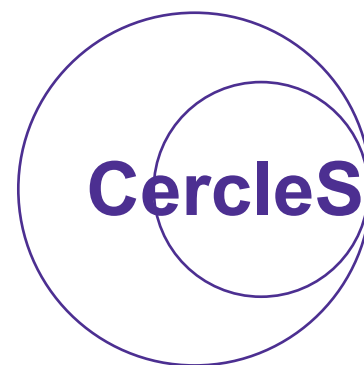


# Bulletin 27



Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur

European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education

Europäischer Verband der Hochschulsprachenzentren

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## Publication Details

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## What matters... Ce qui compte... Was wichtig ist...

It is never difficult to find a common theme running through each CercleS bulletin, a theme that reflects the CercleS mission in the promotion of foreign language learning and teaching. In the present issue, it seems to be particularly well spelt out in the title of the contribution from our Vice President, Marta Genís, "Languages Matter and Language Centres Matter too".

The very familiar EU motto "Unity in Diversity" offers us a stronghold in the campaign for multilingualism within our Confederation, where members should feel free to express their own ideas and take part in discussions in the language they feel most comfortable with, rather than feeling obliged to speak in the most frequent language of communication, that is, English!

It is clear from the Language Centre Profiles that we publish in each issue that Language Centres matter too. These reports describe how each Language Centre strives to meet the demands of its students by organising special purpose courses and making available language learning resources, the aim of which are also to create an awareness of the need to develop lifelong language learning skills in preparation for their future professional lives.

The fact that Language Centres from all corners of Europe join forces with CercleS in the sharing of experiences with a view to improving the quality of their work in their own institutions shows that CercleS matters too. Over the past few years, Language Centres have been aiming to pool their energies by looking further afield than their national association to take part in joint projects and activities. Indeed, the newly instituted Focus Groups are becoming more and more popular (see reports from the First Focus Group Meeting in this issue) and, of their own accord, members have been asking for space and time to be allocated before the Helsinki conference in order for groups to set up their next meetings. Consequently, the image that CercleS continues to transmit is a proactive one.

CercleS has taken part in the LETPP project on Language Policy in Europe that

has organised several events during the past year and is honoured to have its co-ordinator Lid King as one of our plenary speakers at the conference in Helsinki. Other projects such as Explics and Picture have seen CercleS as an active participant in the creation and distribution of language learning materials.

This issue also contains a report on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wulkow meeting (Quality issues) and as we go to print, a 3<sup>rd</sup> (Guidelines for the Assessment of European Language Centres) is being organised in Italy for November this year. Again the topics of both past and future meetings are indicative of what matters to all CercleS members – the quality of what Language Centres are doing, not only in terms of the relevant aspect of teaching and evaluation, but also regarding the recognised standards a Language Centre must maintain.

CercleS overall membership has risen to over 330 member institutions in 2010. In the next General meeting there will be a new National Association (ReCles, Portugal heralding 14 centres) applying for membership, new Associate members from Liechtenstein, Rumania and Norway, as well as established Associate members renewing their membership. This means that more institutions from all over Europe are looking to join us in our common mission.

Having stressed that multilingualism must be at the very centre of CercleS activities, it is perhaps best, nevertheless, to conclude on a less self-glorificatory note. What is missing in this present issue are full contributions in our other working languages, French and German, except of course, a short glossary of Finnish expressions to help us survive linguistically in Helsinki! We warmly welcome contributions to the Bulletin in French and German because: language matters, Language Centres matter and CercleS matters. Wir begrüßen Beiträge für das Bulletin in Französisch und Deutsch sehr herzlich, denn: Sprache ist wichtig, Sprachenzentren sind wichtig und CercleS ist wichtig. Des contributions rédigées en allemand et français sont les bienvenues, parce que ce qui compte, c'est la langue, ce sont les centres de langues, c'est CercleS. GM

# Word from the President

Johann Fischer



My two years of office as President of CercleS will soon come to an end, and this is the moment to look back and see to which extent we have achieved our aims. One of my aims was to support and enhance multilingualism within our confederation. Multilingualism has been on our agenda at many meetings and many efforts have been made, but there is still some way for us to go. With more and more universities joining CercleS the role of English as the language of international communication has increased: more CercleS members mean more languages involved, and the obvious

lingua franca that is then used at meetings is English, since a larger network will communicate in the language used most in international contacts.

In this context, the LETPP Project "Languages in Europe: Theory, Policy, Practice, co-ordinated by Lid King in co-operation with Nick Byrne is of considerable importance as it aims at the valorisation of all languages. At the LETPP Seminar at the House of Lords in February 2010 the participants, representing politics, the business sector and the education sector all agreed that English was not enough. Lord Davies, British Minister for Trade, Investment and Business, underlined that e.g. the UK lost every year a considerable amount of business opportunities as British businessmen were not competent enough in foreign languages and that therefore more efforts had to be made to support the learning of languages. At the LETPP Conference in April 2010 one of the student participants suggested that everybody should learn English and that international contacts should be carried out in English only in order to save time and money; this caused however animated discussions among the student group and the audience in general, who did not agree and listed numerous reasons why other languages were necessary. CercleS, a partner in the LETPP Project, will support the dissemination of the ideas to enhance the teaching and learning of languages developed during the LETPP Conference and throughout the whole duration of the project, and we are looking forward to Lid King's plenary at our Helsinki Conference, where he will present the outcomes of the project.

A second major activity we have launched in the area of multilingualism is the new CercleS Focus Group on language policy, which will cover a broad area of aspects: the activities of this focus group may include aspects like the language policy adopted at university level, the language policy and the choice of languages taught at a language centre, the language policy within CercleS and CercleS' role in disseminating language policy. This focus group has met on two occasions, the first focus group meeting in Toulouse in November 2009 and the second meeting in Messina in May 2010. Furthermore, discussions on language policy took place at the Wulkow meeting of directors of university language centres and have continued via email. We are therefore looking forward to the ideas and suggestions of this very active and dynamic group of CercleS members and are sure that they will support us in enhancing multilingualism within our confederation.

Considerable efforts have been made by the CercleS Executive and the organising team in Helsinki to make our forthcoming XI<sup>th</sup> CercleS Conference a multilingual event. We have increased the number of official conference languages to seven (English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish) and have asked all presenters to use two languages for their presentations, i.e. to give the presentation in one language and to use support material in a second language. At the Seville conference we had already asked presenters to use two languages, but not every presenter respected this rule, which caused some irritation among the audience; we therefore hope that the Helsinki Conference will be more successful in this respect, but it all depends on the participants. I would like to underline the importance of multilingualism within our network and the use of more than just one language as not everybody feels confident in English and other languages might have an even more limited audience. I therefore kindly ask all presenters to support multilingualism and to use two languages with their presentations.

Personally, I am looking forward to a stimulating and multilingual conference in Helsinki in September and hope that our "experiment" will work well and that I will hear many different languages being used at presentations, during coffee breaks and

at dinners and receptions. I do hope that this will then be the beginning of an ever more multilingual communication pattern within CercleS.

Le multilinguisme dans notre confédération est un aspect important et vital pour CercleS. Nous prêchons l'enseignement des langues et devons donc également vivre cette richesse linguistique dans la vie de notre confédération. Au bout des deux ans de ma Présidence je fais le bilan de cet objectif, c.à.d. de renforcer le multilinguisme dans CercleS, qui me tient personnellement à cœur, et constate que nous avons réussi certaines choses, mais que nous devons aussi continuer nos efforts.

Dans ce contexte le projet LETPP « Languages in Europe : Théorie Politiques Pratiques », coordonné par Lid King en coopération avec Nick Byrne, est de grande importance parce qu'il analyse les besoins linguistiques à différents niveaux et la situation de l'enseignement des langues et prépare des propositions pour renforcer le multilinguisme. Les différentes parties présentes aux réunions, séminaire et colloque LETPP étaient toutes d'accord sur un point : l'anglais ne suffit pas ! Pour plus d'informations sur le projet, dont CercleS est partenaire, veuillez consulter le site web ([www.letpp.eu](http://www.letpp.eu)) et venez écouter la séance plénière de Lid King au Colloque CercleS à Helsinki en septembre.

Deuxièmement, CercleS a établi le groupe de travail sur la politique linguistique qui s'est réuni à deux occasions, à Toulouse en novembre 2009 et à Messina en mai 2010, et qui mène des discussions animées par courrier électronique. Nous sommes convaincus que ce groupe de travail contribuera avec ses idées à accroître le multilinguisme vécu dans notre confédération et nous sommes curieux d'apprendre leurs idées et propositions.

Le XI<sup>ème</sup> Colloque CercleS sera l'occasion de voir à quel degré les membres de CercleS vivent ce multilinguisme. Nous avons augmenté le nombre de langues officielles du colloque à sept, c.à.d. l'allemand, l'anglais, l'espagnol, le finnois, le français, l'italien et le suédois, et demandons aux intervenants d'utiliser deux langues pour leurs interventions, c.à.d. une langue pour présenter oralement et une deuxième langue pour le matériel de support. J'espère que ce principe nous aidera à vivre un colloque vraiment multilingue où nous entendrons de nombreuses langues lors des interventions, des pauses café et des dîners.

Zum Ende meiner Amtszeit blicke ich auf meine Ziele für die laufende Präsidentschaft zurück, wobei mir die Mehrsprachigkeit innerhalb von CercleS immer ein besonderes Anliegen war. Viel haben wir erreicht, aber es liegt auch noch ein langer Weg vor uns.

Wichtig ist in diesem Kontext das LETPP-Projekt („Languages in Europe: Theory Policy Practice“), das von Lid King in Zusammenarbeit mit Nick Byrne koordiniert wird und das den Bedarf an Sprachkenntnissen auf verschiedenen Ebenen und die Situation des Sprachunterrichts analysiert und Ideen zur Verbesserung entwickelt. Bei den verschiedenen Treffen, dem Seminar und der LETPP-Tagung waren sich die Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer in einem Punkt einig: Englisch allein reicht nicht aus! Weitere Informationen zum LETPP-Projekt, in dem CercleS Partner ist, finden Sie unter [www.letpp.eu](http://www.letpp.eu); Lid King wird die Ergebnisse des Projektes auch im Rahmen eines Plenarvortrages auf der CercleS-Tagung im September in Helsinki vorstellen, worauf wir schon sehr gespannt sind. Auch die neu ins Leben gerufenen CercleS-Arbeitsgruppen sind in diesem Zusammenhang von Interesse, da sich eine Arbeitsgruppe dem Bereich Sprachpolitik widmet. Diese sehr aktive Gruppe traf sich bereits auf den beiden Treffen im November 2009 in Toulouse und im Mai 2010 in Messina und diskutiert sehr lebhaft über E-Mail. Wir sind gespannt auf ihre Ideen und Vorschläge und sind überzeugt, dass diese zu einer noch lebendigeren Mehrsprachigkeit in CercleS einen wichtigen Beitrag liefern werden.

Die XI. CercleS-Tagung in Helsinki wird zeigen, wie wir diese Mehrsprachigkeit in CercleS leben. Wir haben die offiziellen Tagungssprachen auf sieben erhöht (Deutsch, Englisch, Finnisch, Französisch, Italienisch, Schwedisch und Spanisch) und haben alle Vortragenden dazu verpflichtet, ihre Beiträge in zwei Sprachen darzubieten, d.h. den Vortrag in einer Sprache zu halten und das Begleitmaterial in einer zweiten Sprache vorzubereiten. Wir hoffen, dass dieses „Experiment“ gelingen wird und dass wir in Helsinki in den Arbeitsgruppen, bei den Kaffeepausen, bei den Empfängen und Abendessen viele verschiedene Sprachen hören werden. ■

# Languages Matter and Language Centres too: Overview of the International Year of Languages in Higher Education

Marta Genís, University Antonio de Nebrija, Spain

## Zusammenfassung:

Der folgende Text wurde durch die spanische Organisation der Hochschulsprachenzentren (ACLES) verfasst und ruft anlässlich des durch die UN ausgerufenen internationalen Jahres der Sprachen 2008 zur Veranstaltung verschiedenster Aktivitäten auf. Das Ziel der Initiative ist es, den Herausforderungen des 21. Jahrhunderts mit Harmonie und Verständnis verschiedener Kulturen, welche unsere komplexe Gesellschaft ausmachen, zu begegnen.

