

Ministers' Deputies

Information documents

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Annual Report of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz) to the Committee of Ministers (January-December 2016)

Information document for the GR-C meeting on (date)

Activities of the European Centre for Modern Languages in 2016

2016 represented the first year of the European Centre for Modern Languages' 'Languages at the heart of learning' programme. The four-year programme is based around the declared priorities of the ECML's 33 member states in language education, with quality teacher education at its core.

Launched in January, the programme in 2016 comprised 69 events, involving 1,847 language professionals. The programme links to the political agenda "Securing democracy through education" of the Conference of Ministers of Education and puts languages at the heart of education, learning and the learner. Both the importance of language education as a key component of quality education overall, as well as added value of the European Centre for Modern Languages, were highlighted at the conference in Brussels by several Ministerial representatives on 11-12 April 2016.

The ECML's joint action with the European Commission "Innovative methodologies and assessment in language learning" involved 15 national workshops in 2016. Following a positive evaluation of the 2014-15 series of training and consultancy workshops, the action was extended to a 4th year of activity, with an overall budget of 585.000 EUR. The action involved two specific initiatives: Supporting multilingual classrooms and Relating language curricula, tests and examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference (RELANG).

14 sets of results developed by the projects of the ECML's 2012-15 programme were finalized and published in May 2016. A series of promotional initiatives was launched to ensure that the results are easily accessible to end-users and reach all key target audiences in member states. All publications are available in at least two languages and some, such as the groundbreaking project *Sign languages and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, have been translated by national contacts and professional bodies into further languages.

The Centre renewed cooperation agreements with 14 international associations and INGOs within the Professional Network Forum on language education and assessment (PNF). The PNF represents a key link to civil society. At its meeting in December the members of the PNF reaffirmed the need, in the face of a period of unprecedented migration, to demonstrate support and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity in modern European societies.

The members of the Professional Network Forum also formed a key audience for a colloquium on quality in language testing and assessment which reviewed the progress made since the publication of the *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The event, which attracted over 70 language professionals and a large online audience, offered a platform for an exchange of experiences from different European contexts and proposed ways to address the ongoing challenges in aligning language curricula and examinations to the Framework.

The 15th anniversary of the European Day of Languages proved more successful than ever, with record numbers of participation. 5 million page views of the EDL website were recorded this year. Approximately 1200 events were registered in the online calendar of activities (compared to 900 in 2015). The Council of Europe statement and Secretary General's message focused on the positive role that the Day can play in bringing together and celebrating the different cultures and languages present in European countries, at a time when it is often divisions and exclusion which are highlighted. The Day received widespread media coverage around Europe at national and local level as well as enormous promotion through social media networks. The Graz language festival organised in celebration of the Day, in cooperation with the Graz language network, attracted over 2000 participants to a range of educational, cultural and fun activities.

'Think tanks' on the themes of the languages of schooling and early language learning were launched in September and December respectively. The events pooled ideas and expertise to address these key areas of concern in language education. Over 200 professionals completed the online consultation prior to the setting up of the think-tanks. In both cases think tanks have led to the establishment of new projects within the ECML programme. These projects will be launched in 2017.

Partnerships with Moscow State Linguistic University, Russia and the Official Languages and Bilingual Institute (OLBI), Canada were renewed for the duration of the 2016-19 programme. Both partnerships, based on Memoranda of Cooperation involve additional contributions, either in terms of financing or in kind. In the case of OLBI a new "Internship/fellowship fund" will cover the cost of two students and two visiting scholars to work with the ECML in Graz for a 1-2 month period.

The Centre continued to use all possible occasions to encourage new accessions to the Partial Agreement. Workshops in non member states (such as Portugal, Italy and Belgium) which took place within the framework of the joint action with the European Commission provided useful opportunities to promote the benefits of joining. Also, one-off events can play a useful role in raising awareness at grassroots level; a conference organised by the German embassy in Madrid targeting language teachers from all over Spain achieved overwhelming support from the teachers, teacher trainers and decision-makers from 7 regional educational authorities for Spain to rejoin the Partial Agreement. Similarly a keynote presentation at an EAQUALS¹ conference in Lisbon in the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs served to advance contacts with the Portuguese authorities with regard to possible accession.

2016 in figures

Activities and participation

- 1,847 language professionals took part in capacity building activities directly financed by the ECML
- 72 events directly organised and financed by the ECML – taking place in 21 different states and including 31 workshops and one colloquy
- 8 active projects within the *Languages at the heart of learning* programme
- 10 areas of training and consultancy offered

Programme statistics

- 95% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the ECML event they participated in has contributed to developing their professional competence (95% in 2015)
- 92% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that participating in an ECML event has motivated them to become more active in networking within the professional community (96% in 2015)
- 95% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that participating in an ECML event has encouraged them to play a more influential role in reform processes in their professional environment (93% in 2015)
- 95% of survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the ECML event they participated in has highlighted quality aspects of language education that they will promote in their professional environment (96% in 2015)

Web dissemination

- 13 million page views of all sites on the ECML’s web platform (+12%)
- 7,100 subscribers to the European Language Gazette (-16% following the removal of inactive e-mail addresses)
- 149 events registered in the ECML’s International Events Calendar
- 297 language education experts promoted their services via the ECML’s Experts’ Database
- 38 websites within the Centre’s web platform
- 12 thematic areas)

European Day of Languages

- 1,154 events organised in 48 countries registered in the European Day of Languages events calendar (28% increase in events)
- Website made available in 36 language versions (4 new language versions)
- 4.84 million page views of the European Day of Languages website (+61%)

Budget and expenditure

- €1.291 million expenditure on ECML core programme and activities (status 26 February 2017)
- € 355.000 expenditure relating to EC cooperation (September 2015 - August 2016)
- € 350,000 administered by the Austrian Association of the ECML in fulfilling Austria’s commitment as the host country to provide a seat for the Centre and a local secretariat

¹ EAQUALS is one of the founding members of the Professional Network Forum