

**interarts**

**Ex-Post Evaluation of Activities in the Field of  
Regional and Minority Languages 1998-2002**

**Final Report**

For the attention of

**European Commission  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture  
Language Policy Unit  
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## Executive summary

### Background

This evaluation has focused on the support provided by the European Commission to regional and minority languages (RMLs) between 1998 and 2002. It has been carried out by the Interarts Foundation, with a contribution by the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, between July 2003 and January 2004, after an invitation to tender was launched by the European Commission in February 2003.

During the period covered by the evaluation the general objectives of the EU in the field of regional and minority languages were to contribute to the safeguarding and promotion of regional and minority languages as aspects of the common European cultural heritage and to develop the European dimension of RML projects and activities.

The focus of the evaluation included funding provided to the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) and to three centres of the Mercator network over a 5 year period (1998-2002) and funding for individual projects under three annual calls for proposals in 1998, 1999 and 2000. No further calls were published after 2000 due to the lack of a legal basis.

EBLUL is an independent non-governmental organisation financed by the European Community as an organisation of European interest. It was set up on the initiative of the European Parliament in 1982. It represents regional or minority language communities in dealing with European Union institutions and other international organisations, and acts as a channel of communication between them and European and international bodies and as a facilitator of contacts and exchanges between these communities.

Mercator is an information and documentation network which aims at improving the exchange and circulation of information on minority languages and cultures. It was founded as an initiative of the European Commission in 1987 and seeks to encourage cooperation and networking between institutions and organizations, universities, and local, regional and national authorities. The network comprises three centres – Mercator Education (based in Leeuwarden / Ljouwert, Friesland, the Netherlands), Mercator Legislation (based in Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain) and Mercator Media (Aberystwyth, Wales, UK).

In addition to analysing funded activities and organisations, one focus of the evaluation was also the ability of organisations representing or having an interest in RMLs to take advantage of existing EU funding opportunities in order to pursue their language-related activities, as the EC's present strategy in this field asserts that RMLs will be better served by being able to access opportunities under mainstream funding programmes.

## General conclusions

The European Commission's support for regional and minority languages in the period 1998-2002 has been conducive to strengthening the position of some RMLs in Europe.

As a result of project funding, over 1.8 million citizens in Europe directly experienced projects in support of RMLs funded between 1998 and 2000. This figure includes over 340,000 students, almost 5,000 teachers, over 177,000 members of TV and radio audiences and over 1,280,000 members of the public at large.

Core support provided to EBLUL and the Mercator Centres, as organisations active in the field of RMLs, has also been of great importance to existing knowledge about linguistic diversity in Europe. Indeed, a large share of the knowledge that currently exists about regional and minority languages in Europe has emerged from projects and organisations funded with EC support over the years – a fact that should be positively recognised and for which the European Commission and the centres funded deserve credit.

The low degree of international networking that is perceived among most RML organisations and their scarce awareness of existing resources renders the obtention of new funding rather difficult, and is generally a greater difficulty the smaller an organisation is. Evidence collected in the course of the present evaluation indicates that only a minority of project beneficiaries (generally a circle of "EU veterans") funded during these years have managed to benefit from initiatives other than those directly aimed at the promotion of languages. Difficulties in accessing the larger programmes are experienced especially by less widespread RMLs; whilst organisations developing projects which promote the use of Catalan, Welsh, Irish or Basque still happen to benefit from EU grants, languages with lower demographics or a lesser institutional footing have more difficulty in accessing them because they either lack the relevant resources or possess less international visibility and networking ability.

While proposals for mainstreaming RML support are well-accepted by some communities and organisations, it is also clear that some languages will hardly succeed in obtaining funds from most European programmes unless some sort of ring-fencing happens. This should be taken into account when a new generation of programmes is designed, in areas such as education and culture, or should a specific programme for linguistic learning and language diversity be established as of 2007.

The impression is left that EU action in the field of languages has changed at a higher speed than regional and minority languages themselves. Recommendations for EC measures to effectively support developments in the field of RMLs have been included in the concluding chapter of the present evaluation.

Changes are also needed within organisations representing or with an interest in RMLs if they expect to achieve European support to a relevant extent. Communities are to be asked for a more active approach to cooperation, including with organisations representing majority languages. There is a proactive role that EBLUL could play in the aggregation of interests, the support to networks, the involvement of new audiences and outreach to mainstream organisations relevant to linguistic diversity.

Measures should also be taken to provide new initiatives in the field of RMLs with increased Internet visibility, this being a particular matter of concern to smaller communities.

### **Project funding, 1998-2000**

Organisations representing over 35 RMLs managed to obtain EU funding over the period under study. A few of them (Basque, Breton, Catalan, Irish, Galician, Occitan, Slovenian and Welsh) mobilised over one half of funds earmarked for RMLs. Although these languages are often more able to operate cross-nationally as well, raising support from organisations abroad, a few other languages including Friulian, Frisian and Sorbian, also proved their ability to raise support from language constituencies abroad or to take advantage of their being spread across national borders.

Increasing dependence of project funding on applicants' ability to work with partners abroad (in 1999 and particularly 2000) led to a shift in some countries' success in raising funds to the same extent that they had done until then. Organisations in Spain, which had received by far the largest number of funded projects under the 1998 and 1999 calls for proposals, failed to do so in 2000, when organisations in France, the UK, Austria and Italy moved ahead.

The EC's management of projects had an excellent assessment from most beneficiary organisations, with 8.8 its average mark on a scale of 0 to 10. This notwithstanding, some respondents were concerned about the lack of continuity in the funding for projects in support of regional and minority languages, difficulties encountered concerning cross-national networking, the human resources that were available to monitor funded projects and the dissemination of results.

Among the most visible results brought about by project funding were the production of training materials and new teaching and training methods for a wide range of educational levels and purposes, research and production of lexicographic tools, the development of specialised lexicon, the production of culture and media goods and services which were new to the communities targeted, new connections with specific target groups in the socio-economic and socio-cultural spheres and stronger links with third institutions (e.g. universities, research centres). In addition, some organisations' ability to develop new uses out of traditional cultural and linguistic forms emerges as one of the most interesting elements of innovation brought about by funding – and, given its relevance to the EU's stated aims in fields including culture, among those with most potential crossover in the advent of mainstreaming.

Mid- and long-term benefits generated by funded projects include educational improvement (including teacher training, and products that have been used by several cohorts thereafter), awareness-raising (as in parental awareness, increased social prestige, a renewed interest in local vocabulary), the development of new projects based on the outcomes of funded activities, renewed uses of language in the working environment, and a wider supply of cultural events.

To many organisations active in this field, financial support and morale enhancement brought about as a result of the EC's support have proven fundamental to pursue activities, although serious difficulties remain to many, not least in the legal position given to languages in individual EU member states, the weak financial and demographic footing on which certain languages exist and the lack of information

available to operate on an international scale. The paucity of support for languages at the local, regional and national level somehow used to give EC project funding a 'lifeboat' status to small organisations that will hardly apply to any other EU funds. Against the expectations of the calls for proposals, project funding was often not additional to beneficiaries' regular activities but went to the core of the organisation, at times becoming a last resort for financial continuity.

Several policy premises of EU action in recent years have been proven correct by projects operating in this field, particularly where individually funded activities were accompanied by the initiatives of other agents at the local, regional or national level. Examples have been identified where support for RMLs has contributed to sustainable regional development, to social inclusion and to the enhancement of cultural and sustainable tourism. Doubts exist, however, about the extent to which many language initiatives funded by the EC were sustained thereafter, except where they received an active external support, including that of local and regional authorities. Only in a few cases have international partnerships been sustained after projects' end – often where they already existed before the funded activities.

Dissemination of project outcomes arises as one possible area of failure, although the reduced area where some regional and minority languages operate, the dynamism of person-to-person networks and the reduced number of copies of many final products (the average number of copies for projects which produced a book was 940) rendered the distribution of final results easier than in projects of a different nature. More widespread languages and projects of a cross-national nature, which had to face stiffer competition, were often under-resourced to disseminate their results adequately. The Internet visibility of projects and organisations representing RMLs also emerges as one major shortcoming.

## **EBLUL**

While the basic structure of EBLUL has remained unchanged over the years, internal changes have been regular, and the management of these represent a part of its regular activities. The general financial situation, as well perhaps as internal structures, has provoked a very high staff turnover at EBLUL over the past years. This is a worrying development because expertise and continuity are at stake here. The continuity and certainty of funding, which the usual one-year funding structure and other technical incidents have not contributed to, are relevant factors.

From a diachronic analysis of the work programmes over the past 5 years, it has become evident that EBLUL's emphasis on dissemination strategies has in fact increased, as has the variety in the format this dissemination takes. Notwithstanding this trend, research carried out for this study shows that the objectives have not as yet been achieved. While 84.2% of representative entities from the RML sector know EBLUL, analysis of the actual sources used, and the depth of information sought, suggest that in-depth knowledge of their work is much lower. Only 23% of RML entities actually seek their information from the EBLUL website and 22% from EBLUL publications, in comparison to 38% using the EU websites. The overall position of EBLUL on a 0-10 scale, judging its utility, balanced at 6.75 points. This seems to reflect the general state of affairs between an appreciation of EBLUL work, and the desire for it to be improved.

EBLUL has left the impression of trying to do too many things at once. Especially in face of the current budgetary limitations, the multiplicity of projects from staff training to political meetings, conferences, board meetings and publications, may be unsustainable in the long run, and seems perhaps to warrant a certain streamlining in concept and action. On the other hand, while EBLUL has always been encouraged to apply for alternative sources of funding and has brought forward a series of (at times joint) proposals to some EU programmes, not many have recently been successful.

The evaluators suggest that a new focus on dissemination by EBLUL should include a targeting of new audience and client groups, amongst them particularly young people, the public at large, and non-RML audiences. This dissemination could in the future also be shared with EBLUL information centres in other countries. Activities such as the Partnership for Diversity (PFD) or the press agency EuroLang might already be providing a good platform for such efforts. The latter initiatives have proven successful and are also interesting in their ability to raise funds from third parties.

In a way, the PFD concept continues on another level what two old projects, the Study Visits and EuroSchool, had achieved before it. Both were very successful and popular initiatives, which impacted on the grassroots and the youth sector – there, where it has most long-term effect. The principle underlying these projects, advocating the networking and cooperation of different agents and experiences in order to concentrate and concert their efforts, are in any case judged to be an effective model for the promotion of RML in Europe.

A principal capacity of EBLUL in offering consultancy to national, regional, or local authorities should also be more stringently fulfilled, as it seems not to have been exploited sufficiently until now.

## **Mercator**

Generally speaking, research carried out by the Mercator Centres tends to focus on issues of interest to the EU and is relevant to ongoing EU debates, as well as to subjects of a wider international relevance.

Dissemination of the centres' output and their visibility beyond their own and neighbouring states needs addressing, as they tend not to be too well known among regional and minority language constituencies and only in a few cases have their issues of interest reached out to mainstream research centres and universities. In recent years, lack of additional funding such as that which project funding used to provide has affected the centres' ability to disseminate their results, particularly in events and publications. On the other hand, certain doubts seem to remain regarding the degree to which the Commission views the expertise and data generated by the Mercator centres as helpful for the actual design of its programmes or policy strategies on RML, and thus the degree to which their findings are integrated within the development of these.

A clear positive tendency towards an increasing coordination and avoidance of overlap between the activities of the different Mercator Centres, and an increased interconnectivity between the EU and Mercator Centres on RML-related issues can be perceived. This positive tendency has to be encouraged by stimulating the increase in coordinating contacts. Specific budgetary provisions could be devised for coordination meetings that are an extremely cost-effective manner to avoid expensive overlap. This

could be accompanied by the Centres better coordinating their work programmes. In the future, Mercator Centres could also be expected to project a more coherent image through their websites.

Some overlap and lack of coordination between EBLUL and the Mercator Centres still exists, as shown by the information gathered regarding the setting up of the MININF project. Asymmetry in size and scope of EBLUL and Mercator Centres may also hinder a clearer definition in the distribution of functions among the four institutions.

## Introduction

### Background

This document is the end product of a seven-month ex-post evaluation project into the support that the European Commission has provided to regional and minority languages in Europe in the period 1998-2002. The evaluation conducted by the Interarts Foundation with the contribution of the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia emerged after an invitation to tender was launched by the Language Policy Unit of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission (EC) in February 2003.

The general objectives of the European Union (EU) in the field of regional or minority languages (RML) are to contribute to safeguarding and promoting regional and minority languages as aspects of the common European cultural heritage, and developing the European dimension of regional and minority languages promotion and protection activities. The ultimate objective is to contribute to a qualitative or quantitative improvement in the actual use of regional or minority languages. In this framework, regional and minority languages are defined according to the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, a definition accepted by the European Union, thereby understanding that "regional or minority languages" means "*languages that are: (i) traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and (ii) different from the official language(s) of that State.*" This does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants.<sup>1</sup> Over 35 different languages have directly benefited from EU funding in the period under study.

<sup>1</sup> European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, article 1.

<sup>2</sup> C-106/96 of 12<sup>th</sup> May 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Calls for proposals published in OJ C 125 of 6.5.1999, p.14 and OJ C 266 of 16.09.2000, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Paper. Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity – Consultation*, SEC(2002) 1234, 13 November 2002, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*, COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Viviane Reding, "The future of regional and minority languages in the European Union", speech delivered at the Conference on Creating a Common Structure for Promoting Historical Linguistic Minorities within the European Union" (Helsinki, 11 October 2002).

<sup>7</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the European Parliament's "Resolution on Regional and Lesser-Used European Languages" (13 December 2001); the Committee of the Regions' "Opinion on the Promotion and Protection of Regional and Minority Languages" (13 June 2001); and the Council's "Resolution on the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity and Language Learning in the Framework of the Implementation of the Objectives of the European Year of Languages 2001" (14 February 2002).

<sup>10</sup> <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/langmin/support.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> CIEMEN, *The European Union and Lesser-Used Languages* (Luxembourg: European Parliament – DG Research, 2002), working paper, Education and Culture Series, EDUC 108 EN.

<sup>12</sup> A list of major bibliography used in the course of the evaluation has been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 7).

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that a slightly different version was produced for organisations funded under the 2000 call for proposals, as several funded projects were yet to end and questions concerning final outcomes could not be responded. The questionnaires for beneficiary organisations (1998-99 and 2000) have been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 1).

<sup>14</sup> A list of the organisations that responded to the questionnaire has been included in the annexes to the

Actions in favour of RMLs began in 1983 in the form of project funding and running-cost subsidies to organisations from one of the Member States of the European Union or one of the countries of the European Economic Area. The projects were carried out in the 40 or so regional and minority language communities in the European Union. The largest beneficiaries have been France, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Austria and Finland, which account for some two-thirds of Europe's RML communities. The budget line for RMLs was suspended in 1998 as a result of the judgement of the Court of Justice.<sup>2</sup> In 1999 and 2000, preparatory actions to promote RMLs were financed under

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budget line B3-1000.<sup>3</sup> Preparatory actions with a view to the adoption of a programme for RMLs were interrupted in 2000 for a lack of legal basis, although some projects from the 2000 call for proposals are still running. Running-cost subsidies to organisations of European interest - the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL in Brussels), and the three Mercator information centres (Mercator Education in Leeuwarden, NL, Mercator Legislation in Barcelona, ES, Mercator Media in Aberystwyth, UK) – which carry on their work for safeguarding and promoting RMLs have been funded under budget line A-3015 since. As a consequence of “activity-based budgeting” (ABB), the A part of the budget is going to disappear and a legal basis for organisations funded under budget line A-3015 will need to be created.

### **Objectives of EU activities in the field of RML**

Generally speaking, the objective of language promotion policy is to operate directly or indirectly on one or more of the key factors that determine actual language use: capacity, opportunity and desire; that is to say people’s ability to use the language, the opportunities they have to use it and their subjective motivation to do so. All three factors are interlinked and mutually dependent. For example, education has a direct impact on people’s capacity to use a language, but also enhances children’s opportunities to actually do so. Moreover, the fact that the language is used and taught by educated people in a public institution like a school can enhance its cultural and social prestige, and the self-confidence of the language community as a whole, thereby affecting people’s motivation to use it.

The general objectives of EU activities in this field are: to contribute to safeguarding and promoting regional and minority languages as aspects of the common European cultural heritage, and developing the European dimension of RML promotion and protection activities. These activities will be a contribution to the “Europe of knowledge” by building up the knowledge, skills and information exchange capable of facilitating the full exercise of citizenship. The ultimate objective is to contribute to a qualitative or quantitative improvement in actual RML use, but this objective is impossible to measure in the case of limited one-off initiatives of the type financed. This objective has served, however, as a general criterion in prioritising support in favour of actions with a more or less direct impact on language use. The Commission has explicitly declined to finance projects aimed at enhancing the legal or political status of RMLs.

The specific objectives are:

- a) To promote more and better-quality teaching and education in RMLs.
- b) To promote the production and dissemination of cultural goods in RMLs.
- c) To promote RML media and digital production and broadcasting.
- d) To promote the wider use of RMLs in the home, the street, the school, the workplace, and in social and public life.
- e) To promote the development and dissemination of basic materials for language revival.
- f) To promote cross-border cooperation between RMLs.
- g) Development of new information and communication technologies.
- h) To promote networking and the transfer of expertise.
- i) To promote the European dimension and Europe-wide awareness of RMLs and RML issues.

The operational objectives are:

- a) Development of educational provision, teacher training, teaching methods and materials in pre-school, school, vocational, higher and adult education and the promotion and dissemination of research, innovation, the use of new technologies and best practice in the field of education.
- b) Development and distribution of literature, theatre productions, music and cultural festivals and the promotion and dissemination of research, innovation and best practice in the field of culture.
- c) Development of audio, audiovisual and digital production and distribution, and the promotion and dissemination of research, innovation and best practice in the field of media.
- d) Information, awareness and incentive initiatives, and the promotion and dissemination of research, innovation and best practice in the field of direct language promotion.
- e) Production of linguistic resources: grammars, dictionaries, glossaries and works of language cartography, dialectology, toponymy and sociolinguistic research; promotion and dissemination of research, innovation and best practice in these areas.
- f) Exchange of information, expertise and best practice between RML communities on issues relevant to language promotion and protection.
- g) Development of databases or Internet sites for RMLs.
- h) To promote the Europe-wide collection and dissemination of information on RMLs and RML issues for decision-makers, practitioners, researchers, students and the general public. Promote the flow of information between European RML communities and European and international organisations, in particular by providing RML communities with a representative voice at EU level, providing EU institutions with a dialogue partner on issues affecting RMLs, disseminating information on EU initiatives and funding opportunities of relevance to RML communities and facilitating access by RML communities to EC funding sources for initiatives relevant to language promotion and protection.

Operational objectives a) to g) relate essentially to projects, though h) the European dimension was expected to be present to some extent in all initiatives financed. Projects financed in the period in question cover most of these objectives. On average, a) education accounted for just over 50% of funding, and b) culture, c) media, d) direct language promotion and e) linguistic resources for 10-15% each. A certain number of projects contained an element of f) cross-border cooperation and very small number of projects focused on g). The 1999 call for proposals focused on education and the 2000 call for proposals gave greater emphasis to the European dimension.

Objective h) relates essentially to EBLUL and the Mercator network, though Mercator Media and Mercator Education also participate in the wider objectives of their respective specialist domains.

## Context of the evaluation

Aiming to enter a new phase of the European Commission's policy for regional and minority languages, wherein support for regional and minority languages shall be

mainstreamed into existing EC policy instruments rather than based on specific support programmes, the Language Policy Unit invited tenders to assess its actions in the period 1998-2002.

Mainstreaming of support for regional and minority languages is the result of a two-step process, that comprises (1) the belief that language learning is relevant to most fields of society and (2) the assertion that regional and minority languages will be best supported within the wide aims of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity.

