

## From the president

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Apologies to all our members for the delayed publication of Bulletin 5. We had every intention of getting the Bulletin out before the Second ELC Conference which was held on 1 – 3 July 1999 at the University of Jyväskylä. However, there came a point in time when we felt that all our efforts had to be directed towards the preparation of the Conference itself, and this meant, unfortunately, that the publication had to be postponed until after the Conference.

I should like to believe that the Conference was a success. Although there were fewer participants than at the Launch Conference two years ago, there were a number of positive developments.

- The level of the workshop presentations and discussions was high. This had to do with the fact that over the past two years the Thematic Network Project in the area of Languages, projects launched from within the TNP, such as DIALANG and the European Masters in Conference Interpreting, and the new ELC task forces have all produced concrete and interesting results, which were now ready for presentation and discussion. Clearly, the ELC has succeeded in promoting European co-operation designed to lead to concrete results.
- During the 'European slot' on Friday morning, representatives not only of the European Commission but also of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe took the floor. Their presentations were felt to be very informative. They also bore witness to the fact that the ELC is now engaged in co-operation with all the major European institutions.
- A substantial number of participants came from central and eastern Europe. Many of them represented the areas of translation and interpreting – a sign that the universities in the associated countries are taking the multilingual challenge seriously. However, the ELC will have to make further efforts to carry the message of a multilingual Europe into the universities in these countries.

A more extensive report of the Conference will appear in Bulletin 6, which will be published before the end of the year.

At the second General Assembly of the ELC, held in Jyväskylä on 2 July, elections took place for half the seats of the ELC Board. This had become necessary because, in accordance with the *statuts*, the names of nine Board members were drawn at the Board meeting held in Berlin in late January. The following outgoing members were re-elected: Angela Chambers (University of Limerick, IE), Graham Davies (EUROCALL), Michael Kelly (University of Southampton, UK), Karen M. Lauridsen (C.I.U.T.I.), Wolfgang Mackiewicz (Freie Universität Berlin, DE), and Aud Marit Simensen (Universitetet i Oslo, NO). In addition, the following new members were elected: Anne-Claude Berthoud (Université de Lausanne, CH) and Arthur Van Essen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, NL). The new Board met on 3 July, when the outgoing Executive Committee, comprised of Wolfgang Mackiewicz (President), Angela Chambers (Vice President), Piet Van de Craen (Secretary), and Thomas Fraser (Treasurer), was returned to office for another two years.

At the General Assembly, I delivered my report covering the period July 1997 to June 1999. In addition, Angela Chambers talked about the activities and plans of the Publications Committee and Thomas Fraser presented the financial report. What follows here is an abbreviated version of my report, which, hopefully, will permit readers inside

and outside the ELC to assess the activities undertaken during the first two years of the ELC's existence.

The success of a new association depends on three things: ideas, people, and money. You need new ideas; you need an agenda which shows some originality and sets the new association aside from other, long-standing associations in the field. You need people who are able and willing to engage in joint activities designed to implement the ideas. And you need money to fund the activities. I shall mainly concern myself with ideas and activities.

### ***The Executive Committee – Roles and Activities***

#### *Meetings of the Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee held six ordinary meetings and one extraordinary meeting during its two-year term of office.

#### *Tasks assigned to individual Committee members*

At its first meeting held in Brussels in September 1997, the Committee agreed on the following division of labour:

- Wolfgang Mackiewicz: general coordination of activities, representation of the CEL/ELC
- Angela Chambers: chair of publications committee, responsibility for the *Information Bulletin*
- Piet Van de Craen: proposals for new activities, correspondence, liaison with the Secretariat in Berlin, liaison with chairs of policy groups
- Tomas Fraser: budget, financial report

#### *New initiatives*

The Executive Committee regarded it as its central role to initiate new activities. In addition, it concerned itself with dissemination and publicity, the finances of the association, and the draft standing orders.

