanges and loans. The aim is to extend such schemes to more IOs, i.a. to motivate and train staff and encourage exchange of practices;
- Pooling resources: a number of areas should be explored here, e.g. joint (between IOs) training ventures for staff, common training modules for revisers and précis-writers, sharing know-how and information. As an example, the EU is now adopting an inter-institutional Open Competition system to centralise recruitment and "share out" resources among the Institutions instead of competing for them;
- Co-operation with universities: the 37 replies to the questionnaire sent last year under the IAMLADP WGT mandate is a basis for taking forward the findings with a view to spreading good practices, e.g. in promoting closer and more systematic links between employers and universities, in studying ways in which IOs could be actively involved in advising on course content and curriculum development. Involvement by groups of universities such as Languages TNP and EMC I would be useful. One practical suggestion has been to have universities send lists of their graduates to IOs;
- Enhancing the status of language professions: one of the main objectives is to tackle longer term issues, in particular ways to achieve recognition of academic titles and professional qualifications, drawing on i.a. expertise from sources such as CEDEFOP and academia. In the shorter term, measures can be taken, through, i.a. awareness raising campaigns in IOs to improve the understanding of the roles of language professions.

Each Subgroup is headed by a representative of an IO, and SCIC, as co-ordinator of the project, is leader of the group on co-operation with universities as well as being present in all except the first group. First messages/questionnaires have been sent out by Subgroup leaders to their group members and it is hoped that some tangible results can be achieved under this year's mandate and reported on to IAMLADP Plenary Meeting 2003 in Geneva.

Last year, findings showed clearly the discrepancy between employers' needs (both in the short and longer term) and university/in-house training. On your side, the universities called out for closer contacts and more guidance and involvement by IOs.

In order to allow for easy and rapid communication, representatives of group of universities could, through a spokesperson, participate in the "Co-operation with universities" Subgroup. We hope that EMCI and TNP will be forthcoming here and count on their input which can only be beneficial to a better understanding of employers' needs. In this context, the SCIC Universities Conference 2002 discussed the implications of the post Bologna process for conference interpreting which could be extended to encompass all the language professions.

Some rethinking and adaptation of course contents may well be needed; you should be ready to take on board the consequences and to adapt courses and curricula if we are all to face up to these needs and prepare future language professionals properly for the tasks awaiting them. Keywords here are employability and new market needs, linked primarily to new qualifications and competencies, new linguistic requirements and technologies.

With the active involvement of all concerned and their input, we hope to be able to fulfil our next mandate; that of putting into practice some of the recommendations in the IAMLADP WGT Interim Report, particularly the shorter term ones. Pooling resources in various forms is also an area where, without over-stretching IOs' budgets, much could be achieved with clear guidelines as to how and where such plans could be implemented. This is the mandate given to the WGT by the IAMLADP Plenary Meeting 2002.

We hope to have some practical proposals to make, not only on how contacts between IOs and universities can be streamlined and intensified for the benefit of both sides but also, ambitious as it may seem, to have made some headway towards a better understanding and appreciation of the roles of language professions by our "customers". Recognition of these professions at a European level would be a major step forward.

We count on your help and hope to have some useful and above all practical proposals to make to you as a result of our WGT's work.