The relevance of language learning to other political objectives of the EU has been expressed by the European Commission as follows: *'Language competencies are part of the core skills that every citizen needs for employment, education and personal fulfilment, they are skills to be continuously up-dated and added to; gone are the days when language learning began and ended at school; it is a lifelong activity.'*<sup>4</sup> *'Many other policies being pursued at European level would benefit from an improvement in citizens' language skills.'*<sup>5</sup>

The choice for the inclusion of regional and minority languages within the spectrum of languages that benefit from policies aimed at language learning is based on the belief, here expressed by European Commissioner Viviane Reding, that: *"[We] do not feel that a separate programme for minority languages offers the most advantageous policy context for our future actions in this field. Language is an issue that cuts across many policy areas.'*<sup>6</sup>

Over the course of the present evaluation, this assertion was complemented and materialised in a policy document, the European Commission's Communication on *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*. Published in July 2003 after a public consultation, the Action Plan indicates that *'Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises. Taken as a whole, the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world. The imminent enlargement of the European Union will bring with it a wealth of languages from several language families; it requires a special effort to ensure that the languages of the new Member States become more widely learned in other countries.'*<sup>7</sup> *'In the longer term, all relevant Community languages and the Structural Funds should include more support for linguistic diversity, inter alia for regional and minority languages, if specific action is appropriate.'*<sup>8</sup>

While this "broad range" perspective is clearly included in the present document, the evaluators are also aware of the difficulties faced by many regional and minority languages in facing such changing conditions. It should also be noted that the spectrum of languages contained in the "regional and minority" category includes languages of extremely varied nature, a few having a larger number of speakers than some EU official languages, others being the privilege of solely a few hundred speakers.

As a result of this, in addition to analysing support provided over the past five-year period, one focus of the evaluation was the ability of organisations representing or showing an interest in regional and minority languages to take advantage of existing

EU funding opportunities in order to pursue their language-related activities. Thus consultations were undertaken with a view not only to analyse the effects of funding but also to determine what flaws might exist to the perspective of mainstreaming and where difficulties in the process may lie. The main aim of the evaluation process leading to the present document was as follows:

'To determine, in the framework of the European Union's stated objectives in the field of regional and minority languages and the existing EU policies and programmes, which activities can most effectively contribute to future policy orientations in this field and how best they can achieve this, building on the conclusions obtained by assessing the performance of the European Commission in this field in 1998-2002.'

The present document includes therefore a description and analysis of the results of EC's funding in 1998-2002 and a series of recommendations with a view to maximising support in this field. The methodology of the process is described in the coming section. A review of support provided by the EC in 1998-2002, including an analysis of the effects of project funding and activities of EBLUL and Mercator, forms the core of chapter 1. Chapter 2 focuses on the present context of regional and minority languages vis-à-vis the current EC policy plans in the field of linguistic diversity. Reference is made to the needs of organisations operating in the field and to the feasibility of EC activities maximising support for regional and minority languages. A chapter analysing the key elements for discussion identified throughout the evaluation and a set of recommendations complete the report.

The Interarts Foundation, based in Barcelona and Brussels, is an Observatory on Cultural Policies operating on an international scale. Interarts' interests in the fields of local and regional cultural policies and local development on an international scale have led to its involvement in several projects focusing on regional languages and cultures, as well as on the ability of minorities to fulfil their cultural and linguistic rights. The UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, a UNESCO-recognised NGO based in Barcelona whose interests include linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and elsewhere, has also taken part in the evaluation. Among the contributions that the Centre makes to the understanding and appreciation of linguistic diversity is its Linguapax Institute, which provides research, support and advice to the development of linguistic policies on an international scale.

## Methodology

The present evaluation was the result of an invitation to tender circulated by the European Commission's Language Policy Unit in February 2003. Work started in July that year and has led to the production of the present report by late January 2004. Research activities have included distributing, collecting and analysing responses to questionnaires, undertaking telephone and personal interviews with stakeholders, reviewing existing documents and relevant data and visiting organisations that have benefited from EC's support over the period under study. Further information on the activities performed can be found in this section.

### **Focus of the evaluation**

The evaluation has covered the specific support granted by the European Commission to regional and minority languages in Europe between 1998 and 2002, namely:

- the activities of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) in the period 1998-2002;
- the activities of the three Mercator research centres in Leeuwarden, Aberystwyth and Barcelona, each focusing on a thematic programme and with a given specialist role on Education, Media and Legislation respectively, in the period 1998-2002;
- the results of some 300 individual projects funded over three years (1998-2000) under calls for proposals.

It should be noted that relevant changes in the activities performed by both EBLUL and Mercator in the past few months (e.g. the Lingualia Internet portal, which brings EBLUL and the three Mercator centres together; also the Mercator International Symposia) have meant that reference is also made to developments in 2003, thus ensuring the relevance of conclusions and recommendations.

### **General aim**

As previously indicated, the main aim of the research conducted was as follows:

- To determine, in the framework of the European Union's stated objectives in the field of regional and minority languages and the existing EU policies and programmes, which activities can most effectively contribute to future policy orientations in this field and how best they can achieve this, building on the conclusions obtained by assessing the performance of the European Commission in this field in 1998-2002.

### **Specific purposes**

- To analyse the content and quality of projects financed in the three-year period 1998-2000 with the aim of drawing conclusions concerning future treatment of regional and minority language projects in the context of mainstreaming.
- To analyse the structure, organisation and activities of bodies in receipt of running-costs grants (EBLUL; Mercator) over the five-year period 1998-2002 in order to evaluate their effectiveness in furthering EU policy objectives in this field.
- To obtain views about the EC's performance in this field, both from those directly involved in carrying out activities and from external experts.
- To picture existing support from other EU sources that may contribute to fulfilling the EU's objectives in the field of regional and minority languages in the forthcoming period.
- To obtain a set of guidelines and recommendations aimed at maximising the impact of the European Commission's support for regional and minority languages in the advent of policy mainstreaming.

## Indicators

In addition to the aims and purposes indicated above, the general EU-stated objectives in the field of support for regional and minority languages (see above) have been used as a milestone against which to measure the success of different actions and projects. This includes the current option for mainstreaming regional and minority languages into the broad range of languages to which EC programmes for linguistic diversity apply.

Specific aims and objectives of organisations receiving running-cost grants and of different calls for proposals (eg. 1999's focus on education; 2000's on the European dimension of projects) have also been considered in order to evaluate the success of activities.

Other criteria which appeared to be relevant to the subject of the evaluation, including visibility and sustainability have also been applied to determine the success of activities carried out with the support of the European Commission.

The evaluation has kept in mind the existing EU policies, programmes and initiatives which may contribute to improving the situation of regional and minority languages in Europe, particularly those in the fields of education, lifelong learning, youth, media, culture, information society and regional policy, for these provided fundamental references. This has meant that issues related to the awareness of existing EU policies and programmes and examples of EU support to action in the field of regional and minority languages have been one subject of the research and consultation process. Likewise, principles and ongoing debates relevant to the European Union, including the European Convention and the changes brought about by the Enlargement have been taken into account where applicable.

In the specific context of the evaluation the following dimensions and indicators were identified as key to measuring the success of the European Commission's actions in the field of regional and minority languages:

### **A. PROJECT FUNDING**

**Distribution of funds**, measured according to:

- Projects funded per regional and minority language.
- Projects funded per state.

**Ability of regional and minority languages to raise funds**, measured according to:

- Projects funded per number of speakers of a given RML.

**Projects' effectiveness**, measured according to:

- Average rating of success in achieving the initial objectives of projects, in beneficiaries' self-assessment on a 0 to 10 scale.
- Elements which prevented projects from achieving their initial objectives.
- Number of people that directly benefited from projects.
- Intangible and subjective benefits brought about by funded projects.

**Projects' innovation**, measured according to:

- Average rating of innovation in projects, in beneficiaries' self-assessment on a 0 to 10 scale.
- Elements that beneficiaries indicate as being innovatory to their projects.

**Projects' visibility**, measured according to:

- % of projects for which information can be found on the Internet.
- Type of Internet sites that provide links to sites which were produced as a result of funded projects.

**Projects' sustainability**, measured according to:

- % of beneficiaries for whom funded projects led to establishing permanent contacts with foreign organisations in the field of RMLs.
- % of Internet sites created as a result of projects that still exist and are regularly updated.

**Effects of funded projects on actual language use**, measured according to:

- Positive effects in language use identified by beneficiaries as a result of funded projects.

**Multiplying effect**, measured according to:

- % of beneficiaries who could indicate outcomes of their funded projects had subsequently been used by other projects.

**Effectiveness of projects per sector of activity**, measured according to:

- Beneficiaries who could indicate that outcomes of their funded projects had subsequently been used by other projects, per sector of activity (education, culture, media etc).

**European dimension**, measured according to:

- RMLs raising support from organisations in more EU member states.
- % of beneficiaries for whom funded projects led to establishing permanent contacts with foreign organisations in the field of RMLs.

**Assessment of the EC's management of projects**, measured according to:

- Average rating of management of projects by the EC, assessed by beneficiaries on a scale of 0 to 10.
- Elements that beneficiaries think should be improved.

**2. EBLUL**

**Relevance of EBLUL to RML organisations**, measured according to:

- % of RML organisations which know EBLUL.
- % of RML organisations which state they have participated in EBLUL activities.
- % of RML organisations that know EBLUL's website and Contact Bulletin.

- % of RML organisations which include EBLUL's website and publications among their regular sources of information on EU issues.

**Usefulness of EBLUL to RML organisations, measured according to:**

- Average rating of the usefulness of EBLUL's website and Contact Bulletin, assessed by RML organisations on a scale of 0 to 10.
- % of RML organisations which think EBLUL needs improvement.

**Diversity in information provided by EBLUL, measured according to:**

- News items produced by EuroLang, per each RML language.

### **3. MERCATOR CENTRES**

**Relevance of the Mercator Centres to RML organisations, measured according to:**

- % of RML organisations which know each of three Mercator Centres
- % of RML organisations which state they have participated in Mercator activities.
- % of RML organisations which include Mercator's websites and publications among their regular sources of information on EU issues.

**Usefulness of Mercator to RML organisations, measured according to:**

- Average rating of the usefulness of each of three Mercator Centres, assessed by RML organisations on a scale of 0 to 10.
- % of RML organisations which think Mercator needs improvement.

### **4. THE EU AND RML ORGANISATIONS**

**Awareness of EU programmes, measured according to:**

- % of RML organisations claiming awareness of EU programmes - Leonardo, Socrates, Youth, Culture 2000, Town Twinning, Interreg.
- % of RML organisations which have applied to EU programmes - Leonardo, Socrates, Youth, Culture 2000, Town Twinning, Interreg - in 1998-2003.
- % of RML organisations which have obtained funding from EU programmes - Leonardo, Socrates, Youth, Culture 2000, Town Twinning, Interreg - in 1998-2003.
- % of RML organisations which have regular access to information sources on EC programmes and news.
- Type of sources from which RML organisations obtain information on EC programmes and news.
- Problems encountered by agents representing regional and minority languages when facing existing EC programmes and initiatives.

**Relevance of other EU programmes to RML projects, measured according to:**

- Number of projects involving regional and minority languages funded under recent editions of EC programmes on Education, Culture, Youth, Regional Policy, Social Policy, Information Society.
- Main factors which prevent RML organisations from applying for EU funding.

## Other references

In addition to recent documents of the European Commission concerning regional and minority language support, such as those mentioned above, and to the resolutions and opinions published by the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions over the years,<sup>9</sup> recent reports which partly cover issues dealt with here have been useful to the completion of the present evaluation. They include the 2002 report *Support for Minority Languages in Europe*<sup>10</sup>, commissioned by the European Commission, which makes some suggestions regarding the expected mainstreaming of support for regional and minority languages, and the European Parliament-commissioned *The European Union and Lesser-Used Languages*.<sup>11</sup> It should also be noted that a previous evaluation of RML actions had been conducted in 1996-1997.

## Research and consultation

Research leading to the production of the present report has included the following tools:

### a. Desk research on documents related to funded projects, EBLUL and Mercator activities and other relevant contributions.

To obtain a general perspective of the subject of study, EU declarations and policy documents concerning regional and minority languages and linguistic diversity at large have been analysed. Articles and reports dealing with EU policy in this field have been reviewed where appropriate.<sup>12</sup> An analysis has been carried out of dossiers related to the approximately 300 projects that the European Commission provided funding for between 1998 and 2000. Annual reports, budgets and publications produced by EBLUL and the three Mercator centres in the years covered by the evaluation were analysed. Finally, information has been sought on language-related projects funded within non-language EU programmes.

On the other hand, Internet research has been conducted primarily in order to determine the visibility of the EC's funding and the sustainability of activities once their funded lifetime had ended. Information has been sought on the relevance of funded projects to third parties, the continuity of websites that had been produced with the support of EC project funding and the external relevance of EBLUL and Mercator.

Evidence collected through the methods outlined above has been used in several sections of the present report, most notably the analysis of the EC's support for regional and minority languages in 1998-2002 contained in chapter 1 (including the visibility and sustainability of funded projects, the visibility of EBLUL and Mercator) as well as the evaluation's conclusions.

### b. Questionnaire to organisations that received project grants between 1998 and 2000.

Almost 300 organisations that received grants between 1998 and 2000 were sent a questionnaire in the initial phase of the evaluation. The questionnaire focused on issues including the long-term outcomes of funded projects (success in use of projects' end products, changes in language use, European dimension, multiplier effect), the self-evaluation of project results, an assessment of the EC's management, awareness of EBLUL and Mercator, changes in organisations' needs since their funded projects had ended and the awareness of and difficulties in accessing other EU funding. Data was also collected concerning the size, aims and funding sources of respondents.<sup>13</sup> It was produced in English, French, Spanish and Catalan and distributed by e-mail where possible, and by fax or post where necessary.

Whilst difficulties were encountered in reaching some funded organisations, the lapse since funded projects ended meaning that some had vanished and others may have moved premises unnoticed, a response rate of approximately 42% was recorded. Language difficulties within beneficiary organisations and staff changes since projects had ended prevented a higher response share.<sup>14</sup> Table 0.1 provides data on the questionnaires received, per country and per call for proposals.

**Table 0.1. Questionnaires received per EU member state**

Beneficiary organisations over three editions of project funding, 1998-2000

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Austria</b>	1	1	3
<b>Belgium</b>	3	1	1
<b>Denmark</b>	1	1	0
<b>Finland</b>	1	0	0
<b>France</b>	17	4	3
<b>Germany</b>	1	2	1
<b>Greece</b>	1	0	0
<b>Ireland</b>	1	0	0
<b>Italy</b>	12	1	2
<b>Luxembourg</b>	0	0	0
<b>Netherlands</b>	0	1	0
<b>Portugal</b>	0	1	1

<b>Spain</b>	35	11	2
<b>Sweden</b>	0	0	1
<b>UK</b>	3	2	2

Please note that some organisations received funding under more than one call for proposals or more than one project in one call for proposals. Therefore, some single questionnaires may refer to more than one project.

Information gathered through questionnaires has been used in several sections of the present report, not least the description and analysis of project funding in chapter 1 and the analysis of organisations representing regional and minority languages vis-à-vis the current EU framework in Chapter 2. Questionnaires also provided the basis for several other steps in the consultation process, including telephone interviews with a number of organisations that had received project grants and field visits to regions where EU-supported projects had been put into practice.

**c. Questionnaire to other organisations and agents which either represent or have a proven record in the promotion of regional and minority languages.**

A different questionnaire was produced for organisations relevant to the field but that had not received grants for projects under the calls for proposals under study. This enabled a focus on issues that, due to limited space, could not be dealt with in the questionnaires to beneficiary organisations, while also providing a wider picture of the sector and its views of EU developments. Questions concerned the awareness and assessment of EBLUL and Mercator and their activities, the awareness and relevance of, and difficulties in accessing EU funding, and suggestions for the EU's support for regional and minority languages.<sup>15</sup> It was produced in English, French, Spanish and Catalan and distributed by e-mail where possible, and by fax or post where necessary.

<sup>15</sup> The questionnaires for organisations representing regional and minority languages has also been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 1).

<sup>16</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/langmin/euromosaic\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/lang/langmin/euromosaic_en.html)

<sup>17</sup> <http://ww2.eblul.org:8080/eblul>

<sup>18</sup> A list of the organisations that responded to the questionnaire has been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 5).

<sup>19</sup> An extract of the guide can be found in Annex 2 to the present report. A list of interviews conducted can be found in Annex 3.

<sup>20</sup> An extract of the guide can be found in Annex 2 to the present report. A list of interviews conducted can be found in Annex 3.

<sup>21</sup> A list of interviews conducted has been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 3).

<sup>22</sup> Further information on the contents of each visit can be found in the annexes to the present report (Annex 3).

<sup>23</sup> A list of visits and interviews conducted has been included in the annexes to the present report (Annex 3).

<sup>24</sup> The 2000 call for proposals indicated that its main objective was 'to strengthen the European dimension of activities to safeguard and promote regional and minority languages and cultures', this being also reflected in the series of eligible activities – exchanges of experience (involving individuals 'from several language communities'), creating networks of key players, developing joint solutions, transfer of expertise, coordinated programmes.

<sup>25</sup> The 2000 call for proposals stated that '[in] most cases the Community support awarded may not be less than EUR 50 000 or more than EUR 150 000'. 5 of 35 projects selected were given a grant below EUR 50,000, the lowest being 10,600 (figure at the time of selection, which could vary as the actual budgetary breakdown is completed). The 1999 call had only established a maximum ceiling of EUR 70,000 (exceptions being possible) – 57 of 80 projects selected (71%) received grants of less than EUR 50,000, 9 being also under EUR 10,000 (figures at the time of selection). The 1998 call did not specify maximum or minimum thresholds – only 10 of 180 projects received grants of EUR 50,000 or above, whereas one third

With slightly over 180 questionnaires distributed to organisations representing 35 languages, a sample produced with the help of online databases including Euromosaic<sup>16</sup> and EBLUL's<sup>17</sup>, a response rate of approximately 30% was obtained,

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including organisations representing 28 languages.<sup>18</sup> Table 0.2 provides information on the questionnaires received, per country.

**Table 0.2. Questionnaires received per EU member state**  
Non-funded organisations representing or active in the field of RMLs

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	<b>Replies</b>
<b>Austria</b>	2
<b>Belgium</b>	3
<b>Denmark</b>	1
<b>Finland</b>	3
<b>France</b>	12
<b>Germany</b>	5
<b>Greece</b>	0
<b>Ireland</b>	1
<b>Italy</b>	9
<b>Luxembourg</b>	0
<b>Netherlands</b>	1
<b>Portugal</b>	5
<b>Spain</b>	6
<b>Sweden</b>	3
<b>UK</b>	3
<b>Others</b>	1

Information gathered thereby has been used in several sections of the present report, notably the analysis of RML organisations' needs, the perception of EU programmes and the relevance of the latter to furthering regional and minority language development in chapter 2. Questionnaires also provided the basis for other steps in the consultation process, including telephone interviews with a number of representative organisations and meetings with them in the course of field visits to regions where EU-supported projects had been put into practice.

#### **d. Meetings with EC staff**

A series of meetings have been held with European Commission staff in charge of implementing the EC's support for regional and minority languages at the Language Policy Unit of DG EAC. In addition to meetings scheduled to submit the inception and draft final reports, at least three informal meetings have been held in order to monitor the evaluation's progress and clarify issues. Evidence gathered in the course of these meetings has been used in several sections of the present report.

