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### Newsletter of the Esperantic Studies Foundation

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## Future Of European Languages Under Threat, Experts Say

The 25-nation European Union must take decisive action if it wishes to safeguard the future vitality of its 21 official languages, according to an international meeting of experts in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The warning was issued on August 22, 2005, on behalf of more than seventy participants in the 4th Nitobe Symposium, including academics, politicians, government officials, and language activists.

“There is a great deal of concern about the future of the smaller national languages, including most of those in the new EU member states,” said Dr. Humphrey Tonkin, professor of the humanities at the University of Hartford, USA, and one of the conveners of the symposium.

“Many decisions are currently being taken with the goal of strengthening European unity, without considering their linguistic implications,” Dr. Tonkin added.

Participants in the Symposium, which met at the Lithuanian Parliament building from July 30 to August 1, 2005, included parliamentarians from

Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. All agreed that their national languages risked becoming marginalized in various ways within the EU.

“There were more than 500 mistakes in the Latvian translation of the Constitutional Treaty,” noted the Latvian Minister of Education and Culture, Dr. Ina Druviete. “How is it possible to have a meaningful political debate in such conditions?”

“There is a great deal of concern about the future of the smaller national languages, including most of those in the new EU member states.”

Dr. François Grin, a professor of economics at the University of Geneva, provided an estimate of the economic benefits to the United Kingdom of the widespread use of English rather than a broader mix of languages within the European Union.

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## Language Policy Implications of the Expansion of the European Union: Conclusions From the 4th Nitobe Symposium In Vilnius, Lithuania

### Context

Among the many questions raised by the expanded membership of the European Union is the question of languages. While the Treaty of Rome foresaw equality of status for national languages in EU institutions, the challenges to achieving this in practice are considerable, now that membership has grown to 25 member states with 21 official languages, more than 25 regional and minority languages, and many sizeable immigrant language communities, all with widely varying numbers of speakers. Without a careful, systematic, and well-funded approach to managing the multilingual nature of the EU, the languages and cultural values of some of the smaller states and non-state language groups could come under threat, compromising the principle of equality among EU members and opening the way to new kinds of conflict and struggle within and between nations.

This situation was the focus of the 4th Nitobe Symposium, organized by the Centre for Research

and Documentation on World Language Problems in cooperation with the European Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, and the University of Vilnius. More than 70 participants from over 20 countries, including nine new EU member states, met to explore the various political alternatives and seek consensus on some basic recommendations on EU language policy under the new conditions.

### Concerns

The participants in the Symposium shared a strong commitment to the process of European integration, and in particular to the pursuit of fair, democratic, and high-quality communication among all Europeans. They also shared the belief that current language policies in the EU, both within EU institutions and at the level of national governments, are inadequate to achieving these goals. The following problematic trends appear to be widespread across the EU:

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## European Languages con't

“Conservatively, these transfers to the UK amount to more than 10 billion euros per year,” Dr. Grin said. “A more active multilingual policy would cost a similar amount, but would distribute the costs and benefits much more equally.”

The Symposium also heard from advocates of a greater role for the planned international language Esperanto with the EU.

“It is the only solution which is both fair and efficient,” claimed Dr. Sean O’Riain, an Irish diplomat who currently leads the European Esperanto Union.

The Symposium’s concluding document calls on EU member states to collaborate on the development of a common language framework “that would balance the protection and celebration of linguistic diversity with the need for effective, high-quality communication amongst all the citizens of the EU.”

**For more information, see the Symposium website: [www.esperantic.org/nitobe2005.htm](http://www.esperantic.org/nitobe2005.htm).**

## Language Policy Implications In The EU con't

- Failing to treat linguistic issues as a significant
- Significant aspect of policy-making in such areas as higher education, scientific research, and communications media, to the detriment of the values and needs of small national and non-national language communities;
- Tolerating or encouraging language practices which contravene the principles of multilingualism and linguistic equality, frequently leading to situations in which people with limited or no command of English are unable to participate on equal terms in the EU policy formation process;
- Relying too much on existing language-related institutions and ideas that were never intended to address issues in the European or global context, entrenching a chronic lack of linguistic awareness and expertise in governments at all levels;
- Dramatically reducing the teaching of languages other than English, making it less likely that Europeans will gain a deep understanding and appreciation of the culture of neighbouring

## Student Standards For Learning Esperanto K-16 in the United States Established

In July, the Esperantic Studies Foundation (ESF), together with a team of scholars and foreign language teaching professionals, established comprehensive student standards for learning Esperanto K-16 in the United States.

The standards are currently being reviewed by the American Council On The Teaching Of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The establishment of these learning standards will allow teachers and school boards to offer the international language, Esperanto, as a viable language option to elementary, high school and university students.

The team was led by Dr. Timothy Reagan, a former Director of ESF and current Dean of Humanities at the University of Witwatersrand. Other participants included Christy Brown (ACTFL), Dr. Duncan Charters (Principia College), Dr. Bonnie Fonseca-Greber (Bowling Green State University), and Dr. Katalin Kovats (language instructor; Netherlands).

