

Languages in European Higher Education

TNP3 was a network project about the role and relevance of foreign language skills for European higher education graduates. In the context of the changing linguistic and intercultural needs of Europe, we set about building bridges between higher education institutions, institutions and authorities in the other sectors of education, and the world of work.

The outcomes and results of TNP3 have been disseminated through the

TNP3 Dissemination Network (TNP3-D)

This website, which forms part of the dissemination effort, specifically addresses

- Language specialists in all sectors of education
- University senior management
- Decision-makers in university language departments, schools of translation and interpretation, and language centres
- Decision-makers in the school sector
- Student organisations
- Companies in Language Industries
- Employers in the private and public sectors
- Academic and professional organisations and networks

Why do graduates' foreign language skills matter more than ever before?

Just think for a moment of the following developments

European integration and enlargement, increasing trans-European mobility, migration into Europe, globalisation the advent of a knowledge-based economy, technological advances, changing and emerging new needs in the labour markets, new job profiles, increasing international trade the [Bologna process](#), the [Lisbon agenda](#), [qualification frameworks](#), [lifelong learning](#)

During the [TNP3 project](#), which ran for three years, experts from 90 universities, networks, and other organisations in European countries collaborated in an investigation of the languages and of the language skills and competences required of graduates today – and which are relevant to sustainable employability.

Building bridges between higher education institutions and other stakeholders

TNP3 was driven by the conviction that universities have to enter into structured and

continuous dialogue with employers, survey their graduates' careers, and establish contacts with the other sectors of education in order to adapt their programmes to changing needs in the non-academic environments and to place them in a lifelong learning context.

Thematic areas of TNP3:

- Languages for language-related industries and professions
- Languages for enhanced opportunities on the European labour market
- Languages as an interface between the different sectors of education
- Education and research
- Short-term student mobility
- Teacher training
- Arabic language and culture

What were the main activities in TNP3?

- description and analysis, at national level, of the status quo: changes in the non-academic environments; co-collaboration between universities and other stakeholders; higher education provision
- identification of European trends
- a Europe-wide on-line consultation among graduates, employers, and educational stakeholders
- two large European conferences
- development of recommendations for curriculum innovation and consultation and collaboration, and of pro

What is the purpose of the dissemination network?

During the course of TNP3, we found that local contexts across Europe had considerable influence on the issues we were dealing with. In consequence, we want to present TNP3 findings and results in the context of the specific situations that prevail in different parts of Europe.

Publishing reports and documents on the Web is one thing – engaging in discussion with colleagues, students, graduates and representatives of stakeholder organisations is another. We are keen to hear people's reactions to our findings and recommendations, to learn of their own experiences, and to discuss with them the way forward.

We want to present TNP3 results in a way that makes them comprehensible to and interesting for non-specialist target audiences.

We want to gain the attention of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and the whole range of Brussels-based European interest groups.

What were the main Dissemination Network (TNP3-D) activities?

Conference North: Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus, DK – 11 May 2007

Conference chair: [Karen M. Lauridsen](#), Handelshøjskolen, Aarhus Universitet, DK

The [North conference](#) comprises the following countries: [Denmark](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [Iceland](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Norway](#), and [Sweden](#).

With the advent of globalization, successful communication across linguistic and cultural barriers is more important than ever. We need foreign language and intercultural skills to communicate as part of our job, when studying or working abroad, and when travelling for business or pleasure. The question is, then, which foreign language and intercultural skills are needed, and how we can ensure that everyone who needs to do so has the opportunity to develop them.

The Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages III (2003-06) has developed a set of recommendations comprising :

- Which competences and skills are needed
- What should be done at Higher Education level to ensure that adequate language instruction is provided
- How higher education institutions and their stakeholders on the labour market can collaborate so that the HE graduates develop the linguistic and intercultural skills needed in the world of work

Why this conference?

At the conference, the results of the Thematic Network Project (TNP) will be presented to a wider audience – representatives of educational institutions, educational authorities, employers in various professions, graduates, and students.

The aim of the conference is to discuss the TNP outcomes and to strengthen the dialogue and collaboration between the universities and their stakeholders, the ultimate result being that the HE language provision is geared to meet the needs of the labour market in the widest sense. This applies to language specialists as well as all other professions that need a foreign language component – to name but a few examples, engineers working abroad, medical doctors treating foreign language patients, people working in import / export businesses, etc.

