

# FINAL REPORT

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Scientific Committee on Languages, which was part of the wider SIGMA Project, was made up of sixteen leading experts drawn from universities in fourteen Member States, Norway and Switzerland. In addition, there were representatives from C.I.U.T.I. (Conférence internationale permanente d'Instituts universitaires pour la Formation de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes), ESSE (European Society for the Study of English), from the SIGMA Executive Committee and the European Commission. The chairperson was nominated by UNICA, one of the six institutional networks forming the SIGMA consortium, which had undertaken the coordination of the Scientific Committee on Languages. The experts on the Committee came from considerably different backgrounds, ranging from literature to linguistics, applied linguistics, language teaching methodology and applied language studies. They represented different languages and came from different types of institutions and departments. In this way, the Committee was representative in the widest sense, representing not only the differences in the status quo and different national traditions but also the various sub-areas which make up the complex area of Modern Languages and Philological Sciences. In addition, all the members of the Committee had substantive expertise in international co-operation.

The Scientific Committee, which first met in late December 1995, undertook three major tasks:

- 1.) It produced National Reports for the sixteen countries represented, written by the sixteen national experts on the Committee. The Reports follow a common structure worked out and agreed by the Scientific Committee as a whole at two meetings in December 1994 and February 1995. They describe the status quo of Language Studies in the sixteen countries, thereby, for the first time, providing a comprehensive and coordinated overview of the immensely complex area of Language Studies in higher education. In addition, they identify new needs, taking into consideration the development of Language Studies, professional requirements and the demands which will result from the creation of a united Europe. Finally, they propose concrete measures to be taken to satisfy the needs identified. The Reports were written in English or French and translated into either French or English within a period of four months - in some cases much less than four months - to be ready for the ERASMUS Evaluation Conference on Language Studies held in mid-June 1995.

Because of the limited amount of time available, only 400 copies of the National Reports were produced to be made available to the participants of the Stockholm Conference to serve as a basis for discussion. (An edited publication of the Reports is currently being prepared.) However, syntheses of the three sections mentioned above were prepared for the Conference by Christian Wentzlaff-Eggebert (Universität zu Köln, D), Angela Chambers (University of Limerick, IRL) and Martin Forstner (C.I.U.T.I.) respectively.

The synthesis dealing with the status quo highlights the differences that exist between the linguistic situations in the various countries concerned as well as the different language policies with regard to minority language populations. It underlines the lack of convergence between the education systems with regard to students' educational background and age and the structure and content of higher education programmes (range of languages offered; length and intensity of language instruction - even in traditional language/ literature courses,

let alone in language programmes for students of other disciplines). Because of these enormous differences the author believes that a coherent language policy should be vigorously pursued at European level, aimed at enhancing mutual understanding while at the same time preserving the complex diversity of languages and literatures with which people can identify, and the cultural wealth which is part of this diversity.

The synthesis report of the status quo is to be published together with the the National Reports. The 'needs' and 'new measures' synthesis reports form the basis of Sections 1 and 2 of Part Two of this Report. It needs to be pointed out, however, that the syntheses of the National Reports presented as part of this Final Report hardly reflect the rich pictures and complex arguments presented by the rapporteurs themselves.

- 2.) The Committee undertook an evaluation of past inter-university co-operation in the area of Languages. This evaluation was carried out, over a period of five months, by a junior researcher attached to the Committee, who was advised and guided in her work by the Committee chairman as well as by members of staff of the former ERASMUS Bureau. The report prepared by the junior researcher forms the basis of the ERASMUS Report presented as Part One of the Final Report.
- 3.) The Committee planned and staged jointly with Stockholm University and the European Commission (DG XXII) an ERASMUS Evaluation Conference, which was held at Stockholm University on 9-10 June 1995. The Conference was organised by the Swedish expert on the Committee, Staffan Wahlén, and a number of colleagues of his, who also prepared the National Reports for printing.

The Conference, which was attended by some 200 experts from sixteen European countries, completed four tasks:

- (i) It reviewed the current state of Language Studies in higher education in Europe on the basis of the respective synthesis of the National Reports and of short presentations by the rapporteurs in working groups;
- (ii) it evaluated the activities, under ERASMUS, in the area of Languages;
- (iii) it provided information on and discussed new types of action foreseen under the SOCRATES Programme, particularly in the area of Languages;
- (iv) it formulated, against the background of the 'needs' identified and the 'new measures' proposed in the National Reports, recommendations, which have been incorporated into the Conference report (Part Two, Section 3 of the Final Report).

In two meetings held immediately before and after the Conference, the Committee reviewed the results of the work undertaken and the outcome of the Conference and drew up a plan for future action, taking into account opinions expressed at the Conference. A summary of these deliberations is provided at the end of this Report.

As chairman of the Scientific Committee I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who made the work of the Scientific Committee possible: the European Commission DG XXII, the SIGMA consortium and SIGMA office, notably Madame Cecilia Costa, UNICA, notably Madame Chantal Zoller, and Stockholm University. Personally, I should like to express my gratitude to the members of the Committee and to my own university, without whose unswerving support my task would have

been an impossible one and this Report would never have been written. Needless to say, all errors and weaknesses in the Final Report are entirely my own responsibility.

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