



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

SYNTHESIS REPORT “EAST” (SUB-PROJECT 1)

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

I. Introduction

This synthesis report is based on national report updates from only three countries, Germany, Poland and Romania, and should be read as an attempt to identify certain trends rather than as a comprehensive analysis representing the situation in the whole region.

The aim of the report is, firstly, to identify in Central and East European countries new developments in the language industries and language-related professions which have taken place since the publication of previous TNP3 reports and, secondly, to track the status of the developments identified in previous TNP3 reports.

The background to these developments has been well documented in TNP3 publications, which have highlighted the effect on the language industries of globalisation and internationalisation, EU enlargement, increasing corporate mergers and labour mobility in the EU, and rapid technological change. In addition to these factors, the increase in cross-border trade and business activity is of significance in our region and has also affected the language industries, leading to increasing demand for the services of language professionals.

II. Recent developments in the language-related industries and professions (excluding language teaching)

The region has been influenced generally by the factors listed above, although local factors may have given weight to particular changes in each country. While Germany, with its high profile as a trading nation, has inevitably seen a trade-related rise in the need for translation, interpreting, terminology work, and technical writing, in Romania there has been an increase in the demand for legal translation and conference and community interpreting, as well as a rise in language-related activities in the production of international publications, international marketing, the management of multimedia and multilingual

software, website design, and subtitling. In Poland, expansion, consolidation and increasing specialisation in the language industries has even given rise to the emergence of relatively new jobs in which knowledge of foreign languages and the new technologies is essential.

The picture that emerges is one of a growing demand for services in both traditional and more recently established language-based and language-related industries and professions and, of course, of an increasing demand for competence in software applications across the board. Language skills will clearly not in themselves be sufficient to meet the needs created by rapid changes and expansion in these industries and professions: as TNP3 Consultation results clearly showed, language graduates seeking employment in these sectors will need skills in non-language areas such as management, in order to be able to carry out varied and multifaceted work. One consequence of these developments is the emergence of new job profiles, and these, in turn, present a challenge for HE institutions to meet through the provision of courses which supplement language skills with training and work experience which will prepare language graduates for the job market.

III. New specialist HE programmes corresponding to developments in the language-related industries and professions

HE institutions have been increasingly challenged by the developments described above. Attempts have been made to address these challenges by altering existing course programmes and by providing new ones in all cycles. Of course, many changes to HE course programmes were, and in some cases still continue to be, simply the result of implementation of the Bologna process. However, there is interesting evidence in national report updates of a shift from traditional language and literature courses to courses which reflect the changing linguistic and professional needs of society, ranging from focused additions to course programmes in the areas of translation and interpreting to broader expansion and innovation in course offerings in the area of languages in general.

In Germany, additions to course programmes can be viewed conveniently in a University of Leipzig portal, <http://www.xlatio.de>, which gives an overview of courses in translation and interpreting and other language industry-related courses offered by HE institutions in Germany. Two examples of developments listed there will illustrate trends. First, a BA in Translation Studies for Information Technologies is being offered by the University of Heidelberg in cooperation with the Mannheim University of Applied Sciences. The aim of this course is to open up to graduates a career in the area of technical translation, software localisation, technical documentation and web publishing. And second, Flensburg University of Applied Sciences offers a BA in International Professional Communication in technical editing and technical translation in industry and commerce; Flensburg notes that the degree was established as a

reaction to globalisation and internationalisation, which has given rise to a demand for linguistically proficient professionals who can not only carry out technical communication work but also plan and direct company business.

Poland provides examples of both specific and more general reactions to changing professional needs. The Department of Applied Linguistics at Warsaw University has recently established two post-diploma programmes, one being the Study of Interpreting, focusing on legal translations, and the other a European Masters in Conference Interpreting. These programmes provide both theoretical and practical competence in translation and interpreting, with the former including a variety of practical exercises in terminology for legal translations and the latter covering consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. More broadly, in the programmes offered by the Department of Applied Linguistics, greater emphasis has been placed on students' self-development, as well as the acquisition of intercultural and IT skills. More student placements are offered and the choice of languages taught has become wider. Furthermore, the Institute of Applied Linguistics has been training future translators and interpreters and has included in its courses obligatory periods of practical training, of a minimum of four weeks, to be undertaken by the end of the 4th year of studies. Private and public institutions invite students to practise as translators and interpreters, and periods of practical work have been coordinated in the English, Russian, German, French and, recently, Spanish language sections. Thanks to these opportunities, the best students can begin careers with the companies that host them.

However, reaction to the changing situation within the language industry in Poland is not a recent phenomenon: in 2001 the Faculty of Language for Special Purposes was created as a branch of the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Warsaw University to address developments.

In Romania, one direct reaction to changing professional needs is exemplified by the MA programme at Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca: new specialisations in the MA Translation programme are reviser-translator (revision, proof-reading, text editing), audio-visual translator and legal translator; and, within the MA Interpreting programme, conference interpreting, community interpreting and job profile communication, and cultural mediation, including conference organization, are catered for. Broader changes include the following: the establishment of new Applied Modern Languages departments at Vasile Goldis University, Arad, and at Dunarea de Jos University, Galati, among others; the creation of applied modern languages specialisations at universities, such as that at Petru Maior University, Targu Mures; and the diversification of language offerings within applied modern languages to include, for example, Polish and Japanese at Babes-Bolyai University.

IV. Consultation/collaboration between HE institutions and employers in the language industries and professions

The update reports suggest that a modest degree of collaboration and consultation between HE institutions and employers in the language industries is already taking place in traditional channels, such as professional associations and specialist conferences. However, there is a clear need for increased consultation and collaboration on a regular basis and in a structured and form, so that representatives of the language industries have greater influence on the development of HE curricula.

In Germany, there are umbrella organisations, whose members comprise practising professionals and academics, currently promoting dialogue between HE and the professional world. Of particular note are Transforum, The German Institute for Terminology, and The German Association for Technical Communication and Information Development. In the context of the changes outlined in the German national report, it is clear that such forums have become more essential than ever.

In Poland, however, cooperation between HE institutions, employers, professional associations and alumni associations takes place primarily in the form of conferences and in the context of student placements. But here again, other forms of cooperation conducted on a regular, structured basis are needed, so that the influence of professional practitioners can be brought to bear on HE language programmes. Furthermore, systematic research into the employability of language graduates in relation to developments within the language industries is still lacking.

There is evidence of dialogue in Romania between HE and the language industries in the form of colloquia on the new language professions and through the channels of employers' organisations and professional associations, such as the Association of Romanian Translators. The outcome of this dialogue has been the dissemination of good practice in specialised translation and the promotion of quality standards in the language professions. However, in addition to closer cooperation between HE institutions and employers in general, it is clear that here, as elsewhere, specific initiatives are needed, such as the involvement of alumni associations in the consultation process.

Bartosz Jurczak & Alan Walton, 31 July 2007.

Sources

This TNP3-D synthesis report for the Eastern European region is based on:
An update of the TNP3 National Report for Germany, 2007, submitted by Alan Walton of the Freie Universität Berlin.

An update of the TNP3 National Report for Poland, 2007, submitted by Dorota Jurczyk & Bartosz Jurczak of Uniwersytet Warszawski.

An update of the TNP3 National Report for Romania, 2007, submitted by Stefan Oltean of Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai.