#### **e. Meetings with EBLUL and Mercator**

Two visits to EBLUL's premises in Brussels have been carried out in the course of the present evaluation. They provided for in-depth interviews with several staff in the organisations, dealing with issues including the description of EBLUL's structure and its activities, the self-assessment of needs, views on the relation between EBLUL and Mercator, an external assessment of the EC's activities in the field of regional and minority languages and EBLUL's ability to respond to coming EU priorities in the field of languages. The first meeting provided a general description of the organisation, recent developments and major projects, whereas the second focused on a series of selected projects, including MININF and Partnership for Diversity. Interviews have also been

held with a few representatives of EBLUL's member state committees. A guide to the interviews with EBLUL was produced prior to the meetings, in order to identify the major themes to be included.<sup>19</sup>

Visits have been undertaken to each of the three Mercator centres, namely Mercator Media in Aberystwyth, Mercator Education in Leeuwarden and Mercator Legislation in Barcelona. Each enabled for discussions on topics including the description of the centres' structure and activities, the self-assessment of needs, views on the relation between EBLUL and Mercator and among the three Mercator centres, an external assessment of the EC's activities in the field of regional and minority languages and Mercator's ability to respond to coming EU priorities in the field of languages. A guide to the interviews with Mercator was produced prior to the meetings, in order to identify the major themes to be included.<sup>20</sup>

Evidence gathered in the course of the visits and meetings outlined above has been used in the present report foremostly in the description and analysis of EBLUL and Mercator's performance contained in chapter 1, as well as in the report's conclusions.

#### **f. Other interviews and visits**

As indicated above, questionnaires distributed in the first phase of the evaluation process led to the selection of a number of organisations with which further telephone interviews were held. Criteria applied for the selection of interviewees generally referred to the relevance of responses given to the overall aims of the evaluation (e.g. organisations in receipt of EU funding for fields other than languages, those that encountered strong obstacles at the time of funded projects and those making relevant suggestions for future EU support in this field). An attempt was made to ensure a geographic balance among interviewees. Approximately 15 interviews with organisations that had received project grants and 5 with other organisations have been held as a result.<sup>21</sup>

A guide to the interviews was produced for internal purposes. In each specific meeting, issues for discussion were chosen according to relevant responses given in questionnaires and the context in which the relevant RML operated:

##### **a. Description of the project: then and now.**

One aim of the interview is to obtain a description of and verify previous information regarding:

- the content of funded projects
- the degree to which it achieved its objectives (assessment of performance)
- its innovatory dimension
- the long-term effects and benefits
- changes in organisation's structure and/or needs since project ended
- any new projects or cooperation having resulted from the funded project

##### **b. The project and the European Commission during the funding period**

How has the project experienced its progress? This includes:

- degree of satisfaction on part of the project with the programme
- assessment of EC's performance in managing programmes supporting RML
- difficulties encountered with the programme prior to/during/after the project's development
- assessment of how the EC's action could be improved

### **c. The Organisation and other EC provisions**

In the new context of mainstreaming and the end of the budget line, what other areas of support are available to organisations?

- Difficulty of accessing EU funding in general
- Awareness and relevance of other EC programmes (Leonardo, Socrates, Interreg, IST, Culture 2000, etc.)
- Prospects of these programmes to respond to RML needs, differentiated according to size/status of RML community
- EU programmes where funding has been sought/obtained
- Awareness and assessment of Mercator and EBLUL
- Recommendations for improvement of RML support by the EC.

Five visits to regions where EC funding in support of regional and minority languages had been given were conducted between November 2003 and January 2004: Wales, the Basque Country (Spain and France), Slovene-speaking areas in Austria and Italy, the Grecìa Salentina (Italy) and Southern Denmark and the Sorbian-speaking area of Germany. Each visit enabled for a series of meetings with organisations that either had received project funding in the period under study or were relevant to the overall aims of the evaluation.<sup>22</sup>

A balance was sought in the selection of places and interviewees, whereby regions with high rates of success in obtaining funds were chosen alongside others where less funding had been received. Within regions, interviews were conducted with organisations that had succeeded in mobilising EU funds through the years and had managed to receive funds from non-language programmes, as well as with organisations that had been granted one-off support under one call for proposals. Within the framework of relevant issues identified in the table above, interviews conducted in the course of field visits focused on a range of issues including the long-term effects of funded projects, the self-assessment of needs, the difficulties in accessing EU funding and the awareness and assessment of EBLUL and Mercator.<sup>23</sup>

Information gathered in the course of interviews and field visits has been used in several sections of the present report, including the description and analysis of project funding (particularly its long-term effects) in chapter 1 and the present needs of organisations representing or with an interest in regional and minority languages in chapter 2. In several instances, data has been used in the form of brief descriptions and examples of the development and results of projects and activities supported.

### **g. Analysis and assessment**

A large amount of the information and analysis contained in the present document is based on descriptive evidence gathered through the collection of questionnaires and analysis of dossiers stored at the European Commission's archives as well as in the development of interviews with beneficiary organisations and other agents representing RML communities or active in the field of RMLs.

Hypotheses to test were produced on the basis of the questions contained in the invitation to tender for the evaluation and other relevant documents, including EU policy statements and studies dealing with the state of regional and minority languages in Europe. They were completed with notions identified in the early months of the evaluation process, including responses to questionnaires and other consultations with relevant agents.

On the basis of these hypotheses, evidence collected was subject to scrutiny, leading to the production of tables, the choice of interviewees and priority issues on which to base interviews and the selection of quotes from questionnaires and interviews. RML organisations' ability to network cross-nationally, difficulties encountered by organisations representing less-widespread RMLs and by small organisations, elements of innovation in projects, the long-term impact of projects according to the field covered, main areas of failure identified, communication policies of EBLUL and Mercator, the external assessment of EBLUL projects, coordination among EBLUL and the three Mercator Centres, the ability of Mercator Centres to cross-pollinate research policies of third parties and relevant practices bringing together RML promotion and other fields of local development became key issues on which research focused thereafter. Where possible, this led to the production of tables and the collection of quotes which could provide insight into the key areas at stake.

Difficulties encountered in the course of the evaluation include, as noted above, changes in the staff that had been in charge of funded projects – which prevented some information from being available or representative –, language difficulties in some communities and unequal response rates – organisations representing some communities and states contributing more often than others.

## Staff

Coordination of the report has been provided by the Interarts Foundation. The evaluation was directed by Eduard Delgado. Research was coordinated by Jordi Baltà and Uta Staiger, and contributions were made by Silvia Destri, Oriol Freixa Matalonga, Filipe Galvão, Margarita Méndez and Sonia Pujalte. The UNESCO Centre of Catalonia, in the persons of Josep Cru and Onno Seroo, was involved in the production of the report for the Mercator Education centre, the analysis of EBLUL and Mercator and part of the report's conclusions. Financial management was carried out by Miquel Llivina (Interarts).

Our thanks are due to all the individuals and organisations that have replied to questionnaires, have agreed to be interviewed and have kindly helped us in the course of visits. Likewise, we would like to thank staff at the EC's Language Policy Unit, particularly Teresa Condeço, Gérald Colleaux, Catherine Ranvel, Luca Tomasi and Annick Dewattine.

The opinions contained in the present report are solely those of the authoring organisations.

## **1. The European Commission's support for regional and minority languages in 1998-2002. Analysis of funded activities.**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Support to regional and minority languages within the European Union's actions to promote linguistic diversity has over the years followed several forms.

In 1983 the budget line B3-1006 to protect and promote regional and minority languages was established, providing support to individual, annual projects and core funding to the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) and, from 1987, the three Mercator Centres, each operating on one specific field, Education, Legislation and Media.

The budget line for regional and minority languages was suspended in 1998 as a result of a judgement of the Court of Justice. In 1999 and 2000, preparatory actions to promote regional and minority languages were financed under budget line B3-1000. Running-costs subsidies to organisations of European interest – EBLUL and three Mercator centres – continued to be allocated under budget line A-3015. Preparatory actions with a view to the adoption of a programme for RMLs were interrupted in 2000 for a lack of legal basis.

On the other hand, projects including an element of RML promotion have also received funding under other EC programmes, which although not primarily intended for regional and minority languages have at times supported linguistic development as part of broader aims in fields including education, culture, local development and civil society.

Over the years under study, it should be noted that the former Directorate-General XXII became the present Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) in 1999. Responsibility for RML support was thereafter the responsibility of Unit B4 (Language Policy), which launched the 2000 edition of the call for proposals in support of regional and minority languages as its predecessor, Unit A4, had done for the 1998 and 1999 editions.

This section presents an overview and an analysis of activities funded by the European Commission in the field of regional and minority languages between 1998 and 2002. Funding for individual projects, the result of three calls for proposals published in 1998, 1999 and 2000, is described and analysed first, and an analysis of activities undertaken by each of the three Mercator Centres and by EBLUL is presented thereafter. Other EU programmes which have proved relevant to the aims of organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages are presented in the next section, which focuses on the present context of the European Union and the opportunities found by organisations which represent or have an interest in regional and minority languages.

## 1.2. Project funding, 1998-2000

### 1.2.1. Introduction

The European Commission has funded since 1983 projects to promote regional and minority languages. In addition to support for the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) and for the three Mercator centres, a large share of existing funding was given to individual projects, the type and priorities of which changed according to annual calls for proposals. The basis for the latter were budget lines B3-1006 – the result of a European Parliament resolution – between 1983 and 1998, and B3-1000 in 1999 and 2000. In the years which are the object of the present evaluation, €3,675,000 were made available for project funding in 1998; €2,250,000 for 1999 and €2,500,000 for 2000. Maximum duration of eligible projects was 12 months in 1998 and 1999, 24 months in 2000. Table 1 shows the major features, priorities and types of activities which were funded under those three calls for proposals.

**Table 1.1. Major features of calls for project proposals in support of RML, 1998-2000**  
Based on published calls for proposals and applications

	YEAR		
	1998	1999	2000
<b>Budget</b>	€3,675,000	€2,250,000	€2,500,000
<b>Aims and fields of activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of language skills</li> <li>- Information</li> <li>- Language description and standardization</li> <li>- Economic and social promotion of language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education, including a) teaching and learning of RML; and b) training material.</li> <li>- Dissemination, including a) networks; and b) exchange of experiences.</li> </ul> <p><i>"Le présent appel à propositions a pour objectifs de préparer une éventuelle action communautaire de promotion et de sauvegarde des langues régionales et/ou minoritaires."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing linguistic resources</li> <li>- Developing language skills</li> <li>- Promoting the language directly</li> <li>- Socio-economic aspects of the language</li> <li>- Culture and media</li> </ul> <p><i>"The objective is to strengthen the European dimension of activities to safeguard and promote regional and minority languages and cultures."</i></p>
<b>Selection and award criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European dimension</li> <li>- Promotion of the language</li> <li>- Multiplier effect</li> <li>- Quality of application</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Selection:</li> <li>- Eligibility of applicants</li> <li>- Technical and financial capacity of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Selection: same as 1999</li> <li>(b) Award:</li> <li>- European dimension</li> <li>- Relevance to</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budgetary resources available to EC</li> </ul>	<p>applicants</p> <p>(b) Award: same as 1998 plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriateness of budget</li> <li>- Effective financial needs of project</li> </ul>	<p>language speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scope (in number of people and long-term effects)</li> <li>- Innovative approach (as per resources, methods, technology)</li> <li>- Quality of application</li> <li>- Appropriateness of budget</li> <li>- Budgetary resources available to EC</li> </ul>
<b>Nature of projects</b>	<p><i>"The Community aid is primarily meant to cover cultural and linguistic activities essential to the project. It is not meant to cover all of the activities of the applicant body."</i></p>	<p>Basically maintains request.</p>	<p>Basically maintains request.</p>
<b>Types of activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educational project (courses etc)</li> <li>- Teaching material</li> <li>- Cultural event</li> <li>- Conference, seminar, symposium</li> <li>- Media (film, press, broadcasting)</li> <li>- Language development (description of language, lexicography, databases, recordings etc)</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Educational project (courses etc)</li> <li>- Teaching material</li> <li>- Dissemination</li> <li>- Conference, seminar, symposium</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> <p>Call also mentions the following non-exhaustive list: pilot projects; research and comparative studies; inventories of good practice; inventories of existing materials; seminars and conferences; exchange of agents; creation or development of databases or websites; preparatory activities for setting up networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exchanges of experience</li> <li>- Creating networks of key players</li> <li>- Developing joint solutions</li> <li>- Transfer of expertise</li> <li>- Coordinated programme</li> </ul>
<b>Maximum duration</b>	12 months	12 months	24 months
<b>Volume of awards</b>	<p>Not specified. Actually ranged between €1,300 and €75,000, approximately €20,000 on average. Never to exceed 50% of total project costs.</p>	<p>Generally not above €70,000, and not to exceed 50% of eligible costs (exceptions being possible)</p>	<p>Generally between €50,000 and €150,000, and not to exceed 50% of eligible costs (exceptions being possible).</p>

Selection procedures were carried out with the support of an external group of experts with a proven record in the field of linguistic policies, who were selected on an annual basis. Their task involved analysing applications received and rating them on the basis of a common grid – applications' fulfilment of the relevant selection and award criteria being thus tested – e.g. "Can the project be expected to have lasting and widespread effects?", "Can the EU contribution add value to the project?", "Will the people concerned act as multiplying agents?", "Can the parties be expected to perform effectively (is there an adequate plan for the exchange of experience or knowledge)?", which led to a final rating of excellent / good / weak quality. Evaluators' complementary comments, used to support their final assessment providing details of applications' strengths and weaknesses, were often reproduced in the EC sheet justifying the selection of individual projects.

### 1.2.2. Analysis of funded projects

#### Overview

Over the three years, funding was provided to nearly 300 projects. These included approximately 180 projects in 1998, to which smaller grants were distributed, 80 in 1999 and 35 in 2000. As the table in the previous section shows, **selection and award criteria became slightly more complex with each passing year, and this went hand-in-hand with an option for larger projects, this also having an impact on the nature of beneficiary organisations.** The 1999 edition also placed a larger emphasis on educational issues, whereas 2000's choice for a stronger European dimension<sup>24</sup> and its larger volume of awards<sup>25</sup> meant generally that smaller organisations were left out. Some organisations received funding under several editions of the programme – whether for one or different work strands – or for different projects under one edition, which means that the actual number of beneficiary organisations is slightly lower than the number of funded projects.

Information presented in the following table shows the large share of organisations in the non-profit sector, particularly associations and NGOs, that benefited from funding under the calls for proposals that are the object of the present study. Local and regional authorities undertook leading functions in approximately 11% of projects, though on several occasions they were involved as partners or information providers as well. Likewise, primary and secondary schools had a low involvement in terms of project coordination but were often indirect beneficiaries or participants in activities coordinated by other organisations, as shall be seen.

**Table 1.2. Funded organisations, per status**

Based on questionnaire responses

<b>ORGANISATION STATUS</b> (decreasing order)	%
<b>Association</b>	47.5%
<b>NGO</b>	11.5%
<b>University</b>	9.0%
<b>Local Authority</b>	6.6%
<b>Regional Authority</b>	4.9%

<b>Private Company</b>	1.6%
<b>Primary School</b>	1.6%
<b>Secondary School</b>	1.6%
<b>National Authority</b>	0.8%
<b>Broadcasting Organisation</b>	0.8%
<b>Other (including foundations, trade unions, etc.)</b>	15.6%
<b>Total number of replies = 122</b>	
Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate their status, predefined options being given. Data presented in this table is based on 122 replies to questionnaire for funded organisations received as of 30 November, 2003. Note that as there are some organisations that have double status, percentages add up to slightly more than 100%.	

Activities aimed at the field of education were the most common among projects directly funded by the European Commission in the years under study. Educational aims were often combined with, or themselves complemented, work in other fields, including language promotion and awareness, research or culture. The table below provides data on the self-defined scope of work of organisations that received funding – i.e. not the content of projects themselves, although it is often to be expected that organisational and project objectives go hand-in-hand, especially among the small organisations that were receivers of a large share of existing funding. As interviewees were invited to tick more than one option where this was necessary, total figures do not add up to 100%.

**Table 1.3. Funded organisations, per sector of activity**

Based on questionnaire responses

<b>SECTORS OF ACTIVITY</b> (decreasing order)	<b>%</b>
<b>Education</b>	52.5%
<b>Language promotion</b>	46.7%
<b>Arts and culture</b>	40.2%
<b>Research</b>	27.9%
<b>Media and audiovisual</b>	16.4%
<b>Other</b>	12.3%
<b>General</b>	6.6%
<b>Total number of replies = 122</b>	

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to indicate their sectors of activity, predefined options being given. Data presented in this table is based on 122 replies to questionnaire for funded organisations received as of 30 November, 2003. Note that as more than one reply was accepted, percentages do not add up to 100%.

**Beneficiary languages**

Observation of funding lists (cf. the table below) shows that **some languages met with increasing difficulties as selection criteria became more complex in 1999 and 2000. This could be the case of Griko, which had excellent success rates in 1998, and partly of Galician, Occitan and Basque.** In other cases, the low number of projects funded in some cases (e.g. Sardinian, Croatian, Slovenian, Aragonese, Asturian) renders a detailed analysis difficult.

The following table shows the evolution of project funding, per beneficiary languages. It needs to be borne in mind that some projects focused on more than one language – only those which had links with 5 or less have been taken into account when completing the table. It is easy to perceive that **a reduced number of languages, generally those of a stronger demographic and institutional footing, were by far the most benefited.** Indeed, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Irish, Galician, Occitan, Slovenian and Welsh – 8 of 37 languages which received some funding – account for roughly 60% of references.

**Table 1.4. Projects funded per regional and minority language**  
Over three editions of project funding, 1998-2000

LANGUAGE	1998	1999	2000	TOTAL
Albanian	1	2	0	3
Alsatian	2	1	1	4
Aragonese	3	2	0	5
Asturian	1	0	0	1
Basque	32	7	3	42
Breton	13	3	2	18
Catalan	32	10	1	43

<b>Cimbrian</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Corsican</b>	5	1	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Creole</b>	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Croatian</b>	5	0	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Finnish</b>	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Frankish</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Frisian</b>	6	2	1	<b>9</b>
<b>Friulian</b>	7	2	1	<b>10</b>
<b>Irish Gaelic</b>	8	2	2	<b>12</b>
<b>Galician</b>	11	2	1	<b>14</b>
<b>German</b>	1	2	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Griko</b>	8	2	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Hungarian</b>	2	0	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Ladin</b>	2	2	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Low German</b>	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>Mirandese</b>	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Mocheno</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>New Greek</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Occitan</b>	17	8	4	<b>29</b>
<b>Romani</b>	4	1	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Saami</b>	5	1	2	<b>8</b>
<b>Sardinian</b>	4	0	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Scottish Gaelic</b>	3	2	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Slovenian</b>	8	4	2	<b>14</b>
<b>Sorbian</b>	4	2	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Swedish</b>	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Valaquian</b>	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Welsh</b>	10	4	2	<b>16</b>
<b>Yiddish</b>	2	2	1	<b>5</b>

Please note that the number of references includes both single-language projects and multi-language projects concerning 5 languages or less. Projects which benefited more than 5 languages (13 in 1998; 14 in 1999; and 11 in 2000) have been excluded.

Source: based on existing EC tables for projects funded under calls for project proposals, 1998-2000.

### **Cross-national support**

**Some of the languages appear to be able to raise support from several countries, including both projects based in their own countries as well as projects initiated by organisations elsewhere.** This could indicate a general ability of such languages to operate cross-nationally, and makes their fulfilment of selection and award criteria easier. Among these languages are those which by their own nature are spread over two or more EU countries (Romani, Occitan, partly Yiddish, Catalan, Basque, Slovenian, Saami) as well as those which have developed strong international links over the years (Catalan, Frisian, Galician, Welsh, Breton). Notable are the cases of Welsh and Catalan, which were the focus of projects the leading partners of which were established in 5 different countries.

Cooperation among organisations representing Celtic languages (Breton, Welsh, Irish, Scottish Gaelic) appears as a relevant pattern, whereas other regular patterns of cooperation are established among organisations representing one language but which

are established in different member states (e.g. schools in Northern and Southern Catalonia, media organisations in the Northern and the Southern Basque Country) and organisations representing different languages within one member state (e.g. Basque, Catalan and Galician).

