

The new linguistic imperial order: English as an EU *lingua franca* or *lingua frankensteinia*?

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The European Union (EU) was in an intensive phase of unification from the Maastricht Treaty of 1991 until the French and Dutch rejection of the draft EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005. More has been achieved in unifying economic and monetary affairs than when seeking agreement on a joint foreign policy or on future visions for 'Europe'. In the fields of culture, education and language, the EU has had a legally enshrined right since Maastricht to fund activities, although the amounts involved have been modest by comparison with agricultural subsidies and with what governments spend domestically. These areas have traditionally been seen as an exclusively national prerogative. Language policy has not been an EU priority, over and above ensuring the machinery of institutional translation and interpretation services. A key reason for a *laissez faire* approach to language policy is that it touches existential national nerves, as frankly conceded by the German Head of Mission at the EU (Wilhelm Schönfelder, cited in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1 April 2005): there is 'no more emotional topic in the EU than the language issue'¹. Or in the words of a senior French Member of the European Parliament, 'the topic can be considered explosive in Europe'².

The complexity of language policy is due to the many different roles that languages play in member states and in European integration, and the many facets of the national-supranational communicative interface. To do justice to such issues demands book-length treatment, which I have attempted in *English-only Europe? Challenging language policy* (Phillipson 2003)³. This traces the origins of European languages, it assesses the impact of contemporary globalisation, describes EU practices, and suggests criteria that could guide equitable language policies. The final chapter sketches out best- and worst-case scenarios, and lists specific proposals for what needs to be done to strengthen national and supranational language policy infrastructure. It also suggests how an improvement of the management of multilingualism in EU institutions could be achieved, and lists needs in key areas of the teaching and learning of languages and in research. In a short article, all I can do is touch on some current issues and challenges.

Addressing EU language issues is complicated because there is a great deal of fluidity in language policy in Europe. This relates to

- an unresolved tension between linguistic nationalism (based on the monolingual ideologies of the 'nation' state), EU institutional multilingualism, and English becoming dominant in the EU;
- competing agendas at the European, state (national), and regional or local levels;
- much EU rhetoric endorsing language rights and linguistic diversity, but very uneven implementation at both the supranational level and in the 27 member states;

- increasing grassroots and elite bi- and multilingualism, except in the UK and among the older generation in other demographically large EU countries;
- a largely uncritical adoption of englishisation, English as the *lingua economica* or *lingua americana*.

At the political level, there is a mismatch between the broad sweep of Article 22 of *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (approved by heads of state but currently on hold as a result of the constitutional crisis) – ‘The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’ - and the realities of how this is interpreted. The most extreme form of declaring that the Charter’s commitment is merely hot air was given voice by a senior French civil servant in a conference paper in the USA. Yves Marek, counsellor to Jacques Toubon⁴ when Minister of Culture and Francophonie, claims blandly that ‘in the field of linguistic rights, like in other fields of human rights, there is no right but only ... politics.’ He also claimed that French understandings of national languages underlie how the EU handles multilingualism, and that in France there are no linguistic minorities, hence ‘no discrimination between so-called minorities’ (for analysis, see Phillipson 2003, 45-47). It is unusual for a government representative to be so openly cynical. It also exemplifies why it is so difficult to form policies inspired by human rights principles at the supranational level.

An additional factor that muddies the language policy international waters is that basic concepts like *language*, *dialect* and *nation* mean different things in each language and state. Some countries are based on ethnolinguistic criteria, the cultural nation, as in Germany (Herder, Blut und Boden), others on a political, republican principle rather than consanguinity, as in France. Semantic mismatches, deeply embedded in different conceptual universes and cosmologies, inevitably make international ‘understanding’ problematical. In addition, each country has evolved legal systems along distinct national lines over centuries, with the consequence that when the rule of law and European legislation, which overrides national law, are supposed to have the ‘same meaning’ in 23 languages and 27 states, European union in the sense of uniformity is an illusion. Even such an apparently straightforward concept as *working language* is used inconsistently in media and political discourse, by both senior EU insiders and journalists. The result is often to obscure what rights speakers of various languages have in the EU system or in interacting with it. Analysis of EU language regimes is also often blurred because it is unclear whether what is being referred to relates to a specific institution, to speech or writing, or to a citizen in contact with the EU.