The Nordic Region & Baltic States

The countries of the Nordic Region and Baltic States are all relatively small countries in Europe, and they each have one of the less widely used and taught languages as their national language. As a consequence, there is a strong need for foreign language and intercultural skills in order for these countries to be active members of the international community and stay competitive in the global market place.

Educators, ministry representatives, employers, university graduates and students all have a stake in the development of linguistically competent communities. By participating in this conference, and by entering into dialogue and collaboration with each other, they can contribute actively to the development of such communities.

Conference South: Universidade do Minho (Braga, PT), Monday 18 June 2007

Conference chair: [Orlando Grossegese](#), Universidade do Minho, PT

The [South conference](#) comprises the following countries: [Bulgaria](#), [Cyprus](#), [Greece](#), [Italy](#), [Malta](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#), and [Turkey](#)

Language learning and linguistic diversity are major issues in European integration. But what exactly are the language needs of European enterprise and of the European workforce? In TNP3, recommendations were developed for the creation of new structures for consultation and co-operation involving various groups of stakeholders on different levels, as well as for the adaptation of specialist programmes and general higher education language offerings to the changing needs of the European labour market.

The aim of the TNP3-D Conference South is to:

- present the outcomes of TNP3 to a wider audience, with a focus on the specific contexts in South Europe
- prepare the creation of new structures for consultation and collaboration to keep up the momentum generated by TNP3, facilitating broader and more intensive consultation among regional employers and higher education decision-makers.

The conference offers the rare opportunity for a comparative view on policies and practices in the area of language teaching and learning, especially in the Atlantic-Mediterranean Region, which incorporates the different characteristics of the Western and Eastern parts of this heterogeneous area. Spanish and Portuguese are major world languages, with Spanish having a far stronger position within Europe. With the exception of Italian and Turkish, the prevailing situation in this region is that the national and regional languages are less widely used and taught elsewhere. The whole region has experienced waves of emigration and, more recently, immigration (especially from Arabic-speaking countries and the Far East), the latter of which have increased contact with other languages and cultures. The implications of this development for the economies, language mediation, and education have yet to be fully assessed. In addition to that, there is a strong need for language learning and intercultural skills in order for these countries to be active members of the international community and stay competitive in the global market place.

The conference will focus on the three mainstream sub-themes of TNP3:

SP1: Higher education programmes, and demands in language-related industries and profession - linguistic and non-linguistic skills and competences required on the rapidly changing specialist labour market.

SP2: Foreign languages for enhanced opportunities on the European and international labour markets - languages and linguistic skills sought after on and relevant to the labour market in general.

SP3: Vertical and horizontal consultation and collaboration in the field of language learning and teaching between higher education and the other educational sectors – to achieve a language learning continuum and general improvement in the quality of language teaching and learning.

Conference West: University of Southampton, UK – 29 June 2007

Conference chair: [Michael Kelly](#), University of Southampton, UK

The [West conference](#) comprises the following countries:

[Belgium](#), [France](#), [Germany](#) (old länder), [Ireland](#), [Luxembourg](#), [The Netherlands](#), and the [United Kingdom](#)

With the increased interconnectedness of the world, successful communication across linguistic and cultural barriers is more important than ever. We increasingly need foreign language and intercultural skills to communicate for purposes of work, for studying or working abroad, and for travel and personal development. As a result, we need a better understanding of what kinds of foreign language and intercultural skills are needed, and how we can ensure that everyone who needs to do so has the opportunity to develop them.

The Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages III (2003-06), funded under the EU's Socrates programme, has developed a set of recommendations comprising

- which competences and skills are needed;
- what should be done at Higher Education (HE) level to ensure that adequate language instruction is provided;
- how higher education institutions and their stakeholders on the labour market can collaborate so that the HE graduates develop the linguistic and intercultural skills needed in the world of work.
- how collaboration can be improved between HE and other sectors of the education system, especially with secondary schools.

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Western Europe

North-Western Europe comprises the British Isles, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany (Länder) and Switzerland. There is a huge diversity of linguistic contexts, ranging from smaller countries with several official languages to large countries with internationally used languages. All of them are currently experiencing a rapid growth in migratory movements, with a resulting multilingual population. As a result, there is a strong need for foreign language and intercultural skills in order for these countries to thrive and prosper in the increasingly competitive global market place, and to accommodate the increasingly diverse groups which make up the population.

In all of these countries, issues of language policy and in particular policy on language education are becoming important strategic questions. Educators, ministry representatives, employers, university graduates and students all have a stake in the development of linguistically competent communities. By participating in this conference, and by entering into dialogue and collaboration with each other, we hope you can contribute actively to the development of such communities.