### ***New project-type activities***

As part of the project for the creation of the CEL/ELC ten core policy groups were set up each dedicated to what was seen as a key issue in the area of languages. The themes of the policy groups were the same as those of the ten sub-projects into which the Thematic Network Project was structured. At the same time, the Executive Committee felt that the ELC should not just be an umbrella for the TNP, that it should also initiate new activities over and above the activities undertaken in the TNP. Therefore, the Executive Committee decided to create three small-size task forces: on Quality Management in HE Language Programmes, on Clinical Linguistics, and on European Language Policy. In all three cases, the Committee issued a call for expressions of interest; in the case of Quality Management and Clinical Linguistics the task forces were successfully launched; the task force on European Language Policy has yet to be convened.

The ELC co-funded two meetings of the task force on **Clinical Linguistics** and a workshop and helped with the preparation of a curriculum development grant application under the SOCRATES-ERASMUS Programme. The grant application was approved and the project proper started on 1 July 1999.

The Executive Committee felt that the issue of quality management was of crucial importance to improvements and innovations in higher education language studies, that the ELC was in a unique position to assess various national and institutional experiences, and that quality management might well become one of the themes of the next TNP in the area of languages. The task force on **Quality Management** held a meeting and conducted a workshop in the final months of last year, which was attended by a substantial number of colleagues from ELC member institutions. The results of the workshop held at the Second ELC Conference are expected to prepare the ground for the application for a new TNP in languages.

The CEL/ELC has to work out its own language policy. This became clear in the discussions held by the Scientific Committee of the TNP sub-project on Multilingualism and the less widely used and less taught languages. Rather than focusing on issues such as institutional language policies and the feasibility of attaining multilingual competence, discussions in the Committee continued to be dominated by questions of a more general political nature, such as the role of immigrant minority languages, of regional languages etc. Also, it is important that the CEL/ELC can contribute to the current Europe-wide debate about European language policy and European language education policy. Since the call for expressions of interest was published earlier this year, a substantial number of experts from member organisations have come forward. The creation of the ELC task force on **European Language Policy** will have to be one of the first tasks to be undertaken by the newly elected Executive Committee.

### ***Preparation of the 2nd ELC Conference***

The Conference Planning Committee, comprised of the workshop coordinators, the Conference organiser, the President and the head of the company entrusted with the organisation of the Conference held two meetings in Berlin in October 1998 and January 1999. There is no denying that serious delays occurred in the preparation of the Conference - particularly in the preparation of the Conference programme brochure -, which had at least partly to do with a temporary staffing bottleneck at the Secretariat in Berlin.

### ***Publicity, Dissemination and Publications***

#### *The Report of the Launch Conference*

One of the first tasks taken on by the Executive Committee was the preparation and publication of the Launch Conference report. Lille III prepared most of the transcripts and translations and also printed the report.

#### *The ELC Information Bulletin*

Most of the planning of the general format and of the content of individual issues of the Bulletin became the responsibility of the ELC Publications Committee headed by Angela Chambers. The Bulletin has contributed considerably to the ELC's *visibilité*. However, here, too, it has to be admitted that delays have occurred. A more general problem is that of the printing costs. The production of Bulletins 3 and 4, printed in Berlin, cost some 5,000 Euro each. We have therefore decided to publish future issues on the Internet and to print only a limited number of copies.

#### *The ELC Web site*

At the time of the first meeting of the Executive Committee the Web site had become sadly outdated. Things took a turn for the better when Sietze Looyenga moved to Berlin for a period of some five months in October 1997. Since then, the Web site became more attractive and up-to-date.

## *ELC Leaflet and Logo*

In this day and age, a new association cannot hope to make its impact felt without a logo of its own. Gabriella Jacobsen invested a lot of time and effort in the creation of the ELC logo. The finished product has not failed to make an impact. An ELC leaflet was produced in both English and French, and a new version of the leaflet should be produced in the near future. The logo also appears on the ELC stationary.

## **The ELC Board**

The Board held two meetings during the reporting period. It met in Brussels in late June 1998 and in Berlin in late January 1999. At both meetings, the Treasurer presented a budget for the year in question as well as a statement of expenditure, which were approved by the Board. The Board received reports on and discussed the activities initiated by the Executive Committee, the preparations for the Second ELC Conference, and the decisions made regarding the format and content of the ELC Bulletin. It discussed, amended, and adopted the standing orders prepared by the Executive Committee and prepared the second General Assembly.

