

ECML conference 2007: language professionals networking in Graz, Austria

The European Centre for Modern Languages marked the completion of its second medium-term programme 2004–2007 with a large-scale conference on the theme of *Languages for social cohesion – language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe*. About 250 language professionals from Europe and beyond gathered for the event, which was held at the Karl-Franzens University Graz from 27 to 29 September.



Lucija Cok, Rector of the University of Primorska and Former Slovenian Minister of Education at the opening of the Conference Fair together with Adrian Butler, Director of the ECML

The ECML conference 2007 was a platform for language professionals to present their work on developing and implementing instruments and tools to improve the teaching and learning of languages in the context of securing greater social cohesion on our continent. Four thematic areas corresponding to the sub-themes of the Centre's programme were chosen: Linguistic and Social Diversity; Intercultural Communication; Teacher Development; Innovative Approaches.

The conference took stock of current work in this field, based first of all on the results of the 21 projects run within the Centre's programme since 2004, which were presented by their co-ordinators. To extend the scope of the proceedings, the Centre also invited contributions from international experts not involved in its activities. All these presentations were given in parallel working sessions corresponding to the conference's four thematic areas.

Special guest speakers complemented this programme with plenary presentations giving a European and wider international perspective on both the political and policy aspects of language education's role in ensuring greater social cohesion. They included:

- Lucija Cok,
Rector of the University of Primorska, former Slovenian Minister of Education;
- Joseph Lo Bianco,
University of Melbourne;
- Harald Hartung,
Head of Multilingualism Policy Unit, European Commission;
- Joseph Sheils,
Head of the Council of Europe's Department of Language Education and Policy.

Summaries of the discussions in the working groups and a panel discussion spotlighting the achievements and challenges arising from the conference contributed to the conclusions of the event, which proposed input for the orientation of future reforms and developments in the practice of language teaching and learning in Europe. Moderated by Dagmar Heindler, Austrian member of the ECML Governing Board, the following speakers contributed to the panel:

- Carol Taylor,
president of CERCLES
- Terry Lamb,
president of FIPLV
- Janina Zielinska,
Vice president of FIPF
- Gé Stoks,
editor of BABYLONIA and teacher trainer at Alta Scuola Pedagogica di Locarno
- Anne Gallagher,
Director of The Language Centre, National University of Ireland

The conference closed with the launch of the Centre's third medium-term programme 2008–2011 *Empowering Language Professionals: Competences - Networks - Impact - Quality*.

The results of the projects of the ECML's second medium-term programme – publications, CD-Roms, reports, websites, materials – were on display throughout the conference at the Project Fair. These results will shortly be available on the ECML website: www.ecml.at.



The ECML Project Fair



In response to wide-scale interest in the conference, a webcast of the event may still be viewed online at: www.ecml.at/conference.

The ECML thanks the Karl-Franzens Universität Graz (*Institut für Anglistik, Institut für Romanistik* and *Institut für Germanistik*) and the *Österreichisches Sprachenzentrum (ÖSZ)* for their active co-operation in the preparation of the conference.

Contact:

Adrian Butler
adrian.butler@ecml.at



Susanna Slivensky
susanna.slivensky@ecml.at





Education Newsletter



Editorial

For most people, globalisation is an economic phenomenon, the effects of which, real and imagined, are debated and analysed almost daily in the media. But globalisation is not restricted to resources, industry and trade: it is just as active in our cultural, political and social systems.

Globalisation entails a convergence of patterns of production and consumption, resulting in homogenisation. There are clearly two sides to this coin: harmonisation and common standards are perceived as positive insofar as they enable and sustain diversity and plurality. If they begin to rhyme with uniformisation, they become a threat. This also applies, not least, to learning and knowledge.

The tendency to uniformisation, the imposition of world brands and lifestyles is what many opponents to globalisation latch upon. Opposition ranges from constructive efforts to ensure that globalisation is seen as a means and not an end, to condemning it out of hand and refusing to recognise the increasing interconnection of people and places.

*So how can the Council of Europe and its Education Directorate proceed with modernisation and renewal without succumbing to oversimplified scenarios of a global knowledge business¹? On 20 and 21 November 2007, the Directorate's Higher Education and Research Division organised a conference entitled *New Challenges to European Higher Education – Managing the Complexities of a Globalised Society* at which the Steering Committee for Higher Education launched its new project for 2008-2010: *The University between Humanism and Market: Redefining its Values and Functions for the 21st Century* (see page 13). The aim of this project is*

¹ Peter Scott, Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University, 'Can European Higher Education meet global challenges?'; contribution to the Conference.



The Conference of the Arab Ministers of Higher Education organised by ALECSO at Zayed University in Dubai from 3 to 6 November 2007
From left to right: His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister of the UAE, His Excellency Shaikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and President of Zayed University, and Mr. Gabriele Mazza, Director of Education, Council of Europe.