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Developing synergies in CercleS

Throughout CercleS, language professionals are striving to work together both in their home institutions and abroad in order to implement, among other things, language learning resources, improve teaching methodology and promote quality learning. Indeed, each new issue of the CercleS Bulletin reveals that for anyone involved in language education there is something to be shared and learnt from others' experiences and realities. These realities can be measured through the different synergies at work at all levels of collaboration and competence. Let us identify some of them.

Moving into a new position, for example, is an excellent opportunity for creating new synergies. This is what I have increasingly felt over the past year since I have taken up the position of Secretary General. Firstly, my new responsibilities involve working in a different capacity with colleagues I have always esteemed "at a distance" and with whom I have now joined in the common goal of co-ordinating and promoting CercleS activities in higher education. Secondly, a new CercleS Executive means a new combination of interactive forces, thereby developing a new dynamic of experiences and ideas from a different make-up of European countries.

In the new headquarters of the CercleS General Secretariat, other synergies are created with other participants working closely together: my colleague Patricia Taylor who assists in the everyday routine of incoming and outgoing correspondence, checking the database, updating the Website; Andrea Leotardi, a University computer technician who has taken over the role of Webmaster; not forgetting students from my Department who have asked to join us, albeit briefly, for their work apprenticeship/training which is an integral part of their degree course. This opportunity has taken them from the bounds of the classroom into the world of language education, where they can snatch the opportunity to use their second languages in a real working context and thus come to realise that they have indeed been learning for a purpose!

CercleS fully supports initiatives which lead to such events as the recent ELP Padua seminar (September 2009) and the future Helsinki Conference on Language Policy (September 2010). Far from being an isolated centre of activity, it is becoming an association of excellence being called upon to contribute to language policy making throughout Europe. The recent signing of the ECML memorandum (see Word from the

President) confirms the particularly significant role that CercleS is taking on. Yet another synergy was created this year when in January Directors of Language Centres throughout Europe met at Wulkow/Brandenburg (reported in this issue) to discuss various problems relating to the management of Language Centres.

In this Bulletin, you will find Johann Fischer's announcement regarding the setting up of Focus groups that cover a wide range of topics common to each individual member of every University Language Centre, be they manager, teaching or administrative staff, or technician. The response from a number of National Associations and Associate Members has been extremely encouraging. Indeed, the first meeting in Toulouse in November brought together a number of colleagues willing to share their work experiences and focus on specific current problem areas in language education and language policy making that have not received sufficient attention, thus promoting future collaboration at a distance with a view to redressing the balances.

By getting back to the grass roots and trying to make CercleS as accessible as possible to one and all through a series of networks of people with a wide range of expertise, experience and language competences, we envisage a synergy of ideas that will be triggered off by a desire to work in close collaboration not just with colleagues in the home environment but also in other institutions around Europe. Furthermore, CercleS activities must be a fundamental link in Internationalization projects which are now a common goal in higher education. And this, in turn, means not losing sight of the need to promote a plurilingual future, the theme of the last CercleS conference in Seville.

Each CercleS Bulletin also contains a Language Centre Profile, which places a particular institution on the CercleS map, reports on national conferences and seminars whose participants are never limited to the country of the host institution; there is also news of innovative projects promoting forms of communication between native and non-native speakers, such as the Language Buddies described in the present issue.

All these developing synergies can only be successful with members' contributions and support, and understanding CercleS common aims and objectives as a European association. Keep checking the CercleS website for more news about what is going on!

GM

Word from the President

Johann Fischer



Many university language centres have joined CercleS over the past years, bringing together an increasing number of people involved in university language teaching. A new Portuguese association, ReCles, has applied for membership and will hopefully become a full member at our next General Meeting during the XIth International CercleS Conference in Helsinki.

