

# NANCY DECLARATION

Multilingual Universities for a Multilingual  
Europe Open to the World

## CEL/ELC

Conseil Européen pour les Langues /  
European Language Council

## ENLU

European Network for the Promotion of  
Language Learning Among All  
Undergraduates



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### FOREWORD

The Nancy Declaration results from activities undertaken in the ENLU network project (**E**uropean **N**etwork for the **P**romotion of **L**anguage **L**earning **A**mong **A**ll **U**ndergraduates), co-ordinated by the CEL/ELC and carried out with the support of the Commission of the European Communities under a special Call released in July 2003. Through this Call, the Commission sought to stimulate the development of networks and associations to encourage the sharing of best practice between professionals across Europe in a number of key policy areas, among them the generalisation of language learning at first-cycle level.

The principal aim of the project was, therefore, to assess whether there is sufficient demand for this kind of network. Through desk research and surveys, among them a Europe-wide consultation carried out early in 2006, the project established that, looked at as a whole, provision needs to be improved in terms of both the number of undergraduate language learners and the range of languages offered and learnt, and of the quality of provision.

The ENLU project culminated in a major European conference held in Nancy on 7-8 April 2006, at which Commissioner Ján Figel' expressed his support for the idea of a more permanent trans-European network devoted to the generalisation of language learning at first-cycle level. In five thematic workshops, the 150 participants – higher education experts and representatives of major European and national organisations, among them the Council of Europe – discussed the objectives and ways of working of the network to be created in the wake of the ENLU project. The outcomes of these discussions have been incorporated into the Nancy Declaration.

The Nancy Declaration was approved by the Advisory Board of the ENLU project and the CEL/ELC Board earlier this month. It aims to raise awareness among all stakeholders of the urgent need for a generalisation of language learning among undergraduates and of the issues that have to be addressed in this context. In particular, it takes up the challenge referred to by Commissioner Figel' in his Nancy speech and seeks to show how the gap between policy development at European level and at institutional level can be bridged.

In short, the Nancy Declaration provides the basis for the creation of, as well as for the activities to be undertaken by, the new network, which will go by the acronym HELP – **H**igher **E**ducation **L**anguage **P**olicy.



Wolfgang Mackiewicz  
CEL/ELC President and  
ENLU project co-ordinator

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### I. PREAMBLE

- 1 European integration, and co-operation between Europe and third countries present major challenges to universities in Europe. One of the biggest challenges is posed by the linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and beyond.
- 2 The issue of languages is of direct relevance to a number of core objectives of the Bologna Process. These include the promotion of mobility, of the European dimension of higher education, and of graduates' employability on the European labour market, as well as enhancing the attractiveness of European higher education. These objectives can only be achieved if all students irrespective of their specialisation, especially students at undergraduate level, are given the opportunity to learn languages, and if mobile students receive adequate linguistic support.
- 3 The European Commission's Communication *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism* rightly stresses the importance of language and intercultural skills for the achievement of the Lisbon goals. Universities must therefore play their role in enabling all graduates in Europe to
  - be able to communicate in at least two languages other than their first language,
  - know how to improve their proficiency in languages,
  - have confidence, and know how to learn a new language when the need or opportunity arises,
  - have first-hand experience in working and learning in, and collaborating with other countries, and
  - be familiar with other cultures and intercultural skills.

### II. A FRAMEWORK FOR UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE POLICY

- 4 The Conseil Européen pour les Langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC) has maintained for a long time that a university-wide language policy can play a key role in enhancing the profile, quality, and sustainability of a languages-for-all-undergraduates programme. It is an encouraging sign of the reforms underway in European higher education that a substantial number of universities have now developed their own specific language policies or at least have come to regard the development and implementation of such policies as desirable.

- 5 The linguistic situations and the concomitant language requirements of universities differ widely across Europe. It is, therefore, neither possible nor opportune to produce a single model for university language policies. Rather, the Higher Education Language Policy (HELP) initiative will discuss and seek to agree on a set of reference points designed to guide universities in developing and implementing their own specific policies.
- 6 Work undertaken in the European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning Among All Undergraduates (ENLU) suggests that reference points could be linked to the following fields and issues:
  - university strategy, especially a university's Europeanisation and internationalisation strategy, and its approach to the Bologna reforms;
  - consultation among all institutional actors concerned as a basis for the development of institutional structures to support language learning;
  - integration of languages into students' academic programmes;
  - quality assurance and enhancement;
  - pedagogical issues, such as learning outcomes, methods of learning, teaching and assessment, and the use of new learning environments.
- 7 There is a keen interest among universities in obtaining information, including case studies, about the successful development and implementation of languages-for-all-undergraduates policies. One of the most important future tasks will consist in collecting and processing case studies and in facilitating dissemination.
- 8 Given the importance of university language policy both for the future of higher education in Europe and for the European project as a whole, it is suggested that the issue of institutional language policy should be incorporated into the new Erasmus University Charter and made an issue in external quality reviews.

### **III. THE BOLOGNA STRUCTURE AND THE GENERALISATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG ALL UNDERGRADUATES**

- 9 The change in paradigm associated with the Bologna reforms, notably the emphasis on learning outcomes expressed in terms of competences, should enhance the status of skills-based language learning at higher education level and, as a result, of language offerings for students of all disciplines.
- 10 The change in paradigm can have positive effects on language studies for students of all disciplines, facilitating the promotion of independent and co-operative learning and thereby preparing students for lifelong language learning.
- 11 The flexibility awarded by modularisation and credit accumulation is a welcome means of incorporating non-subject-specific offerings such as language modules into courses of study, particularly at first-cycle level.

