

RML2future

Network for multilingualism and
linguistic diversity

*It's never too late ...
monolingualism is easy to cure!*

*Es ist nie zu spät ...
Einsprachigkeit ist heilbar!*

DOCUMENTATION

First Regional Conference

in Eupen (Belgium)
from 8–10 February 2010

www.rml2future.eu

First Regional Conference
of the Network RML2future
on the subject of
“Language Certification and Testing
of Language Skills”

in Eupen (Belgium)
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in Eupen (Belgium) from 8–10 February 2010

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Welcome and speech

by the president of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Hans Heinrich Hansen (German from Nordschleswig, Denmark)

Hans Heinrich HANSEN has been the president of FUEN since 2007. He has also been chairman of the German minority in Denmark for many years.



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen – participants of the conference, network partners, members of the FUEN-presidium, guests and representatives of the media.

On behalf of the Federal Union of European Nationalities – abbreviated FUEN – I would like to welcome you here in Eupen for the Regional Conference of our network RML2future. I think it is safe to say that we are very happy that we have such a strong partner with the German-speaking Community.

Dear members of the German-speaking Community (DG), dear Joseph, dear Edgar – thank you very much for your hospitality and the permanent good cooperation, which makes it possible for us to organise such conferences of a European dimension. Therefore I would like to address here also a warm thank you to the whole organising team, and the best wished for a successful conference that will be followed by several other.

As the president of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) – I represent, believe it or not, 86 organisations of European autochthonous, national minorities in Europe in 32 European countries. In 2009, FUEN celebrated its 60 year anniversary and our organisation looks back on a colourful history, running parallel with the European unification process; FUEN exists just as long

as the Council of Europe and longer than the European Union does.

FUEN considers itself the ombudsman of the European minorities and represents in particular the political interests of the autochthonous, national minorities. Closely related to that is the ambition to support practical engagement of the minorities in preserving their language and culture, their characteristics and identity, but also to promote the vitality and attractiveness of their area of settlement. It is a fact that language preservation is the highest priority for many minorities. Because of many developments in society, influenced by demographic change and the constant developments of the media, the number of speakers is rapidly decreasing.

We know that many smaller minorities are below the critical size of 300 000 speakers, which is considered as the lowest number for a viable language. We also know that large minorities and national minorities have to deal with these difficulties. We know that natural multilingualism and linguistic diversity today is a real asset, a resource that has to be utilised.

As president of FUEN I had the opportunity last year to visit the Carinthian Slovenes, the Lusatian Sorbs, South Tyrol and the German-speaking Community, to be in close contact with the minorities in the German-Danish border region and also to work with the West-Frisians.

They are all here today and represent multilingual regions of Europe and European minorities.

As FUEN, we are pleased that with this subsidised language network we have a possibility to support your engagement in language promotion. To support it effectively – that is our goal!

For us it is not just about adding another project of European cooperation on a list of good practices or to publish another study on endangered regional and minority languages, which will end up in some forgotten drawer.

No, consistently according to your wishes and needs we want to offer advice, service, networking and hopeful one day also funding for your language promotion. For this purpose we set the ambitious goal to establish a centre of competence, which will satisfy the different starting conditions, aims and needs of the multilingual regions and European minorities and will also contribute to provide profound knowledge and various options of language acquisition and language preservation, with the goal to develop holistic approaches for preservation and promotion of multilingualism and minority languages and to implement these as well.

This is not for the coming three years however; we operate based on the knowledge that positive language promotion is a long term

issue, that mostly the resources will be limited and that we also will need political will. Furthermore, we know that it is also not only about the language as such, but that we are dealing in general with a myriad of complex relationships and competences.

This conference will be the starting point for establishing a centre of competence, as an offer for you and for other minorities who want to participate.

I therefore call on you to consider the conference as an opportunity to take advantage of us, to stimulate us and to remain with us in the months to come, and to make clear to the network and its partners which needs – as diverse as they may be – you have in regard to support in language promotion and language policy, language acquisition and language teaching, certification et cetera.

I look forward to our Café Philosophique and the Regio-Café on Wednesday and wish the conference the momentum it needs for further cooperation.