These problems are compounded by the fact that the EU is pursuing language policies that negate each other. On the one hand it proclaims a commitment to multilingualism and linguistic diversity. On the other, many of its working practices and policies strengthen English at the expense of (speakers of) other languages. This is, for instance, the case with the Bologna process, a key EU project with the very ambitious goal of integrating the research and higher education systems of 45 European countries (with Australia and the USA as observers, since higher education is big business for them) into a single, unified ‘area’, i.e. market. This ‘internationalisation’ is in theory committed, by the original Bologna declaration of 1999 ‘within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national education systems and of University autonomy - to consolidate a European Higher Education Area at the latest by 2010’. At the bi-annual ministerial meetings (most recently in Bergen in 2005 and London in 2007), the main focus has been on structural

uniformity (a single BA, MA and PhD system), on quality control (nationally and internationally), student mobility, recognition of qualifications, and joint degrees – all of which are demanding tasks for most countries - and making European universities attractive enough to compete with the USA and Australia.

What is striking and shocking is that in the long communiqués from each meeting, there is not one word on language policy, on bilingual degrees or multilingualism in higher education. On the contrary, the impression is created that what internationalisation means is English-medium higher education (see Phillipson 2006 on whether English is a cuckoo in the European higher education nest of languages). If this outcome emerges, it will strengthen the position of higher education in the Anglo-American world, including Ireland. It will also mean that the rhetoric of maintaining Europe's linguistic diversity and cultural heritage will remain empty words on paper.

Prior to the 2007 London meeting, EU Commissioner Figel stated (press release IP/07/656):

Bologna reforms are important but Europe should now go beyond them, as universities should also modernise the content of their curricula, create virtual campuses and reform their governance. They should also professionalize their management, diversify their funding and open up to new types of learners, businesses and society at large, in Europe and beyond. [...] The Commission supports the global strategy in concrete terms through its policies and programmes.

In other words, universities should no longer be seen as a public good but should be run like businesses, should privatise, and let industry set the agenda. I speak from personal and institutional experience when writing that this is precisely what the right-wing Danish government that has been in power since 2000, is implementing⁵. The latest Bologna buzzwords are that degrees must be 'certified' in terms of the 'employability' of graduates. 'Accountability' no longer refers to intellectual quality or truth-seeking but means acceptability to corporate imperatives. Before *European* integration has taken on viable forms, universities are being told to think and act *globally* – through the medium of English of course - rather than remain narrowly national or European. This is insulting to universities, most of which have been internationally oriented for decades, if not centuries.

Such developments make it important to explore who it is that is setting the agenda for European integration. The conventional wisdom of recent decades has been that the French and Germans occupy the EU political high ground. This is only part of the story. The role of the USA in shaping the post-1945 world (the creation of the UN, the Bretton Woods agreements, the World Bank, the IMF, NATO) is well known (Smith 2003, Pieterse 2004, Harvey 2005, and for the linguistic dimension of empire, Phillipson in press). What is less well known is that 'The process of European integration might never have come about had it not been imposed on Europe by the Americans' (Holm 2001, 34). This is the analysis of a top Danish civil servant, an adviser to the Danish Prime Minister at the time of Danish entry to the EU, and later employed in the EU system.⁶ The links between the pioneer European architects of what has become the EU, Jean Monnet in particular, and the US political elite, before and after World War II, are detailed in Pascaline Winand's *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe* (1993). While Monnet and many of the key Europeans were quite open about their wish to

create a federal Europe on the model of the USA, the Americans were shrewd enough to influence policies decisively but to remain discreetly in the background.

By contrast there are now regular EU-US summit meetings. At the 2007 meeting, a Transatlantic Economic Integration Plan was endorsed, as well as coordination of foreign policy globally. In effect this means that the EU accepts corporate America's global agenda, as loyal but junior partners. This fits well with the neoliberal project for the New American Century that was hatched by the likes of Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld in the late twentieth century (www.newamericancentury.org), as assessed in *Harper's Magazine* 305 in 2002 (by D. Armstrong, cited in Harvey 2005, p. 80).

The plan is for the United States to rule the world. The overt theme is unilateralism, but it is ultimately a story of domination. It calls for the United States to maintain its military superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. It calls for dominion over friends and enemies alike. It says not that the United States must be more powerful, or most powerful, but that it must be absolutely powerful.