- 12 It is regrettable that a number of universities, in an attempt to transform traditional four- or five-year programmes into three-year bachelor programmes, have dropped languages from first-cycle programmes altogether. Universities should bear in mind that the Bologna reforms go well beyond the introduction of new structures; they require curricular reorientation in line with changing academic and professional requirements, and languages play a crucial role in this respect.

#### **IV. STUDENTS**

- 13 The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) has played an important part in the ENLU project, and national students' unions participated in the Europe-wide ENLU consultation. There is clear evidence of an increasing interest in language learning among undergraduates across Europe.
- 14 Students are a crucial stakeholder and full partner in higher education governance. Therefore, students need to be included in all activities relating to policy development both at European and institutional level.

#### **V. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT**

- 15 There is clear evidence that in many universities in Europe the quality of language offerings for students of all disciplines is insufficient. The enhancement of language education must be given a higher priority by university leaders.
- 16 In line with the views expressed by many respondents in the Europe-wide ENLU consultation, the HELP Network will elaborate a quality framework for higher education language learning and teaching, drawing on work undertaken in the Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages II (TNP2) (2000-2003).
- 17 An important quality aspect in higher education language learning and teaching is the use of instruments and concepts related to the Bologna Process such as modularisation, credit points, definition of entry requirements and of learning outcomes in terms of competences, and reflection on methods of learning, teaching and assessment related to set learning outcomes, as well as continuous updating of provision on the basis of dialogue with stakeholders. The Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* is particularly relevant to the definition of learning outcomes.
- 18 The professional development of higher education language teachers needs to be given particular attention. The CEL/ELC will seek to launch a project for the development of a European Master for the training of higher education language teachers.
- 19 Given the importance of higher education language learning and teaching, language programmes and offerings should be incorporated into

universities' quality culture and included in internal and external quality reviews.

## **VI. E-LEARNING**

- 20 The use of new learning environments for higher education language learning has been on the agenda for a long time. The benefits associated with it include, among others, an increase in the range of languages offered and of the number of students learning languages; promotion of learner autonomy; greater flexibility of learning schedules.
- 21 The introduction of e-learning requires careful planning and preparation, including the training of teachers and students. It has to be incorporated into an institution's general e-learning strategy and into its language policy.
- 22 There is a general lack of information about materials available and successful practices in place. The HELP Network will seek to improve the dissemination of information about materials and practices.
- 23 Consideration needs to be given to the issue of inter-institutional co-operation, and this both in terms of the level of co-operation (local, regional, national, bi-national, European) and of its purpose (sharing of resources, materials development, joint delivery). The HELP Network will seek to gather together pertinent associations and centres of good practice with a view to initiating co-operation and European projects in this field.

## **VII. THE USE OF A SECOND LANGUAGE AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION**

- 24 While the teaching of content through other languages has become a success story in pre-tertiary education across Europe, this approach has hardly been professionally developed at HE level.
- 25 One of the side effects of growing student mobility within and into Europe, the creation of joint programmes, and other forms of cooperation in education and research is the increased use of English as medium of instruction in universities in non-English-speaking countries. The adoption of English as a vehicular language in higher education is widely reported as being carried out without specific educational-linguistic attention being given to ensuing impact on teaching and learning.
- 26 Prioritised areas requiring attention concern (i) discipline-specific methodologies optimal for situations in which teaching and learning is through a second language, (ii) the use of ICT and multi-media for learning through other languages which carries a dual focus on subject and language, and (iii) the adoption of multilingual regimes in integrated or joint degree programmes.
- 27 Drawing on successful practice, including that identified in pre-tertiary academic education, the HELP Network will seek to define parameters that

universities should observe in this field. In addition, it will gather, process and disseminate relevant information.

- 28 The HELP Network will consider the possibility of launching a project for the development and piloting of learning environments facilitating quality teaching through other languages.

## **VIII. THE HELP NETWORK**

- 29 A marketing survey conducted in 2005, the consultation carried out early in 2006, and the Nancy Conference provided ample evidence that (i) there is considerable support for the idea that a more permanent European network will be an appropriate mechanism for promoting language learning among all undergraduates, and that (ii) a substantial number of universities, higher education associations and other organisations are interested in joining such a network.

- 30 The HELP Network is designed as an inclusive structure. The CEL/ELC will seek to gather together as many European and national organisations with a stake in language learning at undergraduate level as possible – to achieve synergies and to avoid duplication of effort. The Network will also seek to attract universities from across Europe (including units from within universities), and it will be open to individuals who share the aims of the Network. It will cooperate with the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

- 31 The HELP Network is expected to adopt an action plan based on the draft action plan presented in the Consultation Document. Encouragement will be given to the preparation and launch of European projects to be contracted and coordinated by member institutions and organisations.

- 32 The HELP Network is expected to take the form of a European consortium. It will be supported by a central office located at the Freie Universität Berlin, with an additional facility located in Brussels.

- 33 The central office will have a crucial role in the HELP Observatory to be set up, which will have the task of gathering, processing, and disseminating quantitative data as well as information about best practices in language policy and provision.

## **IX. CONCLUSION**

- 34 The ENLU partnership and the CEL/ELC intend to take the lead in the creation of the HELP Network. They wish to discuss a future course for action with potential strategic partners. They hope that a number of leading European organisations will be willing to take on specific responsibilities in the HELP initiative. They sincerely hope that the HELP initiative will achieve the breakthrough in the field of languages for all undergraduates that the ENLU partnership has always regarded as its ultimate goal.