



Network project for the decentralised and centralised dissemination of TNP3 results and outcomes

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues!

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you most warmly on behalf of the Conference Organising Committee. Today's European Dissemination Conference of TNP-3 is a very special event dealing with the topic of „Current and Future Linguistic Needs of Graduates on the European and International Labour Markets” from different perspectives. Moreover, this conference is characterised by a number of particular features:

First, this conference marks 12 years of continuous university cooperation in the area of languages. We will point out how the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity has become a more and more central concern for European Higher Education institutions in a constantly changing environment.

Second, this conference brings together the main target groups that have been and will have to be dealing with languages from different perspectives and with different aims:

- all people at all levels in higher education, be it researchers, education specialists and experts, policy- and decision makers, teachers or administrators, including also research funding bodies;
- public authorities in the field of education;
- representatives of the other sectors of education;
- employers and employer organisations;
- professional and academic associations;
- student and alumni organisations;
- the social partners;
- the Council of Europe and, of course,
- the European Institutions and, in particular,
- the European Parliament and the Commission.

The major step forward in the thematic network projects of the past decade has been to actively seek and foster the consultation and collaboration between higher education on the one hand and particularly the European and international labour markets on the other hand.

Third, today's conference will also present the major outcomes of TNP-3, the thematic network on languages running from 2003-2006, together with the results of four regional conferences of TNP-3.

Fourth, in three panels during the day participants from various groups that I have already mentioned will bring in their views on

- what is the role of languages in HE for mobility & employability?
- what does the present and future European labour market require of HE graduates with regard to languages & language-related competencies?
- how should/could consultation & collaboration between universities and other stakeholders be organised?

The Conference organising committee regards it as essential that the outcomes of today's presentations, discussions, interventions, suggestions and ideas should form important, even essential input for establishing new lines of action bringing even closer collaboration between the groups represented here in order to actively shape Europe's future together.

Finally, let me mention that there is yet another special feature to this conference: we are glad to have two keynotes by two European Commissioners dealing with languages at the level of the European Commission:

The morning keynote will be delivered by Jan Figél, who in November 2004 became the first European Commissioner ever whose portfolio explicitly included multilingualism policy issues; these were at that time strongly linked with education issues as the teaching and learning of languages was regarded as an indispensable precondition for the creation of the European Higher Education Area. Jan Figél was assigned the responsibility for multilingualism in education, culture, interpretation, translation, and publications

The afternoon keynote will be delivered by Leonard Orban, who since January 2007 has been the European Commissioner responsible for multilingualism as a transversal issue and who will also report on future plans for furthering multilingualism in Europe.

As you can see, we have a full and strenuous day before us – I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your active participation and to express the Organising Committee's conviction that today's conference will mark an important stepping stone for an integrated view on the future of language learning in Europe.

Thank you!

Arthur Mettinger

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