

## EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MODERN LANGUAGES, GRAZ

3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Professional Network Forum on Language Education  
Graz, 2 February 2012

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### Meeting summary and action points

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#### I. Opening of the meeting

The meeting took place on Thursday 2 February 2012 at the ECML in Graz and was moderated by Waldemar MARTYNIUK Executive Director of the ECML.

Participants:

- AILA – Bernd Rüschoff
- ALTE – Emyr Davies
- CEL/ELC – Maurizio Viezzi, Manuel Célio Conceicao
- CercleS – Johann Fischer
- EALTA – Gudrun Erickson
- EAQUALS – Peter Brown
- EPA – Johannes Theiner (excused)
- EUNIC – Martin Gilbert
- FIPLV – Terry Lamb
- IAM – Britta Hufeisen
- ICC – Rob Williams
- Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe – Philia Thalgott
- OLBI – Marie José Hamel
- ECML – Michael Armstrong, Susanna Slivensky, Waldemar Martyniuk

#### II. Background

Encouraged by its Governing Board, the ECML seeks to intensify its relationships with institutions and associations with similar aims working in the field of language education and assessment.

Following on from the Memorandum of Cooperation signed in 2008 by the ECML and the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa, the Centre has developed a generic bilateral cooperation agreement which outlines the modalities of the desired cooperation and formalises the commitment to work together. The objective of the agreement is to ensure synergies at institutional level in the pursuit of common goals through the exchange of expertise, information and documentation, the attendance at partner events and the cooperation in joint activities.

The first agreements were signed for the duration of the ECML's 3<sup>rd</sup> medium-term programme "*Empowering Language Professionals*" (2008-2011) by a number of leading INGOs having participatory status with the Council of Europe: the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), the, the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), the European Association for Language Testing in Europe (EALTA), the International Certificate Conference (ICC), the International Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV), and the Conseil européen pour les langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC).

The initiative to set up a Professional Network Forum on Language Education allowing leaders of INGOs to meet once a year or once every two years under the auspices of the Council of Europe at the ECML in Graz emerged from this context. Three new members joined the Forum in 2011: the European Parents Association (EPA), the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and the International Association of Multilingualism (IAM).

The Professional Network Forum was set up in order to provide a platform for experts for cooperation and exchange of the latest developments, as well as for synergetic activities. The purpose of the ECML was in particular to intensify the links with NGOs and civil society considered as important partners in the Centre's activities.

The Graz Declaration on language education "Quality education for plurilingual people living in multilingual societies" signed 2010 by network partners serves as a rationale for the next ECML programme of activities 2012-2015.

### III. Aims of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting

The aims of the meeting were:

- To exchange information on the latest developments in the partner networks;
- To present the ECML programme of activities 2012-15 incl. the new format envisaged as 'Targeted support to the member states'
- To explore ways of the partners' involvement in the activities of the new ECML programme;
- Brainstorming and planning for joint actions and activities in the near future

### IV. Action points agreed upon at the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting

- The ECML will update the PNF website and publish a news item summarising the event on the Centre's website.<sup>1</sup>
- A new memorandum of cooperation with the ECML will be sent out to the members of the Professional Network Forum for joint signature. It will cover the timeframe of the *Learning through languages programme – 2012-2015*;
- Partners can become further involved in one or more of the new projects within the new programme in the following ways:
  - nominating participants to the workshops organised within the projects;
  - as an associate partner in projects and targeted support initiatives (where there is a clear link between the aims of the project and the INGO).
  - cooperating with projects as a dissemination partner, in particular for mediation projects (such as LACS II) – this could take the form of new ideas and/or collaboration on national events;
  - in another mutually beneficial way agreed with the project/targeted support team and the ECML.
- Following approval by the ECML Governing Board (end of April) the Centre will inform partners about the envisaged targeted support actions within the ECML's 2012-2015 programme seeking partners cooperation and involvement;
- Develop the information exchange function of the Professional Network Forum through a more structured approach to communication:
  - joint promotion of conferences (via the ECML's International events calendar <http://www.ecml.at/interactive>);
  - contacts from ECML to PFN partners periodically (every 3 - 6 months) to publicise their events and key news/ information;

<sup>1</sup> The news item was published on 15 February at: <http://www.ecml.at/News3/tabid/643/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

- establishment of a joint newsletter coordinated by the ECML (and sent out by all partners) containing priority issues/events/products of the INGOs (feasibility to be examined) – the LACS II project could be involved in this initiative;
- the establishment of reciprocal links between the ECML and INGOs websites (where these do not exist already) and, where applicable, linkage via social networks (for example: Linked In, Facebook, Twitter) and Wikipedia (for an example: see AILA page);
- examine the feasibility of RSS feeds from INGOs to the ECML website;
- the ECML will send out a communication on the 20 publications resulting from the 2008-2011 *Empowering language professionals* programme.

#### **V. Brainstorming ideas for a joint conference/event of the Professional Network Forum partners**

- the event may be linked to the Austrian Presidency of the Council of Europe (November 2013 – May 2014) and take place following on from a policy conference envisaged to be organised by the Austrian authorities
- the event should go beyond an exchange of information and involve working together on a specific theme
- the event could have two parts: a discussion of burning issues in current language education, involving input from the representatives of the Professional Network Forum followed on the second day by a debate with the title 'the value of languages' involving business leaders, decision-makers and experts from other disciplines (for example a neuroscientist presenting 'how you build a language brain') and with an underlying focus on the importance of languages for jobs
- the event should reach out to new audiences (to ensure that not just the importance of English is highlighted, a suggestion was made that ethno-marketers be involved providing evidence of the importance of learning other languages)
- The event could build further upon what had been achieved by the Languages in Europe project ([www.letpp.eu](http://www.letpp.eu))

#### **Possible formats:**

- the conference could be comprised of a debate and a series of presentations/workshops relating to social, economic and intercultural themes
- two-stage activity: an event linked to the Austrian Presidency which would most likely relate to policy, followed by the debate.
- poster sessions
- website/pages providing arguments (and hard data) relating to the importance of languages tailored to a business audience – 20 minute podcasts from different sectors (researchers and businesses)
- moderation of the debate by a journalist (having the advantage of involving the media from the outset)

#### **6. Next meeting of the Professional Network Forum is scheduled for Thursday, 7 February 2013**