Languages with a lower demographic spread such as Frisian, Friulian and Sorbian also succeeded in raising support from countries where they are not spoken, this being critical in their future ability to apply for funding under other EU programmes. **It is worth noting that only one half of languages which obtained support of some kind managed to raise this from organisations based in more than one member state.**

**Table 1.5. Languages raising support from organisations in more EU member states**  
Countries where the leading organisations of projects were based, 1998-2000

LANGUAGE	EU MEMBER STATES WITHIN WHICH SUPPORT WAS GIVEN (and number of projects per country)										NUMBER OF STATES
	Spain		France		UK		Belgium		Austria		
<b>Catalan</b>	Spain	28	France	11	UK	2	Belgium	1	Austria	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Welsh</b>	UK	12	Belgium	1	France	1	Italy	1	Spain	1	<b>5</b>
<b>Basque</b>	Spain	28	France	12	UK	1	Netherlands	1			<b>4</b>
<b>Breton</b>	France	14	UK	2	Austria	1	Spain	1			<b>4</b>
<b>Friulian</b>	Italy	7	Austria	1	Germany	1	UK	1			<b>4</b>
<b>Frisian</b>	Germany	5	Netherlands	2	Belgium	1	UK	1			<b>4</b>
<b>Romani</b>	Austria	3	Spain	2	Finland	1	Sweden	1			<b>4</b>

<b>Sorbian</b>	Germany	4	Belgium	1	Austria	1	Italy	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Yiddish</b>	France	2	Germany	1	Sweden	1	UK	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Occitan</b>	France	16	Italy	5	Spain	4			<b>3</b>
<b>Galician</b>	Spain	11	UK	2	Belgium	1			<b>3</b>
<b>Slovenian</b>	Austria	9	Italy	4	Germany	1			<b>3</b>
<b>Saami</b>	Sweden	5	Finland	2	Norway	1			<b>3</b>
<b>Irish Gaelic</b>	UK	7	Ireland	5					<b>2</b>
<b>Griko</b>	Italy	9	Greece	1					<b>2</b>
<b>Corsican</b>	France	6	Spain	1					<b>2</b>
<b>Croatian</b>	Austria	6	Italy	1					<b>2</b>
<b>Ladin</b>	Italy	4	Belgium	1					<b>2</b>
<b>Finnish</b>	Sweden	2	Spain	1					<b>2</b>
<b>Swedish</b>	Netherlands	1	Italy	1					<b>2</b>

Please note that the number of references includes both single-language projects and multi-language projects concerning 5 languages or less. Projects which benefited more than 5 languages (13 in 1998; 14 in 1999; and 11 in 2000) have been excluded. The relationship between one language and one country does not imply the language actually being spoken there, but the language being referred to by a beneficiary organisation from that country.

Source: based on existing EC tables for projects funded under calls for project proposals, 1998-2000.

### Projects funded per demographic size

While previous paragraphs and tables have shown that relevant differences arise among languages according to their demographic volume, it is interesting to analyse to what extent less widespread languages managed to overcome their smallness and obtain funding. In the next table, languages have been ordered according to their ability to be the subject of funded projects relative to their number of speakers – that is, languages at the top are those which benefited of most projects while being smaller. It is worth noting that figures for the volume of speakers of some languages vary according to sources and that the statistical relevance of figures is smaller the lower the number of funded projects. In any event, **notable are the cases of languages including Griko, Frisian, Saami, Aragonese and Slovenian, which managed to build several beneficiary projects out of small populations** – this probably pointing to strong civil society networks and leadership. **Basque proves also its great ability to mobilise funds**, which is all the more remarkable when compared to languages with a similar number of speakers (250,000-1,000,000), none of which managed to reach 50% of the 42 Basque-related beneficiary projects.

**Table 1.6. Relation of projects funded to number of speakers**

Languages which were the subject of most funded projects (1998-2000) relative to their number of speakers

LANGUAGE	SPEAKERS	FUNDED PROJECTS	SPEAKERS PER FUNDED PROJECT
<b>Mocheno</b>	1,900	1	<b>1,900</b>
<b>Griko</b>	20,000	10	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Cimbrian</b>	2,230	1	<b>2,230</b>
<b>Frisian</b>	21,000	9	<b>2,300</b>
<b>Saami</b>	20,000	8	<b>2,500</b>
<b>Mirandese</b>	10,000	3	<b>3,300</b>

<b>Aragonese</b>	30,000	5	<b>6,000</b>
<b>Hungarian</b>	22,000 (Austria)	3	<b>7,300</b>
<b>Slovenian</b>	130,000 (Italy and Austria)	14	<b>9,285</b>
<b>Sorbian</b>	70,000	7	<b>10,000</b>
<b>Scottish Gaelic</b>	94,000	7	<b>13,430</b>
<b>Basque</b>	580,000	42	<b>13,800</b>
<b>Romani</b>	106,000	7	<b>15,140</b>
<b>Croatian</b>	106,500 (Austria and Italy)	7	<b>15,200</b>
<b>Franco-Provençal</b>	77,000	4	<b>19,250</b>
<b>Irish Gaelic</b>	260,000	12	<b>21,600</b>
<b>Breton</b>	500,000	19	<b>26,300</b>
<b>Welsh</b>	580 000	16	<b>36,250</b>
<b>Corsican</b>	341,000	7	<b>48,700</b>
<b>Albanian</b>	180,000 (Italy and Greece)	3	<b>60,000</b>
<b>Friulian</b>	600,000	10	<b>60,000</b>
<b>Occitan</b>	1,500,000	25	<b>60,000</b>
<b>Ladin</b>	325,000	5	<b>65,000</b>
<b>Low German</b>	90,000	1	<b>90,000</b>
<b>Finnish</b>	280,000 (Sweden)	3	<b>93,000</b>
<b>German</b>	375,000 (Belgium and Italy)	3	<b>125,000</b>
<b>Catalan</b>	6,565,000	43	<b>152,700</b>
<b>Galician</b>	4,000,000	14	<b>285,700</b>
<b>Sardinian</b>	1,500,000	5	<b>300,000</b>
<b>Alsatian</b>	1,500,000	4	<b>375,000</b>
<b>Asturian</b>	550,000	1	<b>550,000</b>
<b>Creole</b>	n.a.	1	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>Frankish</b>	-	1	<b>-</b>
<b>Swedish</b>	n.a. (Italy and Netherlands)	2	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>Valaquian</b>	n.a.	1	<b>n.a.</b>
<b>Yiddish</b>	n.a.	5	<b>n.a.</b>

Notes: as in previous tables, single-language projects and multi-language projects concerning 5 languages or less have been included. Projects which benefited more than 5 languages (13 in 1998; 14 in 1999; and 11 in 2000) have been excluded. "n.a." indicates that no figure of speakers was found. "-" indicates the figure is close to 0.

Source: Data for number of speakers was taken from [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com). Number of projects is based on existing EC tables for projects funded under calls for project proposals, 1998-2000.

### State distribution

Yet another different pattern emerges as the criterion for analysis turns to states, rather than languages, and their success rates over the three editions of calls for proposals. To take a concrete example, **organisations in Spain, which had received by far the largest number of funded projects under the 1998 and 1999 calls for proposals (representing almost one third of funded projects in 1998, 59 out of 180), failed to do so in 2000.** In other words, while themselves active as a second language in cooperation projects coordinated or co-coordinated from another country, the projects the leading organisation for which was in Spain were scarcely selected under the 2000 call. This may therefore point to their comparative shortcomings with respect to other EU member states – France, the UK,

Austria and Italy all came ahead of Spain in 2000, when international networking became a key criterion in the selection and award process.

**Table 1.7. Beneficiary projects, per EU and EEA member state**  
Over three editions of project funding, 1998-2000

<b>COUNTRIES</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Austria</b>	9	4	5	<b>18</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	4	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Denmark</b>	1	2	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Finland</b>	1	1	2	<b>4</b>
<b>France</b>	40	15	8	<b>63</b>
<b>Germany</b>	5	4	2	<b>11</b>
<b>Greece</b>	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	4	2	0	<b>6</b>
<b>Italy</b>	32	11	5	<b>48</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	2	2	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Portugal</b>	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
<b>Spain</b>	59	22	3	<b>84</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	6	1	1	<b>8</b>
<b>UK</b>	14	6	6	<b>26</b>
<b>Norway</b>	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>287</b>

Please note that data were taken from tables made at the time of selection.

Therefore, some projects may actually not have been completed.

Source: based on existing EC tables for projects funded under calls for project proposals, 1998-2000.

To sum up, changes introduced in successive editions of calls for proposals in support of regional and minority languages between 1998 and 2000 point to a series of elements which remain relevant to this day, notably the following:

- Over 35 regional and minority languages managed to obtain EC funding over the period under study.
- Changes in selection and award criteria over the years under study enable an observation of how different languages react to stricter conditions – many languages appear to encounter difficulties when asked to find partners abroad, or when financial requirements mean they are expected to provide a larger volume of matching funding.
- On the other hand, a reduced number of regional and minority languages, generally those with stronger institutional positions and/or a wider demographic volume, mobilised over one half of funds earmarked for regional and minority languages. These include Basque, Breton, Catalan, Irish, Galician, Occitan, Slovenian and Welsh.
- It is very often these very languages that find it easier to operate cross-nationally, raising support from organisations abroad. Yet a number of languages which generally benefited from less funding and which have a lower demographic spread, including Friulian, Frisian and Sorbian, also proved their ability to raise support

from language constituencies abroad or to take advantage of their being spread across national borders.

- Wide variations arise among languages according to their ability to be awarded funding relative to their number of speakers. Basque, with little over half a million speakers, was the subject of 42 projects (the figure being second only to Catalan), whilst no other language with less than one million speakers was targeted by 20 or more projects. Griko, Frisian, Saami, Aragonese and Slovenian were also successful in obtaining several projects in spite of their small spread.
- A different cleavage arises among EU member states concerning their ability to lead projects, as – notwithstanding differences in the nature of and the legal status accorded to regional and minority languages – organisations in states like Spain fail to lead international partnerships to the same extent that they build individual projects. Organisations in member states like Austria, France, Italy and the UK appear to fare much better at leading partners abroad, at least insofar as data from the 2000 call for proposals, which included strong elements of cross-national networking, are taken into account.

As a result of this, the present evaluation needs to take account of the wide variety of languages that are included within the definition of regional and minority languages. A hypothesis to test is that, **whereas the small requirements contained within calls for project proposals up to 1998 allowed organisations of varying nature and representing a wide breadth of languages to obtain funding, requirements in subsequent editions and in other EU funding programmes have led to an increasingly-restrictive list of beneficiary languages.** Of course, this needs testing not only against the evolution of direct support for regional and minority languages but also against other funding programmes and their lists of beneficiaries, to determine to what extent they provide opportunities for representative RML organisations.

### 1.2.3. Project effectiveness

The success of projects in achieving those aims that had first been set by the European Commission's calls for proposals and then adapted by beneficiaries in their own applications has been monitored with the help of both evaluators' and beneficiaries' views. Questionnaires and telephone interviews, as well as field visits and the analysis of project dossiers stored in the European Commission's archives, have enabled a thorough overview of the success and shortcomings of those projects which were funded between 1998 and 2000, the highlights of which are summarised in this section.

**A large majority of funded projects can be said to have achieved the aims they first set out to reach. As a result of funding, over 1.8 million citizens in Europe directly experienced projects in support of regional and minority languages funded between 1998 and 2000. This figure includes over 340,000 students, almost 5,000 teachers, over 177,000 audience of TV and radio broadcasting and over 1,280,000 members of the public at large.**<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Figures are based on responses to questionnaires distributed in the framework of this evaluation (*"Approximately, how many people were direct users / beneficiaries of the project's results? This refers to*

*schoolchildren, book users, attenders to cultural events, audience of media projects, etc. Please specify to which group your users / beneficiaries belong*). Figures for 287 projects were extrapolated from 118 questionnaire responses, including 36 projects the outcomes of which reached the public at large (13,510 beneficiaries per project on average), 27 projects which benefited students (5,211 per project), 8 projects which benefited teachers (241 per project) and 3 media projects (24,266). It should be noted that the figures given refer to *direct* beneficiaries of activities and do not include those projects which only produced books, magazines or CDs, the actual number of beneficiaries of which is subject to more factors.

<sup>27</sup> Taken from the questionnaire of a 1998 beneficiary. In a telephone conversation later, organisation representatives indicated that the project – initially envisaged as a multiyear initiative – may have actually reached most of its first-year objectives but the lack of continued funding in subsequent years prevented its completion.

<sup>28</sup> Quotes taken from calls for proposals, 1998-2000 (see above for further reference). Even where criteria slightly differed from one year to another, the aims stated here seem to be valid for all calls for project proposals in this field.

<sup>29</sup> Responses taken from respondents which indicated a 5-7 degree of effectiveness, among those questionnaires to funded project beneficiaries received as of 30 November, 2003. Please note that remarks about elements of failure in funded projects were also made by some respondents which gave 8-10 ratings, where comments generally focused on the same issues highlighted by the quotes below. In most cases, we have chosen to place beneficiaries' remarks in one single category even where they could clearly fit in several simultaneously.

<sup>30</sup> Of course some of these observations (simplicity of applications etc.) could apply to other EU programmes in the same period.

<sup>31</sup> Taken from the EC's evaluation sheet after one project funded in 1999 submitted its final report.

<sup>32</sup> 'To what extent do you think your project was innovatory? Please rate on a 0 (no innovation) to 10 (maximum innovation) scale. Please specify what elements made it innovatory.'

<sup>33</sup> The call for proposals for 2000 stated that '*Community aid is primarily intended to cover activities essential for the completion of the project, and is not meant to cover all the activities of the applicant body. In particular, manpower costs must be directly linked to implementing the project. Expenditure not directly linked to the attainment of the objectives (overheads, miscellaneous costs, unforeseen expenses, etc.) must be strictly managed...*'; the same principle applying in previous years' calls.

<sup>34</sup> We have generally chosen to place beneficiaries' remarks in one single category even where they could clearly fit in several simultaneously – this enables to maintain the internal logic of responses. Only in a few cases have quotes been shortened for reasons of space or relevance. Spelling and word changes have been made where necessary, while retaining the meaning of the texts.

<sup>35</sup> Quote taken from response to questionnaire.

<sup>36</sup> Project 98-06-EDU-0031-00, by the University of the Basque Country and the Bertsozale Elkarte.

<sup>37</sup> Project 98-06-AUT-0194-00, by the Institut Culturel Basque – Euskal Kultur Erakundea.

<sup>38</sup> Project 98-06-CON-0104-00, by the Parc naturel régional Livradois-Forez.

<sup>39</sup> We have generally chosen to place beneficiaries' remarks in one single category even where they could clearly fit in several simultaneously – this enables to maintain the internal logic of responses. Only in a few cases have quotes been shortened for reasons of space or relevance. Spelling and word changes have been made where necessary, while retaining the meaning of the texts.

<sup>40</sup> Please note that this question was not included in the questionnaire for beneficiaries under the 2000 call for proposals as most projects had not finished at the time questionnaires were distributed.

<sup>41</sup> 13 among 18 questionnaire responses received as of 30 November 2003.

<sup>42</sup> Funding originally received for the project '*Community Language Planning: Practical guidance for strengthening and developing the use of minority languages in minority language communities*' (98-06-CON-0093-00).

<sup>43</sup> 'To what extent was the European Commission's management of the project correct? Please rate on a 0 (bad management) to 10 (excellent management) scale. Please indicate which factors you think should be improved.'

<sup>44</sup> 10 out of 102 valid responses received as of 30 November 2003 gave marks of 0-7. 48 respondents made comments under the section 'Please indicate which factors you think should be improved.' A mark of 0 was given by one respondent that expressed its 'complete discontent' at the lack of funding continuity, in contrast with the funding provided to other, 'less rigorous, less community-rooted' organisations representing the same language. 'We are hurt because a huge effort has not been given the recognition it deserved'.

<sup>45</sup> Percentage refers to the total number of beneficiaries which did give a 0-10 rating, thus excluding "doesn't know" responses.

<sup>46</sup> This summary includes replies taken from two questions in the questionnaire, namely 'To what extent was the European Commission's management of the project correct? Please rate on a 0 (bad management) to 10 (excellent management) scale. Please indicate which factors you think should be improved' and 'Did any of the European Commission's requirements create difficulties before, during or

Project beneficiaries were asked to self-assess the extent to which their projects had reached their initial objectives. Self-assessment, or self-evaluation, has some shortcomings, its methodological difficulties including not only beneficiaries' reluctance to state elements of failure in their projects, but also lack of memory concerning initial objectives and the high rates of staff turnover in some organisations (particularly those in the non-profit sector), which meant that questionnaire respondents had at times not taken part in funded projects first-hand.

Nevertheless, self-assessment also allows to identify the nature of difficulties encountered by project leaders. The following table shows that, when asked to place their project's effectiveness on a scale of 0 to 10, most respondents opted for the 8-10 group. The average figure for the three years under study was 8.33, the small year-to-year variations being difficult to account for.

**Table 1.8. Project effectiveness, in beneficiaries' self assessment**

Answers to the question "To what extent did the project reach its initial objectives? Please rate on a 0 (did not fulfil objectives) to 10 (fulfilled all its objectives) scale."

Rating	YEAR (of funded project)			Total
	1998	1999	2000	
<b>10</b>	24	6	4	34
<b>9</b>	12	4	3	19
<b>8</b>	22	6	6	34
<b>7</b>	10	5	0	15
<b>6</b>	2	0	2	4
<b>5</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>4</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>3</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>2</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>0</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Doesn't know</b>	4	3	2	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Average rate (0-10)</b>	<b>8.44</b>	<b>8.27</b>	<b>7.93</b>	<b>8.33</b>

<b>% of 0-7</b>	<b>21.6</b>	<b>27.3</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>22.3</b>
<b>Source:</b> based on 121 responses to questionnaire to funded organisations. See Annexes for full questionnaires. The percentage of 0-7 ratings has been calculated relative to the total number of respondents which gave a 0-10 rating, thus excluding "doesn't know" answers.				

It is worth noting that 22% of projects were rated 7 or less, although **only 3 projects (2.6%) received marks under 5**. The latter were due to a variety of reasons which prevented the actual carrying out or completion of the projects, including lack of matching funding and the "*complexity of the task, lack of competence of in-house staff, computer problems, a series of mistakes*".<sup>27</sup>

The foremost aspects that have been identified by respondents as the most relevant difficulties accounting for their projects' lack of success are as follows:

- a. Low degree of participation / lack of active involvement**
- b. Scarce dissemination of project results**
- c. Aims only accomplished long after projects' end**
- d. Lack of continuity / sustainability**

To a certain extent, the elements above are closely connected with the initial objectives of projects, as established by calls for proposals, whether it is their scope (projects reaching a large number of people), the multiplier effect (*'the numbers of likely beneficiaries, the impact of the results and/or the products of the initiative must all be significant'*), the achievability of aims (*'the duration of the project must correspond to its natural life and its aims must be achieved in the shortest possible time, given the resources deployed'*) and the strengthening of organisations and activities (as in *'the objective is to strengthen the European dimension of activities to safeguard and promote regional and minority languages and cultures'*).<sup>28</sup>

The coming paragraphs include quotes taken from respondents' questionnaires and evidence obtained in the analysis of funded projects' dossiers which provide more specific insight in each of these elements.<sup>29</sup>

**10. To what extent did the project reach its initial objectives?** Please rate on a 0 (did not fulfil objectives) to 10 (fulfilled all its objectives) scale.

0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

*If you think that some objectives were not reached, please explain what they were and which factors influenced this outcome:*

**a. Low degree of participation / lack of active involvement.** Reference is in several instances made to the failure of third parties to actively take part in projects or to make the expected use of projects' outcomes. This could partly be due to the very low degree of active involvement that was expected from potential partners at the stage of applying for funds. Indeed most applications, particularly those in the earlier calls for proposals, either did not specify whether any external cooperation would be needed or did not provide sufficient evidence (in the form of eg. a signed partnership letter) that the expected cooperation would happen. Consultations with former beneficiaries undertaken in the course of the present evaluation have shown that one welcome element of the calls for proposals for projects promoting regional and minority languages was their simplicity, some potential applicants being put off

applying to later editions of the same support programme or to other programmes in the last few years because of the perceived complexity of applications. It is rather obvious that **the relative ease with which applications could be filled in the years under study became both a strength and a weakness of calls for proposals, accounting for the width and diversity in the nature of beneficiary organisations and the impact relative to their regular activities but also for the difficulties in sustaining partnerships and, in some cases, in carrying forward projects' outcomes beyond their funded lifetime.**<sup>30</sup> The following quotes have been taken from among those funded organisations which indicated that their projects had benefited from less external participation than expected, this decimating both their actual impact and their long-term effectiveness. Reference to low involvement by third parties is also found in the categories further below, notably those concerning dissemination of project results.