The standards may be viewed online at: [www.esperantic.org/publications.htm](http://www.esperantic.org/publications.htm)

countries, and reinforcing a disproportionate presence of British and American cultural products throughout the EU;

- Avoiding open public discussion of language policy, and in particular of viable alternatives to the present situation of official but half-hearted multilingualism coupled with the unregulated and uneven spread of English.

In the context of the 25-member European Union, these failings of language policy were seen as tending to undermine the languages of the smaller states. Speakers at the Symposium noted the existence of significant economic and political burdens imposed on speakers of these languages by the current system, and voiced fears that this would lead in the long run to a loss of status and vitality for all but the largest national languages.

## Interlinguistic Events

**Nov 18 - 20, 2005**

**ACTFL 2005 Conference**

Where: Baltimore, MA, USA.

The Esperantic Studies Foundation presented a seminar on new language learning technology and new student standards for learning Esperanto. More information can be found at: [www.actfl.org](http://www.actfl.org)

**May 12 - 14, 2006**

**Language, Diversity & Integration In The Enlarged EU**

Where: Kaunas, Lithuania.

Organized by: Vytautas Magnus University. Conference details:

[www.vdu.lt/LTCourses/?pg=112&lang=2&menu\\_id=57](http://www.vdu.lt/LTCourses/?pg=112&lang=2&menu_id=57)

**June 15 - 17, 2006**

**FIPLV World Congress 2006**

Where: Göteborg, Sweden.

For more information see:

<http://www.fiplv.org/>

**Sept 10, 2006**

**Symposium In Honor Of Dr. Joshua Fishman**

Where: University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA.

For more information see:

<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/plc/clpp/fishman80/>

## Research Grants Available

The Esperantic Studies Foundation offers Interlingual Research Grants of up to \$10,000 to support publishable research on issues it considers to be relevant to its mission. ESF is particularly interested in supporting projects which: (a) study or apply Esperanto within a broader disciplinary or educational context; (b) improve our understanding of language barriers and inequalities, and of ways to overcome them that are both effective and just.

This program is particularly designed to benefit postdoctoral researchers and junior faculty who are in the process of establishing a research program, although anyone may apply.

For more information about the Research Grant Program, please go to [www.esperantic.org/interlingual\\_researchhome.htm](http://www.esperantic.org/interlingual_researchhome.htm)



## Language Policy Implications In The EU con't

### Commitments

While advocating a wide range of ideas and priorities for addressing these issues, participants in the Symposium agreed on the following five major commitments.

- 1. A common framework.** A constructive, realistic language policy framework for the European Union of 25 countries is needed, that would balance the protection and celebration of linguistic diversity with the need for effective, high-quality communication amongst all the citizens of the EU. The participation of a wide range of individuals and institutions, representing many different perspectives and interests, will be vital in order to transform such a vision into reality.
- 2. Public and political debate.** In order to generate the necessary political will behind such a common framework, much more effort is needed to raise the level and intensity of public and political debate over language policy. The disadvantages of the current system, the vested interests that sustain it, and a range of positive policy alternatives need to be formulated in ways that can be discussed by ordinary people, reported on in the media, and addressed in practical terms by elected politicians. Long term political constituencies and coalitions for the promotion of language equality, diversity, and sustainability need to be developed.
- 3. Diverse solutions.** The development of a common language policy framework needs to

address the following five areas, each of which may involve a different set of solutions and a somewhat different policy process:

- the internal and professional communication of EU institutions, which is closely connected to the professional culture and self-governance of the institutions themselves;
- the official communication of EU institutions with citizens and governments, which is regulated through the EU policy process involving member states, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission, etc;
- the management of the linguistic situation in EU member states, which comes under the jurisdiction of national parliaments and ultimately answers to the democratic process;
- the management of communication and cultural relations, internal to the EU, by an enormous range of public, professional, commercial, non-governmental, and private organizations and institutions, whose linguistic policies are largely autonomous but often highly constrained by economic and political factors;
- the external communication of EU institutions and member states with non-European states and in international organizations, which is affected by both global and local contexts and in turn may have implications for policy decisions within the EU itself.

*Continued on page 4*

### Journal Feature:



ISSN: 0272-2690

## Language Problems & Language Planning

*Language Problems and Language Planning* is published in cooperation with the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems. This international multi-lingual journal publishes articles primarily on political, sociological, and economic aspects of language and language use. The journal also features sections on Interlinguistics and publication reviews.