With increased membership CercleS has also launched new initiatives. After a first ELP Seminar in June 2007, another highly successful one took place on the CEFR and

the ELP in September this year. CercleS has decided to continue these meetings on a regular basis, as we feel that more efforts are needed to link our language courses to the CEFR and to implement the joint potential of the CEFR and the ELP. We are pleased to announce that the University of Groningen (Netherlands) has volunteered to host our next CEFR / ELP event.

CercleS is involved in other events at a European level. In October 2009 the University of Göttingen organised a workshop in co-operation with CercleS, UNICert® and UNICert@LUCE on testing oral skills, which took place within the framework of the GULT Project (financed by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz and with a view to developing guidelines for task-based university language testing at CEFR B2 and C1 levels). More than 50 participants from all over Europe discussed video-recordings of oral exams, models of best practice and evaluation grids.

There will be a follow-up in January 2010 to the first Seminar of University Language Centre Directors in Frankfurt (Oder) and Wulkow, organised again by Thomas Vogel and his team. The outcome of the first (January 2009) seminar, the Wulkow Memorandum, has been distributed around Europe.

CercleS has also taken another challenging step with its Focus Groups. A preliminary meeting took place at the Université de Toulouse 1 Capitole, France in November 2009, bringing together over 50 CercleS members from all over Europe to discuss needs and interests relating to the focus group descriptions (see this Bulletin) as well as knowledge and competences available at partner institutions. The idea is to create synergies and make full potential of the knowledge, skills and competences available in order to launch research projects, develop modules and propose other activities. The participants left Toulouse looking forward to future co-operation and development, and also to a follow-up event, kindly offered by Giovanni Bonanno, at the University of Messina, Sicily in 2010. All those unable to make it to Toulouse should contact their President and / or the CercleS General Secretariat in Parma.

This year, CercleS signed a Memorandum of Co-operation with ECML in Graz, according to which both parties will inform each other of activities, projects and developments, and look into possible synergies for future co-operation. In January 2010 ECML will host a meeting of presidents of European associations involved in language teaching and learning in order to discuss possible synergies and further opportunities of co-operation, thus creating a network of language teaching and learning associations that have joined forces to achieve common aims.

Six years after becoming a full member of CercleS, the Finnish association FINELC will host the XIth International CercleS Conference, "University Language Centres: Language Policy and Innovation", at the University of Helsinki from September 2nd to 4th, 2010. The Helsinki University Language Centre, FINELC, the CercleS Executive and Co-ordinating Committees are planning to make the event another major milestone in the list of CercleS' activities.

Si nous considérons nos activités de l'an passé, nous constatons que CercleS, avec un nombre de membres croissant, devient de plus en plus active et lance de nouvelles initiatives. Nos stages et séminaires ont maintenant lieu plus régulièrement. Après un premier séminaire sur le PEL en juin 2007 à Dublin, un second a été organisé sur le CEFR et le PEL en septembre 2009 à Padoue et nous

envisageons un troisième, qui devrait avoir lieu en 2011 à Groningen, Pays-Bas. La première rencontre des directeurs des centres de langues à Francfort s/Oder et Wulkow, qui a mené à la rédaction du Mémoire de Wulkow, sera suivie en janvier 2010 d'une seconde réunion. Après le succès du stage sur l'évaluation de l'expression orale en octobre 2009 à Göttingen, organisé par le projet GULT en coopération avec l'Université de Göttingen, CercleS, UNICert® et UNICert@LUCE, une suite est envisagée en 2010.

Le lancement des dix groupes de travail CercleS dont la première réunion a eu lieu en novembre 2009 à Toulouse est nul doute une étape importante pour CercleS, car les cinquante participants sont repartis pleins d'enthousiasme et d'idées pour de futurs projets et activités. Remerciements à Giovanni Bonanno, Université de Messine, pour son invitation à une seconde rencontre en 2010 en Sicile. Nous espérons que l'enthousiasme suscité à Toulouse mènera à de nouveaux stages, séminaires, activités de recherches et publications.