*'Some participants in the project did not come to understand the situation of minority language groups. As the project tried to inspire the participants to influence conceptions in their local communities, and as we have not had any possibility to access this, then one would also have to think of this as a failure.'* [a 1998 project led by an NGO]

*'The ownership of linguistic heritage among citizens: a blatant lack of dynamism, despite the presence of actual speakers, grassroots agents generally too concerned about local ideological animosities. Thus, the lack of a dynamic, credible non-profit sector which could effectively take over.'* [a 1998 project led by a local authority]

*'[It failed] to make a linguistic exchange between the 2 zones involved.'* [a 1998 project led by a local authority]

**b. Scarce dissemination of project results.** Observation of funded projects' dossiers showed that **in only some occasions was provision made for the dissemination of project outcomes** (eg books or magazines). **While admitting that the reduced area where some regional and minority languages operate, the dynamism of person-to-person networks and the reduced number of copies of many final products (the average number of copies for those projects which produced a book was 940) rendered dissemination more easy than in projects of a different nature, it is still likely that in some cases project outcomes have failed to be properly disseminated.** On some occasions, the EC's own monitoring of projects' final reports indicated that *'There is no information on the actual dissemination of the work or plans for future reprints.'*<sup>31</sup> This could partly be due also to the smallness of many funded organisations and the little effort of forward-looking made at the time of applying, including the fact that little emphasis was placed on dissemination by calls for proposals and their accompanying applications. The lack of actual dissemination was recognised by some beneficiaries themselves, whose quotes include the following:

*'...The authorities did not promote the results the way they should have'* [a 1998 project led by a university]

*'Little dissemination among the youth. The end-products were not easy to take through to schools.'* [a 1998 project led by a private cultural foundation]

*'It didn't reach the dissemination we expected, due to lack of funding and lack of effort by the Communities'* [a 1998 project led by an association]

*'Dissemination tasks are yet to be completed.'* [a 2000 project led by an association]

**c. Aims only accomplished long after projects' end.** In a few cases, respondents indicated that their projects had only been able to accomplish the stated objectives some time after their initial applications had expected to. Most quotes below belong to projects the aims of which could easily be pinned down (number of users, production of books or CDs). Yet it should also be borne in mind that **in certain cases objectives were of a less tangible nature, including projects which attempted to initiate long-term processes of higher language use or initiatives intended as multiannual projects which only received one-year funding** (including several projects aimed at lexicographic and related research). In several instances, **beneficiaries who have been observed to complete the expected outcomes of their funded projects in subsequent years are single-project organisations, i.e. tiny organisations the activities of which revolve around one sole project, with only incremental year-to-year variations.**

*'...Objectives were reached, though with some delay.'* [a 1998 project led by an association]

*'Our goal is to reach an audience of 100,000' [this 1998 project, led by an association, has so far reached 82,000].*

*'The first objective was to publish the manual. However, this is a progressive objective.'* [Thus some of the project's objectives can only be achieved in the long term – a 1999 project led by an NGO]

*'Delay in the publication of results.'* [a 2000 project led by a research institute]

**d. Lack of continuity / sustainability.** While not an explicitly stated aim of projects whose intended lifetime was mostly 12 months, the funding of activities was to a certain degree expected to help organisations to reach out of their general scope and to establish links which could pave the way for sustained cooperation afterwards. Observation of funded projects and beneficiaries' responses to the questionnaires show that this has only been the case on a relatively small number of occasions. In connection with this, **it has generally been the European dimension of projects the one that has suffered the most, except where cross-national partnerships were preexistent.** The following quotes show a number of difficulties encountered by beneficiaries which prevented them from assuring the long-term stability of projects.

*'It [didn't] lead to establish a strong cooperation after the end of the project.'* [a 1998 project led by an association]

*'Lack of continuity in some actions. Non-existence of a more active linguistic policy in the domain where the project unfolded (social-cultural environment).'* [a 1998 project led by a trade union]

*'Funding problem. The [publication] is never finished and depends on the Internet site. This requires adequate means.'* [a 1999 project led by an association]

#### 1.2.4. Innovation

Another self-assessment question put to the funded projects concerned innovation. Project beneficiaries were asked to rate on a scale of 0 to 10 the innovative nature of their projects. "Innovative approaches", were one award criteria under the 2000 call for proposals, which described this as follows: "*The project must contain an innovatory dimension for the language community or communities targeted. It must use the most up-to-date resources, methods and technologies available (new information and communication technologies, new production and teaching methods, etc.)*". In both 1998 and 1999, criteria for judging the quality of applications also mentioned innovation of some sort, though only reference to the first of the elements above was made at the time (*the project must contain an innovatory dimension for the targeted language community / communities*).

The present questionnaire did not specify the nature of innovation being sought. The openness of the question<sup>32</sup> proved interesting in that it allowed to identify widely different definitions of the term – some of scarce usefulness (*We think that any action aiming to promote minority language knowledge across Europe is innovatory*), but many deserving a mention. It is also worth noting that **most respondents gave an explanation as to what made their projects innovatory (hardly anyone saying their projects were *not* innovatory)**, even where this meant giving rather simple explanations which may not correspond to the information being sought (*[Our project is innovatory because] all activities are directly experienced by children*; *It is a project related to informal education*). Here again, although self-assessment may have some shortcomings, it enables an appraisal of trends and key elements.

On a scale of 0 to 10, the innovation average is slightly lower than the one found in the previous question. Although differences are marginal, it is worth noting that projects funded in 2000 rate slightly above those of 1998, yet below figures for 1999. Figures (see Table 9) appear to indicate **a relevant increase in innovation as perceived by project leaders after selection criteria became more stringent in 1999 and 2000, innovation becoming critical in project selection**. While nearly one fifth of those questioned did not specify their assessment of innovation on the scale of 0 to 10, existing responses show widely-varying definitions of innovation (see below). It is also worth noting that 33% of those who did respond gave ratings of 7 or below, yet often pointed to some elements of innovation.

**Table 1.9. Projects' degree of innovation, in beneficiaries' self assessment**

Answers to the question "To what extent do you think your project was innovatory? Please rate on a 0 (no innovation) to 10 (maximum innovation) scale."

Rating	YEAR (of funded project)			Total
	1998	1999	2000	
10	13	4	2	19
9	8	7	6	21
8	17	7	1	25
7	12	4	3	19
6	5	1	1	7
5	4	0	1	5
4	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0

<b>2</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Doesn't know</b>	18	2	4	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Average rate (0-10)</b>	<b>7.90</b>	<b>8.39</b>	<b>8.14</b>	<b>8.05</b>
<b>% of 0-7</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>35.7</b>	<b>33.0</b>
Note: based on 121 responses to questionnaire to funded organisations. See Annexes for full questionnaires. The percentage of 0-7 ratings has been calculated relative to the total number of respondents which gave a 0-10 rating, thus excluding "doesn't know" answers.				

Responses to this question indicated a certain overlap between the innovation brought forward by projects themselves and innovation as represented by the organisation in charge – as in *'It is absolutely innovative, because there is no one else doing what we do'*. This points to one of the elements identified in the course of the present evaluation, namely that **to many once- or twice-funded organisations, project funding was not *additional* to regular activities<sup>33</sup> but went to the core of the organisation, at times becoming a last resort for financial continuity. It is worth noting that, particularly under the 1998 call for proposals, a large number of single-project organisations is found. The principle of additionality was hard to apply in such cases.**

Generally speaking, definitions of innovation as seen in questionnaire responses refer either to innovation in the *approach* or *status* given to the language or to innovation in the *methods* or *tools* being used. This could somehow reproduce the two elements in the EU's own definition of *innovation*: providing a new dimension to the targeted language community or communities and using the most up-to-date resources, methods and technologies available. The following elements have been identified in beneficiaries' descriptions of the elements that made their projects innovatory:

### **1. Approach / status**

- a) Lexicographic research and other studies providing new information on a given language
- b) Development of links with new social sectors and increase in language use.
- c) Establishment of formal contacts with institutions which provide for a language's increased status (e.g universities).
- d) Foreign contacts, providing for good practice exchange or networking (either with other RML organisations or with organisations and agents in other fields).
- e) Production of goods or services which had hitherto only existed in other languages. Development of approaches which were new to a language, including the joint development of initiatives with majority languages.

### **2. Tools / methods**

- a) New information and communication technologies.
- b) New production and teaching methods.

Generally speaking, innovation of the second kind is of a more tangible nature (particularly when referring to the "new information and communication technologies"), whereas slightly more vague assertions can be made in fields such as the establishment of contacts or foreign relations. The actual impact of elements of innovation on language use or awareness of linguistic diversity may also vary widely – innovation in the dissemination methods of a book or cultural product (as in *'The most innovative was its distribution in all libraries, cultural centres and research centres'*)

may be less relevant than, say, the first-ever introduction of a tuition method in primary school. Some of the comments made by beneficiary organisations are shown below, which help to illustrate the elements of innovation contained in funded projects.<sup>34</sup>

### **What elements made your project innovatory?**

(The quotes listed under each of the following headings have been taken from beneficiaries' comments on the nature of innovation brought about by their funded projects. [The text in square brackets indicates the call for proposals under which projects were funded])

#### **1a. Lexicographic research and other studies providing new information on a given language.**

**Particularly among those languages facing heavier difficulties in standardisation and generational continuity, research and the production of lexicographic tools was significantly strengthened by EC funding.** There exists some overlap with projects in other categories, particularly 1b (through the research and development of specialised lexicon tools) and 2a (providing research works and other studies with ICT formats for dissemination and use).

*'It is the first mono-language Breton dictionary.'* [1998 project]

*'The innovation elements concerning the Slovenian in Italy consist in a broader and deeper knowledge of the general situation and of the school structure which enables to develop the guidelines for future planning. This work can be considered a reference and touchstone for the evolutionary process of the field (education) considering even the future processes of integration and the next enlargement of the EU.'* [1998 project]

*'Increase in the network of respondents and development of a larger questionnaire as regards previous works [this was a project dealing with lexicographic research]. Taping of questionnaires and publication of a volume of "ethno-texts". Creation of a database.'* [1998 project]

*'We built up the first historic archive on the island of Amrum.'* [1998 project]

*'It was the first time that all Aragonese lexicon was compiled in a database.'* [1998 project]

*'It records the language used by actual speakers nowadays. Previous dictionaries included information which is not in use today. There was no other electronic multimedia dictionary for the Graecanic/Griko dialect.'* [1998 project]

*'There is a link between scientific research and the practical use for the speakers group. As far as I know there exists no dictionary which contains all practical needs for the speakers group and the scientific information for further research. F.e.: each dialect word in Tischelwang is standardized in cooperation with the language users. Each word is categorized grammatically, its use is given by examples in phrases, each word has the pronunciation in international phonetical transcription in brackets, the etymology of each word is included as well as the links to similar words. There are 2 registers: Italian-Tischelwang; German-Tischelwang.'* [1999 project]

*'Our project was really innovative because it was the first time this was made, as the title says: "Primer manual de conversación en Romanò-Kalò".' [1999 project]*

*'Standardization: the Burgerland Croats now have their first scientific grammar book in their 500-year history.' [2000 project]*

*'Study carried out using data taken from a large percentage of users (7,500 interviews out of 120,000 inhabitants).' [2000 project]*

### **1b. Development of links with new social sectors and increase in language use.**

This category includes both **projects which provided relatively widespread languages with the opportunity to make connections with specific target groups in the socio-economic and socio-cultural spheres and projects which enabled other languages to develop specialised lexicon.** As with other categories, a large share of projects indicating innovation of this type were undertaken by organisations in the educational field, some language-promotion organisations being active as well. There exists some overlap with projects in other categories, particularly 1a (see above), 2a (by creating glossaries and term databases on digital format] and 2b [designing and adapting learning methods to the needs of specific sectors).

*'There was no previous experience like this one. Today, there are. To integrate the learning of Euskara [Basque] in a children's summer camp required a big effort in imagination.' [1998 project]*

*'The target population are traditionally unaware of linguistic messages; the project also intended to involve individuals from the legal and the labour relations spheres in linguistic awareness-raising.' [1998 project]*

*'The project represented the first and so far the only experience for teaching Sardinian language and culture in several areas of life. The project's methodology also intended to update existing knowledge of the language within several professional fields.' [1998 project]*

*'Teaching of language skills focusing on unemployed women and school campaigns for gipsy and non-gypsy kids.' [2000 project]*

*'Modernisation of terminology in the field of environment, education, natural sciences, medicine, music and construction.' [2000 project]*

### **1c. Establishment of formal contacts with institutions which provide for a language's increased status (e.g. universities).**

Of particular interest to those languages with a lower degree of access to the higher rungs of the education system, **mention of projects' reaching out to and leading to stronger links with third institutions was made by several respondents.** A more institutionalised position and a relative improvement in status may be long-term outcomes, while also depending on a wide variety of factors – indeed, some of the project beneficiaries quoted below indicated that the long-term effects were not always as successful as expected. There exists some overlap with projects in other categories, particularly 1b (organisation-to-organisation relations also implying further insight into

the needs of specific social sectors), 1d (as new relations sometimes implied international contacts) and 2a (by establishing links with organisations in the audiovisual or IT sector).

*'The scientific cooperation with the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec...by searching the best methods in learning minority languages.'* [1998 project]

*'Through its presence in university, the project provides Occitan with an unseen opportunity to reach out to all education levels.'* [1998 project]

*'The most innovative was its distribution in all libraries, cultural centres and research centres (institutes, universities, cultural organisations, etc).'* [1998 project]

#### **1d. Foreign contacts, providing for good practice exchange or networking (either with other RML organisations or with organisations and agents in other fields).**

Languages' ability to network internationally also varies widely. **Languages spread across state borders or those having a stronger institutional potential generally appear to have taken more advantage of such opportunities. In a few cases, cooperation of this kind enabled to establish contacts with non-RML organisations with an interest in languages and linguistic diversity.** The 1999 and 2000 editions generally witnessed a higher degree of networking, though this was most often combined with innovation of other types. This is the reason why there exists an overlap with projects in other categories, particularly 1b, 1c, 1e, 2a and 2b, the development of which included cooperation with agents in other states. Examples of international networking can also be found among the quotes for other types of innovation.

*'It was the first time in the Basque country that works concerning the learning of Euskera, Gaelic, Irish, Breton, and Welsh were presented. It was also the first meeting of researchers in this field that took place in the Basque Country, though we had previously met in Brittany.'* [1998 project]

*'Højskolen Østersøen was the first Danish folk high school to use this traditional Danish form of non-formal education as a forum for European debate, the first one to develop a European dimension in its work, this inspired other to follow, as witnessed by the Youth2002 event.'* [1998 project]

*'The innovation consists in allowing students to meet Catalan colleagues from other schools.'* [a 1998 project led by a Catalan school in France, with partners in Spanish Catalonia]

*'The use of Galician in every centre around Europe. The creation of a cooperative of Galician products. Promotion of cultural and artistic events. Promotion of the Camino de Santiago. Creation of a Federation of Galician Centres in Europe.'* [1998 project]

*'The idea of an annual conference for tutors was not entirely new; however, the possibility of inviting guest speakers from other EU countries was an innovatory development.'* [1998 project]

*'Comparison between different economic realities of the language minorities in the EU. Many participants didn't have any kind of information on other realities before.'* [1998 project]

*'The events' taking place in several parts of Europe.'* [1998 project]

*"Planalto" is part of a set of measures that were necessary to take, their objective being the survival and recognition of the Mirandese language. Large scale of integrated actions to promote the Mirandese language, forgotten at national and European level...It aims at the recuperation of the linguistic elements simultaneously with the discovery of the culture. Active participation of local creators in cooperation with local and European institutions of culture. Development of a cultural market to next generations and European visitors. Editing products in multimedia supports. Increases the participation of both sides of the border (Portugal/Spain) to dissipate the border effect that still exists.'* [2000 project]

### **1e. Production of goods or services which had hitherto only existed in other languages. Development of approaches which were new to a language, including the joint development of initiatives with majority languages.**

**Projects in several fields, particularly culture, education and media, used EC funding to develop contemporary products which were generally out of their reach.** There exists some overlap with projects in other categories, particularly 1b (cooperation with agents in the socio-cultural field leading to the joint production of educational or leisure tools), 1d (international contacts), 2a (development of digital goods) and 2b (development of new learning materials, often through the translation of foreign works such as visual dictionaries or workbooks).

*'The project wasn't innovative in itself, as this kind of event already existed in French. It was however the first time that Breton was used.'* [1998 project]

*'This was the first meeting where the Roma language was used in this large extent.'* [a 1998 conference with Roma representatives from different countries]

*'It was the first time that a project of this kind was done in Galicia.'* [a 1998 study comparing the sociolinguistic situation of three languages, aimed at improving educational methods]

*'Minority radios produce programmes nearly exclusive in minority language. Radio Agora intended with the developed guidelines to show possibilities to produce bilingual programmes (both languages in one programme respectively in one broadcast). This should give the possibility for a lingual and cultural approximation between minority and majority population.'* [2000 project]

### **2a. New information and communication technologies.**

The production of new language tools with a digital format or the use of other types of new media in formal, informal and vocational training contexts was rather common, a widespread pattern amongst most beneficiary RMLs. It is worth noting that **the development of such products does not necessarily lead to their actual use, and that regular updates are subsequently needed** – this not always being the case, as shall be seen later. The 1999 and 2000 editions in particular witnessed a high

degree of IT-related projects, which was most often combined with innovation of other types. This is the reason why there exists an overlap with projects in most other categories. Examples can also be found among the quotes for other types of innovation.

*'It is the only multimedia project in the area.'* [1998 project]

*'Internet dissemination of poems, grammar and a vocabulary in a minority language.'* [1998 project]

*'The realization of the book and CD-ROM was innovatory as it was the first research made in our valley about the traditional language in rural activity. The book and CD created allow an easier approach to the language for students and schoolchildren.'* [1998 project]

*'Use of new technologies: creation for a web site for the management of reports and studies about minority languages.'* [1998 project]

*'The audiovisual format as the framework to open a social debate on language and market.'* [1998 project]

*'Development of specialised labour lexicography. Wide scope of domains. Dissemination in a floppy disk, enabling for download and individual use.'* [1998 project]

*'1. It is a sophisticated electronic language course that uses adequate Internet facilities. [2.] It makes use of authentic speech by native speakers in order to introduce students to the language. [3.] It is an approach to exhibiting segments of spoken language as a collection of cultural artefacts by annotating them with varied and detailed explanations and comments.'* [1999 project]

*'One of the main features of the project was the use of new technologies as a tool of communication between associations.'* [1999 project]

*'Online dictionary. Linkages between lexical and grammatical information on categories that have no counterparts in German. Description of the equivalences between German and Sorbian.'* [2000 project]

*'Large database available online.'* [2000 project]

## **2b. New production and teaching methods.**

Education being the single sector which more directly benefited from funding under the three calls for proposals under study, **the development of new teaching and training methods, including joint work with language-related organisations in the community or abroad, was rather common to most languages.** Examples are to be found among most benefited RMLs and overlaps exist with projects in most other categories.