## **Cooperation with other Organisations**

Following the Launch Conference, the President was approached by the Council of Europe with a view to establishing cooperation between the two organisations. This move was made in view of the fact that for the first time the Council of Europe was to concern itself with languages in higher education. The ELC Executive Committee and Board responded positively to a request from the Council of Europe to assist in the piloting of the European Language Portfolio in the HE sector. Following a call for expressions of interest circulated by the President, a total of 10 universities came forward and declared their willingness to become involved in the project. A first meeting of a rump project group was held in Jyväskylä on 1 July 1999, and I am confident that the group will now become very active and make a substantial contribution to the further development of the ELP.

The President and other members of the Executive Committee and the Board received and accepted invitations to national and international meetings. The President and Robert Phillipson became involved in the project *Which languages for Europe?* initiated by the European Cultural Foundation, the European Parliament and the Luxembourg Ministry of Culture. The President also attended a major conference on European language policy staged by the Nederlandse Taalunie in March this year. Invitations like these show that the CEL/ELC has managed to establish itself as a major player in Europe.

Our next Conference will be held in the European Year of Languages. Both the Council of Europe and the European Commission are planning major events for 2001. We shall have to think carefully about how we should position ourselves in relation to these two institutions.

## **New Members**

In my report I have repeatedly referred to the cost of activities. The simple fact is that the publication of a bulletin and the launching of task forces cost money. The problem is quite simply this. We will not be attractive to the HE community unless we are seen to be doing interesting things. And interesting things cost money. A catch 22 situation, in other words – quite common in the private sector, of course – but we quite simply cannot borrow money in order to invest in activities designed to increase membership and thereby revenue.

At the time of the Launch Conference, the association had 113 members. Today, it has 149 members. Clearly, this is not enough, and one of the priorities of the new Executive

Committee will have to be a recruitment campaign. We have to reach the 400 mark in the next two to three years if we want to be able to continue starting new activities and, at the same time, build a reserve fund.

Membership also has to do with people. It is immensely important that new people become involved in ELC activities. The task forces are a promising beginning in this respect. The next TNP will, of course, be another opportunity.

### ***The Permanent Secretariat at FUB***

The Commission grant for the creation of the European Language Council allowed us to create the infrastructure needed for the running of a European association. It also allowed us to hire an assistant project manager, Gabriella Jacobsen, who – after the end of the project – went on to manage the ELC's affairs on a day-to-day basis and who contributed a lot to the new format of the Bulletin, the planning and starting of new activities etc. Even if Gabriella had not given birth to two sons during the past two years and would not have been forced to pull out for the time being, we would have had staffing problems because Gabriella – just like Sietze, who has temporarily replaced her – officially works for the TNP and not for the ELC.

This, then, is how we have managed to survive. We have relied on the dedication of people like Gabriella, Sietze and Meike, who have worked part-time for projects and who were willing to work extra hours to keep the ELC on track. In addition, we hired young graduates on a contract basis for specific tasks such as the mailing of invoices, Bulletins and other documents to member institutions and associations, helping with the preparation and running of meetings and with keeping the accounts etc.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to those member institutions that supported the ELC by contributing (wo)man hours to the project. Sietze Looyenga was released by the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen for five months in the winter of 1997/98; the costs of his stay at FUB were shared by Groningen and FUB. Virginie Bersy from Lille III worked at FUB for a number of weeks, and as was explained elsewhere, Lille III has also contributed substantially to the completions of specific tasks.

It remains a fact, however, that at present the financial basis of the association does not allow us, even on a temporary basis, to hire an assistant or secretary to provide for the Secretariat at FUB.

I should like to conclude by thanking my team, if that's the right name, at FUB for their unswerving support over the past two years. If I have to mention names, it will have to be Gabriella Jacobsen and Katrin Rösler as well as Meike Hilbring, who helped enormously with the preparation of the Conference, and, of course, Sietze Looyenga.