

CONFERENCE REPORT:

„NEW CHALLENGES FOR MULTILINGUALISM IN EUROPE“ Dubrovnik, 11.-15. April 2010

a) Date, place and organizers

1. The Conference „*New Challenges for Multilingualism in Europe*“ was held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from 11 to 15 April 2010.
2. The meeting was organized by LINEE in cooperation with the Institute for Anthropological Research, Zagreb, Croatia. The meeting was supported by the European Commission and the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports.
3. The Conference was held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Croatia and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

b) Objectives

4. The Conference was recognized as a key dissemination activity of LINEE four-year Joint Programme of Activities, with the goal of spreading the outcomes of research conducted by LINEE at the European and national/regional levels of policy making as well as to the general public and the public media.
5. In order to contribute to the ongoing public debate on “Unity in Diversity” and multilingualism in Europe, the aim of the Conference was to provide a common platform for the exploration of new approaches from a broad interdisciplinary perspective and to strengthen linkages between theoretical analysis and the dissemination of research results.

c) Structure of the conference and program summary

6. The main conference agenda, formulated with the support of the conference Scientific Committee as well as with the input of the local Organising Committee in Croatia, featured 230 speakers and chairpersons from 35 countries and offered an abundance of opportunities for participants to learn, share and network with colleagues from all over the world.

With 5 plenary sessions, 28 sessions in 4 parallel conference strands, 5 panel discussions, 1 poster session and a round table with EC officials, LINEE Conference made a considerable contribution towards the building of a common European platform of research and education in multilingualism.

7. The Conference was structured into **four thematic symposia**, namely Language, identity and culture; Language policy and planning; Language and education; Language and economy.

The six sessions under *Theme 1* addressed the issues of discourses of cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe, identification processes in minority, migration and media contexts, and youth linguistic practices. The nine sessions under *Theme 2* addressed a variety of issues related to policy making in European and national contexts, migration and education, with particular focus on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and Ireland. The six sessions under *Theme 3* addressed the topics of second language learning, attitudes and beliefs towards multilingualism in education, individual strategies and psycholinguistic issues, as well as multilingual education in minority and migration contexts. The four sessions under *Theme 4* focused on discourses in economic contexts, language markets and language management in multinational companies.

8. The context was set by the inaugural **plenary** given by Susan Gal (Chicago) who called for a shift in rethinking the very concept of multilingualism based on the standardization ideology used in European and national policies which benefits elite multilingual speakers but very often excludes speakers of non-standard, minority or immigrant languages.

Each of the next four plenaries was on the four main themes of the conference. Adam Jaworski (Cardiff) introduced a concept of „sociolinguistics on the move“ exploring language practices in tourism while Jan Blommaert (Tilburg) discussed language policing as strategies of various local and non-institutional actors in managing language use. As an introduction to Theme 3 Rosemary Tracy (Mannheim) called for an inclusive language policy and recognition of multilingual competences in classrooms, while Glyn Williams in his talk stressed the vital role of language in the knowledge economy and the construction of knowledge.

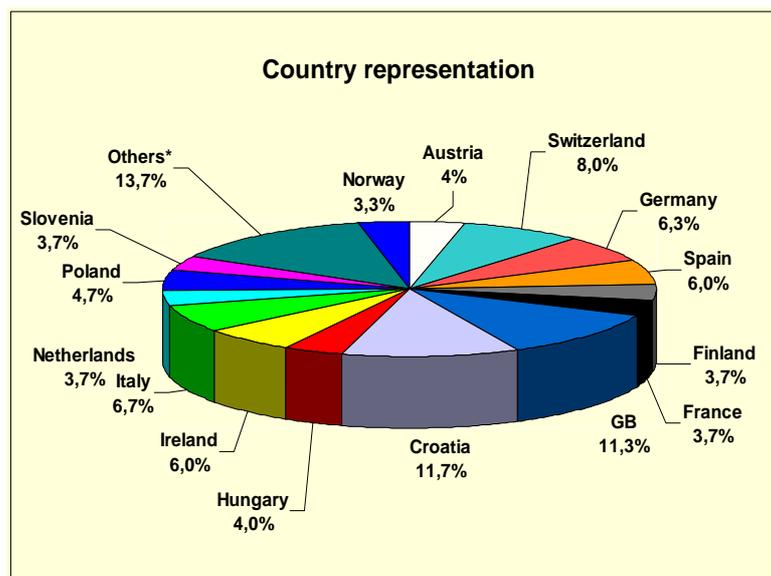
9. Five strategic **panel discussions** were held debating key issues on “English as a *lingua franca* in multilingual Europe”, “Theoretical and methodological aspects of European multilingualism”, “Approaches to *lingua receptiva*” and “Valorization of linguistic resources in minority contexts” and „Language and gender“.

10. A **round table** of researchers and EC officials provided a good opportunity to review some major concerns and to identify priorities and scenarios in respect to multilingualism policy and practice.

10. A **post-conference LINEE meeting** was also held to discuss the network sustainability and its potential educational and scientific work at which some plans were elaborated for upcoming LINEE activities.

d) Participants

11. The meeting had strong participation from EU (68%) and other European countries (28%) as well as key international experts from other continents (4%). It was attended by more than 300 participants, from over 35 countries. Their profile included researchers, educators, community activists, press representatives and others interested in incorporating new ideas and approaches to multilingualism into their work and policies.



*Others: Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Japan, Kosovo, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, USA

12. A number of young scholars and doctoral students (app. 70) from different countries were attracted to the Conference. By giving oral or poster presentations many of them had an opportunity to share ideas and get feedback about their research from senior scholars and experts.

13. The conference benefited also from the presence and input of high-level EC officials, Harald Hartung (Head of Unit Multilingualism Policy in the EC Directorate-General for Education and Culture) and Silva Kauko (Policy Officer in the unit Multilingualism and Translation Studies in the EC Directorate-General for Translation).

e) Conclusions

14. Building on the outcomes of its four-year work, the Conference was a key activity for LINEE, both as the first of its biennial conferences and as an introduction of this new and growing network of professionals interested in challenges of multilingualism and all the wider issues of how to integrate political and sociocultural approaches to language.

15. The conference provided a platform for sharing views, research findings and expertise on a wide variety of issues inherent in research of multilingualism related to identity, policy making, education and economy within intersecting power differentials involved at the local, national and European level. It also helped to look beneath the surface of macro-level official policies of multilingualism and to explore its underpinnings and micro-practices from below to learn from the diversity of experience that participants brought to the conference. As such it was also an important milestone for everyone concerned with how to support in a more efficient way multilingualism in practice and to improve both the accessibility and quality of multilingual education and training in Europe for the benefit of all European citizens.

16. Feedback from the conference was very positive – participants greatly enjoyed the chance to meet like-minded people from so many countries, the opportunity to learn from one another, and the chance to explore ideas.

17. The conference was covered by a number of regional and national media in Croatia (regional daily and weekly papers, regional radio, national TV, and a number of internet portals).

The aims of the conference had been to present recent progress on a variety of issues related to social, political, economic and cultural approaches to language and to the development of strategies to cope with many challenges related to multilingualism, and to encourage the interaction between scholars from different theoretical and cultural backgrounds. These objectives have surely been achieved. We hope that LINEE will contribute to a continuation of such international exchanges in the future.

All other relevant details and information relating to the conference is given in its full-length programme, Book of Abstracts, a list of participants and media extracts.