

Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity

NPLD Information

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) was established in 2007 following a series of meetings between various governmental language boards and NGOs specialising in the development and revitalisation of Europe's less widely used languages (RMILs).

To date, the Network has received its first funding from the Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme and will use this as a platform to firmly establish itself as the chief organisation to promote and develop European RMILs.

Background

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity is a pan-European Network which encompasses regional, minority, indigenous, cross-border and smaller national languages to promote linguistic diversity in the context of a multilingual Europe. Some 50 million EU citizens, 10% of the EU population, speak a regional or minority language.

Over the past 25 years the face of language planning in Europe has changed considerably. Many regional and national governments have established **language boards** or departments to promote linguistic policies. As a result a new breed of **language planning professional** has developed with a new and developed expertise in this field. NPLD will respond to this development and provide a forum for these professionals to gain from the considerable benefits of working together. Further cooperation between official bodies who promote the use of minority languages is vital for the development of a coherent strategy for the future survival of these languages.

The Network to promote linguistic diversity will build upon the existing structures that are in place to promote regional, minority, indigenous, lesser used and smaller national languages in Europe, namely: EBLUL; the Network of Language Planning Boards; Mercator; and Adum. The Network includes elements of all of these existing Networks and while it will build upon the excellent work undertaken by them over the past years, it will also respond to the EU's new linguistic context.

The Network has a considerable presence within the new Member States of the EU, and includes a much wider range of languages than the existing networks. The linguistic needs of the languages included in the Network vary considerably, from the languages with a legislative basis and full governmental support, to languages which are in imminent danger of extinction. Stronger languages can offer support and guidance to languages in a more precarious situation and can provide invaluable expertise and partnerships for projects.

Since the expansion of the EU in 2001 and 2004, the linguistic context of the Union has changed considerably. We are now faced with a situation where the traditional distinction between minority language and majority or official language is somewhat artificial: we have a situation in the EU whereby some indigenous languages find themselves flourishing with several million speakers (such as Catalan) and certain recent official languages sharing many of the features of regional and minority languages (Irish and Maltese).

Aims and Objectives

- The Network's aim is to facilitate the sharing of existing **best practice** and the development of new and innovative ideas across the field language planning in education, the home, the workplace, legislation and the media in the contexts of regional, minority, indigenous, smaller national languages and lesser used languages (RMIL). As language planners we are aware that many of the issues facing these linguistic communities will be very similar and that sharing good practise is a must if these languages are to survive and flourish. The main focus will be on providing information about and easy access to a large Network of

organisations that can share ideas, information and best practice regarding the promotion of RMIL languages.

- This is especially true in terms of project work: the Network will facilitate the process of finding partners for projects which are compatible with one another. The Network will also provide information on sources of funding which are available and accessible to minority language groups across Europe. **Project work will be a vital element of the work of the Network** and will provide partners with innovative and varied opportunities to participate in high quality, pan-European partnerships to deliver real solutions to language planning challenges. Partners have already drafted initial lists of priority areas, however it is in fact the members of the Network who will determine the priority areas to tackle with project work.

The overarching aim of the Network, therefore, is to create an environment whereby multilingualism, linguistic diversity and language learning are all actively promoted for all age ranges. In order to achieve this ambitious aim:

- NPLD, in all its activities, will ensure that the needs of speakers of all languages are fully respected.
- It will work to ensure that the existing diversity of languages and cultures be publicised and used to good effect and will aspire to meet the demand for a rich supply of language learning opportunities.
- It will promote making better use of opportunities to hear and see languages and cultures, thereby helping to improve language awareness, learning opportunities and best practice.

NPLD will achieve this aim by addressing the following objectives:

- The network will contribute to a **language friendly environment** by exchanging best practice in second language and third language provision.
- It will **examine, discuss, distil and disseminate information** on the organisation, structure of teaching institutions and movements, their methodology, finance and the drawbacks that have befallen them. A particular emphasis will be given initially to improving the language skills of public sector professionals who interact with the public on a regular basis, for example health and education professionals.

Specific emphasis will be attributed to **early language acquisition** and aspects of life long learning within the NPLD.

Priorities

Priorities agreed for the NPLD's first series of projects are:

- Intergenerational language transmission and pre-school learning
- Motivation to learn and increasing usage
- RMILs in healthcare

Proposed projects

- **language transmission within the family**, which includes educating adults on the benefits of language learning, training in language awareness issues and training opportunities for people wishing to return to work, and the language skills of trained professionals in the health and education services. This project will follow the example of TWF <http://www.twfcymru.com/>, on raising children bilingually.
- **healthcare**, whereby a network of experts in the field of healthcare provision in RMILs will work on a project to extend best practice.

Participants

The Network will comprise two levels of membership – **full members** who will fund and govern the Network, and **associate members** who can discuss and participate in the Network. Members will be expected to contribute a minimum amount towards the funding of the Network: a sum of 30k € (negotiable) is requested. Members will automatically become members of the Steering Committee and have greater voting powers within the Network's structure. They will influence policy decisions, be able to veto membership of the Network, as this is decided by the Steering Committee, and the Committee will also have the final say on contributions.

Full members

Irish Government, Foras na Gaeilge
Estonian Government, Dept. of Education
Welsh Government, Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
Scottish Government, Bord na Gaidhlig
Swedish-Finnish Government, Folktinget
Breton Regional Council, Dept. of Education and Culture
Frisian Government, Dept. of Education and Culture
EBLUL
Linguamon, Catalan government

Associate members

Council of Europe
Mercator Centres
Åbo Akademi, Finland
Prifysgol Caerdydd, Cymru
Cultural Council of Brittany
Meän Akateemi, Sweden
ADUM, Catalonia
Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia
NGOs
Universities
Research Centres

Anticipated EU project applications

Life Long Learning Programme
Media
Citizens for Europe
Culture
Youth
E-Content plus
Interreg IIIa, Cross Border, north west Europe, Convergence
FP7 for R&D
Agricultural fund for rural development
(Co-funded from Network funds)

NPLD own projects

These are still being decided by the Steering Committee but follow these priority areas
intergenerational language transmission, motivation for learning, language provision in healthcare.

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