## Résumé :

Le texte suivant a été rédigé par l'organisation espagnole des centres de langues de l'enseignement supérieur (ACLES) et appelle, à l'occasion de l'année internationale des langues annoncée par les Nations Unies en 2008, à l'organisation d'activités diverses. Le but de l'initiative est de faire face aux défis du XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle grâce à une meilleure compréhension des différentes cultures qui forment notre société complexe mais riche de ses diversités.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007, the General Assembly of the Organization of the United Nations declared 2008 the International Year of Languages, making a call on member states to promote, protect and preserve cultural and linguistic diversity under the theme "Languages count", thus summarizing effectively its goal: to certify that linguistic diversity and language are essential tools of intercultural dialogue and intangible cultural heritage of the world.

In 1995 the European Commission's document "Teaching and Learning. Towards the Learning Society", considering that multilingualism was a key element in the general culture of an individual and an advantage in terms of employment possibilities, set the goal that all EU citizens should be competent, at least in two foreign languages.

In addition, in 2001, the European Union and the Council of Europe established the European Year of Languages with the objective of life-long learning for citizens, emphasising the personal, economic, educational and cultural benefits. The celebration of the Year was an opportunity to start a debate about language learning and linguistic diversity and, above all, the desirability of lifelong learning for foreign languages was made apparent along with the need of improving the quality of language teaching and the opportunity to create a more favourable environment for languages.

At the European Council in Barcelona in 2002, Member States were invited to take steps to introduce the teaching, from an early age, of at least two foreign languages, as language learning "enhances cognitive and metacognitive abilities in general", improves knowledge of the mother tongue and reading and writing skills and develops general communication competence." In November 2006, the European Parliament adopted a report on multilingualism which emphasized the importance of learning foreign languages and advocated the adoption of measures to support lesser used languages.

In a special edition of Eurobarometer, Europeans and their Languages (2006), it is mentioned that the linguistic competence of the people in countries with more than one official language or languages that have contacts with neighbouring countries, is good. An example is Luxembourg, a country where 92 % of the population speaks at least two languages. One might expect the situation in Spain, a multilingual country which also has more than one language border, to be similar, but the situation is actually quite different; 56 % of Spanish citizens admit they do not know any language other than their mother tongue.

This happens for the following reasons: firstly, the state spends only 4.36 % of GDP on education (data for 2007), below that of all the other countries in the European Union. EU average expenditure on education is actually 5.9 % of GDP; secondly, the number of hours devoted to language teaching in compulsory education level is approximately 98 hours per year, a number far below the 200 hours dedicated, for example, in Germany and Malta; thirdly, languages in Spain have traditionally not been considered as important subjects,

as opposed to, for example, Mathematics, a subject considered as essential; in addition, the number of youngsters who have not completed secondary education and do not continue any further studies is 30.8 %, the second highest position in the EU (Portugal is the first with 38.6 %), whereas the European average is 15.2%. This data reveals the relatively low priority given to education in Spain.

In higher education the situation, although better, is not so different. Indeed, in most programmes, except of course those in Philology, language plays a non-preferential role, relegated to student choice, and although language centres are directly or indirectly connected with universities, they are not well equipped as regards infrastructure, they lack adequate financial resources to remedy these deficiencies and to meet the challenge of new technologies. In addition, the teachers' working conditions are extremely diverse.

A report was prepared for the Spanish Ministry of Education by Jose Manuel Vez and his research team entitled "Language learning in language centres of Spanish universities". Analysis of the current status and proposals of general application for convergence in the ESS (2006) highlights the work that language centres have been doing and the importance of this work in relation to the European Space for Higher Education.

Two sections of the report which we consider essential are emphasized in the following paragraphs.

First of all, the new requirements regarding foreign language learning arising from the entry into the European Space for Higher Education: a) university students will need training in order to prove their language proficiency, required for certain degrees and postgraduate programmes; b) teachers in primary and secondary schools will need language training to certify they have the minimum level proposed for teaching; c) administration and service personnel will have to learn languages to perform their work in a multilingual environment; d) university teaching and research staff will need to acquire specific skills to cope with the growing demand for bilingual diplomas from Spanish students and of subjects taught in English from EU students; e) the university community will need advice in matters of language translation and document review.

Secondly, the proposal of the following actions: a) to structure and organize a language policy for each centre in order to respond to the language needs of all sectors of the education community with explicit mention of the role of language centres; b) the creation of self-study programs for those members of the university community who cannot take a classroom course; c) the use of ICTs, more flexible tools and methods and the quality of education provision as



essential for the formation of the university community; d) certification and accreditation of the students' skill levels according to the European Framework of Reference for Languages.

From our Association of Language Centers in Higher Education (ACLES), a member of the Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur (CercleS), a non-profit association that brings together 24 Language Centres at university level we want to emphasise the opportunity of the celebration of the International Year of Languages as regards to the projection of initiatives to promote languages at all educational levels, including higher education, and, in particular, the important role Language Centres can play in these initiatives.

Without widespread support at all levels, the promotion of learning and teaching of modern languages, the standardization of levels and

evaluation systems of language proficiency and the creation and development of modern languages centres in higher education according to the guidelines of the Council of Europe, all main objectives of ACLES, will not be achieved.

We urge educational institutions, political authorities, professional associations and the general public to celebrate the International Year of Languages by launching initiatives to improve language teaching in education systems in order to confront the XXI century in the framework of a new spirit of harmony and understanding among the different cultures that make up the mosaic of our complex society.

LANGUAGE CENTRES MATTER TOO!

(This document was presented to the rectors of all ACLES universities) ■

## The Second Wulkow Meeting

Petr Kos, University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic

### Zusammenfassung:

Vom 14. bis 16. Januar 2010 fand das zweite Wulkow Meeting von Direktoren europäischer Hochschulsprachenzentren statt. Das Ziel dieses Treffens ist, einen Rahmen zum Ideenaustausch zu schaffen. In diesem Jahr wurden die Themen Qualität im Lehrplan und der Lehrplanung sowie Qualitätssicherung und Weiterentwicklung im Personalbereich diskutiert. Am Ende des Treffens wurde, wie schon beim letzten Mal, ein Wulkow Memorandum zum Thema des Treffens verabschiedet.

### Résumé :

Du 14 au 16 janvier 2010 a eu lieu à Wulkow la seconde réunion des directeurs des centres de langues de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe. Le but de cette rencontre est de créer un cadre pour un échange d'idées fructueux. Cette année, les thèmes abordés furent la qualité dans les programmes d'études et dans l'organisation des enseignements ainsi que le développement personnel. A la fin de la réunion, et comme ce fut le cas la dernière fois, un « mémorandum de Wulkow » a été rédigé, qui fait le point sur les sujets abordés pendant cette rencontre.

Quality issues were the main focus of the second Wulkow meeting of Language Centres Directors in higher education in Europe.

This meeting took place in the castle hotel in Wulkow in Brandenburg, Germany, from Thursday, January 14th to Saturday, January 16th 2010 with the participation of 34 Language Centre Directors from 12 European countries.

It was almost exactly a year after the first Wulkow meeting which was held at the same venue. The idea of meetings to provide a platform for an exchange of ideas among Language Centre Directors came from Thomas Vogel, Director of the Language Centre at the Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany, who had had experience with similar meetings at the national level. As the first Wulkow meeting was a great success, it was only logical that there should be a continuation.

This year's goal was to discuss issues concerning quality assurance in two major areas – quality assurance in curriculum and syllabus design and quality assurance and development in human resources.

Since in most countries there are no benchmarked quality standards, the first round of discussions involved defining quality in language learning and teaching. This was followed by examples of good practice, a discussion on methods and means of quality assurance, and a section on quality certification.

In the section devoted to defining quality in language learning and teaching in higher education the first presentation was

given by Britta Hufeisen, who talked about quality management at the Technical University of Darmstadt. Her speech was followed by Debbie Coetzee-Lachmann on the relationship between quality assurance, strategic planning and staff management. Sabine Völz concluded this section with her talk on people's skills.

In the Case Studies section Anna Król spoke about good practice in her Language Centre in Warsaw, followed by Ray Satchell from Bristol on self-evaluation and quality review, and Nick Byrne on quality at LSE.

Methods and means of quality assurance were discussed by Sigrid Behrent during her contribution on the survey of staff training measures in Germany and Sabina Schaffner on 360-degree feedback as a means of employee and quality development. The final section



In a session

was devoted to quality certification. Views on this topic were shared by Anje van Dijk, and Johann Fischer, who talked on quality assurance in testing and assessment.

Another major objective of the meeting was to compile a second Wulkow memorandum that would serve as a basis for discussing quality standards in individual institutions. Issues were discussed in work groups and then in the plenary. Many thanks for transferring the conclusions into the actual memorandum go to Nick Byrne from the Language Centre at the London School of Economics. The memorandum bears the title *The Wulkow Memorandum on Quality*

*Assurance and Quality Management at Language Centres in Institutions of Higher Education in Europe* and has 40 signatories in total.

As important as the discussions in the meeting room were, the time that we spent talking informally and networking during our visits to Friedersdorf and Neuhardenberg Palace, at meals, and in the evenings while sharing national songs and dances was also extremely productive.

Our great thanks go to Thomas Vogel and David Furmanek from Viadrina Sprachen gmbh for organizing this great event. We are all looking forward to the third Wulkow meeting. ■

## CercleS Seminar: The role of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in higher education

Gail Taillefer, Université Toulouse 1 Capitole, France

### Résumé :

Un séminaire de 2 jours dédié au Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues (CECR) et au Portfolio Européen des Langues (PEL) a eu lieu à Padoue du 17 au 19 Septembre 2009. Lors des conférences plénières et des différents ateliers, les participants ont pu discuter de l'évaluation et de l'auto-évaluation, de la mise au point de programmes d'études, de l'autonomie des étudiants et de l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie, des portefeuilles électroniques, de la formation des enseignants et des aspects interculturels. Les communications de ce séminaire seront publiées avec celles du séminaire à Dublin en 2007 dans un avenir proche.

### Zusammenfassung:

Vom 17. bis 19. September 2009 fand in Padua ein zweitägiges Seminar zum Gemeinsamen Europäischen Referenzrahmen für Sprachen (CEFR) und zum Europäischen Sprachportfolio (ESP) statt. In verschiedenen Vorträgen und Workshops konnten die Teilnehmer über Evaluierung und Selbst-Evaluierung, Lehrplanentwicklung, autonomes lebenslanges Lernen, elektronische Portfolios, Lehrerbildung und interkulturelle Sensibilität diskutieren. Die Ergebnisse dieses Seminars sollen gemeinsam mit den Ergebnissen des Seminars in Dublin 2007 in naher Zukunft als Buch veröffentlicht werden.

Ten years after the launch of the Bologna process encouraging the internationalisation of European higher education and two years after the first international seminar in 2007 at University College Dublin on the role of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in higher education, discussion of the role of the ELP and its companion, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR), returned to Italy. The Padua University Language Centre and CercleS hosted two thought-provoking full days for about 125 researchers and higher education practitioners from all across Europe, as well as the United States, China and Japan. The warm welcome and the treasures of Padua were enjoyed by all. Many thanks to the Organising Committee —Fiona Dalziel, Maria Teresa Musacchio, Johann Fischer and Mary Ruane.

Since its publication in 2001, the CEFR has had a significant impact on language education across Europe. But in many higher education contexts, its implementation, along with that of the ELP promoting autonomy, learner reflection and self-assessment, is still very much work in progress. The aim of the Padua Seminar was thus to help participants consolidate and further develop their work with these tools in their own institutions, and to reflect on possible future strategies to promote plurilingualism and intercultural awareness in Europe and beyond.