1. Regionalkonferenz
des Netzwerkes „RML2future“
Netzwerk für Mehrsprachigkeit
und sprachliche Vielfalt in Europa
8.-10. Februar 2010
EUPEN (Belgien)

1st Regional Conference
of the network “RML2future”
Network for multilingualism
and linguistic diversity in Europe
8th-10th of February 2010
EUPEN (Belgium)

RML2future
Netzwerk für Mehrsprachigkeit
und sprachliche Vielfalt

Kulturevent
Donnerstag, 11. Februar 2010
Weiberfastnacht in Eupen
Cultural event: Women's carnival day in Eupen

Bildung und Kultur
DG
Mit Unterstützung
der Europäischen
Kommission COMENIUS



PROGRAMME OF THE FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN EUPEN FROM 8–10 FEBRUARY 2010

Monday, 8 February 2010

- 19:00 hr Opening of the First Regional Conference of the Network RML2future
Welcoming the participants by **Edgar HUNGS** (Agency for European Education Programmes VoG), **Joseph DRIES** on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Training and Employment of the German-speaking Community in Belgium and **Hans Heinrich HANSEN** (President of FUEN – Federal Union of European Nationalities)
- 19:30 hr Walking Dinner in Restaurant Visé

Tuesday, 9 February 2010

- 9:30 hr Welcome and presentation of the programme
- 9:45 hr Presentation of the language policy in the German-speaking Community:
Presentation on language certification; **Corina SENSTER**
- 10:30 hr Language certification and testing of language skills in Europe
Prof. Manfred PETERS
- 11:30 hr European multilingualism policy
Johan HÄGGMAN – Member of Cabinet of EU-Commissioner for Multilingualism
Leonard Orban
- 12:15 hr Europass – Language Passport; **Lydia RÖSSLER**
- 13:00 hr Lunch in the foyer of the Ministry
- 14:00 hr Workshops:
1. Workshop on the Language Passport; **Lydia RÖSSLER**
2. Workshop on testing language skills; **Eva BRIEDIGKEIT**
3. Workshop on DELF, PISA, IGLU – surveys on minority languages based on the example of the German-speaking Community Belgium; **Corina SENSTER**
4. Workshop on language transmission; **Dr. Elmar WINTERS-OHLE**
- 17:45 hr Presentation of the Network RML2future by the partners of the network
- 19:00 hr Dinner at the Robert-Schuman-Institute in Eupen

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

- 9:30 hr Welcome and presenting the programme of the day; **Edgar HUNGS**
- 9:40 hr Summary and presentation of the workshops
- 10:00 hr Café Philosophique
Exchange of experiences and ideas from the workshops
- 11:00 hr Regio-Café
Regional approach – exchange within the regions
- 11:45 hr Summary of the results
Questions, discussion and outlook
- 12:15 hr Concluding words **Oliver PAASCH**
Minister for Education, Training and Employment of the German-speaking Community in Belgium
- 12:30 hr Press conference
- 12:45 hr End of the conference

The first RML2future regional conference in Eupen, Belgium

Together with the German-speaking Community in Belgium the Network for Multilingualism and Linguistic Diversity, abbreviated RML2future, organised its First Regional Conference in Eupen, Belgium, from 8–10 February 2010. The aim of the network is to promote multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe, actively involving the regional and minority languages.

With the support from Oliver Paasch, the Education Minister of the German-speaking Community in Belgium, the conference on certification and assessment of language skills marked the launch of a series of conferences for professionals.

The objective of the conference was to contribute to a stronger use of regional education potential through the cooperation of professionals, experts and decision makers

and to contribute to cooperation on the European level.

Representatives from the multilingual regions of Europe that are involved in the project were invited to come to the conference: from the German-Danish border region, from North Friesland and Lusatia in Germany, from Carinthia and Burgenland in Austria and from West-Friesland in the Netherlands, South-Tyrol in Italy, Graubünden in Switzerland and the German-speaking Community in Belgium. And also other interested persons from additional European minorities and regions had come to the conference.