*'It was the first time in Bretagne that Breton teachers were formed in an intensive way.'* [1998 project]

*'The creation of the first secondary school in Catalan in Northern Catalonia.'* [1998 project]

*'We don't know of any similar project, aiming to correct everyday expressions in Basque.'* [1998 project]

*'To associate language specialists to parents; to make students work with artists and not just to consume what they produce.'* [1998 project]

*'The use of the methodology developed through this project has changed the way several subjects are taught.'* [1998 project]

*'It...proved the effectiveness of giving priority to minority languages in a plurilingual school context, thus validating the theory of language interdependency.'* [1998 project]

*'In our context, there are no recent examples where this objective has been sought [language normalisation in schools].'* [1998 project]

*'Stable teaching of Aragonese...Stable hiring of teachers.'* [1998 project]

*'Exchange of pedagogic methodologies between French and Catalan teachers.'* [1999 project]

*'It has been innovatory for experiencing immersion as language learning method for small and "weak" lesser used languages, for parallel alphabetisation in two languages, for experiences with language teaching methods that include music, dance, theatre play and the social environment as language learning resources, for the professional formation of teachers (for West Frisians, East Frisians, Saterfrisians, North Frisians and Slovenians in Austria), generally for all participating language groups to get higher awareness of their possibilities and to work systematically on multilingualism. As all languages which were included in the project belong to the extremely threatened languages in Europe, this innovation was of high importance.'* [1999 project]

While reference has so far been made to types of innovation which in some way unfolded from the definition of innovation made by the European Commission under the 2000 call for proposals ("*The project must contain an innovatory dimension for the language community or communities targeted. It must use the most up-to-date resources, methods and technologies available (new information and communication technologies, new production and teaching methods, etc.)*"), it is worth noting that remarks by some beneficiaries may point to other conceptions of innovation. Funded under the 1998 call for proposals, *An Educational Project to Foster Oral Expression in the Basque Language* consisted in the development of tuition materials and the provision of training to secondary school teachers in order for the traditional form of *bertsolaritza* (improvised oral expression about one suggested theme) to become a learning tool, spreading not only to literature but with uses in other school subjects as well. *'Teachers' evaluations highlight this programme's contribution to stimulating and motivating pupils, whose linguistic skills are enhanced in communication and in their ability to seduce interlocutors in one way or another.'*<sup>35</sup> The project's outcomes have been used by over 200 teachers and 4,500 pupils and their effects have meant planning changes in some schools' dealing with subjects such as literature and mathematics. With scarce financial support nowadays, project leaders have still been able to produce training guides to over 60 themes, priority among which was the result of polling secondary school pupils in the Basque Country – thus guides have been

produced for issues including the environment, sexuality, the military service and drugs.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the *Basque Cultural Heritage seen by the Youth* project served to pinpoint the issues that rendered intergenerational transmission of culture difficult and provided opportunities for new interpretation of traditional culture,<sup>37</sup> whereas in Occitan-speaking areas a conference on "Albert Dauzat and Auvergne's linguistic heritage" also provided a rarely-seen opportunity for tradition and contemporariness to meet, focusing on both music and literature.<sup>38</sup>

**New uses of traditional cultural and linguistic forms were highlighted by other beneficiaries as well,** the questionnaire's petition for elements of innovation in their projects being met with references to '*The meeting between tradition and modernity*', '*Mixture of traditional elements and youth culture*' and '*[A] new look approach to ancient language and to traditional expressions of art, music, songs and dances*'. **Interestingly, this alternative approach to what innovation may mean seems to chime with the '*Tradition and innovation: linking the past with the future*' theme, one of three work areas under recent calls for proposals of the Culture 2000 programme.** It could therefore show a possible way for certain representative RML organisations, in spite of the difficulties also encountered when applying under this programme, as shall be seen later.

#### 1.2.5. Impact on language use

Several references were made within calls for project proposals to the expected effects of beneficiary initiatives towards language awareness and use. Impact of funding on language use included both direct and indirect references. The former took the form of "promotion of the language" ('*the project must significantly promote the utilization of the language*', 1998 and 1999) and "relevance" ('*the project must relate to one or more fields which have an impact on the number of speakers of a given language, their level of proficiency, their attitude to the language, opportunities for using the language and/or creative and media activities*', 2000) being mentioned within selection or award criteria. Similarly, elements such as the "economic and social promotion of the language" ('*presence of the language in the visual environment..., in the tourist infrastructures or on products for local consumption or exportation; development of the potential for using the language in new technologies*', 1998) and the "socio-economic aspects of the language" ('*presence and role of the language in economic and social life, languages and economic development*' 2000) were included over successive editions within the eligible fields of action. On the other hand, an indirect impact on language use could be expected as well from those funded activities in the fields of education or media.

Although evaluating the effects of project funding to patterns of language use far exceeds the possibilities of the present evaluation and would require a multi-factor analysis, to take account of elements including demography, legislation, socio-economic situation and individual and social status of languages, an attempt has been made throughout the process to identify relevant elements. This has happened both in questionnaires, through a direct question ('*What positive effects in language use as a result of your project could be noticed since it finished?*'), and in the interviews and field visits that have been carried out thereafter.

When asked about the impact on actual language use brought about by funded projects, at least two ideas are easily highlighted among beneficiaries' responses:

- a) **most funded projects can point to benefits of some sort, generally of a qualitative nature, including the increase in collective self-esteem generated by the EU's looking after a small-scale project;** and
- b) **changes in language use cannot always be identified by respondents, either because no tools are available to measure use** (this is particularly the case of media projects or those which led to the development of a website, the users of which may be unknown to respondents, as well as cultural projects of a one-off nature, such as performing arts events) **or because enhancing language use was not the main direct aim of projects** (as in the case of projects geared towards the production of a dictionary or lexicographic research).

With the benefit of two- to five-year hindsight, positive impacts identified by those organisations which had projects funded can be classified as follows:

- **educational improvement**
- **awareness-raising**
- **development of new projects**
- **use of language in the working environment**
- **offer of cultural events in the minority language**

Some of the comments made by beneficiary organisations are shown below, which help to illustrate the improvements in language use brought about by funded projects.<sup>39</sup>

**What positive effects in language use as a result of your project could be noticed since it finished?**

- **educational improvement**, including the production of training materials which have subsequently been used by new generations of students, the training of teachers which have later provided tuition to students, or an increase in the number of pupils who enrol in courses of one given regional or minority language. **Although such effects do not necessarily translate into actual language use, a correlation can easily be expected, particularly within those languages with poorer tuition records.** Some respondents pointed to an increase in the quantity and quality of tuition.

*'Nearly all children now attend the bilingual primary school and later the secondary education to practice and learn the Slovenian language (and English).'* [1998 project; Slovenian; Association working in education]

*'This project had the effect of increasing the quality and quantity of Catalan use in the schools of L'Alguer. Today, almost 70% of the schools have 1 hour of Catalan classes. One part of the teachers have taken part in course to update their language skills.'* [1998 project; Association working with education, culture and language promotion]

*'On one hand, it is innovative because it is the students themselves who make the journalistic work using the Basque language. On the other hand, readers also benefit from all the work.'* [1998 project; Basque; Regional Authority working in education and language promotion]

*'The positive effects are indirect. The magazine aims to give school teachers the tools and strategies to make immersion programmes better...' [1998 project; Catalan; Association working in education]*

*'In some cases children with a lesser used language as mother tongue started to use this language also communicating with other children in the kindergarten of school - teachers were encouraged to use the lesser used language consciously as teaching language, following fixed didactic rules, in a broader shape of time than before.' [1999 project; Frisian; Organisation working in several areas]*

- **awareness-raising**, including renewed enthusiasm for one language, increased parental awareness of the need to receive tuition in one language, social prestige, one language's ability to reach out to new domains (e.g. the work field, universities, administration, the press or other public spaces, such as road names) and a renewed interest in the study of local vocabulary. **This seems to be particularly relevant among those organisations which define themselves as involved in language promotion**, with education and culture coming behind, generally followed by bodies active in media and research.

*'The effects were very positive for the use of Catalan. Students at La Bressola speak Catalan and French. The students from Spanish Catalonia speak Catalan and Spanish. That makes Catalan the only common language between them... Some families have maintained contact after the exchange which means there is a continuity.'* [1998 project; Catalan; Association working in education and language promotion]

*'Awareness to understand the importance of the language role in raising Romani identity. Also realise that the Romani language is an internationally spoken language.'* [1998 project; Romani; National Authority responsible for Education]

*'The speakers of the minority language are more self confident, initiated new projects, want to have an own automatic orthographic correction programme for their personal computers. The electronic lexicon is very useful for children and young people. They get more interested in the language of their village and their parents...' [1999 project; Multilanguage; Association working in education, language promotion and research]*

*'...the aim of the project was not to increase language use, but to promote respect of minority languages and minority population groups in general among majority language groups.'* [1999 project; Multilanguage; NGO working in education and language promotion]

- **development of new projects**, as some respondents indicated that their projects led to new initiatives, either EU-funded or not, with a focus on language development. In a way, **this can be said to enhance language dynamism**, although not directly implying an increase in language use.

*'Other initiatives related to literature / performing arts were born. The operation has produced sustainable quality effects.'* [1998 project; Corsican; Association / University working in culture and education]

*'The project helped to plan the joint action from the heads of linguistic policies.'* [1998 project; Multilanguage; Autonomous Community Administration working in all areas]

*'The updating and review of the network have permitted to dispose of a faster and bigger database to work on minority languages in EU.'* [1998 project; Multilanguage; Regional Authority working in language promotion and research]

- **use of language in the working environment.** As some respondents indicated, and field visits confirmed, a number of projects were successful in introducing the minority language into the working environment. Two cases in Wales showed how Welsh speakers would still employ English as the "official" working language when communicating in their work environment or publicising their services. Projects managed to provide services that encouraged the respective target groups to use the minority language for their business, technology and communication usages. Another project, this time in Slovene speaking Trieste, focussed on improving language competence amongst radio and television staff, thus ensuring that minority language speakers occupying strategic multiplier positions be well trained and confident in language use. All examples seem to demonstrate an **increased language use, a multiplying effect, and a professionalisation of status and usage of the minority language.**

*'...local administration programmes to promote the use of this minority language in the municipal councils and in public events.'* [1998 project; Griko; Inter-School Representation Organisation working in education and research]

*'...Helped to establish Galician as the language of communication between several associations throughout Europe...'* [1998 project; Galician; Cultural and Educational Centre for adults]

*'It has emphasised the importance of the use of minority language in the working environment.'* [1998 project; Slovenian; Association working in the field of business promotion]

*'Increase in the language awareness of Union members and workers; increase in language use; more attention to the language in the social-cultural environment.'* [1998 project; Galician; Union]

*'This database is the tool which controls the police terminology that our organisation uses.'* [1998 project; Basque; Regional Authority – Security Force]

- **offer of cultural events in the minority language.** In several cases, support granted by the EC enabled organisations operating in the field of culture and the arts to disseminate their projects more broadly. This includes the presentation of performing arts or visual arts events to larger audiences (e.g. by enhancing educational programmes, or by touring), the development of new initiatives involving respected artists and the production of cultural goods with a quality level which certain communities had seldom enjoyed until then. Two projects in Austria may serve as good practice examples. While one of them introduced a theatre season ticket for high quality contemporary performances in the minority language and provides other cultural events based on a bilingual concept, the other managed to provide a bilingual radio programme (majority and minority language use) with a large part of cultural content. Such projects assure an **increased language use, an actualisation of cultural content and self-representation, and an increased integration of the minority and majority languages.**

*'...For 8 consecutive years, the number of schools asking for performances was always rising.'* [1998 project; Breton; Association working in culture]

*'The knowledge of contemporary Occitan theatre and to meet Occitan authors.'* [1998 project; Occitan; Association working in culture]

*'Some parts of the book were adapted by several theatre groups from Belgium and Germany.'* [1998 project; German; Association working in Culture]

*'...Creation of shows in Provençal language.'* [1998 project; Multilanguage]

*'...Increased interest in Franco-Provençal through a theatre performance.'* [1998 project; Occitan; Regional Authority]

*'Promotion of actors and events'* [1999 project; Occitan; Association working in culture]

### 1.2.6. Other outcomes

#### Multiplying effect

Organisations that had received funding for individual **projects were asked whether any other projects had directly benefited from the outcomes of funded activities. Slightly over half of the respondents could indicate particular effects** – this includes 38 of 76 valid responses among 1998 beneficiaries and 16 of 26 valid responses for 1999.<sup>40</sup>

Most projects have arisen in the educational field, as interschool contacts have intensified and led to joint activities, or new schools have undertaken tuition in regional and minority languages. Furthermore, regular contacts have been established between educational centres and institutions in other fields (e.g. schools joining France's Parc Livradois-Forez annual educational programme, which focuses on cultural awareness in the broad sense, including Occitan language). Equally, we found evidence of universities giving a more prominent role to research into RMLs, either as a theme for doctoral theses or through the formalisation of degrees in a regional or minority language (Asturian). As can be seen, the nature of activities emerging partly as a consequence of funded projects varies widely. Formalisation of regional or international contacts, which may eventually lead to developing new projects, also emerges as one consequence of funded projects. Generally speaking, therefore, multiplier effects have been aimed for and have also been achieved in a sector in which the transmission, linguistic standard and dissemination are particularly assured.

#### International networks

Cross-national networking not being a fundamental selection criteria in the 1998 and 1999 editions, few of the funded projects under those calls for proposals actually led to the creation of networks or regular exchanges among organisations interested in the development of regional and minority languages in different countries. **Only about**

**45% of 1998 funded projects point to international exchanges of some kind, and some tend to be of a rather informal, irregular nature (“we had contacts”, “we established contacts”) or are related to networks the membership in which was pre-existent.** The figure is sensibly higher for 1999. It is worth recalling that networking and the exchange of experiences were two of the four fields of activity on which that call for proposals focused, thus making it easier for those organisations with strong international links to apply (“We have always been in contact with foreign organisations”) and for the establishment of networks to become one focus area during the project’s development.

**Table 1.10. Organisations that created permanent international relations**

Percentages per year and type of organisation, as stated in questionnaires

TYPE OF ORGANISATION	1998	1999	2000	TOTAL	Organisations
Association	48.5%	45.5%	62.5%	<b>50%</b>	52
NGO	60%	100%	80%	<b>78.6%</b>	14
Local Authority	20%	50%	100%	<b>37.5%</b>	8
Regional Authority	75%	100%	-	<b>80%</b>	5
National Authority	100%	-	-	<b>100%</b>	1
Primary School	100%	-	-	<b>100%</b>	1
Secondary School	-	-	-	-	0
University	50%	-	50%	<b>50%</b>	8
Broadcasting Organisation	-	-	-	-	0
Private Company	100%	-	-	-	2
Other	27.3%	71.4%	100%	<b>50%</b>	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>72.2%</b>	<b>54.2%</b>	<b>111</b>

Please note that the number of organisations is sometimes slightly different from the one stated in other tables due to the inclusion of multiple type organisations and non-answer by some respondents.

Based on responses to questionnaire for project beneficiaries.

**9. Did the project lead to the establishment of permanent contacts with foreign organisations or bodies representing other minority and regional language communities?** Please specify their name and the nature of exchanges.

*[Contacts were established with] language departments of the universities of Udine, Padua, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt for further research in language in contact (...)*

*[Contacts were established with the following linguistic communities] Frisian, Ladin, Tirol German, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Slovenian, Alsatian, Irish, Welsh, German, etc'*

*'Yes indeed, and in several ways: 1- Ongoing contact with the city of Beltz and its University in the Republic of Moldova. We have been asked a) to help create a Yiddish studies program (within the German department) at the Alecu Russo University, and b) support the city's initiative for cultural activities (e.g. establishing a theater for Yiddish plays). Negotiations are in progress. 2- We work together with the libraries of Columbia University, NY, towards presenting all materials of the language and culture archive of Ashkenazic Jewry as a public laboratory in the Internet.'*

*'The eight participating language groups are still and continuously in informal contact, there is an exchange of knowledge and information (for example: a Slovenian kindergarten teacher from Austria held lectures for kindergarten*

*teachers in East Friesland, language promoters from East Friesland and West Friesland held lectures for Sorbian teachers). For networking also EBLUL structures and services are used.'*

Finally, the 2000 edition included the strengthening of the European dimension of activities to safeguard and promote regional and minority languages as its key objective. Cross-national partnerships became thus fundamental to most projects. As a result of this, and the fact that most projects under this call for proposals are still underway or have only recently come to their end, a large majority of beneficiaries state that funded activities enabled them to forge international partnerships which have been sustained afterwards.<sup>41</sup> As a particularly valid example one could mention here the conference organised with RML funding in 1998 by the Welsh Language Board, which targeted language planners and produced practical guidelines for language planning institutions in general. This project has developed over 5 years to become a Network of Language Boards in Europe, a network involving partners in Wales, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Finland, Friesland, Ireland and Scotland that has now received funding under the EC's call for proposals on language learning and linguistic diversity in 2003 in order to formalise and intensify its work.<sup>42</sup> The network's activities include sharing good practice on topics such as language transmission, marketing, information technology and education.

Another project for the EXPO 2000 in Hannover also resulted in a continued cooperation. Coordinated by the Sønderjyllands TIC & Erhvervs Centre, a Danish incubator and consultancy centre for young businesses, it concerned a web page designed for the EXPO, on which minority languages all over Europe were presented on a clickable map format. The website still exists, although no further updating is carried out due to lack of funding, and user logs statistics show that the use has been increasing over the past years, easily surpassing those of the Centre itself. This project was of a bigger, overall Interreg project (Cultures, Languages, Minorities) to present European Minorities on the EXPO. Other project parts included a booklet on languages, a conference, and a future workshop with young people, centring on the Roma and Sinti, German, Danish and Frisian minorities. Since then there have also been sustained contacts and cooperation between the four minority groups concerned, and a network of associates continues to work together, and further conferences are developed within its framework.

### **1.2.7 Assessment of the European Commission's management**

#### **General assessment by the funded projects**

**Generally speaking, the management of projects by the European Commission had excellent ratings, 8.8 its average mark on a scale of 0 to 10.**<sup>43</sup> Although, again, approximately one in five respondents did not give a rating of EC performance – this being at times justified by the departure of staff in charge of the funded project since the time of its completion -, less than 11% of responses gave marks of 7 or lower, and less than 50% of valid responses included a comment on the aspects that needed improving.<sup>44</sup> As table 4 shows, no remarkable differences exist among editions of the programme, each of the three years under study averaging over

8.5. While it is likely that the reception of EC funding easily makes up for any inconveniences generated in the process, thus erasing hindrances from respondents' memories, it is remarkable that **very high rates are found also for projects funded in 2000, most of which have only recently been completed and difficulties encountered during which could still have been present** in respondents' minds.

**Table 1.11. Management of project funding by the European Commission, in the view of beneficiaries**

Answers to the question "To what extent was the European Commission's management of the project correct? Please rate on a 0 (bad management) to 10 (excellent management) scale."

Rating	YEAR (of funded project)			Total
	1998	1999	2000	
<b>10</b>	26	8	8	42
<b>9</b>	17	8	2	27
<b>8</b>	15	4	4	23
<b>7</b>	2	1	1	4
<b>6</b>	2	1	0	3
<b>5</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>4</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>3</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>2</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>0</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Doesn't know</b>	13	2	3	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Average rate (0-10)</b>	<b>8.72</b>	<b>8.56</b>	<b>9.13</b>	<b>8.80</b>
<b>% of 0-7<sup>45</sup></b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>10.7</b>

The thankfulness of many respondents to the funding received is expressed by remarks that, as in '*Without the EC we would not have been able to continue our project. They were more sensitive to our request than [the relevant regional authority]*', point to the lack of support from lower tiers of administration that many regional and minority languages encounter. Indeed, support received from the European Commission has on several occasions helped to strengthen small

organisations, acting somehow as a springboard into increased local, regional and national recognition. **In many cases, obtaining European funding was important not only because of its unquestionable financial consequences but also for its moral reinforcement, the acquired strengthening vis-à-vis regional and national authorities and the opportunity given to diversify the often-limited funding sources.**

Other beneficiaries indicated that *'The financial aid from the EC was extraordinary. But it would have been impossible to complete the project without the help of many volunteers'*, and often praised administrative monitoring of their dossiers – *'A few heavy administrative issues, but a good following of the dossier and good personal relations'*, *'It was a clear and effective management'*, *'I was informed at every time in a very competent way'*.