### Food for thought...

Four keynote speakers, old friends and new to CercleS, from Portugal, Italy, Austria (via Poland) and Ireland, set the tone. Fifty-three speakers from nine European countries (Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom) and the United States targeted the six strands of the Seminar: assessment and self-assessment, curriculum development learner autonomy and lifelong learning, electronic portfolios, teacher education and intercultural awareness

### Keynote addresses

Manuela Guilherme (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal), in the opening keynote address, spoke about “living in languages” — plurilingual competence and intercultural responsibility in language education. Among people using different languages in plurilingual contexts, “linguistic ideologies” determine power relations, giving rise to the concept of “intercultural responsibility”. This is defined as “a conscious and reciprocally respectful social and professional relationship - which may also be personal - between the members of a team/group, assuming that they have different ethno-linguistic backgrounds, whether national or sub-national”. It also implies that “every member is responsible not only for identifying and recognising the cultural idiosyncrasies of every other member-in-interaction, but also for developing full and reciprocally demanding social and/or professional relationships with them.”

The second keynote address was given by Professor Maria G. Lo Duca, from the University of Padua. She raised the question of terminology in the development of grammatical competence as described in the CEFR, and its application in creating a Syllabus for Italian L2 for exchange students. The presentation gave a concrete example of how the “theoretical” CEFR guidelines, along with reference grammars of a specific language, can be translated into practice. Among the key issues addressed were the terminology itself used by Italian grammarians and the selection and sequencing of linguistic elements: interjections, forms and textual structures (discourse markers...), sentence complexity, the verb system, syntax, etc. Professor Lo Duca stressed the importance of an eclectic, non-traditional approach to the question of grammatical terminology for teaching programmes, and therefore for the teachers responsible for mediating language learning.

Waldemar Martyniuk, Director of the European Centre for Modern

Languages in Graz (Austria), raised four key concerns pertaining to the CEFR: approach, status, function, and implementation. If the reference value of the CEFR and the legitimacy of the founding principles are readily recognised, there are also cases where the spirit of the document is being misconstrued. It has been seen to be used for “advertising” purposes in international education and, incredibly ironically, in a prescriptive sense to impose a uniform, curriculum in language education. In answer to such inappropriate use, Waldemar Martyniuk brought to the attention of Seminar participants the options presented in the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (July 2008) on the use of the CEFR and the promotion of plurilingualism (CM/Rec(2008)7): [www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/SourceForum07/Rec%20CM%202008-7\\_EN.doc](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/SourceForum07/Rec%20CM%202008-7_EN.doc).

The final keynote speech was made by founding member and former President of CercleS, David Little, Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College Dublin and Chair of the Council of Europe’s European Language Portfolio Validation Committee. David Little’s theoretical and practical work on learner autonomy, and his role in developing the CercleS version of the ELP need no introduction. His talk addressed the need for a new assessment culture in relation to the CEFR and the ELP to close the circle of curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment. He argued that, taken together, these two tools imply the need to accommodate self- and peer-assessment alongside formal examinations. His message focussed, in particular, on the use of the can-do checklists by university-level language learners and the implications of the CEFR’s action-oriented approach for university language exams. In conclusion, David Little set a task for CercleS: to develop a toolkit with three components — a language curriculum framework for the European university sector, a generic version of the CercleS ELP, and a communicative language test development kit.

## Workshops

One of the richest strands was that of assessment and self-assessment, with ten papers presented. Both Ana Beaven and Lucia Livatino (Università di Bologna) and Marilyn Kies (Università degli Studi, Siena) underlined positive points of the CEFR as regards assessment — providing standard descriptors and facilitating communication on recognised levels. But both also drew attention to specific problems and illustrated solutions: in the first case, through benchmarking instances of spoken language via on-line collaboration (WebCEF); in the second case, by proposing and testing criteria rendering more transparent the comparison of high-stakes certification exams linked to the CEF. On a similar theme, Claudia D’Este (Università Ca’ Foscari, Venezia) spoke of the benefits of using the Dutch CEFR Construct GRID to create and develop an English B1 level qualification test in reading and listening. Three papers dealt with e-testing based on the CEFR: Andrea Koblizkova (Univerzita Pardubice, Czech Republic) on the introduction of e-placement tests; Sara Radighieri (Università degli Studi, Modena e Reggio Emilia) on several significant issues ranging from the creation, development and piloting of language tests to questions of test scoring and setting common standards for computerised language testing; Manuel Silva and Célia Tavares (Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração, Porto) on assessment criteria and parameters used to assess students’ work with e-portfolios as a translation training tool.

Looking specifically at assessment of advanced writing performance, Sián Morgan (Università degli Studi, Modena e Reggio Emilia), explained how students in the Faculty of Letters need to reach C1 and C2 level in English or another European language in order to

graduate, but that teachers are generally less familiar with the higher CEFR higher levels. To measure students’ performance more accurately, the author examined samples of advanced writing in terms of the CEFR descriptors with particular regard to the degree of complexity of language. Maria del Carmen Arau Ribeiro and Samuel Best (Instituto Politécnico da Guarda, Portugal) approached the question through self-assessment and the ELP, presenting data to corroborate conclusions on the impact of encouraging the individual creation of original, regular, and relevant writing assignments. More generally considering C1 competences for academic study, Margaret Fowler (British Council, Milan) looked at how English is currently being used at university level around the world, offering an overview of English language exams for academic purposes. Finally, Mathilde Anquetil (Università degli Studi, Macerata) raised the pertinent issue of the ELP reporting function, presenting an action-research project which tied oral interaction based on the CercleS ELP into a B2-level French certification (DELF).

Just as much interest was shown for the theme of curriculum development (ten papers). Similar approaches were adopted cross-Channel by Mary Ruane (University College Dublin) and Céline Davesne (Rouen Business School, France), focussing on a whole-school approach to using the CEFR and the ELP. Both researchers stressed the fact that these tools must be, in the words of Mary Ruane “allowed to have a central and defining role in language curricula in terms of theory and practice”. In a large-scale programme for non-specialist language students in Dublin, the two European tools provided structured support and scaffolding not just for learners but also for teachers, language advisors, administrative staff and others involved in the language learning process. In the French context, they were implemented in an innovative manner in the form of workshops on objectives, common core courses and linguistic tutoring. Here again, positive impact carried over to relations within the teaching team and between teachers and the institution.

The particular challenge of change management in curriculum development was addressed by five authors, all from Portugal and Spain. While Southwestern Europe obviously does not have a “monopoly” on this question, this concentration nonetheless reflects the historical diversity across Europe of teaching/learning styles in general and, in particular, of approaches to foreign language learning. Thus, Pedro Ruiz (Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração, Porto) and Dulce Sarroeira (Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo, Estoril) both evoke issues of learners’ needs in Portugal and ways to meet them through adaptations of syllabi, teaching and assessment. From Spain, Veronica Colwell O’Callaghan (Universidad de León) speaks of “the parallel development of language syllabi and the dependence on available human and material resources”, including issues of teacher education, CEFR and the ELP interpretation and assessment, in terms of “cutting the ties that bind”. Doing so must be an “ongoing, step-by-step, negotiated approach”. Mercedes del Fresno Fernández and Mária Vega, both from Universidad Complutense in Madrid, echo similar challenges in a context of limited means, strong regional languages competing for the language “market” and incoherent language policy.

Finally, three further “Southern” papers from Padua addressed different aspects of curriculum development: Isabelle Montfort on special needs of future Erasmus students with low levels of language competency; Mirjam Mansen and Susanne Vitz-Manetti on questions of the ELP and learning awareness, learning targets and learning strategies for students of German; Dagmar Winkler on bilingual knowledge transfer as a strategy for internationalising curricula, particularly in the context of CLIL.

A third very popular strand was learner autonomy and lifelong learning, with eight variations on the theme from speakers covering Europe from North to South, and with an added insight from Taiwan. Liisa Wallenius (Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, Finland) led participants to consider students' approach to professional life, presenting a project to enhance ELP use in different groups of learners. Perhaps reassuring to many of the Southern European participants, Liisa Wallenius explained that even in Finland, "not all teachers (not to mention students) know the ELP and the CEF well enough to implement them." Véronique Hébrard (Groupe Ecole Supérieure d'Agriculture, Angers, France) discussed the role of the CEFR in continuing education through platform-based e-learning tools and "emailangues". Bernadette Maguire, from the British Council in Madrid, addressed the thorny question of the transition from B1 to B2 in speaking, and how teachers and students can address the disparity in levels between speaking skills and reading, writing and listening. From Portugal, Cristina Pinto da Silva (Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração, Porto) drew participants' attention to the foreign language classroom as a social event, underlining how "learners' espoused theories and beliefs about teaching and learning are intricate, dynamic and, most importantly, idiosyncratic, albeit culturally determined". Thus, the teacher must keep in mind the reality of learner individuality and heterogeneity.

Travelling East to Italy, Loredana Cavaliere (Università degli Studi, Napoli Federico II) discussed the concept of learner autonomy, synchronic and asynchronous communication, and the diversity of learning styles. A teacher at the host university of Padua, Gillian Davies explored how the ELP provides structure to students' difficult passage from teacher centred schooling to more student-centred type language learning at university. Considerable use is made of collaborative conferencing software, and particular attention paid to the roles of both teacher and learner during the process. Finally, Padua teachers Fiona Dalziel, Gillian Davies and Amy Han teamed up to explain how, in a context where the CercleS ELP has been used since 2002-2003 in blended learning, the online learner diary reflects use of descriptors and offers insight into learners' reflection. Finally, via Dublin, Elisabeth Yin-Ling Lin (Trinity College Dublin) presented doctoral work examining implementation of the "English Language Portfolio", modelled on the CercleS ELP, in the exam-oriented approach to curriculum planning which characterises Taiwanese higher education.

Six papers dealt with e-portfolios, representing work done in four countries. Inma Alvarez, Tita Beaven and Maria Luisa Perez Cavagna (Open University, UK) presented the development of an electronic ELP and its use by adult distance learning students. The authors looked at the suitability of the original ELP template's structures and navigation in a digital environment, as well as piloting an additional section on learning styles within the Biography and providing a link to the newly developed Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE). Their conclusions suggest that the potential of the ELP can be significantly enhanced using a virtual environment instead of a paper format. The only participant from the United States, Patricia Cummins (Virginia Commonwealth University) presented a three-part e-portfolio which allows students to reference American or European rating scales, and uses technology in university learning, teaching, and assessment. Global Language Portfolio (GLP) —[www.globallanguageportfolio.com](http://www.globallanguageportfolio.com)— can be downloaded into either a learning management system (Blackboard, etc.) or into open source portfolios, and can be modified according to the learner's needs —employment, study abroad, internships. Fionnuala Kennedy, Juliette Péchenart and

Jennifer Bruen (Waterford Institute of Technology, Dublin City University) gave an end-of-project report on the LOLIPOP ELP, first presented at the CercleS Seminar in Dublin in 2007, describing its integration into undergraduate modules and the favourable feedback. Bärbel Kühn (Universität Bremen, Germany) and Rosanna Pedretti and Adriano Murelli (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany) both spoke of e-ELP use within the web-based language learning platform EPOS. The former put out a call for partners for cooperation and networking, sharing more validated models of ELPs, sharing good praxis, technical and pedagogical development; the latter developed questions of blended learning, the role of tutors, the capacity for self assessment and greater awareness of learning pathways. Last but not least, Luisa Panichi (aka Jole Zhong, Università degli Studi, Pisa) and Christel Schneider (aka Letty Pienaar, ICC International Language Network, Germany) presented the new Portfolio for Avatars, still in its conceptual stage. The main focus of this EU-funded project is to develop language learning scenarios in Second Life® and to provide examples of best practice. While based on the European ELP model, Avatars is more focused on technical skills required to actively participate in 3D learning environments.

Three presentations addressed questions of teacher education in different national contexts. Marie Hanzlíková (Charles University, Prague) dealt with a major problem in ELP implementation: how to fit course prerequisites into the descriptors? Can both be taught? Ivana Fratter (Università degli Studi, Padova) related how she uses two key references as self-assessment tools in training future teachers of Italian L2, stressing digital literacy: Grenfell, M. & Kelly, M. (2004). *European Profile for Language Teacher Education. A Frame of Reference* and Newby D. et al. (2007), *Portfolio européen pour les enseignants en langues en formation initiale*. Dorothy Ní Uigín (National University of Ireland, Galway, Eire) raised the challenge of training teachers in using the ELP with students of Irish (C1 Level) as well as the reported benefits.