The European Union set ambitious goals for itself in the field of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. But people often forget that multilingualism in Europe is more than “just” the official state languages in the member states. There is a much greater linguistic diversity than most Europeans think – the linguistic diversity of the regional and minority languages. But this linguistic diversity is critically endangered – many smaller and smallest languages amongst the regional or minority languages are fighting for their survival.



The network RML2future is working on a centre of competence

About 60 representatives from different regions of Europe gathered in Eupen, Belgium, for the regional conference of the network RML2future.

“We gathered in Eupen in order to work on one of our main topics, namely the certification and testing of language skills”, said project manager Judith Walde, who explained also the other main pillars of the first successful conference and the thoughts behind the network RML2future: “we obtained three years time to establish a centre of competence for the regional and minority languages. To that end we need a strong, motivated network based on the different regions of Europe. This is what we want to achieve in Europe.”

“We had a very good, positive conference. We succeeded in bringing together professionals and researchers on one table. Our focus is in particular to make our network and later the centre of competence to be something that brings tangible benefits in practice for the regional and minority languages in Europe”, said Edgar Hungs, the leader of the Agency for European Education Programmes of the German-speaking Community and representative of the network RML2future about the objectives of his own work.

The German-speaking Community (DG) in Belgium is considered rightfully – the participants were able to check for themselves – as a good practice in the field of language certification for a small language community. The Education Minister of the DG, Oliver Paasch – also patron for the key area of education within FUEN – explained that “knowledge-oriented education policy is the guideline for acting politically”, which has to be based on empirical data. As a result the DG has now a lot of experiences in the field of language certification, and continues to develop its procedures on a constant basis.

The guests – among them teachers, kindergarten teachers, representatives of school boards, politicians, researchers – were able to get acquainted to topics such as the European Language Passport, testing of language skills and language transmission during the workshops.

Johan Häggman, former member of cabinet of outgoing EU Commissioner for Multilingualism Leonard Orban, spoke in his speech about multilingualism policy in the European Union. The major importance of multilingualism is a clearly defined objective in the EU and is of great significance, not in the last place because of economic competitiveness in times of globalisation. Often however there is a lack of recognition that also the regional and minority languages are of interest to the EU, other than just for their cultural importance.

“We are proud of our network RML2future”, said Hans Heinrich Hansen, President of FUEN. **“We want – apart from working professionally to establish a centre of competence – get instructions from those of you who work in practice for our political actions. We need exchange with the professionals, in order to be able to help them in a targeted political way.”**

The result of the meeting was that exactly such instructions for acting of professional and political nature were recorded. Among them, the establishment of a European minority-teachers association, translation of the Language Passport into regional and minority languages, ideas for regional exchange and cooperation as well as concrete guidelines for the establishment of a centre of competence were recorded.

“Now it will be our task within the network RMLfuture to coordinate these good ideas and initiatives, to strengthen our network and at the same time work further on the idea of a centre of competence”, Judith Walde concluded directly after the conference.



RML2future
Network for multilingualism and
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Presentation of the workshops, the Café Philosophique and the Regio-Café – results and recommendations

■ **Workshop 1: Europass – Language Passport: “Show what you can”** led by Lydia Rössler, Europass Valorisation & Impact Assessment, National Agency for Lifelong Learning in Austria

After a general presentation of the Europass Language Passport for all the participants on Tuesday morning, the workshop Europass – Language Passport dealt with the subject of Europass in practice. The Europass consists of five documents that were developed on the European level in order to increase the transparency of qualifications: Europass CV, Europass Language Passport, Europass Mobility, Europass Certificate Supplement and Europass Diploma Supplement.

The workshop Europass – Language Passport went further into the following questions: What is the Europass for? What are these five documents of the Europass, where can you get them, how are they completed and what are they based on?

In particular the Europass – Language Passport was covered during the workshop. This document makes it possible to present the knowledge of foreign languages and linguistic experiences, based on the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” and gives a standardised overview of the linguistic skills of a person.

First the self-assessment of the language skills into the different language levels was explained and secondly the use of the Language Passport in the practice of training, mobility and job applications, etcetera for a language friendly environment that includes the regional and minority languages.

