

CONSEIL EUROPÉEN POUR LES LANGUES / EUROPEAN LANGUAGE COUNCIL (CEL/ELC)

ENLU – European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning

Among all Undergraduates

Project carried out under European Commission's Call for Proposals

EAC/45/03 of 31 July 2003¹

A need for action

The launch of the ENLU project reflects both the need and the new opportunities available for decisive action in regard to “languages for all undergraduates”. The new educational priorities arising from the advent of the knowledge economy / society as well as the profound changes underway in European higher education (please see background document attached) have created conditions that facilitate the implementation of the methodological recommendations developed and put forward for this field since the early nineties.

Strategic considerations

Cooperation between HEIs in Europe

Policies and practices for “languages for all undergraduates” are, in the first instance, a matter of institutional concern, rather than simply the business of language centres or language departments; and - universities are autonomous. This means that it is up to the universities themselves to devise language policies and to ensure that these policies are properly implemented. However, since the universities are increasingly becoming actors in a European higher education area, there is every reason for them to co-operate at European level in an effort to define common reference points for a “languages-for-all” policy, then to be interpreted in the light of the specific linguistic priorities set by individual universities.

Cooperation within HEIs in Europe

Needless to say, it is the business of language centres, language departments, and other relevant units to devise, develop and implement concrete methods, practices and scenarios designed to facilitate the realisation of university-wide policies. What this means is that the ENLU project must make it its concern to promote co-operation between university directorates and relevant departments and units.

Examples of good practice

Of course, individual institutions – or even entire Member States - can be expected to be at different stages on their way to achieving the aim of “languages for all”. This means that it is impossible to prescribe one single method to universities across Europe. Rather, it would seem to be important to identify and disseminate examples of good and promising practice that can be adopted and adapted by universities that are at less advanced stages of development in this respect. The open method of co-ordination, which is an essential part of the Lisbon Strategy in general and of the Objectives Process in particular, can also be usefully applied in the endeavour to achieve a breakthrough in the field of language learning and linguistic diversity in higher education.

Spreading the word across Europe

One of the main challenges that European co-operation networks like ENLU are confronted with is that of bridging the gap between reflection and policy development at European level and at institutional level, i.e. of putting proposals and recommendations developed at European level through to institutional level – and this not only in partner institutions but also in higher education institutions outside the project partnership. This is why it is intended, in the early life of the project, to identify

¹ A list of the projects supported under this call is available at
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/languages/selection.pdf>

national or regional relay points that will disseminate project outcomes and be in a position to offer targeted advice to universities in a given region / Member State.

Aims, activities, and outputs of the ENLU project

The key aim of the project is to set up, under the auspices of the CEL/ELC, a trans-European network of higher education institutions and of a wide range of other relevant bodies which share **the vision of the generalisation of language learning among all undergraduates and of language diversification** and which are determined to create conditions – policies, resources, strategic partnerships – designed to make the vision reality. We propose to do this in three stages:

Stage One: ascertaining and evaluating the status quo

In order to establish a base for future action, the ENLU project will seek to gain a comprehensive overview of the current situation in the participating countries in the field of “languages for all”, particularly in regard to

- the percentage of undergraduates learning languages
- the range of languages being learnt by undergraduates
- existing explicit or implicit “languages-for-all” policies
- existing financial, curricular, pedagogical and organisational models and practices relevant to the generalisation of language learning among undergraduates

To this end, four task groups will be convened at the partner meeting to be held in Brussels on 23-24 April devoted to the following policy and methodological issues:

1. University language policy
2. Percentage of undergraduates learning languages and range of languages being learnt
3. The use of distance education and e-learning for language learning among undergraduates
4. Medium of instruction in undergraduate studies

Task groups 1, 3 and 4 will be focussing on issues that over the past twelve years have come to be regarded as being particularly relevant to the generalisation of language learning among undergraduates. (A further issue – co-operation and sharing resources – had to be dropped because of the limited financial resources available, but will definitely be taken up at a later stage.)

The precise working methods of the task groups will be decided on in the wake of the partner meeting to be held in Brussels on 23-24 April. However, in general terms the following fact-finding steps are envisaged:

- desk research and direct contacts with relevant parties² (- September 2004)
- a co-ordinated survey to be conducted at regional/Member State level (September-November 2004)

It is expected that as a result of the desk research, direct contacts and the consultation, it will be possible (a) to demonstrate the need for action and (b) to compile a collection of successful policies, strategies, and methods that lend themselves to implementation and adaptation under various institutional conditions.