Last but not least, the theme of intercultural awareness brought together three authors from different countries. Sonia Cunico (University of Leicester, U.K.) responded to the challenge of raising intercultural awareness through the use of drama "to develop an awareness of the interpersonal dimension embedded in the language we use". Veronika Bayer (Telecom ParisTech, France) explained how she coordinates videoconferences between her German courses in France and comparable French courses at a German university on B1 and C1 levels. Francesca Helm and Sarah Guth (Università degli Studi, Padova) presented a framework bringing together, through telecollaboration, the development of multiliteracies to promote foreign language learning (in CEFR terms), the development of intercultural communicative competence and online literacies.

The last words of the Seminar were shared by participants in a round table, chaired by Johann Fischer, including Manuela Guilherme, Maria del Carmen Arau Ribeiro, Chris Taylor, David Little, Mary Ruane, Waldemar Martyniuk. Many doors were opened for future reflection, touching on the political role and impact of language teaching, its survival in higher education, inter-university collaboration, teacher training opportunities, critical pedagogy and interculturality, "back to the basics" of the CEFR and the ELP, the challenge of pedagogical change... The scope of the exchanges over these two full days clearly whetted appetites for the next workshop in two years' time. In the interim, CercleS will see to the publication of a joint volume of proceedings from both the Dublin and the Padua Seminars. ■

## 8<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the European Language Portfolio

29 September – 1 October 2009, European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz, Austria  
Fiona Dalziel, University of Padua, Italy

### Zusammenfassung:

Nur 10 Tage nach dem CercleS Seminar zu CEFR und ESP fand das 8. internationale Seminar zum Europäischen Sprachportfolio des Europarats statt. Im nachfolgenden Artikel lesen Sie Einzelheiten zur Entwicklung des ESP und zu dessen Zukunft (zum Beispiel soll die Validierung 2010 abgeschlossen werden).

### Résumé :

Seulement 10 jours après le séminaire de CercleS concernant le CEFR et le PEL a eu lieu le 8<sup>ème</sup> séminaire international sur le Portfolio Européen des Langues organisé par le Conseil de l'Europe. Dans l'article suivant, vous trouverez toutes les informations concernant l'évolution récente du PEL et son avenir (la validation, par exemple, doit être conclue en 2010).

The Council of Europe's 8<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the European Language Portfolio took place just 10 days after the CercleS seminar in Padua and the two combined provided much food for thought concerning future directions of the CercleS ELP project and the ELP in general. The two CercleS ELP co-ordinators, Mary Ruane and Fiona Dalziel, were invited to participate in the seminar, which was hosted by the ECML in Graz. This was a fitting venue for several reasons. Firstly, as Mr Anton Dobart (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) stressed, Austria is a multilingual society and is committed to innovation in language education. This task is facilitated by collaboration with the ECML, which, as its director Waldemar Martyniuk stated, aims "to help its member states implement effective language teaching policies by focusing on the practice of language education". The seminar consisted of presentations of ELP projects and studies, show-and-tell reports, working group discussions and feedback from these.

In his introduction to the seminar, David Little (chair of the ELP Validation Committee) outlined the programme and working methods of the seminar, stressing its focus on the past, present and future in relation to the role of the ELP in language education. This was followed by a presentation by Rolf Schärer (Rapporteur General for the ELP project) entitled "The European Language Portfolio from 1997 to 2009: a retrospective". He spoke of the enthusiasm of the early days of ELP piloting and of evidence that the ELP really can enable learners to take responsibility for their own language learning. To illustrate this point, he quoted an exchange between two Hungarian learners:

"I like the portfolio because it allows me to cheat" - "If we cheat, we cheat ourselves." However, Rolf Schärer admitted that the uptake of the ELP is proving slower than anticipated, and provided some possible explanations for this. He stressed that the ELP should not be in conflict with official curricula, and that the ELP approach should be simplified, avoiding overly complex portfolios. He also stressed a greater understanding of the need of companies as regards the reporting function of the ELP.

A report on the Impact of the European Language Portfolio followed, presenting the results of a study conducted by Maria Stoicheva, Gareth Hughes and Heike Speitz for the ELP Validation Committee. The study investigated the implementation of the ELP in a variety of educational contexts in nine countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia and the UK. It emerged that the ELP cannot be separated from the CEFR in terms of impact, since it provides a way of enabling practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of the CEFR. One aspect of the ELP which may need further work is that of fostering plurilingualism. This consideration was to re-emerge in the course of the seminar.

At this point the five working groups were provided with four questions to discuss:

- What are the most visible areas of impact that you would identify in your context?
- Which areas of impact do you consider the most important for the future?
- How should we take the study of impact further?
- What concrete help can you offer in this respect?

Examples of impact that emerged from the groups concerned the revision of language curricula and approaches to assessment, and the changing relationship between teachers and learners brought about by the ELP. Some of the groups mentioned the impact of the ELP on textbooks, but there was also some caution about this point, with the fear of inappropriate ELP use being encouraged. It was strongly believed by the groups that teacher training is essential for the future, as is the lifelong perspective of the ELP, starting from primary learners. It was also stressed that the ELP can facilitate the integration of migrant children. As for the

future it was felt that more research must be carried out into ELP impact along with the collection of case studies and instances of good practice.

The focus then moved to the present, with reports on two ELP-related projects in the ECML's present medium-term programme. David Little presented the ELP in whole-school use, which aims to involve learners, parents, teachers and head teachers in project development. More information can be found at: <http://elp-ws.ecmlat/>. Margarete Nezbeda then described "Training teachers to use the ELP: follow-up" (<http://elp-tt2.ecmlat/>), which supports ELP implementation by means of materials, activities and events. She presented a forum for teachers and trainers using the ELP, where they can discuss and share experiences and reflections. The seminar included country reports from Austria, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Common themes in these were the increase in ELP use and the implications of this for teaching and assessment, the need for clarification of the relationship between the CEFR and the ELP, and the important role of the ELP in promoting plurilingual education and intercultural competence at all levels of schooling, given the cultural and linguistic diversity of classrooms in Europe. The show-and-tell sessions provided reports on a wide range of ELP experiences, such as the European Portfolio of Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), the European Language Portfolio for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Professional ELPs (including mention of the Latvian ELP for train drivers, which sparked some lively discussion!). Mary Ruane and Fiona Dalziel presented the CercleS ELP, reporting back on the recent Padua seminar.

Then it was time to start looking to the future, with David Little's presentation of the Strategy for the Future of the ELP. This was an important moment in the seminar as it was explained that the process of ELP validation was to come to an end at the end of 2010. This is to be replaced by one of registration based on self-declaration. In order to facilitate the work of ELP developers, the Validation Committee will produce guidelines for the design of both paper and electronic ELPs. Gareth Hughes and Barbara Glowacka introduced the proposed enhancements to the Standard Adult Passport and the Junior ELP, which will, amongst other things, attempt to facilitate the description of the owner's plurilingual competence. In the following working sessions on the future of the ELP, the previous presentation gave rise to animated discussion, with some participants welcoming the new strategy of the Validation Committee and others worried about the new direction. The latter were concerned about the validity of the ELP, stressing the need for a clear definition of what the ELP is, along with support in development and implementation, and stronger networks between practitioners. The groups praised the work of the ECML and hoped that its support would continue.

David Little also presented a text he had produced for a seminar entitled "The European Language Portfolio: where pedagogy and assessment meet" (available online). He argued that the CEFR and the ELP needed to be "exploited as a single package" and explored "the possibility of accommodating self-assessment alongside teacher assessment and external tests, each form of assessment being explicitly and systematically related to the levels and descriptors of the CEFR". In his summing up, David Little reaffirmed the value of the ELP as "an innovative product that, besides empowering specific target groups, has proved an unprecedented instrument of cooperation at European level". He stressed the need to continue promoting teacher education, to develop the plurilingual and intercultural dimensions of the ELP and to ensure effective networking at European and national levels, perhaps by means of a redefinition of the role of ELP contact persons. He concluded by stating: "In confronting all these challenges we shall do our best to follow Rolf Schärer's advice, that we should make every effort to learn from past achievements." ■

# University Language Centres – Language Policy and Innovation

11<sup>th</sup> International CercleS Conference

## Zusammenfassung:

Vom 2. bis 4. September 2010 findet in Helsinki die 11. internationale CercleS-Konferenz statt. Auf den nachfolgenden Seiten finden Sie eine kurze Beschreibung der Stadt Helsinki und Finlands, einen kurzen Überblick über FINELC, dem finnischen Verband der Sprachenzentren, sowie eine Darstellung der Universität Helsinki und des dort angesiedelten Sprachenzentrums. Auf Seite 11 schließlich folgt das (vorläufige) Programm der Konferenz, welche dieses Mal unter dem Motto “Hochschulsprachenzentren – Sprachpolitik und Innovation” steht. Im Anschluss finden Sie einen kleinen Sprachwegweiser mit wichtigen Ausdrücken und verschiedenen Situationen für Ihren Aufenthalt in Helsinki. Wir freuen uns auf Sie und auf eine anregende und erfolgreiche Konferenz!

## Résumé :

Le 11<sup>ème</sup> congrès international CercleS aura lieu à Helsinki du 2 au 4 septembre 2010. Dans les pages suivantes, vous trouverez une description brève de la ville de Helsinki et de la Finlande, un court aperçu de FINELC, l'association finlandaise des centres de langues, ainsi qu'une présentation de l'université de Helsinki et de son centre de langues. A la page 11 se trouve le programme (provisoire) du colloque intitulé « Les centres de langues de l'enseignement supérieur – politique linguistique et innovation ». A lire également un petit guide linguistique avec des expressions clés utiles lors de situations variées pour faciliter votre séjour à Helsinki. Nous nous réjouissons de vous voir à Helsinki lors d'un colloque qui ne manquera pas d'être stimulant et couronné de succès!

## Welcome to Helsinki

Finland is a Nordic country and has been a member of the European Union since 1995. Finnish culture is a mixture of eastern and western influences. Ruled by Sweden and Russia in past centuries, Finland has developed a special character of its own – a fascinating blend of simple Scandinavian elegance and rich eastern diversity.

Finland is a bilingual country with two official languages: Finnish and Swedish. Both are naturally the most widely spoken languages in the country, and in addition approximately two thousand people speak the Sami language. Finland is a small nation with a population of 5.3 million; foreign languages are therefore a must for Finns. Languages are an integral part of the school curriculum and English in particular is widely understood and used in daily communication.

Helsinki, often called “the Daughter of the Baltic”, is the capital of Finland. It has good direct flight connections with most European capitals as well as with many other locations worldwide. Helsinki-Vantaa Airport is situated 20 kilometres north of the city centre. Taxis are easily available everywhere in the city and public transportation is smooth and punctual. If you want to get out of the city, no problem: Helsinki is surrounded by vast natural parks and one of the world's most beautiful archipelagos.

The University of Helsinki is an ideal venue for conferences and the newly renovated Language Centre facility is a successful mixture of the modern and the historic. Practically everything – hotels, restaurants, cafés, shops and sights – are within walking distance of the University's city centre campus.

Whether you are a first-time visitor or a long-time fan, Helsinki has plenty to offer. For details of events and attractions, downloadable maps and other resources, see [www.visithelsinki.fi](http://www.visithelsinki.fi) and [www.bestofhelsinki.fi](http://www.bestofhelsinki.fi).

## FINELC – The Network of Finnish University Language Centres

The Network of Finnish University Language Centres (FINELC) is a confederation of 17 university language centres (LCs) and similar institutes all over Finland.



The aim of FINELC is to

- strengthen European multilingualism by developing the teaching of languages and communication;
- improve opportunities for learning languages;
- enhance evaluation practices and quality assurance by promoting networking between language centres and by making use of their common strengths, as well as the opportunities provided by closer European co-operation.