La signature d'un Mémoire de Coopération entre CercleS et le Centre Européen pour les Langues Vivantes du Conseil de l'Europe à Graz est une étape importante pour CercleS. Nous espérons que cette coopération mènera à des échanges et projets fructueux, et créera de nouvelles synergies entre nos deux institutions. Nous espérons aussi que la prochaine réunion des associations partenaires du CELV mènera à la création d'un nouveau réseau des acteurs clef au niveau de l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues en Europe.

CercleS organise son 11^{ème} Colloque International, qui aura lieu du 2 au 4 septembre 2010 à Helsinki et qui réunira de nombreux chercheurs sous le titre « Centres de langues universitaires : Politique linguistique et innovation » : un colloque de haut niveau, pour partager des idées stimulantes et bâtir des projets communs.

Wenn wir das vergangene CercleS-Jahr Revue passieren lassen und dabei die Entwicklungen der vergangenen Jahre insgesamt ins Visier nehmen, erkennen wir, dass parallel zum Anstieg an Mitgliedsinstitutionen auch die Aktivitäten zugenommen haben. Nachdem wir zahlreiche neue Workshops und Seminare auf den Weg gebracht haben, entwickeln sich diese nun zu regelmäßig wiederkehrenden Angeboten. Auf das erste Seminar zum Europäischen Sprachenportfolio im Juni 2007 in Dublin folgte nun ein zweites zum GER und ESP im September 2009 in Padua, und wir planen bereits das dritte im Jahr 2011 in Groningen. Auf das Treffen für Leiter von Sprachzentren aus ganz Europa im Januar 2009 in Frankfurt (Oder) und Wulkow, das mit dem weithin beachteten Wulkow-Memorandum endete, folgt im Januar 2010 das zweite Treffen. Der im Rahmen des GULT-Projektes an der Universität Göttingen in Zusammenarbeit mit CercleS, UNICert® und UNICert@LUCE organisierte Workshop zum Testen des mündlichen Ausdrucks erfreute sich ebenfalls großer Nachfrage, so dass wir über einen Folgeworkshop nachdenken.

Das Treffen der neu ins Leben gerufenen CercleS-Arbeitsgruppen, das im November 2009 an der „Université de Toulouse 1 Capitole“ stattfand, brachte über 50 Personen aus allen Ecken Europas zusammen. Wir hoffen, dass diese neue Initiative die Aktivitäten unseres Verbandes ankurbelt und ausweitet. Wir danken schon jetzt Giovanni Bonanno von der Universität Messina, der uns für 2010 zu einer Folgeveranstaltung nach Sizilien eingeladen hat.

Einen wichtigen Schritt in unserer Arbeit stellt sicherlich das Unterzeichnen eines Memorandums zur zukünftigen Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem Europäischen Fremdsprachenzentrum (EFSZ) des Europarates in Graz dar, das neben dem regelmäßigen Austausch auch zu einer engeren Zusammenarbeit und zu gemeinsamen Projekten führen soll. Ein für Januar 2010 am EFSZ geplantes Netzwerktreffen für die Präsidenten europäischer Verbände wird hoffentlich weitere Synergien schaffen und zu einer engeren Zusammenarbeit führen, so dass wir unsere Ziele besser durchsetzen können.

Schließlich bereiten wir derzeit die 11. Internationale CercleS-Konferenz vor, die vom 2. bis 4. September 2010 an der Universität Helsinki zum Thema „Sprachzentren an Hochschulen: Sprachpolitik und Innovation“ stattfinden wird. Damit wird sechs Jahre nach seinem Beitritt zu CercleS FINELC erstmals eine CercleS-Tagung ausgerichtet und wir hoffen, unseren Mitgliedern wieder anregende Vorträge, Arbeitsgruppen und Diskussionen bieten zu können, die die hohe Qualität unserer Arbeit fortführt und neue Projekte ins Leben ruft. ■