Conference East: Uniwersytet Warszawski, PL – 21 September 2007

Conference chair: [Jolanta Urbanikowa](#), Uniwersytet Warszawski, PL

The [East conference](#) comprises the following countries: [Austria](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Germany](#) (new länder), [Hungary](#), [Poland](#), [Romania](#), [Slovenia](#), and the [Slovak Republic](#)

Brussels, 27 September 2007

Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst ([VLEKHO](#))

Koningsstraat / Rue Royale 336 - 1030 Brussels

Conference chair: Arthur Mettinger

The [European conference](#) seeks to attract all project partners together with representatives of employer and employee organisations or individual enterprises, European and national education authorities, students' organisations as well as university management and language experts from the different sectors of education.

Current and Future Linguistic Needs of Graduates on the European and International Labour Markets

The TNP3-D European Conference will be the climax of a one-year dissemination network project funded by the European Commission under the Socrates-Erasmus Programme. TNP3, the third full-fledged Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages (2003-2006) sought to work towards structured consultation and collaboration between universities and other stakeholders, including employers in the language industry, enterprise in general, authorities responsible for and institutions in the other sectors of education, academic and professional organisations, and graduates – in order to align higher education offerings to changing and emerging needs and to place them in the structure of lifelong learning. TNP3 started to pave the way towards structured dialogue and collaboration through conference workshops, a Europe-wide on-line consultation and the launch of a virtual consortium.

One of the insights gained through TNP3 was the awareness that there are considerable, in some cases huge differences across Europe as regards labour market needs and higher education programmes. Because of this, the main emphasis of TNP3-D is on decentralised dissemination through one-day conferences in Aarhus (DK), Braga (PT), Southampton (UK) and Warsaw (PL). The results of these regional conferences will also inform the input of the European Conference.

The European Conference will be opened by Mr Ján Figel', member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Culture and Youth, and closed by Mr Leonard Orban, member of the European Commission responsible for Multilingualism. The presentation of major TNP3 results will be followed by three panels on the following themes:

- Languages in higher education
- Linguistic, language-related and cultural skills and competences required of higher education graduates on the European labour market
- Consultation and collaboration between universities and other stakeholders

There will be several opportunities for Conference participants to take part in discussions.

The principal aim of the Conference is to provide a forum for critical reflection on the outcomes of TNP3 and of the regional conferences, and for discussion about future action. TNP3 clearly showed that the principal difficulty in building bridges between universities and the various environments is in bringing about a structured dialogue between higher education and enterprise. The Conference is to send clear signals to both higher education institutions and enterprises why it is in their own best interest to engage in continuous dialogue. In addition, we shall draw attention to the fact that when we speak of the employability of graduates, we also have to think of non-commercial sectors of the labour market, for example public authorities at different levels and INGO's.

TNP3-D has 65 partners in 27 participating countries and in Switzerland. The Conference will be chaired by Arthur Mettinger, Vice rector of the University of Vienna and President of the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA).

Project Structure

Project co-ordination and management

The TNP3-D project is coordinated by the Co-ordinator and Deputy-Coordinator in collaboration with the [Steering Committee](#) and the [Project Management Team](#).

Quality Assurance is in the hands of the [Evaluation Board](#).

The core activities of the TNP3-D project are the regional conferences and the final European conference in Brussels. This is reflected in the project structure:

For each of the regional conferences, there is a conference chair and organiser responsible for the programme and for all practical arrangements in collaboration with the project management team in Berlin:

Steering Committee

Wolfgang Mackiewicz - Project coordinator

Freie Universität Berlin

Karen M. Lauridsen - Deputy project coordinator

Handelshøjskolen / Aarhus Universitet

Anne-Claude Berthoud

Université de Lausanne

Neva Šlibar

Univerza v Ljubljani

Martin Stegu

Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien

Daniel Toudic

Université Rennes 2

Bartek Banaszak

The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB)

Evaluation Board

Régis Ritz (Chair)

European University Association

Brian Fox

European Commission, DG Interpretation

Annie Lhérété

Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, enseignement supérieur, recherche

Mette Fjord Sørensen

Dansk Industri

Maurizio Viezzi

Università di Trieste

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Sub-projects of TNP3-D

Sub-project one: Languages for language-related industries and professions

Sub-project 1 of the Third Thematic Network Project investigated recent developments within the so-called language industries. These industries include organisations and companies active in the following fields: translation, including software and website localisation, revision and editing, terminology management, dubbing and subtitling; interpretation, in the form of conference interpreting, liaison interpreting and public service interpreting; and the language technologies, comprising, among others, machine translation, multilingual text processing, and speech processing.