LCs in Finland created a common network in 2001, primarily to implement the national Virtual Language Centre project. The issue of a national association and full membership in CercleS had been on the agenda for several years, but it was not until 2003 that the matter was given real priority. That same year, the Network's regulations were modified into statutes, and the reshaped Network assumed the new name **FINELC (Finnish Network of Language Centres)**. Language and communication skills have always been highly esteemed in Finnish society and in our educational system, and such skills, needed in academic and professional fields, are by tradition a well-established part of all Finnish university degrees. Proof of this is our LC network, which dates back to the 1970s.

LCs in Finland entered a new phase in September 2004, when FINELC's full CercleS membership was accepted at the organization's

General Meeting in Bratislava. Most of the centres' mother universities are multidisciplinary, others represent economics or technology, while the Defence College is in a category of its own. As they stand today, most LCs have a well-established and independent position in the university administration, similar to that of the faculties. The staff, whether they are teachers, administrators or other non-teaching experts, usually hold permanent full-time posts. Finnish LCs have conducted several joint projects, for example innovative teaching experiments, and have pursued research in teaching and learning in accordance with the objectives set forth in their strategic plans. Consequently, in recent years some LCs have also qualified as research institutes.

The latest joint project, **LAAKEA (Quality, development and assessment in language, culture and communication studies designed for all university students)**, was carried out in 2007-2009. The project was initiated by FINELC and funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education. Its purpose was to develop, evaluate and document the quality assurance practices of language centre teaching and operations.

The LAAKEA project offered expert training in quality planning, analysis and assessment; commissioned reports; and launched development projects for common use by all LCs in three thematic areas: quality assurance in teaching, quality assurance in academic affairs administration and development of administration and management. The results of the LAAKEA project will be presented in various sessions at the Helsinki conference.

### University of Helsinki – building the future since 1940

Education, research and international interaction have a several-hundred-year history at the University of Helsinki. Over the past centuries, the University has played a decisive role in building Finnish identity, learning and affluence.

The first stage in the history of the University of Helsinki stretches from its founding as a Swedish university in 1640 to the War of Finland in 1808. The University's name was originally the Royal Academy of Turku.

The second stage covers the period from 1809 to 1917 when Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia. In 1809 it was renamed the Imperial Academy of Turku. In 1828 the University was moved to Helsinki and renamed the Imperial Alexander University of Finland.

The third stage, as a university of the Finnish republic, began with Finland's independence in 1917. Once Finland gained her independence the University was given a crucial role in building the nation state and welfare society. Members of the academic community worked to further the international relations of the new state and to develop its economic life. They were also actively involved in national politics and the struggle for equality.

The progress of scientific development created many new disciplines and faculties at the University. At present it comprises 11 faculties, 500 professors and 35,000 students. The University has established the goal of being one of the world's top multidisciplinary research universities.

In 2005 the University became convinced that it needed an overall review of the status of languages used in its work. After extensive preparations, the University Senate approved the University of Helsinki Language Policy in 2007. The policy is not an action programme, but a strategic document which aims to guide the preparation of action programmes for the various sectors of university activity.

Through Language Policy the University seeks to

- ensure that the language used in research, teaching, administration, services and communication is rich and comprehensible;
- increase language awareness, emphasise multilingual capacity as a strength and encourage the use of different languages;
- meet the challenges brought about by increased internationalization;
- secure the status and the position of Finland's national languages as languages of research and scholarship;
- support and strengthen the implementation of the University's bilingualism;
- determine the status and development targets for teaching and research undertaken in other languages;
- determine the languages to be used in a given situation at the University;
- develop opportunities deriving from partial linguistic competence, parallel language usage and multilingual working environments.

### The Language Centre at the University of Helsinki

The Language Centre at the University of Helsinki, established in 1977, is one of Finland's largest language educators in terms of its personnel and syllabus, in addition to being a multilingual and multicultural work community. The Language Centre is responsible for providing the language and communication instruction required for academic degrees in all University of Helsinki faculties and for offering extensive language services to the academic community and external customers.

The Language Centre employs over 250 language professionals including Finnish and foreign-language teachers, translators, language revisers and administrative personnel.

Every year close to 14,000 students attend either optional language courses or courses preparing them to meet the faculty-specific language requirement for their degrees. In addition, some 2-3,000 students complete the above language requirement by passing a placement test. The faculty-specific courses account for about half of all the teaching offered by the Language Centre, and the other half consists of a wide variety of courses ranging from elementary usage to highly specialised topics in academic discourse. These optional courses are open to students from all faculties. Specialised courses in Spanish, Italian, French, German and Russian are also provided.

Degree students may incorporate courses or sets of courses in the seven main languages (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Swedish) into a 15-25 credit module. The objective of the study modules is to enable the students of different faculties to acquire versatile and advanced skills in a language of their choice.

The Language Centre also provides courses for University of Helsinki students in languages that are less frequently studied in Finland, such as Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Hungarian, Japanese and Portuguese.

The Self-Access Centre in the Aleksandria Learning Centre provides opportunities to study more than 50 languages independently. The Centre's materials include books, recordings, videos and computer programmes.

Through its Language Services unit, the Language Centre offers training in more than 30 languages, language testing, translation and language revision to university personnel, public bodies, institutes, companies and individuals. ■

# University Language Centres – Language Policy and Innovation

11<sup>th</sup> International CercleS Conference  
Preliminary conference programme

## Wednesday 1 September 2010

15.00-17.00 Executive committee meeting

## Thursday 2 September 2010

09.00-12.00 Co-ordinating committee meeting and elections

12.00-17.00 Registration

13.30-14.15 Opening session

Ulla-Maija Forsberg, Vice Rector of the University of Helsinki

Johann Fischer, President of CercleS

Martina Buss, Chair of FINELC

Ulla-Kristiina Tuomi, Director of the Language Centre of the University of Helsinki

14.15-15.15 Plenary - Lid King, The Languages Company, UK

15.30-16.00 Coffee break

16.00-18.00 Parallel sessions

Language policy and innovation

Putting policies into practice

Learning outcomes – strategies and realities

Personalising learning environments and networking

Plurilingualism and English as a Lingua Franca

Managing change and quality assurance

Current issues in LSP

19.00-21.00 Reception of the Rector of the University of Helsinki

## Friday 3 September 2010

09.00-13.00 Registration (continues)

09.00-10.00 Plenary - Jean-Claude Bertin, University of Le Havre, France

10.15-10.45 Coffee break

10.45-12.45 Parallel sessions

12.45-14.00 Lunch & posters

14.00-16.00 Parallel sessions

16.15-17.45 General meeting

18.00-19.30 Reception of the Mayor of Helsinki

## Saturday 4 September 2010

09.30-11.30 Parallel sessions

11.30-12.00 Coffee break

12.15-13.15 Plenary

English as a Lingua Franca

Anna Mauranen, University of Helsinki, Finland

13.15-14.15 Round table

Pierre Frath, University of Reims, France

Michelle Crick, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

14.15-14.45 Closing

Johann Fischer, President of CercleS

Martina Buss, Chair of FINELC

14.45 Coffee

## How to survive in Finland and in Finnish

As language teachers we share a common fascination with new languages, such as guessing the meanings of words and forming an idea of the structures of a foreign language. The Finnish language – being so different from Indo-European languages – may offer interesting perspectives for language enthusiasts.

A survival course in Finnish entitled *Tavataan taas!* (Let's meet again!/See you soon!) is available on the Internet at

<http://donnerwetter.kielikeskus.helsinki.fi/finnishforforeigners>.

The course has been designed by Language Services of the University of Helsinki Language Centre.

The *Tavataan taas* course offers opportunities to practice pronunciation as well as learn new vocabulary and expressions. *Tavataan taas* has been widely praised, and the site is visited daily by 500-700 learners from all over the world.

The course consists of two parts, the first of which focuses on basic vocabulary. The second part familiarises the student with the structure of the language and with Finnish culture. An entertaining story about a Swiss family travelling in Finland provides a framework for the second part.

Below are a few examples of the course material which will help you to survive in Finland:

### Tervehtimiset

Huomenta!

### Greetings

Good morning!

Päivää!

Iltaa!

Hyvää yötä!

Mitä kuuluu?

Kiitos hyvää! Entä sinulle?

Olkaa hyvä!

Kiitos!

Anteeksi!

Ei se mitään!

Kiitos!

Ei kestä!

Tervetuloa!

Näkemiin!

How do you do./ Good afternoon.

Good evening!

Good night!

How are you?

Fine, thanks. And you?

You are welcome.

Thank you.

I am sorry.

Never mind.

Thank you.

Not at all.

Welcome.

Goodbye.

### Ravintolassa

Martin: Päivää.

Waiter: Päivää ja tervetuloa.

Täällä ikkunan vieressä on vapaa pöytä

Haluatteko syödä?

Martin: Kyllä kiitos.

Saisimmeko ruokalistan?

### In a restaurant

Hello.

Hello, and welcome in.

There is a vacant table by the window here.

Would you like something to eat?

Yes, please.

Can we have the menu?

Waiter: Tässä, olkaa hyvä. Ja mitä juotavaa haluaisitte?	Here you are. And what would you like to drink?
Martin: Minä otan pullon olutta.  Mitä olutta teillä on?	I'd like to have a bottle of beer, please. What kind of beer have you got?
Waiter: Meillä on Koffia ja Amiraalia ja Lapin Kultaa.	We have got Koff and Amiraali and Lapin Kultra.
Martin: Ööh...No, otan pullon Koffia.	Well ... I'll have a bottle of Koff, please.
Ilse: Minä otan vähän viiniä. Saisinko viinilistan?	I'll have some wine. Can I have the wine list?
Hmm... otan lasin tätä ranskalaista punaviiniä. Ja sitten vettä, kiitos.	Well ... I'll have a glass of this French red wine, please. And also water, please.

Martin: Saanko laskun, kiitos. Can I have the bill, please?

Finnish has relatively few easily recognisable loanwords. The Finnish orthography or pronunciation of a word may deviate so much from the source word that the connection between them is not easily discerned (like the Finnish word *pekoni* from 'bacon').

Luckily there are a few easily recognisable loanwords:

auto 'a car', radio 'a radio', televisio 'a television', taksi 'a taxi', bussi 'a bus', hotelli 'a hotel', filmi 'a film', lasi 'a glass', kuppi 'a cup', kahvi 'coffee', viini 'wine', tee 'tea', banaani 'a banana', appelsiini 'an orange', tomaatti 'a tomato'.

Further information about the Finnish language and its history can be found at:

<http://www.euro-languages.net/finland>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finnish_language) ■

## Increasing Transparency in Oral Skill Testing

Anu Virkkunen, University of Helsinki, Finland

### Résumé :

Un atelier, dont le thème fut l'évaluation des compétences orales au niveaux B2 et C1, a eu lieu fin octobre 2009, à l'université de Göttingen, Allemagne, appelé à être suivi d'autres rencontres sur le même sujet. Organisés en groupes selon la langue testée, les participants purent comparer leurs méthodes et critères d'évaluation afin de pouvoir, à l'avenir, définir ensemble des modèles de bonne pratique afin de favoriser la mobilité des étudiants en Europe.

### Zusammenfassung:

Ende Oktober 2009 fand in Göttingen ein Workshop zum Thema "Testen der Hörverstehensfähigkeiten auf CEFR Niveaus B2/C1" statt. Die Teilnehmer diskutierten über verschiedene Prüfungssituationen, Bewertungsschemata, Prüfungsaufgaben usw. Dieser Workshop soll der erste in einer Folge sein, der Prüfer zusammenbringt, um Maßnahmen zu beschließen, sodass Prüfungen transparent werden und schließlich die Mobilität Studierender innerhalb (und auch außerhalb) Europas gefördert wird.

Ever since the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), university language testers have been looking for fora to discuss assessment methodologies plus practices and criteria used in administering language tests in various universities across Europe. Consequently, it was no surprise

that about 50 enthusiastic testers of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish came together to participate in a workshop "Testing Oral Skills at CEFR Levels B2/C1" organized at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen in late October, 2009.