The dominion over friends has been worked through in the European Round Table of Industrialists, the Transatlantic Business Dialogue, and the Transatlantic Economic Partnership (Monbiot 2000) as well as in all the main international fora. The UK has spearheaded the adoption of this model in Europe, with its key role in global finance and its energetic military engagements as visible symptoms of commitment to US strategic interests.

In the EU system the way English linguistic hegemony is asserted can be seen in the figures for choice of language over the past 40 years in the initial drafting of EU texts. These reveal a dramatic decline in the use of German and French, and a progressive and accelerating increase in the use of English as the default in-house language. This clearly strengthens the interests of the English-speaking member states, and of the countries in northern Europe where proficiency in English tends to be high⁷.

	French	German	Other	English
1970	60%	40%	0%	0%
1996	38%	5%	12%	46%
2004	26%	3%	9%	62%
2006	14%	3%	11%	72%

Is it reasonable and correct then to refer to English simply as a *lingua franca*? The origins of the term, its varying senses and uses, and the implications of misusing it in an age of US-dominated empire have been explored (Phillipson forthcoming) as well as the history of the intensive promotion of English internationally since the 1950s (Phillipson 1992). A few key points can be summarised here.

Reference to English as a *lingua franca* generally seems to imply that the language is a neutral instrument for 'international' communication between speakers who do not share a mother tongue. The fact that English is used for a wide range of purposes, nationally and internationally, may mislead one into believing that *lingua franca* English is disconnected from the many purposes it serves in key societal domains. English might be more accurately described as a *lingua economica* (in business and

advertising, the language of corporate neoliberalism), a *lingua emotiva* (the imaginary of Hollywood, popular music, consumerism and hedonism), a *lingua academica* (in research publications, at international conferences, and as a medium for content learning in higher education), or a *lingua cultura* (rooted in the literary texts of English-speaking nations that foreign language learning traditionally aims at, and integrates with language learning as one element of general education). English is definitely the *lingua bellica* of wars between states (aggression by the US and its loyal acolytes in Afghanistan and Iraq, building on the presence of US bases in hundreds of countries worldwide). The worldwide presence of English as a *lingua americana* is due to the massive economic, cultural and military impact of the USA.

Labelling English as a *lingua franca*, if this is understood as a culturally neutral medium that puts everyone on an equal footing, is simply false. It is an *invidious* term if the language in question is a first language for some people but for others a foreign language. It is *misleading* if the language is supposed to be disconnected from culture and very specific purposes. It is an *inaccurate* term for a language that is taught as a subject in general education. Ironically, there is a historical continuity in the way the term originated (from Arabic) as a designation for the hybrid language of European crusaders who were out to eliminate Islam from Asia Minor, while now English is viscerally connected to the crusade of global corporatisation, marketed as freedom and democracy (Poole 2007). Human rights have been dropped from this rhetoric, as they are manifestly no longer on the agenda, except when criticising ‘enemies’. The role of the British, especially Tony Blair, in this global scenario, is captured by the playwright David Hare:

it is now impossible to imagine any American foreign policy, however irrational, however dangerous, however illegal, with which our present Prime Minister would not declare himself publicly delighted and thrilled. [...] They know we have voluntarily surrendered our wish for an independent voice in foreign affairs. Worse, we have surrendered it to a country which is actively seeking to undermine international organisations and international law. Lacking the gun, we are to be only the mouth. The deal is this: America provides the firepower. We provide the bullshit. (Hare 2005, 207, 208)

The elimination of linguistic diversity has been an explicit goal of states attempting to impose monolingualism within their borders: linguistic policies favour the *lingua frankensteinia* and lead to linguisticide (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1996). This was the case in the internal colonisation of the British Isles and in most Europeanised parts of the world. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) avoids seemingly innocuous terms like ‘language death’ and ‘language spread’, concepts that obscure agency, by referring to *killer languages*, *language murder*, and *linguistic genocide*, basing this term on definitions in international human rights law and the historical evidence of government policies. Swales (1996), after a lifetime of work on scientific English, is so concerned about other languages of scholarship being on the way to extinction that he labels English a *lingua tyrannosaura*. The widespread concern in political and academic circles in Scandinavian countries with *domain loss* signifies a perception that segments of the national language are at risk from the English monster, hence the concern that Danish, Norwegian and Swedish should remain fully operational in all domains.

