



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

SYNTHESIS REPORT “NORTH” (SUB- PROJECT 1)

Skills and competences required in the language industries and in the language-related professions

Introduction

This report is based on the national reports from Denmark, Lithuania and Sweden. In all three countries, language graduates benefit from increased economic growth and a general decline in unemployment rates. The popularity of language studies varies considerably. While Danish data show that language studies increasingly lose market shares in H.E. institutions, language study programmes in Lithuania are becoming increasingly popular among young people – especially in business, legal, and technical areas.

In a Danish context, however, the image of language studies presents reasons for concern both for employers and for H.E. institutions, especially as concerns the ‘classical’ languages as German, French, Spanish, Italian and Russian.

1. Recent developments in the national/regional labour market language industries and the language professions that have given rise to new needs regarding foreign language skills and competences required of graduates

Generally, in the Nordic region, only minor changes and adjustments to existing programmes have taken place from 2003- 2007, although a certain degree of national variation is present.

Sweden:

Acquisitions and mergers in the translation business have reduced the number of employers. Swedish companies are buying companies abroad, and at the same time foreign companies are starting up businesses in Sweden. Swedish translators are competing on an increasingly global market. The comparatively high income level in Sweden means that translators must compete with *quality and expertise* in special subject areas rather than low prices.

Lithuania

Lithuania has witnessed considerable changes in its economic and social life. The main foreign investors in Lithuania are Russia, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany. In 2006, nearly 3000 foreign enterprises were registered in the country.

During the period 2003-2006, unemployment rates in Lithuania dropped significantly (from 14.2% to 5.9%) for two reasons: the improvement of Lithuania's economy and increased emigration. With the access to the EU, a great need for interpreters and translators has arisen. EU institutions hold regular competitions, which are often won by people with good proficiency in at least 2 foreign languages as well as experience. These people do not necessarily possess a formal translator's diploma or a degree in interpretation. Also, hundreds of part-time translators assist in translating official European documents.

Denmark

Language industries increasingly demand that language graduates possess a range of complementary skills in several areas. As the traditional, strictly linguistic profile of the language expert changes, language industries and language professionals increasingly become involved in activities that involve aspects of communication, and various types of knowledge sharing in organizations. From 2003–2007, this development has highlighted the importance for language graduates to possess a range of supplementary, cross-disciplinary skills especially in information technology, knowledge sharing, and skills related to general and intercultural communication, media relations, etc. In brief, language graduates must be able to perform a range of multifaceted tasks to supplement the traditional language skills and must be able relate their specific skills and competences to the world of work in increasingly specific and concrete terms.

2. New specialist HE programmes and offerings: New curricula or modules introduced in the last three years – corresponding to new needs in the labour market.

Generally, the national reports state that there is a development towards *specialization* and *centralization*. The centralization of specific study programmes is reported to have improved the quality of the study programmes in question.

Denmark:

The development of new curricula includes oral and written language studies in combination with other disciplines, e.g. organizational communication, IT-skills and media contact, or cultural studies. As this development of curricula and

modules was already well on the way in 2003, recent years have seen minor adjustments of existing study programmes. Recent curricula developments in language specific curricula involve the introduction of study programmes in modern Arabic and Chinese.

Lithuania:

The Bachelor's programme for technical translation at Kaunas University of Technology has gained considerable popularity among young people. Its first graduates joined the labour market in the year 2004. A new Master's degree programme 'Translation and localisation' has been introduced at Kaunas University of Technology in the year 2007 for advanced studies in this area.

Another significant response to the growing popularity of foreign language studies is introduction of programmes for training translators (basically English) at six colleges in different regions of Lithuania, most of them specialising in business or law. After 3 years of study, college graduates are granted the professional qualification of a translator-referent.

Sweden:

A Nordic network has been set up for the development of a joint Nordic master in terminology. This network has received funding from Nordplus (under the Nordic Council of Ministers). Also, new programmes and courses in translation and/or interpreting are being set up (BA to MA level).

In Stockholm (TÖI), the basic training of translators and interpreters on BA level will start with a joint course called "Basics of translation and interpreting", followed by specialisation semesters in either translation or interpreting. Students can take a BA degree in interpreting or translation. On the Master's level, there will be a two year programme, consisting of e.g. localisation or conference interpreting. There will also be a special strand for students who wish to continue their studies for a PhD.

As concerns community interpreter training, the number of schools offering this programme has been reduced to three. The number of students has thus been drastically reduced, but the quality has improved considerably.

3. Consultations/collaborations between higher education institutions and organizations/companies in the language industries/professions

The consultation between higher education institutions and organizations/companies in the language industries is by now an established and ongoing process in all three countries.

Denmark

The establishing of contact and the development of dialogue and consultations between H.E. institutions and organizations/companies were well on the way already in 2003.

In 2007, the challenge for both parties lies in *collaborating and constantly maintaining* the ongoing dialogue between H.E. institutions and the world of work.

Lithuania

The greatest change in this respect has been the development of Students' Career Centres in the largest universities of Lithuania. The aim of these Centres is to maintain close ties with different enterprises, find out about their needs and organise regular seminars or consultations for students (online or face-to-face).

Career days are another important factor in this context. In 2007, at Kaunas University of Technology, representatives of 84 enterprises expressed their preferences concerning potential employees. A great number of them mentioned proficiency in foreign languages (English, Russian) as the main priority.

Sweden:

No new activities stated.

4. Trends and tendencies: Future challenges

The challenges for language policies and language studies differ from one country to another. As concerns future challenges for the language professions, Denmark and Lithuania seem to be in very different situations.

In Lithuania, the European Union situation and the rapid development of international contacts and emigration have resulted in a growing interest in foreign language proficiency and a need for interpreters and translators. Study programmes offering specialized courses in business, law and technical translations are *increasingly* popular among Lithuanian students.

In Denmark, on the other hand, the popularity of language studies is rapidly *decreasing*, especially as classical European languages (French, German, Italian, and Spanish) are concerned. Although the organisation of Danish Industries as well as Danish H.E. institutions have argued that this development presents a threat to the international activities of many Danish companies, the interest in other European languages than English is rapidly declining. The interest in 'new' languages as Chinese and Arabic, however, is increasing, and new study programmes are being established in this area.

New initiatives needed

In 2007 and in years to come, the above development presents an extremely interesting challenge in the dialogue between H.E. institutions and professional organizations from the world of work. In a Danish context, there is still a demand for foreign language skills other than English – but very few students to meet this demand. New initiatives are needed to market the image of languages at all levels of education.

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References:

This TNP3-D synthesis report on the Nordic region is based on:

The national TNP3-D report from Lithuania, 2007, submitted by Jūrate Zdanyté of Kaunas University of Technology.

The national TNP3-D report from Sweden, 2007, submitted by Helge Niska, Tolk- og översätterinstitutet, University of Stockholm.

The national TNP3-D report from Denmark, 2007, submitted by Birgite Norlyk, University of Southern Denmark.