**Many of those organisations which highlighted difficulties focused on bureaucracy-related issues that seem to be common to most EC funding procedures**, rather than particular to the RML programme, as the following summary shows.

### **What elements of EC management should be improved?<sup>46</sup>**

#### **1. Length of procedures**

*'...Time was always a problem, in terms of length of time for the application to be processed'. [1998 project]*

*'Sometimes, the period given to present the application is too limited.' [1998 project]*

*'Speed of communication'. [1999 project]*

*'Sometimes you have to wait 4 months or longer to get the rest of the last 20% of the payment. It would be helpful to get it a little bit earlier'. [2000 project]*

#### **2. Difficulties posed by applications and requirements**

*'The fact that all projects have the same bureaucratic rules, despite the enormous differences in the grants.' [1998 project]*

*'Norms should be more simple, and documents presented in a more accessible way – they should not require advice by professional experts, recourse to whom reduces the EC effective grant.' [1998 project]*

*'Excessive rigidity prevented the project's development from fitting the Commission's administrative and control logic. This led [us] to renounce the second due payment.' [1998 project]*

*'To make processes simpler' [1999 project]*

*'This was a 1998 project, and procedures were actually rather simple. We again applied for funding two years later, which was not granted, and both the required documents and the application to fill had become much more difficult, and called for hours of work.'* [1998 project]

*'It is impossible to get binding finance promises by cofinancing national or regional institutions before the projects start.'* [2000 project]

### **3. Administrative distance**

*'Maybe the contact should be more direct. It is difficult to understand a project only through paper, and for us it is difficult to explain too.'* [1998 project]

*'There should be an opportunity for projects to be evaluated together.'* [1999 project]

### **4. Need for increased resources**

*'The EC should increase the financial support'* [1998 project]

*'The budget was too small for our requirements.'* [2000 project]

In addition to these issues, which would to a certain extent arise in evaluations of most EU funding programmes, some other remarks appear to be of particular relevance in the field of RML or are significant in the context of the present evaluation. They have been highlighted in the next section, which closes the analysis of projects funded under calls for proposals.

#### **1.2.8. Relevant issues**

A few remarks raised by project beneficiaries deserve some further insight, as they indicate specific difficulties of organisations operating in the field of regional and minority languages. A few issues raised in this section are connected to elements of chapter 2, which deals with the present context of organisations active in the field of RMLs and their position vis-à-vis EU developments.

**Among the relevant concerns that arose in the course of the present evaluation is the lack of continuity in the funding for projects in support of regional and minority languages** (*'We need a continuous support urgently, not only temporary'*), **the difficulties encountered concerning cross-national networking** (*'We had difficulties in finding international partners'*), **the human resources that were available to monitor funded projects** (*'I have the impression that the Commission officials we deal with, like ourselves, have a very heavy work load'*) and **the dissemination of results** (*'Resources should be made available for the dissemination of results'*).

The following paragraphs gather opinions from questionnaires and interviews which show the key elements at stake here. They are complemented with evidence collected

throughout the process. While not necessarily representing a large share of responses, they have arisen in the course of the present evaluation and appear to be relevant to the general aims of the present evaluation.

### **Continuity of support**

As previously indicated, support for annual projects, as that provided under calls for proposals in 1998 and 1999, often fuelled organisations' activities much beyond the intended project scope. Tiny organisations found never-seen-again opportunities on which to sustain organisational development. **It could be argued that EC funding for RML organisations was not initially intended for organisational support of this nature, nor to support initiatives of as local a nature as was the case of some funded projects, yet the paucity of other existing support at the local, regional and national level somehow gave the EC's funding line a 'lifeboat' status to small organisations that will hardly apply to any other EC funds.**<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> One 1999 project provided funding for the 'enhancement of a school site as a safe play area for the students', as part of the project's aim to support immersion education in one given RML, whilst the allocation of grants to a few projects in 1998 was made on the grounds that '*the situation of [the language] makes this funding a priority*' – this may somehow respond to the loosely-specified selection criteria of 'promotion of the language' ('the project must significantly promote the utilization of the language').

<sup>48</sup> Projects of up to 24-month duration were only eligible under the 2000 call for proposals, and thus amount to slightly over 10% of the projects which are object of the present evaluation. Both 1998 and 1999 provided for projects of a maximum of 12 months.

<sup>49</sup> The titles of a sample of 10% of funded projects (30), including the name of the organisation in a few cases, was searched on the Google search engine. This included 10% of projects per each call for proposals. Only 12 searches returned positive responses and 2 were discarded for the sole reference to them came from the EC's own list of projects funded in the 2000 call for proposals.

<sup>50</sup> The sample included 17 projects that had included (either in final reports or questionnaires) the building of a website among their stated final outcomes. Projects the sites of which were still updated include Generalitat de Catalunya's *European Minority Languages Website* (1998), Basque Government Departamento del Interior's *Multilingual Police Terminology Bank* (1998), Welsh Language Board's *Celtic Languages Initiative* (1999), Förderverein für Jiddische Sprache und Kultur's *Yiddish Language and Culture for Internet Self-study* (1999), Instituto de Desenvolvimento Social's *Lhéngua* (1999), Union Latine's *Linmiter* (2000) and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya – Internet Interdisciplinary Institute's *Atlantis Observatory* (2000).

<sup>51</sup> Generally, the Commission does not intervene in the management of individual projects, although it may suggest a project framework or topic. For a further (if brief) discussion of MININF, see 1.3.2. Activities and Projects in this chapter.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. EBLUL Biennial Report 2001-2002 (Brussels: EBLUL 2003), p. 10

<sup>53</sup> We will not enter here into details of the technical problems of the site because, theoretically speaking, these lie outside the time frame here considered. The technical development and subsequent difficulties emerged only in early 2003. Fact is that the Lingualia portal was not up in the time frame first agreed, but has become fully operational only by early 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Please note that, as multiple choices were possible, the percentages do not add up to 100%. Also, many of the EU site users may also look to EBLUL for further information. Thirdly, the questionnaire did not specify a specialised EU website, but inquired about a general knowledge and use of EU websites. Nonetheless, more organisations from the RML sector look towards these than to the specialised EBLUL site.

<sup>55</sup> These findings are backed up by data from the questionnaire responses analysed in the course of these, which show that only 43.86% of representative organisations from the RML sector are aware of Mercator Education. Nonetheless, Mercator Education scores highest of the three centres in this respect, with Mercator Media known by 40.4% of the sector, followed by only 38.6% Mercator Legislation. In the interviews conducted with an (arbitrary) selection of project beneficiaries, it also transpired that of the three Centres, Mercator Education was most known for its actual content production.

<sup>56</sup> While in responses to the questionnaires received (from organisations that did not receive RML funding), respondents gave Mercator Education a comparatively low 5.57 in a scale of 10, interviewees

In addition to the difficulties created by the disappearance of funding after 2000, the issue is relevant in its revealing the need for support beyond the funding line's 12- or 24-month period.<sup>48</sup> Particularly for some of the programme's aims and fields of activity

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(such as 'language description and standardisation') and increasingly as funding moved to cross-national networking in later editions, it appears obvious that language-related projects, as it happens with most process-related activities, call for longer-term development. Whilst the success of funded projects in delivering products to their communities, particularly those less well-off in terms of language speakers and institutional support, is hard to dispute, **doubts remain about the ability of many beneficiaries to sustain their activities beyond projects' lifetime and their immediate future.** The fact that very few of the projects funded between 1998 and 2000 paved the way for subsequently sustained partnerships (organisations that *have* maintained contacts mostly had them in the first place) also points to the need for longer-term support.

### **International networking**

As indicated earlier, international networking was not a prerequisite for applications under the 1998 and 1999 calls for proposals, although references to the 'European dimension' of projects were made in the former's call and networking was one eligible activity in the latter. The 2000 edition did not explicitly require partners from more than one EU member states either but, in its inclusion of 'exchange of experiences', 'creating networks of key players', 'developing joint solutions', 'transfer of expertise' and 'coordinated programmes' as targeted activities, clearly made the case for applications containing a transnational dimension. This proved clearly difficult for would-be beneficiaries, many of which had been able to receive funding under previous years' calls for proposals while failing to hold contacts with organisations in other countries. **Both the low degree of international networking that is perceived among most RML organisations (as seen above, only 54% of organisations which had projects funded could develop international relations thereafter) and their scarce awareness of existing resources (information, networking, funding – as shall be seen later) made it impossible for many former beneficiaries to apply under later calls for proposals.** This being a greater difficulty the smaller an organisation is – information presented in the next section will show that roughly 40% of organisations active in the promotion of regional and minority languages do not have regular access to information on EU developments -, the question remains, to what extent other EU funding opportunities cater for the needs of larger RML organisations which do hold international contacts – and to what extent a fair trade-off can be expected from such operations (i.e. whether EU programmes in the fields of education, training, culture or regional development can be the source of funding targeted in such a way so as to promote regional and minority languages), which will almost certainly exclude the majority of languages on a lesser demographic and institutional footing.

Even if projects were successful in finding international partners and achieving funding for the project, however, cooperation between international partners is often rather difficult due to the scarcity of resources that can be destined to travel between the countries. As one project (1999, 2000) commented, the cooperation with their partners (including distinguished, established and experienced institutions) had to be reduced to mainly only phone or e-mail contact, as regular meetings could not be financed out of the project's funds. This led to a generally rather passive participation in the project's process, and not towards an active cooperation activity distributed evenly amongst the cooperation partners.

### **Dissemination of results**

Although dissemination was never mentioned as one core, necessary element of funded projects and only the 1999 call for proposals made it explicit (the next year's edition also promoting exchanges of information), it seems only natural that projects aimed at the enhancement of language whether in education, culture, media, research or other socio-economic areas would place a certain emphasis on ensuring a broad dissemination of their results. This was the case among many projects, particularly those operating in education and led by organisations directly involved in that field of activity (e.g. schools) or projects benefiting a language with a relatively reduced use area (as indicated elsewhere, communication among organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages seems to privilege person-to-person means).

Yet as previously indicated, many projects did not make provision for the dissemination of their final outcomes, and it seems likely that they have never reached their expected audiences. **Evidence collected in questionnaires and interviews points to a greater need for dissemination methods particularly among those more widespread languages (e.g. Catalan) or those projects which had a cross-national nature – it is here that existing resources proved less decisive, projects having to face stiffer competition.** An effort was clearly made by many beneficiaries in the 1999 and particularly the 2000 edition to strengthen projects with an IT-dimension, websites becoming more present than previously, yet it would still seem necessary to have developed the necessary means to ensure a proper promotion or dissemination of funded projects' end products.

Research on the Internet visibility of funded projects was undertaken in the course of the present evaluation. It led to the conclusion that **two thirds of projects funded between 1998 and 2000 did not appear to be visible in the Internet.**<sup>49</sup> Those which did appear were most often mentioned in websites based in their same member states. Whilst the time elapsed since some projects finished and their focus on person-to-person communication may partly account for such absence, this and evidence gathered in other sections of this report indicates that **one recurrent need for organisations representing regional and minority languages is their ability to be present and active in digital channels.**

On the other hand, evidence was sought about the extent to which those funded projects the outcomes of which had included a website had been able to maintain their sites operational. A 50/50 split exists among those projects the sites of which had not been updated for over one year or no data for which was found (i.e. no website for the leading organisation or the project) and those projects that had been able to sustain websites and update them regularly – this included projects representing Basque, Catalan, Mirandese, Welsh, Yiddish and two multilingual projects.<sup>50</sup>

### **Assessment and monitoring of projects**

At the point of selection, it has been the impression that the resources and time available for the selecting and assessing the quality of projects were limited. It has been noted on grounds of evaluators' comments that an average of 1,66 dossiers could be monitored within an hour, which corresponds to under 40min per application. These factors, and certain individual concerns expressed by language planners interviewed,

who had (successfully) submitted proposals over the years, regarding the general basis of selection on language planning criteria, could imply that selection procedures may not always have taken place under ideal circumstances. However, it has not been possible in the course of this present evaluation to carry out a thorough analysis of selection procedures employed, and therefore no conclusions can be warranted.

On the other hand, the variety of documents with which beneficiaries attested the results of their funded projects makes actual monitoring of outcomes highly difficult. Although funded organisations often complemented their final reports with copies of books, videos or CD-ROMs that had been produced as a result of their projects, evidence collected is in some cases scarcely sufficient to analyse whether the expected target audience had been reached, or whether activities had been performed as initially designed. In connection with this, one 1999 beneficiary organisation argued that '*[the] instructions for the final financial accounts and the way the "impact" of a project is measured could be made more clear. Perhaps a more standardized outline of a final report would help?*'

Contributions by some projects that provided research and new content on the role of regional and minority language within several domains of regional development (e.g. tourism, information technology) appear to be relevant to several EC policy premises - development of RMLs contributing to sustainable regional development, to social inclusion and to the enhancement of cultural and sustainable tourism. Outcomes of these projects seem particularly relevant in the advent of mainstreaming and call for a strengthening of the EBLUL / Mercator interface between organisations generating knowledge and programme designers at the EU level (those in the field of linguistic diversity, but also in regional policy, research, IST).

### 1.3. Analysis of EBLUL

#### 1.3.1. Introduction and basic description

The European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL) is a democratically governed independent NGO promoting European regional and minority languages and linguistic diversity. It was established in 1982 through the Arfé Resolution of the European Parliament, and is funded mainly by the European Commission. The largest body active at European level in this field, it works to inform the members of regional and minority language communities about EU policies, funding programmes and opportunities, and to promote European policy-making in favour of these languages and linguistic diversity.

#### Structure

The Bureau has its headquarters in Brussels, run by an on average 6-strong team, and currently one Info Point in Dublin. This Info Point used to be the original EBLUL headquarters, before EBLUL concentrated its presence and activities on Brussels, and thus gradually reduced the Ireland office, leading to its conversion into an Info Point in 2001. This Info Point is fully funded by the Irish government. Other Info Points, also to be funded by regional and/or national authorities, are currently in preparation, with one in Bratislava due to open next year.

EBLUL formally is based on a network of currently 16 Member State Committees (the 15 current member states of the European Union plus Poland), which each in turn represent the regional and minority language communities of their respective country, at times through specific sub-committees. Altogether the MSCs directly comprise about 6-7 organisations each, including NGOs, government organisations, associations or individuals such as journalists or academics. Some are also umbrella groups for other NGOs, which thus indirectly participate. Three times a year the MSCs participate in a General Council, at which EBLUL's policy is determined. The MSCs meet in a General Assembly to discuss the Bureau's forthcoming activities and strategies. Every three years these constituents elect a 6 strong Board of Directors, including the EBLUL president, which has overall responsibility for EBLUL's operation.

The organisation of EBLUL is based on annual work programmes, drawn up on the basis of long-term activities and of a number of individual projects. The Language Policy Unit at the DG EAC of the European Commission, providing the lion's share of EBLUL's funds, has an input in discussing the work plan with the Bureau and gives its approval on an annual basis.

Generally, management, coordination and representation functions are responsibility of the Secretary General and the Office Manager. The Project Officers, of which there are at least three (plus one in Dublin), organise and coordinate the individual projects (such as conferences, studies, etc.), and contribute to the long-term functions (such as the information service, documentation, etc.), which EBLUL assumes. Additionally, an editor-in-chief and currently a part-time assistant editor run the Eurolang Press Agency. The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the work of EBLUL.

### General field of operation

EBLUL works in four basic areas:

- a. It represents the European dimension to the communities through its Member State Committees (MSC) and through its Europe-wide activities. It thus works as an **intermediary** between the concerns and queries of the language communities in question, and the European Union. It advises and helps with administrative procedures and applications.
- b. EBLUL provides **information** to the communities, as well as to the regional and national authorities concerned, on European programmes, funding opportunities, policies and developments. This information is distributed through newsletters, the press agency Eurolang, and the Documentation centre, as well as through conferences and seminars, including *Partnership for Diversity*.
- c. It assumes a **political role**, in that it represents the minority language communities of Europe in its relation to EU institutions, as well as to a lesser degree other international bodies. It carries out activities towards best results in policy-making in the RML domain. These include providing European Parliament Committees and Intergroups with data and information, lobby policy-makers, and cooperate closely with the European Commission. EBLUL also has consultative status with the Council of Europe. In a wider sense, EBLUL also maintains

operational relations to bodies such as UNESCO, UN Economic and Social Council, and the OSCE.

- d. EBLUL also works as a **cooperation broker** linking and networking the different linguistic communities, and servicing them in ways as to support and promote their activities.

In correspondence to these four basic areas, EBLUL therefore carries out the following general activities:

- to attend to queries concerning the current situation of linguistic policy at European level with regard to regional and minority languages, the strategies and opportunities available through the EU's funding programmes, and governmental and parliamentary initiatives concerning the promotion and protection of RML;
- to help language communities find possible partners, encourage cooperation, assist with application procedures, and service practical queries;
- to maintain and update a free, publicly-accessible website with a broad link list, accessible or downloadable documents, and specialised information on the political and policy aspects of the sector. It is also responsible for the technical maintenance of the joint EBLUL-Mercator Information Portal [Lingualia.net](http://Lingualia.net).
- to disseminate news and information through its independent press agency EuroLang, as well as through newsletters, publications, and information brochures.
- to organise conferences, seminars and meetings with representatives of the RML sector, especially in order to network them amongst each other, and to broker concrete links with national, regional and local authorities
- to supply the EU and other public institutions with factual information, and work towards positively determining policy-making on behalf of their constituencies.

## Budget

Around 77% of the funds received by EBLUL stem from the European Commission. The Bureau receives further funds, some of them project-specific, from regional and national governments (Ireland, Friesland, Luxembourg, etc.) and some private organisations.

**Table 1.12. Annual budgets for EBLUL**

According to work programmes and activity reports, 1999-2000 and 2000-01

### 1999-2000

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	457,870.00	480,675.00
General Expenditure	87,035.00	106,932.00
Travel and Subsistence	60,470.00	49,922.00
Conferences/Seminars	60,470.00	38,233.00
Production, dissemination, information	87,040.00	74,210.00
Other	160,700.00	154,809.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>913,585.00</b>	<b>904,781.00</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	800,000.00	800,000.00
Other subsidies	70,640.00	65,500.00
Revenue generated by project	0	0
Self-financing by applicant	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>870,647.00</b>	<b>865,500.00</b>

### 2000-2001

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	500,000.00	503,727.00
General Expenditure	84,100.00	86,036.00
Travel and Subsistence	59,380.00	59,021.00
Conferences/Seminars	56,720.00	63,245.00
Production, dissemination, information	93,300.00	104,294.00
Other	201,445.00	204,379.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>994,945.00</b>	<b>1,020,702.00</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	797,500.00	797,500.00
Other subsidies	139,445.00	144,652.00
Revenue generated by project	58,000.00	56,792.00
Self-financing by applicant	0	21,758.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>994,945.00</b>	<b>1,020,702.00</b>

### 1.3.2. Analysis of activities

As outlined above, EBLUL functions through general ongoing activities, as well as through particular and temporal projects. Pertinent to this study are thus:

- The **structure**, including the administrative structure, the relationship to the Member State Committees, and the Board of Directors. This includes the institutional relations and political dimension of EBLUL's work.
- The **activities and projects** carried out by EBLUL, both those funded long-term from the EBLUL budget and a selection of projects funded separately through the European Commission. Particular reference will be made to Partnership for Diversity, Study Visits and Euroschool, and Eurolang.
- The **dissemination** strategy in general, and the Eurolang press agency, the Contact Bulletin, the websites, and the publications in particular.
- **Evaluation** procedures, assessment and audits.