During the workshop, the participants were divided into groups according to the language they tested. On the first day, to get an idea of how oral skills are assessed, all groups viewed videos and rated student spoken production according to the grids provided. The groups aimed at consensus, which was not always possible. Then came detailed discussions on the characteristics of examination situations, assessment grids, examination tasks, etc., and both pair and group work sessions provided very enlightening information on why we differ in our testing traditions. In our language-specific groups, we also planned a future workshop to further develop models of best practice in oral skills testing. The University of Göttingen Language Centre was a very accommodating place to meet, and staff were ready to help visiting participants with the relevant equipment and other requests. The workshop attendees did not mind losing part of their weekend; on the contrary, we all felt that this workshop should be the first of many to bring language testers together to decide on measures that will make assessment so transparent that student mobility will be facilitated across Europe and beyond. ■



Workshop participants "at work"

# 6<sup>th</sup> ACLES Conference Innovation and Quality in University Language Centres

Marta Genís, University Antonio de Nebrija, Spain

## Résumé :

En Octobre 2009, le 6<sup>ième</sup> Colloque ACLES a eu lieu à Valence sur le thème de la qualité dans les centres de langues dans l'enseignement supérieur. Les communications, très intéressantes, concernèrent les domaines de la qualité, de l'éducation, des applications des NTIC, de la traduction et de la terminologie. ACLES a aussi renouvelé son bureau lors d'élections au cours desquelles Michelle Crick a été élue présidente.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Spanish Association of Language Centres in Higher Education (ACLES) was held in Valencia from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2009. The conference theme was Innovation and Quality in University Language Centres suggesting the importance of research and improvement in language teaching and learning, with four thematic strands running through the Conference. The first strand was **quality** in language centres, both in terms of training and management and initiatives to achieve quality standards. The second focused on **teaching** and the different educational experiences in foreign language teaching and methodological innovations. The third concentrated on **ICT applications** in the classroom, innovative experiences, developing new resources and their applications to teaching. The fourth dealt with **translation and terminology**, creation of terminology databases, management practices and assisted translation tools.

Seventy-one teachers from all around Spain attended the Conference and benefitted from the thirty-two papers delivered, the three workshops organised and the six bookstalls set up by different publishers.

The plenary speaker was Dr. Guy Haug, an expert on higher education policies from a European perspective and a member of the Advisory Council of the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ANECA). Dr. Haug talked about the importance to universities of the European Space of Higher Education.

During the General Meeting, the outgoing president welcomed the Universities of Coruña, Alicante, León and Valencia as new members of the Association, remarking that we are now 27 members. She also presented proposals for future activities such as the following:

- Organization of regional workshops on evaluation.



Cristina Pérez, Dr. Guy Haug and Marta Genís

## Zusammenfassung:

Im Oktober 2009 fand in Valencia die 6. ACLES Konferenz zum Thema Innovation und Qualität in Sprachenzentren an Hochschulen statt. Neben interessanten Vorträgen zu den Bereichen Qualität, Unterricht, ICT-Anwendungen und Übersetzung und Terminologie fanden auch die Vorstandswahlen statt, in deren Verlauf Michelle Crick zur Präsidentin von ACLES gewählt wurde.

- Creation of an Accreditation Commission and a Committee of Experts (whose task would be the validation of the different tests created by the language centres).
- Organization of new focus groups.
- Continuation of the Meetings of Directors of Language Centres.
- Promotion of 11<sup>th</sup> CercleS Conference in September among members
- Organization of the 7<sup>th</sup> ACLES Conference to be held in 2011.
- Recruitment of new members.
- Improvement of our web page and hire the services of a webmaster.

A report on the activities undertaken since the last Conference in 2007 was presented by the Secretary General and the Treasurer presented the financial statement for the period 2007-2009.

The elections of the new Executive Committee were held during the 6<sup>th</sup> ACLES Conference in Valencia. The candidates for the Offices of President, Secretary General, and Treasurer along with those of the members of the board (3 in number) were ratified by the General Assembly:

- Michelle Crick, from Universidad Complutense de Madrid, as President.
- Fiammetta Cincera, from Sevilla University, as Secretary General.
- Elena Orduna from Nebrija University, Madrid, as Treasurer.
- Steve Sylvester from Granada University as member.
- Andreu Pulido, from Girona University as member.
- Cristina Pérez Guillot from Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, as member. ■



Coffee Break

# CercleS Focus Group Meetings

## University of Toulouse, 20-21 November 2009

### Zusammenfassung:

Der nachfolgende Artikel bietet eine Zusammenfassung der Berichte der CercleS Arbeitsgruppen über deren erstes Zusammentreten vom 20. bis 21. November 2009 in Toulouse. Wie die Berichte zeigen war dieses Treffen außerordentlich erfolgreich. Es wurden Problemfelder in den einzelnen Bereichen (Management/Politik/Verwaltung; Lehreraus- und Weiterbildung und Personalaustausch; Erneuerung; Prüfen und Evaluation; ELP/CEFR) identifiziert und Möglichkeiten zukünftiger Zusammenarbeit und gemeinsamer Forschung ausgelotet. Sollten Sie Interesse daran haben, in einer der Arbeitsgruppen mitzuarbeiten, so wenden Sie sich bitte an das CercleS Generalsekretariat ([generalsekretariat@cercles.org](mailto:generalsekretariat@cercles.org)), das Ihre Anfrage dann an den Sprecher der betreffenden Arbeitsgruppe weiterleiten wird.

### Résumé :

L'article suivant est un résumé des rapports élaborés par les groupes de travail CercleS lors de leur première réunion du 20 au 21 novembre 2009 à Toulouse, une réunion qui eut un très gros succès. On a identifié des problèmes dans des domaines divers (management/ politique/administration; formation et formation continue des enseignants et échange de personnel; innovation; tests et évaluations; PEL/CECR) ainsi que des possibilités de collaboration future et de recherche commune. Si vous désirez collaborer à un des groupes de travail, veuillez vous adresser au secrétariat général de CercleS ([generalsekretariat@cercles.org](mailto:generalsekretariat@cercles.org)) qui transmettra votre demande au coordinateur du groupe de travail concerné.

The following is a summary of the reports produced by the individual CercleS Focus Groups that met for the first time at the University of Toulouse on November 20-21, 2009. As the summaries show, the two days were highly successful in terms of identifying issues in the various topics and future prospects of working and researching together. Anybody wishing to join a Focus Group should contact the CercleS General Secretariat ([generalsekretariat@cercles.org](mailto:generalsekretariat@cercles.org)) who will then forward their request to the group co-ordinators.

Although recognized as a 'buzz-word', concern was expressed that internationalization was seen in some universities as something that existed with no direct relationship to language skills. This was an issue that had to be addressed at the highest level in all sectors of higher education.

### FOCUS GROUPS 1 & 2:

#### Management/Policy/Administration Group

The group, comprising Language Centre Directors and Administrators from Finland, France, Italy, Spain and the UK met over the two-day period to explore current issues facing the Language Centre sector. A productive working relationship was soon established, and lively, stimulating, professionally relevant discussion ensued.

The group determined the specific needs of staff, particularly in relation to training and development, and formulated short, medium and long term strategies to meet these needs.

#### Teacher training and CPD

It was recognised as essential to hire staff with appropriate qualifications and to develop existing staff to their potential through internal and external staff development programmes. The group agreed to share good practice in this area and explore the possibilities of a portfolio of CercleS staff development programmes.

#### Employment status reorganisation and career development

The professionalisation of our work runs parallel to the dangers of casualization brought about by economic cutbacks. It may be worth tracking and mapping career structures in Language Centres across Europe, and CercleS could facilitate this.

**Teaching loads & hours (core & non-core):** these can vary greatly but it would be useful to have a European wide mapping exercise. CercleS focus groups to follow up on this.

### CURRENT ISSUES

#### Language policy formulation

It was deemed essential that universities should establish a robust language policy based on sound theories, and which could be put into practice effectively. The policy should encompass employability, intercultural communication, and a whole range of transferable skills.

#### Relationship with traditional departments

Language centres must have a positive collaborative relationship with language faculties and departments. Ownership should be shared and common ground established. Areas of specialism can be maintained whilst underlining the importance of language learning in all its forms. A wide range of courses which are fit for purpose and suit a variety of student needs should be offered.

#### Sustainability impact in the current economic crisis, managing expectations, resources, and funding (income generation)

All members of the group expressed (to varying degrees) the impact of university-wide cut-backs on language centres. Everyone recognised the need for languages to be embedded in university education to prevent languages being seen as 'an extra' which could be starved of core funding.

#### Internationalisation

**Benchmarking and quality assurance:** Again an issue for CercleS and something addressed by the second memorandum to be issued shortly by the Wulkow group.

### NEEDS RESULTING FROM THESE ISSUES

- Certification linked to the CEFR
- Teacher training programmes
- Leadership training courses e.g. management training, leadership skills.

### FUTURE STEPS

- Short term: job shadowing, exchange, tandem, investigate Grundvik project
- Medium term: developing workshops: financial & budgeting, personnel issues, management of change
- Long term: professional training linked to a post-graduate diploma, possibly CercleS accredited.

Chaired by  
Nick Byrne (London School of Economics) and Ray Satchell (University of Bristol).

### **FOCUS GROUP 3: Teacher Training, Teacher Education, Staff Exchange**

#### **1. WHAT IS HAPPENING AT YOUR INSTITUTION?**

General consensus:

Several contradictions exist between national policy on languages and the financial/professional recognition given to Language Centres in many EU countries. Due to the economic crisis, many national governments are in the process of passing new laws targeting universities, which include severe cuts in the language learning policy budgets.

There is a lack of professional recognition from within the professorial ranks of language departments and also from other specialist areas, for example science, economics, arts, etc. There are several different profiles of language tutors or instructors under the umbrella term “language teachers” with different curricula and teaching background. Could a teacher portfolio help language teachers’ profiling?

There is a need to create communication and networking platforms for sharing ideas about new “teaching profiles”. IT tools used in class can be shared and utilised in order to make language teaching more effective. IT is a tool for language teaching, not content or methodology.

Teaching LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) is often regarded by University governing bodies more as a student service rather than a proper teaching or academic research activity.

Language Centres are predominantly staffed (or, rather, under-staffed) with temporary language tutors or instructors with no career path or professional development. There is a serious problem in recruiting experienced staff as many language centres lack a long-term staff policy.

Relationships between Language Centres and Departments of Languages and Faculties vary from country to country. In some European countries, lecturers work in Language Centres whilst in others they serve as an adjunct faculty to external units. When working as staff at Language Centres, lecturers and professors find it difficult to carry out their research work alongside heavy contact teaching hours.

Teacher training schemes are difficult to set up because of a lack of:

- well established good practices
- qualified experts, especially in the use of IT
- curriculum constraints

#### **2. WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?**

Short term:

Social network via CercleS

Training

Long term:

A lobbying force, able to transform language policy from theory to practice

#### **3. WHERE DO YOU SEE POSSIBLE SYNERGIES FOR FUTURE CO-OPERATION?**

- Training through meeting, observing, and cooperating between

CercleS members

- Training through distance information technology
- Pedagogical resource sharing

#### **4. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO?**

##### **Step 1:**

- Set up tools to facilitate members’ connections through internal adverts (e.g. I’m X, from X university, my centre has such and such a structure and we’re ready to welcome X colleagues for X days to share our daily teaching tasks).
- Virtual cooperation on a “CercleS Moodle platform”
- Cooperation via a social network system such as Ning (<http://www.ning.com/>)

##### **Step 2**

- Set up Professional Development Modules (PDM) ranging from informal teacher exchanges (virtual or otherwise, see above) to substantial formal 50 hour (more or less) PDM organised by CercleS and locally run by host universities.
- Curriculum examples: (a detailed programme will be worked out and proposed for discussion before our next meeting in May in Messina)
  - Unit 1: Learning technical requirements and their effects on teaching/learning
  - Unit 2: didactics, pedagogy, methodology, learner’s autonomy.
  - Unit 3: Language content. (Different modules according to general methods/attitudes towards teaching and separate modules on single languages).
- Hands-on and resource production
  - Questions:
    - Will colleagues have enough time to organise and run such modules?
    - If there is a staff exchange, personal qualifications can be put in a common resource area.
    - Who will be the experts? How will they be chosen? Will they be paid or not? If yes by whom?
    - Warning: our training actions shouldn’t be an excuse for our national education authorities to not do anything in the matter of teacher training

#### **5. WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

- Test the CercleS Moodle platform
- Create a network of professionals who work or are interested in the field of teacher training and education.
- Organise a virtual meeting to compare ideas on the development of PDM.