### Featured Articles in Issue 29(2)

- Globalisation and national communities of communication.  
*Joseph Lo Bianco*
- Tove Skutnabb-Kangas. Linguistic genocide in education - or Worldwide diversity and human rights? *Edmond Brent & Cora Brent-Palmer*
- Tessa Carroll. Language planning and language change in Japan.  
*Haitao Liu*

For more information see: [www.benjamins.nl](http://www.benjamins.nl)

## New Releases Books

### Language Planning and Policy in Europe: Vol. I & II.

Author: Baldauf, R. B., Jr. and Kaplan, R. B. (eds)  
Published: Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 2005.  
Languages: English. pp. 320.  
ISBN: 1-85359-811-9

### L'enseignement des langues étrangères comme politique publique.

Author: Grin, François  
Published: Rapport établie à la demande du Haut conseil de l'évaluation de l'école. N° 19  
Septembre 2005. Available online:  
[http://cisad.ade.education.fr/hcee/documents/rapport\\_Grin.pdf](http://cisad.ade.education.fr/hcee/documents/rapport_Grin.pdf)

A policy response to François Grin's book by the French "Haut conseil de l'évaluation de l'école" is also available below:

### Quelle politique linguistique pour quel enseignement des langues?

Source: Haut conseil de l'évaluation de l'école. 2005. Available online:  
<http://cisad.ade.education.fr/hcee/documents/avis19.pdf>

## Articles

### Multilingualism in the European Union.

Author: van Els, T. (2005)  
Published: International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 15(3): 263-281  
Languages: English.

### EU translation problems and the danger of linguistic devaluation.

Author: Tosi, A. (2005)  
Published: International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 15(3): 384-388  
Languages: English.

### The hidden perverse effects of the current system of international communication.

Author: Piron, C. (2004)  
Published: Esperanto Documents 48A, Rotterdam: UEA.

### Interlinguistics and Esperanto Studies: Path to the scholarly literature.

Author: Blanke, D. (2004)  
Published: Esperanto Documents 47A, Rotterdam: UEA.



## Language Policy Implications In The EU con't

**4. Alternative visions.** The development of a common framework, and of policy solutions in particular contexts, will be enriched by informed public debate over competing visions of the linguistic future of the European Union. Among the visions needing articulation and elaboration are the following:

- Drawing lessons from diverse models of multilingualism around the world to better understand the dynamics and potential strengths and weaknesses of the EU language system, and its place within the global language system;
- Defining and defending the status and needs of small national and non-national language communities, both indigenous and immigrant, within the EU;
- Developing policy frameworks to ensure that any widely used lingua franca does not undermine the continued vitality of national languages, the equal treatment of their speakers in EU institutions, and the preservation of cultural diversity;
- Exploring the potential role of Esperanto within an EU language framework, with particular regard to the economic benefits of its use as a pivot language in translation and interpretation, its efficacy as a introduction to foreign language education, and its advantages as a medium of intercultural communication;

**5. Political and expert collaboration.** The 4th Nitobe Symposium provided one of the first opportunities for politicians and experts from a

majority of states in the expanded EU to discuss common concerns and priorities in the area of language policy and communication. Progress on the issues identified here will depend on ongoing and increasing collaboration of this kind, including:

- Regular meetings, both at the level of the entire EU, and of groups of states within it, for example through the creation of a language policy conference for the smaller EU states as proposed at the Symposium;
- Development of a research network that brings together work on language economics, sociology, politics, and planning (including education, terminology, legislation, etc.), and can provide timely and well-founded information to policy-makers and the media;
- Ongoing communication by e-mail and other means, with the objective of engaging a growing number of key individuals in the academic, bureaucratic, and political establishments of EU member states in the development of common solutions to shared linguistic concerns.

The emergence of the EU as a complex, novel type of international collaboration requires new approaches to the management of multilingualism and efficient, equitable communication. The building of capacity in this area, in the form of ideas, expertise, and institutions, is an urgent priority that deserves attention and resources from national governments and EU institutions alike.

## Interlingual Links

### Around the Globe

**Esperantic Studies Foundation**  
[www.esperantic.org](http://www.esperantic.org)

**Lernu.net**  
[www.lernu.net](http://www.lernu.net)

**Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik**  
[www.interlinguistik-gil.de](http://www.interlinguistik-gil.de)

Site devoted to the study of Interlinguistics

**Interlinguistics in China**  
<http://htliu.nease.net>

Website maintained by the Chinese Interlinguist, Liu, Haitao

**International Communication Association**  
[www.icahdq.org/](http://www.icahdq.org/)

**Linguistic Data Consortium**  
[www ldc.upenn.edu/](http://www ldc.upenn.edu/)

**SIL International**  
[www.sil.org/](http://www.sil.org/)

Site devoted to the study & documentation of lesser known languages

**We are interested in receiving information about interesting websites, new books, articles, courses or other media pertaining to Esperanto & Interlinguistics. Send us your latest discoveries.**

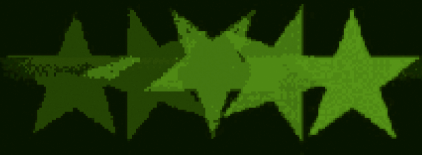
All contributions and reactions to the newsletter are welcome at [newsletter@esperantic.com](mailto:newsletter@esperantic.com)

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# N·A·S·K 2006



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