Summary of some statements and recommendations from the workshop and from the Café Philosophique



- 1) The Language Passport should also be available for the smaller and regional and minority languages. At the moment it is possible to indicate your language skills, but this is not generally available in the regional and minority languages.
- 2) The Language Passport should be publicised, for example by disseminating also through the network RML2future, the organisation of courses, information, meetings, especially for teachers, employers and employment agencies.
- 3) Also in job centres in the multilingual regions the Language Passport should be publicised and the regional and minority languages should be included.
- 4) The Language Passport should be certified.
- 5) A translation of the Language Passport in the regional and minority language is desirable.
- 6) It would be desirable to have an annex to the Language Passport with an overview/directory of all the languages including the regional and minority languages with an explanation about each and every language and language family, and information about specific languages on the internet-site of the Language Passport.
- 7) The Language Passport should be extended to specific target groups (children, youth).

web



More links on the Europass-Language Passport:

Europass-website: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/home>, www.europass-info.de/?id=283

www.europass.at/article/frontpage/?swlang=en

European Language Portfolio: www.coe.int/t/dg4/portfolio/default.asp?l=e&m=/main_pages/welcome.html

An extensive description of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:

www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Framework_EN.pdf

The Language Passport in a special form for learners between 9 and 12 years old:

www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Introduction%20Template%20learners%206-9.html

Study on the contribution of multilingualism to creativity:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/studies/study_on_the_contribution_of_multilingualism_to_creativity_en.php

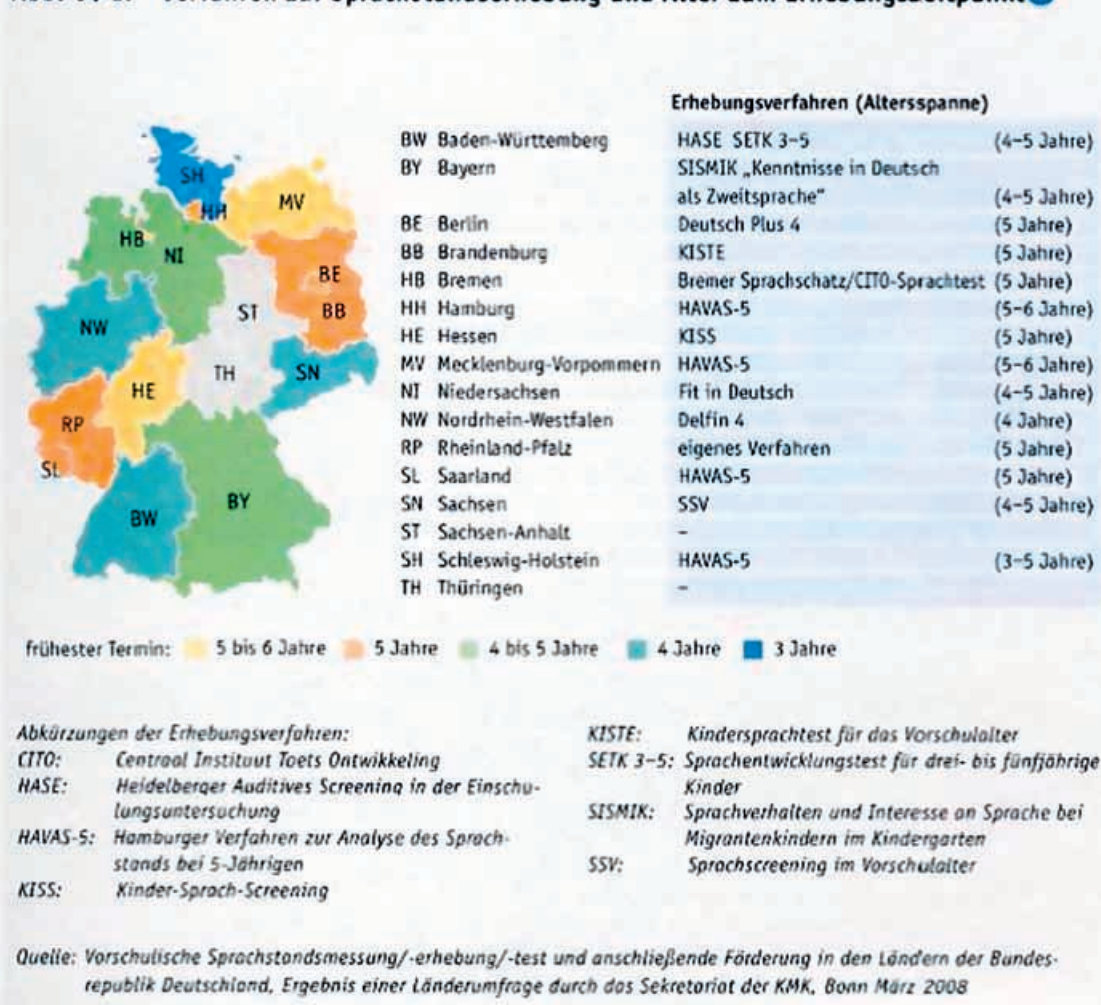
Workshop 2: Testing language skills of young children – an introduction to pedagogical diagnostics of language skills led by Eva Briedigkeit, TU Dortmund University