There are many distinguished European voices that reject the prospect of English becoming the sole language to unify Europe. For George Steiner (2000), ‘a global mass media créole founded on

American English is a soul-destroying prospect. So is the continuation of inflamed regionalism and language hatreds'. For Pierre Bourdieu (2001), globalisation simply means Americanisation: Englishisation entails symbolic imperialism and linguistic hegemony. He accuses speakers of the dominant language (currently English, and earlier French and German) of behaving as though their symbolic forms and values are universal. For Étienne Balibar (2004, 230), following Umberto Eco, 'the only genuine "idiom of Europe" ... is the practice of translation', and 'English cannot be the language of Europe'.

Such pronouncements presuppose proficiency in at least two languages, which is precisely what the EU and the Council of Europe recommend for all school pupils. The EU Commission has expanded its activities to strengthen multilingualism (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/languages_en.html) In *Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*, the message is hammered home that 'learning one lingua franca alone is not enough ... English alone is not enough'. There is also a warning to continental countries which have opted to start using English as a medium of instruction that 'in non-anglophone countries recent trends to provide teaching in English may have unforeseen consequences on the vitality of the national language.'

The ambitious *Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* (2005) recommends that member states undertake the following:

- the learning in education of mother tongue⁸ plus two,
- the formulation of national plans to give coherence and direction to actions to promote multilingualism, significantly including the teaching of migrant languages,
- improved teacher training for foreign language learning,
- early language learning,
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), i.e. the merging of a foreign language with another school subject,
- more study of multilingualism in higher education,
- introduction of a European Indicator of Language Competence, a Europe-wide language testing scheme,
- greater use in language learning of Information Society technologies,
- the harnessing of languages to 'the multilingual economy'.

There has been since January 2007 a Commissioner with a portfolio to promote multilingualism, Leonard Orban from Romania. In his many speeches at conferences all over Europe, he stresses three interlocking goals:

- 'promoting the cultural dimension of languages to build inclusive societies and develop intercultural dialogue. I intend to promote the learning of all languages present in the European Union, including the languages of migrants [...]
- work with business, to help them identify how to build up their language capacities to enter new markets, and to improve job-satisfaction [...]
- a European space for dialogue with the citizens, to make sure that everyone can communicate with the institutions in their language, that the Community legislation is available to everyone in their languages.'⁹

What the local impact of any of these initiatives and EU 'actions' will be is impossible to predict, since it is entirely up to member states to follow or to ignore what 'Brussels' decides. The same is true of a raft of language policy activities that the Council of Europe engages in. Language policy issues do not figure prominently on the agendas of the meetings of EU Ministers of Education. There is a modest system of reporting back to the Commission regularly on implementation, which may or may not represent naming and shaming (since the minutes of some meetings are available on the internet). Though there is increasing evidence of the Commission drawing on advice from independent experts, it is doubtful whether the career eurocrats who at any point of time might be attached to a language policy unit are professionally qualified for liaising with national authorities or educationalists and making an impact. They might just as well be dealing with fish quotas, energy, or air pollution, and may well be doing so in their next posting.

This worry applies equally strongly to the European Parliament. When debating the Framework Strategy for Multilingualism, a majority in the Parliament refused to approve a set of measures for strengthening work on language policies that had been recommended unanimously by the Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education. Essentially this meant that linguistic nationalists schooled in monolingualism did not wish to promote multilingualism nationally and failed to connect this defensive stance to the changes in language use that globalisation and European integration are bringing about.