#### **6. WHEN AND WHERE WILL YOU MEET NEXT?**

University of Messina, Italy 2010.

Multiplex video conferencing.

#### **7. STRUCTURE FOR FUTURE CO-OPERATION?**

CercleS Moodle and video conferencing among the participants in the focus groups.

Staff and teaching materials exchange

#### **8. ANY SUPPORT NEEDED?**

Financing and practical organization are essential issues which must be secured. Without any economic support or some sort of

organisational pattern, we will not be able to set up sustainable practices.

Support needed for staff exchange and Professional Development Modules.

Chaired by:

Mariavita Cambria (University of Messina) and Christine Vaillant Sirdey (University of Toulouse)

## FOCUS GROUP 4: Innovation

### 1) Innovation in language centres

It was felt that **innovation** could cover many different aspects, and though it was often taken for granted little was known about how much innovation there was in Language Centres, as regards their **structures, activities**, etc., ICT for LT was also deemed to be widely used but there were seen to be many discrepancies between centres, countries, teachers, and teaching approaches (for example classroom approaches versus the more widely advertised European Projects, or local initiatives made more conspicuous in CercleS conferences and publications). “Innovation” is not confined to ICT but we chose to focus on that particular aspect because of its wide implications for all aspects of Language Centre activities. In other words, we need to find out more about IT related activities in LC.

### 2) Need for surveys and resource sharing

A need for surveys was identified. It is crucial for members to find out more about innovating on-going projects and also about new courseware development, for example the multilingual online case studies developed in the context of the Explics project. These studies often challenge traditional notions of language testing by instigating continuous assessment (<http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/>).

To make information available, a template for the surveys is necessary.

It is also essential to identify ICT related EU projects that are easily available online, so that the large amount of work and examples of good practice can be used for the benefit of students and teachers in their real life learning and teaching experience.

An association like CercleS should also make it easier for its members to share resources, network, collaborate, put together proposals, be it locally, nationally, or internationally Networking. Identifying potential ICT EU partners can be prioritised, not only by sending a message via the CercleS mailing list, but also by having more targeted Language Centre descriptions and teacher profiles on each member association website, so that it is easier to find colleagues with the special expertise that one would need to work and collaborate with on any given project.

### 3) Training needs

A need for the training of teachers and technicians was felt necessary. European working contexts vary enormously, and while some teachers are very familiar with IT and use and integrate resources on a daily basis, others want to find out more, especially about easy to use solutions. There is therefore a need for workshops (a few days in length, as the French RANACLES association has organised every summer for many years now, see [www.ranacles.org/](http://www.ranacles.org/)), or longer summer schools. Teacher training sessions (initial /continuous) could be set up by CercleS, either at national and / or at European level,

using the expertise of its members and also inviting specialists from other associations or the business world.

### 4) Virtual environments and Learning platforms

Virtual Environments and Virtual learning platforms have developed enormously, digital campuses have appeared in several countries, and many members would benefit from what those who have used them extensively have learnt.

Why prefer commercial software such as Blackboard or WebCT over freeware solutions such as Moodle? What are the new platforms, their advantages and drawbacks? What are nings and is the use of social networks or video games for language learning really empowering or a time-consuming distraction? How do I choose the right technical set up for what I want to achieve (MCQs, wikis, blogs...?) Is Wimba what I need for voice mail, and how do I integrate it into Blackboard or Moodle? How do I set up tandem learning? Will the use of cloud computing give providers access to users' unencrypted data? Which on-line language testing programmes provide reliable rather than bogus calibration with CEFR levels?

These are some of the questions that a special CercleS expert group could endeavour to answer by providing on-line help and advice. The rapid evolution of devices, on-line developments, and the intrusion of mobile technology in all fields makes it necessary to have a Technology Watch group (mobile learning, e-books...) with contributions from experienced colleagues.

### 5) Workshops

To further support innovation, it is also paramount to be able to **bring research and good practice together and report on the findings in dedicated workshops**. Action research has made a growing impact in recent years and Language Departments and universities should work to improve its visibility and credibility by insisting on the essential links between fundamental research and the modern day needs of Language Centres. More collaboration is needed with those working in fields such as cognitive science, speech perception, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, ergonomics or document design, for example. To do so, we need to gather the expertise within CercleS and outside, by actively collaborating with other associations such as EUROCALL, IALLT, WORLDCALL (as already stated in the 1998 Essen seminar policy statement).

In concrete terms, to make more investigation possible and enable more members to become actively involved, we need to encourage the use of video-conferencing facilities, for example SKYPE and CONNECT PRO.

### 6) Publications

The workshops would naturally lead to **publications**, be it on line, on the CercleS website or in printed format. Most national evaluation agencies for academic advancement are still heavily biased against on-line publications but there are signs of improvement here and there. The Innovation Focus Group workshops could lead to special issues (e.g. on ICT) of the newly-created CercleS Journal together with articles based on presentations from the CercleS conferences.

### 7) Support

To achieve these aims, CercleS will have to provide support in various formats, probably for all focus groups. It could provide (for example) templates for surveys, and could help by keeping the (innovation) focus group(s) web pages up-to-date. Clearly identified contact

addresses will make it easy for members to join and collaborate. Financial support for teacher training might be considered unless the workshops are self-financing.

Chaired by Nicole Chenik (Université Paris Dauphine) & Tony Stenton (Université Toulouse I)

## **FOCUS GROUP 5: Testing and Assessment**

The introduction of specific and context-related issues in the field of testing in University Language Centres (ULC) was followed up by the identification and discussion of some areas of interest, namely mutual recognition of tests/certifications across European countries and possible forms of standardization in terms of general rationale and approach (communicative, task-based, etc.), procedures, constructs, formats, paper vs. electronic version of tests.

The recognition of the profound differences determined by different contexts in which ULC operate, both at national and European level, made the possibility of developing common procedures viable only for certain aspects, such as constructs and delivery, leaving other specific decisions to individual ULC, thus respecting their teaching and assessment autonomy. However, an increase in communication, information and exchange of experiences across countries is highly desirable. Cost-effectiveness of testing in ULC was also identified as a general priority, along with teacher training. Teachers are often not trained to be testers and the basic rationale in testing entails a life-long learning approach to teacher and tester training, in order to guarantee high-quality tests.

Achievement and proficiency tests for foreign languages are context-dependent and culture-dependent (i.e. inter alia tied to national language policies) and cannot and should not be standardized. The rationale for testing in terms of several variables was also discussed.

A project within CercleS members could be developed to accelerate the issue of **mutual recognition of national certifications**, coordinated by individual universities, national associations and testing systems (i.e. CELC, Unicert) or international bodies. Administration of these certifications rests on each institution, which should, in turn, submit their formats and quality control systems to CercleS so as to achieve a CercleS recognition and/or validation following procedures that the focus group may suggest.

Secondly, a **test in Language for Mobility Purposes (LMP)** was identified by group members as a useful and viable model of European standardization in the area of testing and assessment for foreign language learning. LMP needs to be preliminarily discussed at the national level, within national associations, in order to gauge the real need and applicability of such a test.

Questions of intercultural competence were also discussed, highlighting the importance of encouraging students to be more aware of cultural differences and show sensitivity to foreign cultures' "otherness". Since intercultural competence cannot be tested in traditional terms, an LMP may represent a way of introducing students to foreign cultural elements, equipping them with basic language and cultural notions to cope with this "otherness" in the central educational context of tertiary education.

An LMP was also envisioned as a test which may be beneficial for the spread of less taught languages, as many European mobility programmes take place in the countries where less taught languages are spoken. More often than not, students come back after a mobility programme without speaking the national language of the European country which hosted them, since teaching and assessment are often in English.

The creation of a European electronic database of items was agreed upon as the best way to ensure quality control of high-stake tests as well as the cost-effectiveness of their development and standardization.

Discussion within national associations is needed to start the enterprise, in a spirit of democratic participation.

Chaired by Maria Šikolová (University of Brno); Maria Grazia Sindoni (University of Messina)

## **FOCUS GROUP 6: ELP/CEFR**

The group set the following deadlines for activity related to the CercleS ELP (seen as a way of mediating the CEFR to language learners in higher education).

### **Short-term - end of March 2010**

1. Making the English/French version of the CercleS ELP downloadable from the CercleS website with online registration.
2. Creation of a forum (possibly using Google Groups otherwise Forum set up on CercleS portal) of members of CercleS ELP/CEFR focus group (including people not present at Toulouse meeting) for exchange of ideas.

### **Medium-term – end of May 2010**

1. Correction of major errors in French version of CercleS ELP (with help from Gail Taillefer).
2. Check all translations of CercleS ELP to date for consistency and add to CercleS website to be freely downloaded (along with links to national association websites).
3. Develop set of Guidelines for CercleS ELP use to be added to CercleS website, including resources and bibliography.
4. Investigate ways of formatting pdf files so that sections can be filled in online.

### **Long-term – July 2010**

1. Make new pdf file (with sections to be filled in) available for limited piloting.
2. Investigate further the proposals for an e-ELP (e.g. Bremen version).
3. Begin organisation of 2011 CercleS seminar on CEFR/ELP.

As well as collaborating online, the Focus Group intends to meet again in Helsinki in September 2010 on the occasion of the CercleS conference.

Chaired by Mary Ruane (University College Dublin) and Fiona Dalziel (University of Padua) ■

# The Centre for Business Languages at European Business School - International University Schloss Reichartshausen: Languages in Motion

Christiane Odile Papadopoulou, EBS, Germany

## Résumé :

Le Centre de Langues des Affaires fait partie intégrante de la European Business School (EBS), École de Commerce privée au statut universitaire. Dès sa création en 1971, les langues étaient présentes dans les programmes d'études de EBS, le fondateur de l'École étant persuadé de l'importance des langues pour réaliser des affaires au niveau international. Cette conviction est partagée par le Président actuel. L'anglais est considéré comme une compétence de base et la maîtrise de plusieurs langues et la connaissance des différences culturelles comme un atout dans un contexte de mondialisation du commerce. En 2004, EBS est passé à la structure en deux cycles suivant le processus de Bologne. Le Centre de Langues des Affaires est ainsi responsable de cours crédités et de cours facultatifs dans les programmes d'études du Bachelor, du Master et dans une grande partie des MBA créés ces derniers temps. Son ambition est d'élargir ses activités au domaine des formations sur mesure pour les cadres actifs. La création cet automne d'une deuxième faculté de EBS, une faculté de droit, à Wiesbaden pourra certainement soutenir ces ambitions.

## Zusammenfassung:

Das Zentrum für Wirtschaftssprachen ist ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der European Business School (EBS), einer privaten wissenschaftlichen Hochschule mit Universitätsstatus. Seit der Gründung im Jahre 1971 ist die Sprachausbildung Teil des Studienprogramms. Der Gründer der Hochschule war überzeugt, dass den Sprachen bei internationalen Geschäftsabschlüssen eine große Bedeutung zukomme, eine Meinung, die auch der derzeitige Präsident der EBS vertritt. Englisch wird als Grundkompetenz betrachtet, und das Beherrschen mehrerer Sprachen und die Kenntnis kultureller Hintergründe als Trumpfkarte in einer globalisierten Geschäftswelt. Im Zuge des Bologna-Prozesses stellte die EBS im Jahre 2004 ihre Studienstruktur um. Das Zentrum für Wirtschaftssprachen ist nun verantwortlich für kreditierte und fakultative Sprachkurse in den Bachelor- und Masterprogrammen sowie in einigen MBA-Programmen, die in letzter Zeit entwickelt wurden. Ein wichtiges Ziel des Zentrums für Wirtschaftssprachen ist eine Ausdehnung seiner Aktivitäten im Bereich der Weiterbildung. Die Gründung einer zweiten Fakultät der EBS (Rechtsfakultät) im Herbst in Wiesbaden, der hessischen Landeshauptstadt, könnte dabei durchaus hilfreich sein.