In recent years the awareness has grown that language diagnostics and advancement belong together. Public discussions make clear however that diagnostics is seen as more problematic than advancement. This has various reasons, which were discussed during the workshop.

The focus of the workshop was on the latest

findings leading to the basic line of argumentation within the international discussion on language diagnostics. This was followed by formulating minimum standards that diagnostics of language has to fulfil. These include standards to measure the tests: validity, objectivity, reliability, normalisation/calibration, comparability, efficiency and usefulness.

Abb. C4-1: Verfahren zur Sprachstandserhebung und Alter zum Erhebungszeitpunkt ^M



Pre-school language skill testing, on the basis of the example of Germany and its federal regions

An extensive overview on the developments in the federal regions of Germany in the field of testing of language skills and language teaching can be found in the following expert report commissioned by the German Youth Institute / Deutsches Jugendinstitut: Dietz, S. / Lisker, A. (2008): "Sprachstandsfeststellung

und Sprachförderung im Kindergarten" (Testing language skills and language teaching in kindergarten). It contains inter alia an overview of procedures for language testing in pre-schools:

www.dji.de/bibs/Sprachstandsfeststellung_Dietz_Lisker.pdf (in German)

The workshop continued with the question of how a procedure suitable for the specific pedagogical practice can be selected from the multitude of instruments that were developed for young children and how these procedures can be implemented. The discussion went especially into the question of which procedures also are adequate to use for the testing of minority language skills.

- Why exactly have these fields of language development been selected?
- Is proven why these fields of language development are of importance?
- Has the instrument been developed and tested in a careful way (does it comply with quality standards)?
- Does the instrument refer to the language theory it is based upon?



An overview of the most important criteria to evaluate procedures to test language skills

Minimum criteria:

- To what end has the procedure been developed? To what end was it explicitly not developed?
- What can be tested with it?
- Which fields of language development does it leave out?

Other criteria especially for educators:

- Has the procedure been developed to be used by educators?
- Has the testing situation been adapted to the situation of a child of pre-school age?
- How much time will the implementation of the test take?
- Is the effort that has to be invested in the procedure reasonable compared to the results it will yield?
- Is the procedure explained in such a manner that educators will understand and use it?
- Can the implementation of the procedure be integrated in the day-to-day work of the daycare centre?
- Can the outcomes be used by the educators?
- Will the procedure give an indication when special teaching needs are required?
- Does the procedure explain for which outcomes which specific teaching measures will have to be taken?

At the end of the workshop the participants discussed about the question if no testing of language skills would be better than a bad one, in regard to the situation of the different minority languages?

Summary of the topic "Testing language skills of young children" from the Café Philosophique

- No testing of language skills should be taking place if no recommendations will follow or no strategies will be developed
- There is serious need for research and backlog in the field of multilingual procedures: testing of multilingual children.
- Resources for the development of testing language skills in regional and minority languages are lacking.
- Each regional and minority language has to check for itself as to whether and, if so, which procedures are useful to apply or which procedures eventually should be developed.