On one of the rare occasions when the EU did commission a serious study of some language policy issues, it decided internally and totally undemocratically to ignore the advice they received. A feasibility study concerning the creation of a European Agency for Linguistic Diversity and Language Learning was requested by European Parliament, and commissioned by the Directorate General for Education and Culture. The task was given to Yellow Window Associates, a consultancy with wide experience of servicing EU institutions. Their mandate excluded attention to the internal workings of EU institutions and migrant languages. Their report, of 18 May 2005, was made available on the DG's website. The detailed (118 pp) study, on the basis of extensive consultation with a wide range of people concerned with many aspects of language policy, articulates an analysis of needs, conditions, and modalities. The report confirms that a wealth of professional expertise exists that decision-makers ought to draw on. It makes a strong case for either a Linguistic Agency, like other high-prestige EU agencies (dealing with the environment in Copenhagen, and racism in Vienna), or alternatively a network of Language Diversity Centres to strengthen policy formation and implementation, particularly for regional minority languages. The feasibility study reveals a widespread perception that there is a serious need for policy advice and information for national and EU decision-makers. This was overwhelmingly the case in new member states, whereas the established ones consider such functions 'not useful'. The same pattern holds for research into language policy issues. There was also near unanimity in responses in rejecting English as a sole lingua franca. The study concludes that 'A no-action scenario would seriously undermine the credibility of the EU in this field'.

In fact the Linguistic Agency proposal was rejected unilaterally by the Commission. What it has done is to decide to support the Network on Promoting Linguistic Diversity within the framework of the programme 'Integrated Lifelong Learning (2007-2013). But funding for 'regional and minority languages' has been significantly reduced, from 1.2 million euros annually to 149,000 euros annually¹⁰. This represents a massive downgrading of funding for languages. Whatever credibility the EU might have gained by creating a portfolio for multilingualism in its own right from 2007 is being seriously

undermined by no-action on an Academy and reduced action on minority languages. Most of the Commissioner's speeches consist of platitudinous generalities about support for diversity and language learning, and it is probably in the nature of his role that they have to be.

The final report of a High-Level Group on Multilingualism was published on 26 September 2007 (IP/07/1396; http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/lang/doc/multireport_en.pdf), analysing many aspects of language policy and making suggestions for activities to strengthen language learning. It was published in 22 languages (all official languages except Irish), reflecting the importance of the project. The Group's many proposals relate to raising awareness and enhancing motivation for language learning; the potential of the media in evoking, enhancing and sustaining motivation for language learning; languages for business; interpretation and translation, new trends and needs; regional or minority languages; and research into multilingualism. The key issue is whether EU or government funds will be forthcoming for implementing such ideas.

The up-beat nature of these ideas contrasts with many symptoms of crisis in language policy in Europe, such as foreign languages other than English being learned less, and the way market forces are strengthening English in the Bologna process, as reported above, and in the internal management of multilingualism in EU institutions. Translators and interpreters for demographically 'small' languages like Danish and Swedish, as well as the newly arrived Baltic and central European languages, are convinced that their languages are being treated as second-class. There is evidently a conflict between the rhetoric of supporting all languages and the realities of linguistic hierarchies and marginalisation.

Any more detailed analysis of the current role of English in Europe would need to see it in terms of *the English language as project, as process, and as product*. Nobody is questioning whether English ought to be optimally learned or not. There is no dispute about the fact that proficiency in English is massively useful in the modern world, and that English serves multiple purposes, some constructive, some benign, and some evil. But while English opens doors for some, it closes them for others. More in-depth research is needed into how English functions globally and locally, for which the following pointers may be useful.

The *lingua franca/frankensteinia project* can be seen as entailing

- the imagining of a community, in the same way as polities are imagined (Anderson 1983), an English-using community without territorial or national boundaries;
- the invention of traditions (in the sense of Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), customs, activities and discourses that connect people through a merging of the language with multiple agendas at many levels, the local, the national, the European, the universal and global;
- ultimately the project reflects metaphysical choices (Schumacher 1977) and philosophical principles (Kant 2004) that underpin the type of community we wish to live in, the beliefs, values, and ethical principles that guide us, in a world that is currently dominated by neoliberalism, unsustainable consumerism, violence, and linguistic neoimperialism (Phillipson in press);
- our choices can either serve to maintain diversity, biological, cultural and linguistic (<www.terralingua.org>) or to eliminate it, and current trends are alarming;

- all of which lead to visions of and for English, in Europe and elsewhere, and if these do not define *lingua franca* in such a way as to ensure equality and symmetry in intercultural communication, but are essentially one-sided promotion of English, the project tends to be more that of a *lingua frankensteinia*.

