

Closing conference of the 3rd programme of activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages

Over 200 language education specialists from all over Europe and Canada participated in the closing conference of the *Empowering Language Professionals* programme of activities (2008-2011) co-ordinated by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz.

The conference presented the results of 23 projects supporting member states in promoting and disseminating innovation and good practice in the learning and teaching of modern languages. Over 400 events directly involving 4 000 participants in 40 states in



Anne Brasseur, Member for Luxembourg of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Ólaf Ólafsdóttir, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe

Europe and beyond, contributions to over 300 conferences, seminars and workshops worldwide, 23 sets of publications made available to language professionals – this is the impressive balance of the activities coordinated by the ECML over the last four years.

In her opening address, Ólaf Ólafsdóttir, Director of Education and Languages representing the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, congratulated the Centre and thanked all those who contributed to its success: the many European experts involved in the Centre's project activities and the representatives of the ECML member states which oversee, support and disseminate the results of the Centre's work. Referring to the current economic and budgetary crisis in Europe, which places significant pressure on many member states to examine their level of contribution towards international co-operation, she stressed that their efforts to sustain this co-operation are to be valued today more than ever. She added that the most efficient way of dealing with the crisis in the contemporary globalised

world is precisely through solidarity and co-operation at international and inter-governmental level. Her special thanks went to the Austrian authorities for their longstanding commitment and generous support –the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research, the authorities of the Province of Styria and the City of Graz, and to the Austrian ECML Association which manages this support.

Teresa Condeço of the Multilingualism Policy Unit of the European Commission highlighted the need for continued co-operation between the Commission and the Council of Europe in the area of languages. In this, she referred to the joint Declaration signed by Commissioner Vassiliou and Secretary General Jagland to mark the 10th anniversary of the European Day of Languages on 26 September 2011.

Keynote speeches were given by Anne Brasseur, Member for Luxembourg of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Jim Cummins of the University of Toronto, Canada.



In a session chaired by Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Austria to the Council of Europe, the Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages Graham Fraser gave a speech on bilingualism and multilingualism, Ana Perona-Fjeldstad, Executive Director of the European

Wergeland Centre (EWC) in Oslo, indicated possible areas for co-operation between the EWC and the ECML, and Johanna Panthier of the Language Policy Division provided an overview of the Council of Europe's work in support of languages in and for education.

The conference concluded with the launch of the next (4th) ECML programme *Learning Through Languages – Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education* (2012-15), featuring innovative approaches to language education, mediation (dissemination of developments and dialogue with stakeholders) and targeted support for the ECML member states.

For more details see:
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Education Newsletter



Editorial

The first decade of the 21st century has proved to be a time of great upheaval, a trend that has accelerated over the past two or three years. Technological progress aside, some developments, such as quests for democracy and increased social awareness and solidarity among people, have been for the better, whereas others which unfortunately spring all too easily to mind, such as bad debts, wild and arrogant financial markets and growing intolerance and selfishness, or terrorist attacks have been detrimental and damaging to say the least.

Like many other organisations, the Council of Europe has taken steps to respond to societal change by reviewing its role and seeking to improve the pertinence and effectiveness of its work in the defence and promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The structural reform required to accompany this reassertion of the Council's relevance and rationalise the Secretariat's work began on 1st October and will be completed by the end of the year.

Under this reform, the former Education and Youth Directorates have been brought together as Departments in a new Directorate for Democratic Citizenship and Participation, which is in turn part of a new Directorate General of Democracy (DG II). This is a logical move to improve co-operation, as both departments have focused extensively on citizenship and human rights education, in a non-formal setting in the youth sector and more on the formal primary and secondary classroom and higher education contexts in the education sector. There is perhaps a lot more in common between non-formal and formal education than one might think: non-formal methods have greatly inspired education over the last few years and joining forces should be beneficial to all involved and strengthen the impact of our work.

Another aspect of the reform is that from 2012 on, all activities will be conducted as part of a biennial programme. The activities of the Education and Youth Departments are covered by the programme on democratic citizenship through education, culture and youth policies, which aims to promote Council of Europe standards and values, focusing on citizenship and human rights education, the right to quality education and language policies. Our work will,



High-Level Forum on "Education systems in Europe in the 21st century", Kyiv, 22 and 23 September 2011. From l. to r.: Ólaf Ólafsson, Mykola Azarov, Prime Minister of Ukraine, Dmytro Tabachnik, Minister of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Mady Delsaux-Stehres, Minister of National Education and Vocational Training of Luxembourg