Workshop 3: DELF, IGLU, PISA – comparative surveys on minority languages based on the example of the German-speaking Community in Belgium

led by Corina Senster, Pedagogics Unit of the Department for Education, Training and Employment of the German-speaking Community in Belgium

The education system of the German-speaking Community is run autonomously. The government of the German-speaking Community, which has an Education Minister, therefore takes all the political decisions regarding the education system.

Since 2004 the government of the German-speaking Community has selected the promotion of multilingualism as one of its priorities. Guaranteeing and improving the quality of education are the main characteristics of this education policy. The participation in international comparative studies

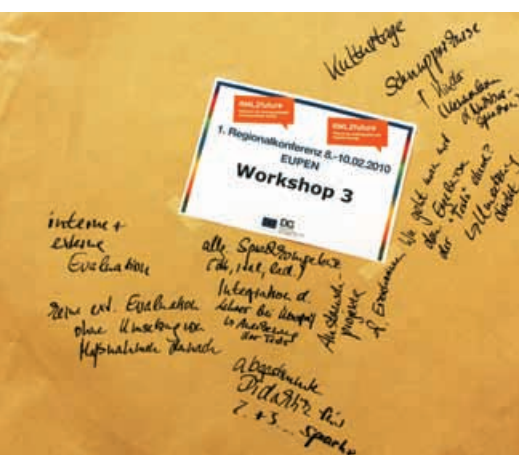
helps in decision making and steers for a large part the measures that have to be taken.

In this workshop, the participants learnt more about the backgrounds, implementation and evaluation of different comparative surveys such as DELF, Pisa, Iglu and Surveyland in the German-speaking Community.

Moreover, a discussion on exchange of experiences and chances in the field of comparative surveys in the different regions was stimulated.

Summary of some statements and recommendations from workshop 3 and from the Café Philosophique

- In the implementation of comparative surveys a combination of internal and external evaluations is desirable and promising.
- No solely external evaluation should take place without subsequent implementing measures and guidelines in the minority regions.
- What should be done with the outcomes of the “tests”? – Important are immediate implementation of the measures and concrete help and support for the educators.
- Teachers and educators should be involved in every evaluation and every test of language skills, which will lead to a higher acceptance of the tests in general.
- A balanced methodology for learning of a second, third and further language should be developed. Too little scientific knowledge and too few concepts are available or are applied.
- Exchange projects for educators and teachers of regional and minority language on the European level are desirable.



Workshop 4: Language transmission

led by Dr. Elmar Winters-Ohle from TU Dortmund University



The workshop “language transmission” dealt first with various terminology around languages: the meaning of language, the meaning of first and second language, a model of multi-language acquisition, cognitive effects of bilingualism and multilingualism and the presentation of different types of bilingualism. An important aspect was the role of culture and language in the different minority languages and regions.

After making a round of presentations of the situation of language transmission of the languages of the representatives from the single regions present, practical aspects of the transmission of languages from elementary school to adult education were discussed.

In the discussion that followed the participants dealt in particular with the possibilities of European cooperation between professionals from minority regions in the field of language teaching within the total context of the minority situations (e.g. recognition of the language, economic situation, historical background).



Summary of some statements and recommendation from workshop 4 and from the Café Philosophique

- Recognition and image of the regional and minority languages are key to language preservation and to language promotion. Especially parents are a very important target group who should be aware of their mother tongue.
 - Promotion of languages
 - Increasing the valuation of languages and the status of languages
 - Attractiveness of the language should be raised amongst the youth - peer groups, coolness
 - Linking language with identity
 - Right to mother tongue
- Lobbying on the European level for linguistic diversity is of utmost importance.
- Making a needs analysis in the specific regions and showing the possibilities and approaches to language planning to responsible persons and representatives.
- Wish for an association of teachers of regional and minority languages.
 - Practice-oriented exchange of methods and didactics of the minority regions
 - Explaining the use of different methodology and didactics based on different needs and minority situations
 - No didactics based on a top-down approach, but bottom-up
 - Experts report about the experiences with multilingual instruction

■ *Regio-Café*

At the end of the conference Regio-Cafés took place with the participants from the regions that were represented. The representatives of a region discussed with each other about the experiences gathered during the conference and made comparisons between other regions and their own situation.