The *lingua franca/frankensteinia process* can be seen as entailing

- building communities of practice, of language use and language learning
- that people identify with at various levels
- which can be personal, interpersonal, intercultural, and sub-cultural
- in contexts of use, discourses, and domains
- which conform to norms of linguistic behaviour that are institutionally (re-)enforced, legitimated and rationalised,
- in societies that hierarchise by means of race, class, gender, and language
- leading to English being perceived as prestigious, ‘normal’, and normative, hence the feeling of native speakers that the language is universally relevant and usable, and the need for others to learn and use the language, in some cases additively, in others subtractively.

The *lingua franca/frankensteinia product*

- interlocks with economic/material systems, structures, institutions, and US empire
- is supported ideologically in cultural (re-)production and consumption
- in political, economic, military, media, academic and educational discourses
- through narratives of the ‘story’, the ‘spread’ of English, language ‘death’ or linguicide
- through metaphors of English as ‘international’, global, God-given, rich, its use being ‘natural’ in the modern world
- with the prestige code that of elites in the dominant English-speaking countries, and embedded in the lexis and syntax of the language.

Heuristic ways of clarifying whether the advance of English represents *lingua franca* rather than *lingua frankensteinia* trends would entail asking a series of questions, and relating each of them to English as project, process and product:

- Is the expansion and/or learning of English in any given context additive or subtractive?
- Is linguistic capital dispossession of national languages taking place?
- Is there a strengthening or a weakening of a balanced local language ecology?
- Where are our political and corporate leaders taking us in language policy?
- What is the role of English Studies in the contemporary world?
- How can academics contribute to public awareness and political change?
- If dominant norms are global, is English serving local needs or merely subordinating its users to the American empire project?

Empirical studies of such questions are needed before firmer conclusions can be drawn, in tandem with a refinement of the theoretical framework for understanding these changes in the global and local language ecology.

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¹ 'Es gibt in der EU kein emotionaleres Thema als Sprachen.'

² 'Un sujet qui peut être qualifié d'explosif en Europe'. Pierre Lequiller, Président, réunion ouverte à l'ensemble des membres français du Parlement Européen, le 11 juin 2003, pour débattre le *Rapport sur la diversité linguistique au sein de l'Union européenne*, préparé par Michel Herbillon, auprès de la Délégation pour l'Union Européenne.

³ A summary of the book can be downloaded from my homepage, www.cbs.dk/staff/phillipson.

⁴ Toubon later became Minister of Justice, so that the name given to the legislation in France aimed at stemming the tide of the invasion of English in France in 1994 is popularly known as the *Loi Toubon*.

⁵ The Royal Danish Academy of Letters and Sciences commissioned a study in the spring of 2007 that demonstrates how academic freedom and the freedom of speech of academics are being restricted. The issues are explored in 'Autonomy and control: Danish university reform in the context of modern governance', Susan Wright and Jakob Williams Ørberg, *Learning and Teaching: The International Journal of Higher Education in the Social Sciences (LATISS)*, 2008, 1/1.

⁶ Holm bewails the lack of vision of present-day European leaders, their petty national agendas and inability to think long-term.

⁷ It is, however, doubtful whether Dutch or Swedish interests are served optimally when representatives of these countries use English in high-level negotiations. This issue, often pointed out by interpreters, can be addressed by analysing how the interpretation system operates, how it is managed and funded, and criteria of efficiency and equity in communication.

⁸ Whether this refers to minority mother tongues or the dominant national language is left unclear.

⁹ From 'Languages are a bridge for intercultural dialogue', speech, Brussels, 29 June 2007 to The Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue.

¹⁰ *Mercatornews* 33, September 2007, reports: 'this new network aims at the strengthening of Regional and Minority Languages throughout Europe has been established on the initiative of the Welsh Language Board in Wales. The Mercator Research Centre is one of the partners of the network alongside with organisations and regional authorities from Wales, Catalonia, Finland (Swedish speakers), Estonia and Ireland. Around one half of a million euros has been provisioned for the new network for three years - the project partners/regional languages will finance the necessary equity contribution. Until now, in the Action Programme 2004-2006, the Mercator Centres in Ljouwert, Aberysthwyth and Barcelona had received earmarked financial support from the European Commission together with the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). As a result of this mainstreaming operation of the European Commission the total sum of EU funding for Regional and Minority Languages has declined from 1,2 million euros annually to 149.000 euros annually.'