Besides these four task groups, a number of other structures are envisaged to ensure that all aspects of the workplan can be achieved in the very tight financial and time constraints of the project:

² In the case of university language policy, it will be possible to build on the findings of a pilot survey conducted by Angela Chambers (University of Limerick, IE) as part of the activities of the CEL/ELC's pilot project *European University Language Policy Interest Group*.

Data Management: The requirements of the major survey need to be thought through carefully, to avoid several requests for information from the same project arriving at individual institutions. A specific team will streamline the survey exercise.

Conference planning task force: the conference, planned for November 2005, will take place in Brussels. A planning group will be required to manage the content and logistics of this event.

The role(s) of all partner institutions is vital to the success of the project. We need to exploit the considerable geographical coverage represented by the partnership and ensure that the work of all task groups reflects this. Additionally, as mentioned above, we hope to establish a network of national / regional contact points for ENLU who will be active throughout the life of the project and beyond.

In the first instance, it will be important that the representatives of partner HEIs bring ENLU's aims and activities to the attention of both the directorates and the colleagues/units in their own institutions. In the Europe-wide consultation we hope to co-operate with other pertinent associations such as CercleS, EUA and ESIB. This should allow us to gather information from as well as to disseminate the ENLU programme to a large number of HEIs and other relevant bodies across Europe. It is also hoped that the project will in this way be able to establish working contacts with both university directorates and language centres/departments outside the ENLU partnership.

Stage Two: preparation of a consultation document and Europe-wide consultation

Once the findings of the desk research and of the initial Europe-wide consultation have been evaluated, an initial decision will be made on whether to go ahead with the idea of setting up a network. Assuming that the decision will be in the affirmative, the partnership, in co-operation with associations such as EUA and ESIB, will prepare a consultation document (December 2004-February 2005), which will be in three parts.

Part One: Where are we and what should and can be done?

- an analysis of the political context (very much along the lines of the background document circulated with this outline)
- a summary of the findings of the desk research and of the initial Europe-wide consultation
- broad recommendations, underpinned by position statements and examples of good practice
- presentation of the rationale for setting up a European network

Part Two: An outline of the structure of the network envisaged

Part Three: A broad action plan for the network (2006-2010)

In the period March-May 2005, the project will conduct a Europe-wide consultation in an attempt to establish whether there is sufficient consensus on the aims and objectives propagated and whether there is broad agreement on and interest in establishing such a network. In this consultation, it will be important to reach out to a large number of university leaders, colleagues and units directly responsible for "languages-for-all" offerings, rectors' conferences, national/regional associations, public authorities and other funding organisations. The evaluation of the responses will be undertaken in the period June-July 2005.

Stage Three: a major European conference for launching the new network

On the basis of the evaluation of the responses received, a decision will be made on whether there are sufficient arguments in favour of creating a network of the kind envisaged. Whatever the decision may be, the project is committed to organising a major European conference as a closing event (November

2005), to which all organisations that have expressed broad agreement with the aims of the initiative will be invited.

At the Conference, the following input will be provided in formats yet to be decided:

- a report of the outcomes of the two-year project
- a report of project findings regarding the percentage of undergraduates learning languages and of the languages being learnt
- guidelines for the development and implementation of university-wide language policies
- two reports of facilitating measures: (i) *E-learning and distance education*; (ii) *Teaching through the medium of a foreign language*
- a more detailed plan for actions to be undertaken or initiated by the new network to be created (2006-1010)

Moreover, it is expected that the new network will be formally set up at the Conference.

Dissemination

Preparations are under way for the creation of a central ENLU website to be housed at the Freie Universität Berlin (DE) and linked to the CEL/ELC website. The website, which will have the URL www.fu-berlin.de/enlu/ should be up by the end of May. Every effort will be made to have links to the ENLU website on websites of all relevant organisations. In addition, project partners will be requested to include links to the ENLU site in the websites of their departments, centres etc.

In addition, it is hoped that the relay points to be established will create regional/national ENLU websites – preferably in their own languages.

Synergies

The ENLU project will seek to co-operate with European, national and regional associations that are engaged in or support initiatives designed to promote language learning among all undergraduates. It will closely co-operate with the Thematic Network Project in the Area of Language III (TNP3) (2003-2006). Whereas ENLU will focus on policies and practices designed to significantly increase the percentage of undergraduates learning languages and to broaden the range of languages being learnt, TNP3 will, among other things, seek to establish what linguistic, language-related and cross-cultural skills and competences and which languages are sought after on the European labour market and may be in demand in years to come. The ENLU project will, however, not just address the issues of language learning and linguistic diversity from an economic point of view, but will – in the spirit of the Berlin Declaration and the Berlin Communiqué – seek to highlight the importance of these issues for the personal development and the identity of European graduates, for the creation of Europe and for interaction between Europe and third countries.

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