In the Regio-Cafés, representatives from South Tyrol, Lusatia, the German-Danish border region, from West- and North-Friesland, Sweden (Finns in Sweden), the German-speaking Community in Belgium, Carinthia

and Burgenland were present.

During the regional conference, it became clear that the exchange with comparable regions is particularly fruitful. Many similarities could be determined, but also differences. A continuous and regular exchange between the regional and minority languages was repeatedly asked for and regarded as desirable. The importance of the involvement of professionals/educators in the work of the network and its next meetings and projects was emphasised.

The most important results and recommendations from the Cafés in key points:

- Permanent and regular exchange between regions; especially where they have similar problems / challenges (quality control) would be desirable.
 - Starting up an association of teachers from multilingual regions with regional and minority languages in order to have concrete exchange about subjects (not only language teachers): training and exchange of methods for bilingual education, work with parents, integration of adult education
 - Offer visits to practice and opportunities to compare between the regions (concretely in kindergartens, schools, institutions)
 - Involving experts from the regions about the subjects of teaching programmes and pedagogical practice
- Testing language skills and language certification should be assessed for each region separately.
- Elaborating quality standards for teaching.
- Promotion of minority languages amongst the minority and majority population and raising the image of the languages is urgently needed.
 - Campaign for multilingualism using information and communication technology, European campaign with regional implementation
 - Operating self-confident for the regional and minority languages: minority promotion = regional promotion
 - “make a language sexy” – idols and role models as driving forces
 - Promotion of best practise
- Call for multilingual teacher training in Europe/Germany in two languages (bilingual), higher requirements with possibly higher payment.
- Further development of the Common European Framework of Reference: make it useable for the regional and minority languages.



GRENZ ECHO OF 13 FEBRUARY 2010

**“IN THE EU LANGUAGES ARE DYING”**

Frisian and Sorbian are in a similar position as the classic playmaker in football: the regional languages are critically endangered. “In the European Union languages are dying”, states Jan Diedrichsen. He is the director of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN). The largest umbrella organisation of the regional minorities in Europe started RML2future last year, a network for multilingualism and linguistic diversity.

The first regional conference of RML2future took place in Eupen this week. The German-speaking Community is among six partners of the network and belongs to those governmental institutions that are funding FUEN. The organisation has 86 member organisations from 32 European countries. “The German-speaking Community has its own linguistic and cultural autonomy, which most of the other regional minorities do not have. “But the German-speaking Community does not

sing songs of joy for that, but reflects on itself”, Diedrichsen praises.

SIGN OF IDENTITY

RML2future is guided by the EU-objective that each European citizen should master at least two foreign languages next to his or her mother tongue. In this connection the network put the accent on the regional languages, which are more and more put into the background according to Diedrichsen. “In order to pursue a career globally, English and Chinese are recommended. The emphasis in multilingualism is strongly directed at the business factor. But language should not only be regarded as a tool for economic success, but is also an important sign of identity.” The regional languages play an insignificant role in the European funding for languages, the network laments.

The opening event in Eupen was attended by 60 teachers, researchers and politicians. They came to Eupen from South Tyrol, Burgenland, West-Friesland, Nordschleswig and other regions with minorities.

DELFI, IGLU, PISA

“The goal of RML2future is to have a centre of competence for regional languages in Europe within three years time”, project manager Judith Walde says. To pursue this goal, the network has 625 000 Euro, provided by the EU and the Autonomous Region Trentino-South Tyrol. The German-speaking Community, more precisely its Agency for European Education Programmes, is responsible within the network for the area of certification and testing of language skills and for comparative educational studies. These areas – keywords are DELFI, IGLU, PISA – were therefore the main topic of the regional conference that took place in the Ministry in Eupen.

FUEN-director Jan Diedrichsen hopes that the dying of languages in Europe can be stopped. “Were Frisian and Sorbian endangered animal species, then Greenpeace would long ago have chained itself to them”, he made a comparison. (boc)

IMPRESSIONS





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