The remit of the sub-project was to identify changes in the language industries across Europe, to describe the needs, in terms of new professional skills and competences, resulting from these changes, and to monitor the efforts of European Higher Education institutions to meet these needs by providing relevant specialist language programmes at Bachelor's and Master's levels.

The work of the sub-project is documented in national reports, a synthesis report, various conference reports, and the dissemination document produced by TNP3-D, the network project for dissemination of the results and outcomes of the Third Thematic Network Project. All of these documents are available on this website or on the website of TNP3.

The dissemination document, which presents the recommendations of the sub-project on measures required in Higher Education to meet the current and future demands of the language-related industries and professionals working within them, also draws on insights gained from a Europe-wide consultation conducted in 2005-2006 among employers and graduates in the language industries.

Sub-project two: Languages for enhanced opportunities on the labour market

Over the past few years, the European labour market has generally been affected, and continues to be so, by the impact of wide movements and changes, including the expansion of the EU by 12 new member countries and the rapid changes in economic and other conditions, usually labelled the consequences of globalisation. This is also, and perhaps even more so than in many other areas, the case in the area of languages.

More sectors are characterised by less permanence in employment and more flexible working patterns, including increasing requirements for geographical mobility, and a subsequent need for re-training and upskilling. For university graduates this may often lead to a need for conversion to new fields, and with that, a need for new, more or better language skills and intercultural competences.

Sub-project 2 of TNP3 has focused on ‘measuring’, describing and analysing these developments and trends in the area of languages through intensive collaboration between the university sector and non-university stakeholders, i.e. representatives of employers, employers associations, students and student associations.

Results so far are a much clearer picture of what is needed in terms of curriculum reform at universities with a view to fulfilling the needs of the labour market, and a more common language for describing levels of competence in a life-long learning perspective among university as well as non-university stakeholders.

The actual languages required are conditioned by the specific professional requirements and the work in question. It is clear that while English is increasingly used as a means of communication in multinational corporations, English on its own is inadequate to meet the needs of business and other professional activities, the use of the client language being crucial to satisfactory outcomes.

With Europe’s recent expansion to 27 member countries and with Europe’s ambitions for leadership in the global economy, language and intercultural competences remain crucial for Europe’s future prosperity and cooperation – internally and externally.

Sub-project three: Languages as an interface between the different sectors of education

Subproject 3 of TNP3 has focused on a new concept in language learning and teaching. It has dealt with issues concerning “interfaces” between the different sectors of education, interfaces having been referred to as points of contact, communication and cooperation between different actors/players in the language mediation process. They are junctions, where on one hand different levels of language education intercept and where on the other hand different players, i.e. decision-makers and language providers both on the vertical axis of formal language education and on the horizontal axis of other language providers or language learning opportunities (could) meet. We were interested in the modes, effects, issues and structures of interfacing, i.e. if and how teachers at different levels, learners, stakeholders and any other partners cooperate and communicate with HEI in order to ensure the common goal of enhancing and improving language learning and multilingualism in a life-long-learning (LLL) perspective. One of the main objectives of the subproject was to identify the role of HEI in these processes. As HEI occupy a central position in the process of life long learning, they should take the lead in designing language learning scenarios encompassing the whole spectrum of language learning. We wanted to find out how HEI might step in, take up, stimulate and initiate interface-activities.

Three main issues were at the very heart of the subproject’s activities, reports, analyses and recommendations:

- Facilitating the continuity of language learning (and teaching) by making it more coherent and efficient, a goal to be attained by removing obstacles for a smooth progression and transparent and efficient learning paths.
- Thus making space and enhancing motivation for learning more languages, enhancing multilingualism and attaining the European goal of every citizen speaking at least 2 foreign languages in addition to the first one.
- Fostering individual and collective language-awareness processes in the life-long-learning perspective.

The work of the sub-project is documented in national reports, a synthesis and a final report, various conference and workshop reports and presentations, as well as the dissemination documents produced by TNP3-D for the decentralised conferences. The recommendations of the sub-project draw on insights gained from a Europe-wide consultation among different language providers and other stakeholders. For concrete information, please consult the NR, the SR, the workshop reports, the Southampton reports on teacher training, the extensive Final Report on the TNP3 website and the dissemination documents on this website.