## The University

The European Business School gGmbH (EBS) is a private business school with university status. The university's activities focus on three core areas: undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, executive education and research.

The EBS was founded in 1971 in Offenbach/Frankfurt am Main and received state recognition as a university of applied sciences in 1977. It moved to Schloss Reichartshausen in Oestrich-Winkel (Rheingau) in 1980 and was awarded the university status by the German state of Hesse in 1989. The School was one of the first universities to complete the reform process and offered Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes in 2004. In January 2008 it launched the EMBA programme and in the autumn the EBS MBA programme.

The European Business School will establish a law faculty in Wiesbaden in September 2009 with the support of the city of Wiesbaden and the state of Hesse. The EBS Law Faculty will be the second private law school in Germany along with the Bucerius Law School in Hamburg.

Management of the EBS is conducted by the President in his role as Academic Director and CEO, and by the Chancellor/CFO and the Managing Director/CMO. The Supervisory Board is its highest controlling body.

## Facts and Figures

- one of the three largest business studies faculties in Germany
- 1,200 students: 26% female, 15% foreign students
- approx. 220 new students per year in the Bachelor's and 110 in the Master's programmes
- average age of graduates is 23
- studium universale and coaching are offered to all students and doctoral students
- 150 partner universities on all five continents
- 200 partner companies
- 10 languages taught by 34 native speakers of 19 different nationalities

## Study Programmes

Bachelor of Science:

- Bachelor in General Management, with study tracks Business Law, Business Languages, Business Information Systems, and International Business Studies (3 semesters at the EBS, 3 semesters at partner universities abroad)
- Bachelor in Aviation Management



Students working in front of the Tower of the Schloss

- Bachelor in Automotive Management (starting 2010)
- With the Bachelor of Science in General Management, EBS offers a broad degree programme in business administration that qualifies its graduates for a career in business and management and for a consecutive Master's degree programme. The programme has set the standard with 210 ECTS credits within three years, thereby reflecting the intensity of the study programme. Language modules constitute an important part of this programme. For example, in the Business Languages track, 12 ECTS are acquired through

English modules and 20 from studying the second language. All EBS study programmes include mandatory English language modules, as English is the channel of business communication. Other languages may be chosen according to the study programme. Consequently, we carefully assess the competence and language level of the individual student. Currently the Business Languages study track contains modules in Business Chinese, Business French, and Business Spanish.

Language courses and seminars are also part of other programmes such as the Cross Cultural Communication module offered in different languages in the Master's programme, and the Language Training and International Communication module in the MBA programme.

Master of Science:

- Master in Management, in Business & Law, in Finance, and in Real Estate
- Executive Master in Business Innovation
- Executive MBA in Health Care Management
- MBA Logistics & SCM (in cooperation with the Graduate School of Business Administration (GSBA) of Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU))

For guest students, the Centre for Business Languages offers credited courses in German as a foreign language at different levels, including intensive preparatory courses.

Additionally, students on all programmes can attend optional language courses in Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. Other languages can be offered depending on demand.

### The Centre for Business Languages

Learning at the Centre for Business Languages

It is intended that students should become fluent in two additional languages, to the extent that they can operate internationally, in an academic context, or during later professional life, as effectively as a native speaker of comparable education and background. In order to achieve effective international business communication we combine linguistic, cultural and functional competences.

Teaching at the Centre for Business Languages

Small groups and modern methods of language teaching guarantee active participation and communicative learning. The language modules cover the needs of an international business school, developing language competence by practising business communication skills and by sharpening awareness of cultural differences.

Learning is subject to continuous and regular assessment to assure that these high standards are kept and to enable the students to monitor their own progress.

The highly-qualified and committed staff members of the Centre for Business Languages comprises exclusively native-

speaker lecturers who have, as well as a university/college education, many years of experience as lecturers at university/college level. In addition our training managers have worked in renowned national and international companies. Through this expertise our team members have developed, and continue to update, their own teaching material for a range of different subject specific and language modules.

Testing at the Centre for Business Languages

The EBS is an official test and preparation centre for the following institutions:

- TOEFL iBT
- Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris (CCIP)
- TestDaF
- Cámara oficial de comercio e industria de Madrid (Ccámara)

Testing sessions take place regularly and training courses for all these diplomas and tests are offered on demand. Participants of the optional language courses can also choose to prepare for one of the diplomas offered.

### Outlook to the future

The EBS is developing at a continuously fast pace. The Centre for Business Languages is an integral part of this development which will increasingly provide new opportunities particularly in extending its activities into the field of executive education. The new campus in Wiesbaden will further allow us to offer our courses to new clients and to launch new and innovative programmes. ■



Campus Schloss: main building

*Residential Seminar for Language Centre Directors:*

## **“Guidelines for the Assessment of European Language Centres”**

*25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November, University of Rome ‘Foro Italico’ – Frascati ‘Villa Tuscolana’.*

*Aim of the Seminar:*

*Building on the ‘Wulkow Memorandum on Quality Assurance’ of January 2010, this Seminar is devoted to the identification of common guidelines on which each centre can assess its own activity in view of a future common CERCLES assessment policy and accreditation scheme aimed at ensuring common standards and quality recognition throughout Europe.*

*Participation: limited to 30 participants.*

*Registration: by August 8th      Info and forms at: [www.claiusm.it](http://www.claiusm.it)*

## CercleS National Associations

ACLES (Spain)  
Michelle Crick  
Universidad Complutense de Madrid  
E-mail: [mmcrick@rect.ucm.es](mailto:mmcrick@rect.ucm.es)  
Web: <https://acles.wikispaces.com/>

AICLU (Italy)  
Maurizio Gotti  
Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, Università di Bergamo.  
Tel: +39 035/2052701  
Fax: +39 035/2052535  
E-mail: [maurizio.gotti@unibg.it](mailto:maurizio.gotti@unibg.it)  
Web: <http://www.aiclu.it>

AKS (Germany)  
Doris Gebert  
Universität Potsdam  
Tel: +49 (0)331 977 2027  
E-mail: [doris.gebert@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:doris.gebert@uni-potsdam.de)  
Web: <http://uni-potsdam.de/spz>

AULC (UK and Ireland)  
Peter Howarth  
University of Leeds  
Tel: +44 (0)113 34 33250  
Fax: +44 (0)113 343 3252  
E-mail: [p.a.howarth@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:p.a.howarth@leeds.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.aulc.org/](http://www.aulc.org/)

CASALC (Czech and Slovak Republics)  
Ludmila Kolackova  
University of Defence Brno  
E-mail: [ludmila.kolackova@centrum.cz](mailto:ludmila.kolackova@centrum.cz)  
Web: [www.casajc.sk](http://www.casajc.sk)

FHS-ELHE (Switzerland)  
Sabina Schaffner  
Universität Zürich / ETH  
E-mail: [sabina.schaffner@sprachen.uzh.ch](mailto:sabina.schaffner@sprachen.uzh.ch)

FINELC (Finland)  
Martina Buss  
University of Vaasa  
Tel: +358 8 553 3204  
E-mail: [mbu@uwasa.fi](mailto:mbu@uwasa.fi)  
Web:  
[www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi/finelc\\_etusivu\\_eng.asp](http://www.virtuaaliyliopisto.fi/finelc_etusivu_eng.asp)

NUT (Netherlands and Belgium)  
Liesbet Korebrits  
University of Nijmegen  
E-mail: [l.korebrits@let.ru.nl](mailto:l.korebrits@let.ru.nl)  
Web:  
<http://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/nut/index.htm>

RANACLES (France)  
Christine Vaillant-Sirdey  
Université Toulouse 3 Paul Sabatier  
Tel +33 (0)5 62 25 81 20  
E-mail: [christine.vaillant-sirdey@iut-tlse3.fr](mailto:christine.vaillant-sirdey@iut-tlse3.fr)  
Web: [www.ranacles.org](http://www.ranacles.org)

SERMO (Poland)  
Liliana Szczuka-Dorna  
Politechnika Poznańska  
Tel: +48 (61) 665 24 91  
E-mail: [liliana.dorna@put.poznan.pl](mailto:liliana.dorna@put.poznan.pl)  
Web: [www.sermo.org.pl](http://www.sermo.org.pl)

VUS (Austria)  
Wilfried Wieden  
Universität Salzburg  
E-mail: [Wilfried.Wieden@sbg.ac.at](mailto:Wilfried.Wieden@sbg.ac.at)

# Forthcoming events

**26-28 August 2010:** First international Conference on “Mass-Customization” for Language Teaching and Learning; University College Dublin, Ireland; more information: [www.ucd.ie/german/](http://www.ucd.ie/german/)

**2-4 September 2010:** 11<sup>th</sup> International CercleS Conference, Helsinki, Finland; more information: [www.congrex.fi/cercles2010](http://www.congrex.fi/cercles2010)

**8-11 September 2010:** EUROCALL 2010 “Languages, cultures and virtual communities”, University of Bordeaux, France; more information: <http://eurocall2010.u-bordeaux4.fr/>

**15-17 September 2010:** 40. Jahrestagung der Gesellschaft für Angewandte Linguistik: „Sprachräume”; Universität Leipzig, Germany; more information: [www.uni-leipzig.de/gal2010](http://www.uni-leipzig.de/gal2010)

**4-8 October 2010:** ACLES seminar on Testing “Developing a B2 certification exam”

**14-16 October 2010:** 1<sup>st</sup> Freiburg Language Policy and Language Teaching Conference “Multilingualism and Aspects of Intercultural and Transcultural Language Teaching”, Language Teaching Centre of Freiburg University (Germany); more information: [www.sli-konferenz-mehrsprachigkeit.de](http://www.sli-konferenz-mehrsprachigkeit.de)

**11-13 November 2010:** Fortbildungsseminar „Interaktive Unterrichtsmethoden für Russisch als Fremdsprache an Hochschulen“; Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder), Deutschland

**19-20 November 2010:** 11. UNicert®-Forum und 11. UNicert®-Fortbildungsworkshop; Universität Regensburg, Germany; more information: <http://rcswwww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~unicert/>

**19-21 November 2010:** EXPOLINGUA Berlin 2010: 23. Internationale Messe für Sprachen und Kulturen; more information: [www.expolingua.com/berlin](http://www.expolingua.com/berlin)

**25-28 November 2010:** Residential Seminar for Language Centre Directors: “Guidelines for the Assessment of European Language Centres”, University of Rome ‘Foro Italico’ – Frascati ‘Villa Tuscolana’; more information: [www.claiusm.it](http://www.claiusm.it)

**25-27 November 2010:** XVIII<sup>ème</sup> congrès RANACLES « Pratiques d’accompagnement(s) des apprenants en présentiel et à distance », Nancy, France; more information: <http://www.atilf.fr/ranacles2010/accueil.htm>

**3-5 December 2010:** International Conference “Foreign Language Instructional Technology: Theory and Practice”; University of Cyprus, Nicosia; more information: <http://lclinux.ucy.ac.cy/Flit/index.htm>

**6-7 January 2011:** AULC conference and AGM, University of Warwick, UK; more information: [www.aulc.org](http://www.aulc.org)

**4-5 March 2011:** 3. Symposium „Autonomie und Assessment - Testen, Evaluieren, Zertifizieren in unterrichtlichen und autonomen Lernkontexten”, Universität Bremen, Germany; more information: [www.fremdsprachenzentrum-bremen.de/symposion](http://www.fremdsprachenzentrum-bremen.de/symposion)

**17-19 March 2011:** 32<sup>nd</sup> GERAS Conference “Hegemony and singularities: orchestrating languages for specific purposes”, University of Burgundy, Dijon, France; for more information and abstract submission contact [martine.goiset@u-bourgogne.fr](mailto:martine.goiset@u-bourgogne.fr) and refer to [www.geras.fr](http://www.geras.fr)

**9-11 June 2011:** congrès APLIUT « L’image », IUT La Rochelle; more information: [www.apliut.com](http://www.apliut.com) ■