### Structure

While the basic structure of EBLUL – balancing Member State Committees, the Board of Directors, and Project/Managing Staff – has remained unchanged over the years,

internal changes have been regular, and the management of these represent a part of EBLUL's regular activities. These changes concern most of all the final transfer of headquarters from Dublin to Brussels in 2001. In 1999/2000, EBLUL still had four people working in Dublin, and 7 more in Brussels, with financing divided 47%-53% to the advantage of the Brussels bureau.

This distribution made staff and administration costs rise well above 55% of general expenditure. Current structures still position such expenditure at just under 55%, which includes staff costs related to the performance of projects and regular activities such as information services.

**EBLUL has experienced a high staff turnover over the past years.** This is a worrying development because of its impact on the available expertise and continuity. Complications in internal management and external financial pressures appear to contribute significantly to this development.

The closure and subsequent reorientation of the Dublin office into an "Info Point", now fully funded by the Irish government, is a model that EBLUL aims to extend to other countries. While negotiations with Helsinki and Vienna have failed due to political concerns of the respective countries, negotiations for the set up for the first Info Point in Bratislava seem well under way, and will be included in next year's work programme. In fact, the management has pointed out that there is a **general determination to make the structure in Brussels lighter and to work towards increasing decentralisation.**

### **Member State Committees**

A General Council is held three times a year, and the MSCs also meet in a General Assembly to discuss the Bureau's forthcoming activities and strategies. They also democratically elect the Board and president every 3 years. The Board and MSC meetings are therefore a central part to EBLUL's regular activities, a fact that is corroborated by the Member State Committees consulted, which have generally expressed approval of the structure.

Currently, while all MSCs work towards EBLUL and provide it with information and logistic help if approached, there seems to be a different weighting of the individual MSCs in regard to their influence, their grade of coordination and input. This is due amongst others to the voluntary basis on which they are working, although efforts will have to be undertaken so as not to disadvantage smaller and less experienced or resourced MSCs.

Concern has been expressed both by the MSC members interviewed and by EBLUL itself that the budget for the MSCs, which in itself is more of a token contribution worth between €500 and €1.500 per MSC per year, will remain stable over the year 2004, despite a likely 10 new committees joining the venture. **While MSCs show a high motivation and are accustomed to work for EBLUL on an entirely voluntary basis, this structure may be debilitated by these developments.**

Due to these factors, the concrete influence of the MSCs on EBLUL is probably fairly low, and seems to happen usually via the board and presidency elections. **The board, and especially the president, seem to have a much greater impact on EBLUL's focus of activities and represent an indirect form of steering.** On the whole, the board and president are deemed to have worked well during the crisis years by the MSCs interviewed in the course of this evaluation, although some individual MSC members interviewed also voiced their concern as to the flexibility of the system and its influences on EBLUL decision-making in the long run. The work with the different MSCs, while considered important and generally smooth, thus also provides for frequent difficulties, making the whole structure a very complex one to balance.

### **Distribution of functions**

Currently, EBLUL works as an **amalgam of around 10 to 12 projects**, of which some are rather to be considered regular activities (such as Eurolang, or the Documentation Centre, for instance). Each of the projects requires the approval of the EBLUL Board of Directors and of the European Commission. While both instances are clearly interested in the effectiveness and balance of EBLUL's work, it could be observed that the Commission is principally concerned that EBLUL function efficiently as a technical agency (offering information, documentation, and consultation services), while the board monitors particularly its political and lobbying activities.

EBLUL presents these projects in an annual work program, which is internally designed with an input from MSC representatives, the board of directors and EBLUL staff, before they are discussed in detail with and approved by staff at the European Commission. The MININF project, for example, was the reply to a specific demand of the Commission, while Eurolang is a project thought up and initiated by journalists who are represented in several Member State Committees.<sup>51</sup>

Generally, staff at EBLUL are directly assigned to specific functions, such as running the Documentation Centre, editing Eurolang, or coordinating the Dublin Info Point. Further to these, different staff members are assigned to the temporary projects suggested in the Work Programme. Moreover, staff work to organise the regular board and council meetings, on contact brokering and consultation between the regions, or editing publications. The information service, which means responding to a great number of inquiries per month, is a task taken on by all.

It is important in this context that **due to shortage of staff, no one in the office is assigned to being aware of calls for proposals, for contacting partners, and for carrying out application procedures.** This activity is generally done in extra hours, which indicates the necessity of EBLUL to find extra sources to complement their funding, and to extend the area of operation. While EBLUL feels it has always been encouraged to seek alternative funding and has brought forward a series of (at times joint) proposals to other European programmes, not many have recently been successful.

Finally, EBLUL contributes to **consultations** (e.g. to programmes of the European Commission), carries out a **lobbying function** (for instance in the process of the *Convention on the Future of the European Union*; art. 3), and fulfils other official roles, such as serving the European Parliament's Intergroup for Regional and Minority Languages as its secretariat. These more political functions are also at times directed

at nation state level, if problems with the recognition or rights of minorities are concerned. Much of this attention has lately been paid to Greece, Austria (Carinthia) or Spain (Navarre), due to the political developments in these countries that directly affected at the RML community in question. They are functions that are carried out mainly by the Secretary General, the Office Manager, or particularly specialised staff.

Significantly, EBLUL has left the impression of trying to do too many things at once. **Especially in face of the current budgetary limitations, the multiplicity of projects from staff training to political meetings, conferences, board meetings and publications, may turn out to be untenable in the long run.**

### **Activities and projects**

In the period to be evaluated as well as today, EBLUL coordinates a series of projects that have been approved in the Annual Work Programme. These include regular long-term activities and services such as those mentioned above, EuroLang, the Information Service or the Documentation Centre. Further to these, there are temporally limited projects that require extra management, such as Partnership for Diversity Conferences, EuroSchool or the Study Visit Programme. Some of these projects are related explicitly to the new technologies, and have included DART, a project on software industries and normalisation bodies, MNM (*Minority Newspapers to New Media*), the EYL 2001 project *Web of Words*, or the Minority Information project MININF resulting in the Lingualia portal, to which we will make further reference below. While the European Commission does not intervene in the management of individual projects (some of which may also be funded independently under another programme or budget line), these projects are part and parcel of EBLUL's day-to-day work and mission, and therefore an important factor of its performance.

### **Information service**

There are currently 9 staff members, who answer around 450 concrete queries and requests a month, in addition to general phone calls and e-mails. Many people contact the Bureau already having projects in mind; and staff then help, advise and give information on possible financing within the European Union. Advice has generally been sought on fund raising, the evaluation of projects, networking and cooperation partners, as well as general information requests on the situation of languages, on the EU dimension, and on linguistic questions.

Towards the end of the evaluation period, around 15 concrete questions and requests were put to EBLUL per day, and most clearly focussed on finding funding possibilities and information about the programmes of the European Union. According to EBLUL staff dealing with these inquiries, the difficulty of advising on the access of EU funds has increased since the revision of the budget line B3-1006 into the more streamlined B3-1000 in 1999, which also had a significantly higher threshold, and thus proved more difficult to access. The end of the latter budget line after the 2000 call has evidently affected the consultation possibilities further. Many inquiries now centre on how to access funding in the "mainstream" European programmes, as well as on alternative funding possibilities and events. Other inquiries centred on details of individual language communities (amongst the most requested languages are Irish,

Occitan, and Basque), linguistic queries (the influence of English, or classification as a language or dialect).

EBLUL has also assisted regularly in advising projects on possible cooperation partners or the opportunity of networking. Further to this contact brokering, it has also helped evaluating individual projects, with a view to their effectiveness and eligibility for European funding.

According to the 2002-3 final report, a draft version of the revised "EU Funding Possibilities for Projects Promoting Regional and Minority Languages", originally published in 1998, was released. While we have not been able to ascertain if this publication was still released within the evaluation period, or how it is or will be distributed, it seems an important part of efficiently managing this information service, and extending its reach. At the moment, these brochures and other relevant documents are available on the EBLUL website. For a further discussion of how EBLUL disseminates information further to the phone, mail or in person inquiries, see 1.3.2.3. Dissemination in this chapter.

On the whole, therefore, and despite the end of the budget lines which had attributed a clearly defined role to EBLUL's general information services, a notable **increase of information and documentation activities over the past years** can be observed – especially regarding the funding possibilities and future strategies of the European Commission to protect and promote regional and minority languages in Europe.

### **Documentation centre**

Located on the top floor of EBLUL premises in Brussels, the Information and Documentation Centre is, to our knowledge, the only institution at European level to have a documentation or information centre dealing specifically with policies, material or publications related to the protection and promotion of regional and minority languages. Extended and re-launched in May 2000, the centre is now well prepared to, on the one hand, provide services of information and documentation through its collection of material and the answering of queries, and to host information sessions or accommodate group visits. These two are its main functions.

As regards the first, the Documentation Centre seems to be responsible for answering a great part of EBLUL's incoming queries, and attends to around 5000 a year. The staff assigned to the centre (including the by now indispensable contribution of a changing number of stagiaires) is also responsible for dealing with spontaneous visits, as well as for coordinating group visits following prior arrangements. On average, around 600 such visitors are registered per year.

The Centre targets mainly organisations or individuals involved in research, documentation, press or teaching in the sector, but is open to the interested public at large. Its services first and foremost include the provision of an expanding catalogue of journals, books, information brochures, bibliographies and databases. An E-bibliography with a personalised database, which is compatible with the cataloguing system of most libraries, is maintained, regularly updated and extended.

The Centre also provides access to all the public documents, reports, studies or position papers that are produced by EBLUL itself. These include the Contact Bulletin,

leaflets such as the "Unity in Diversity" leaflet available in 4 languages, brochures on individual languages and language communities as well as on language rights and language policies, short guides to the situation of RML in Europe and information on EBLUL's activities. During 2001-2002, the Centre has also signed an agreement with the Royal Albert II Library in Belgium, which will contribute to the distribution of EBLUL publications by forwarding them to partner libraries in 25 countries.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to its main activity of giving out information concerning RML issues and to collect material on the topic, the Documentation centre also hosts events. It hosts organised group visits (students, representatives of local authorities or associations, etc.). Further to these, information sessions are held in the Centre around two times a year, which are open for a maximum of 40 people. At each these events, policy makers, academics, MEPs, European civil servants, embassies or media representatives are invited to give papers and chair the discussions. These are well publicised and attended. Due to the limited capacity of the premises, book launches tend to take place in other venues.

### **Eurolang**

Eurolang is a press agency providing online information on issues related to regional and minority languages and linguistic diversity in Europe. First launched as a project of the annual Work Programme, it has gone on to provide an independent information and press service, and has its own image on the web. Eurolang provides national and regional media with news on developments from the European institutions, which may affect the minority communities in Europe. It also runs stories provided by stringers working in different countries on national events in the field, and supplies longer reports of a more general nature that may be of interest to its readers. Thus, it aims to fill a gap in news coverage across Europe by providing specialised information and news on the sector of regional and minority languages.

An analysis of the major news carriers in Europe (such as EUobserver, Welcomeurope, etc.) show that little attention is paid in general to contributions by EBLUL, Mercator, or indeed Eurolang. However, with an increasing number of press agencies and broadcasters paying attention to Eurolang in news releases, such as the BBC (mostly through its Welsh and Scottish branches), **chances are that this press agency is instrumental in bringing regional and minority languages, and the policies relating to them, to the fore of European media.**

Generally speaking, Eurolang seems to have a better geographical spread than the Mercator news section, as can be seen in table 4 below. With around 200 visits per day, it is also about as well visited as the institutional website. The time spent by the users is around 7 to 10 minutes, which also seems to be a decent average, and generally at par with the average EBLUL visits.

**Table 1.13. Eurolang. Articles carried per language of focus**  
01/07/2002 until 31/12/2002

<b>Language: number of articles, place of writing</b>	<b>Total</b>
MULTILINGUAL: 8 Copenhagen; 69 Brussels; 8 Turin; 3 Strasbourg; 2 Bratislava; 2 Trieste; 2 Barcelona; 4 Tallinn; 2 Dublin; 1 Flensburg; 1 Ossiach; 3 Helsinki; 1 Thessaloniki; 1 Brugge; 3 Lescar	110
WELSH: 21 Bangor; 1 Brussels	22
ROMANY: 5 Brussels; 2 Bratislava; 3 Copenhagen	10
SLOVENE: 6 Brussels; 1 Trieste; 1 Ossiach; 2 Turin	10
FRISIAN: 2 Groningen; 1 Flensburg; 1 Burgum; 3 Leeuwarden	7
CATALAN: 6 Barcelona	6
BRETON: 1 Lescar; 1 Vannes; 3 Brussels	5
ESTONIAN: 5 Tallin	5
LATVIAN: 4 Tallinn; 1 Brussels	5
OCCITAN: 2 Turin; 2 Lescar; 1 Brussels	5
SAMI: 3 Brussels; 1 Helsinki; 1 Copenhagen	5
SCOTTISH GAELIC: 1 Belfast; 4 Edinburgh	5
BASQUE: 3 Bilbao; 1 Brussels	4
IRISH: 2 Dublin; 1 Bangor; 1 Brussels	4
RUSSIAN: 3 Brussels; 1 Tallin	4
DANISH: 3 Copenhagen	3
FRIULIAN: 3 Turin	3
GERMAN: 3 Brussels	3
HUNGARIAN: 3 Brussels	3
SORBIAN: 1 Brussels; 1 Ossiach; 1 Copenhagen	3
CORNISH: 1 Edinburgh; 1 Truro	2
MACEDONIAN: 2 Brussels	2

SARDINIAN: 2 Turin	2
ALSATIAN: 1 Brussels	1
AMAZIGHT: 1 Utrecht	1
ASTURIAN: 1 Bilbao	1
FINNISH: 1 Brussels	1
FLEMISH: 1 Brussels	1
GRICO: 1 Trieste	1
LOW-SAXON: 1 Groningen	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>

EuroLang now publishes around 160 articles per quarter year (Activity Report, WP 2002-3), including full-length articles and News in Brief. This comes down to about 1-2 full-length articles per day, which is less than independent press services offer, but good average considering the limited resources, staff and funds. 14 stringers in different countries (11 member states plus Estonia) contribute articles to the agency, which the Brussels based Editor-in-Chief and a part time editor at times need to translate into English. The aim is to have one stringer per language community or country contributing to EuroLang, although this may not be possible due to financial restrictions.

**EuroLang also seems to be active in brokering information and using expertise gathered to draw attention to its service and those of EBLUL.**

Attendance at conferences, the preparation of a CD-Rom and an information leaflet, as well as the increasing attention to link the page up with other minority websites seem to have been an effective marketing strategy. EuroLang also sends updates through e-mail to recipients and regular customers across Europe, including both minority language newspapers and big majority language newspapers. The agency has also started increasing the translation of its articles into the regional languages concerned, but needs some of the current negotiations with regional governments to be successful in order to continue the service.

Being an EBLUL project, however, EuroLang has at times experienced difficulties to qualify as an independent press agency, as it tends to be regarded as the news service of an particular interest group. These are conflicting interests that may benefit from clarification in the future. Furthermore, the financial situation of EuroLang does not appear to be stable at the moment, as the work of unpaid stagiaires is still indispensable to maintain the service, and the regular payment of stringers does not seem to be guaranteed. Whether or not related to these circumstances, the turnover of staff at the level of editor-in-chief has surpassed the general EBLUL average, which adds a further weight to these considerations. Nevertheless, as it stands **EuroLang seems to have become one of the most successful of EBLUL's project.**

### **Partnership for Diversity**

Partnership for Diversity (Pfd ) is a network aimed improving cooperation in support for RML between public authorities and NGOs in European regions where these languages are spoken. EBLUL's definition states that it "enables local, regional, provincial and national authorities, official language planning agencies and appropriate private foundations to join with the European Bureau in promoting Europe's lesser-used autochthonous languages, disseminating good policies and practices, as well as in

finding partners for EU-funded projects". Lately, an emphasis has been laid on a more thorough cooperation between cities and regions. A project to develop this cooperation and emphasise the networking of European language boards did not receive funding under the Action Plan, but was granted to a similar project already initiated by the Welsh Language Board.

PfD forums held so far seem to have been very successful, as some of the organisers and participants interviewed attested. While in 2001, 8 languages from 7 countries were represented in the conference, which had received funding from the European MLIS, the 4<sup>th</sup> conference about to take place in Flensburg/Germany shows that progress has been made both in increasing the amount of participants and increasing the funding provided by the regional partners. **The forums also increasingly provide a meeting point for organisations to develop joint projects and search for funding.** Most importantly however, as they are held in the regions' territories themselves, **co-funding from the regional partners is often achieved.**

This contact brokering between regions, levels of authority and organisations responsible for RML promotion and safeguarding, which is coordinated by EBLUL staff and organised mainly by member state committees and sub-committees, responds also directly to petitions from the field. As one questionnaire respondent put it, EBLUL needs to continue

*'Strengthening of internal structure of MSC's; Strengthening relationship with local and regional authorities through partnership projects.'* [Association working in Arts & Culture]

Combining therefore 1) the networking with different players that involved in promoting regional and minority languages at the level of the communities themselves, with 2) the establishment of co-funding mechanisms and thus extra fundraising, and 3) providing practical advice and direct examples of good practice, the PfD concept seems to become extremely relevant for future action. If these are further developed, a greater complementation to European funding structures could be achieved, which would benefit all partners. Furthermore, efficient, flexible and sustainable partnerships might be established, which could lead to increased multiplier effects and concerted efforts.

**In a sense, the PfD concept continues on another level what two other now terminated projects, the Study Visits and Euroschool Projects, have achieved before it.** Both were very popular initiatives, which impacted on the grassroots and the youth sector – there, where it has the most and long-term effects. The Study Visits allowed agents and representatives from language communities to participate in coordinated visits to other such communities, in order to study the experiences, difficulties and structures applicable in the other context. Euroschool, in turn, was a project that brought school children together in a summer project, thus enhancing their self-confidence and pride as a minority language speaker, as well as the awareness of a European dimension to their culture.

Bringing young people and a wide range of RML organisation representatives together in an exchange programme of this kind has been very successful, and herefore had **very positive responses from the field.** The following are two extracts from questionnaire responses.

*Euroschool, for example could and should be organised every year for it allows contacts between children/students, teachers, families, communities and helps to increase Status and visibility.* [University]

*'It needs [...] study visits; Euroschool; secretariat for children book/other publications in lesser used languages.'* [Organisation working in Language Promotion]

These comments have been corroborated by project visits and interviews, where it often emerged that the Study Visits were the entry of many of these organisations/people into European activities, or the constituted the first moment of awareness of European activities and programmes, or of EBLUL itself. Many of the project beneficiaries interviewed had taken part in one of these projects, either before or after having gained funding for their project.

**Despite these reactions, however, the cost-efficiency and the scale of these projects may no longer be up to contemporary demands, as other projects such as PfD or Eurolang have a much wider reach, and more succinct multiplier effect.** The Study Visits came up to 95,550€ in 1999, more than 10% of the total EBLUL budget, although they were then financed through the budget line. These amounts are no longer sustainable. And while Euroschool 1998 cost less than 10% of the above amount, this was only so as it was co-financed by local partners, which themselves received their funds through the budget line – an idea that is similar to the PfD concept, but on a smaller scale.

While many of the RML speakers interviewed therefore argued for a renewed edition of the Euroschool and Study Visit programmes, these will probably need to be considered from a perspective of cost-efficiency in order to correspond to current EU standards. It is in this respect that the *Partnership for Diversity* promises a more secure footing, and a long-term multiplier effect difficult to achieve in the other formats, which nonetheless could be integrated within this platform. The principle underlying these projects, advocating the networking and cooperation of different agents and experiences in order to concentrate and concert their efforts, are in any case judged to be an effective model for the promotion of RML in Europe.

One should add here that a principal capacity of EBLUL could be more stringently fulfilled, and that is **offering consultancy to national, regional, or local authorities**. The real impact of language planning and policy making begins with the interest expressed by these authorities, and the consultancy function is one that may not to have been exploited sufficiently until now.

## MININF

The project MININF (which stands for Minority Information) was suggested by the European Commission for EBLUL's 2001-2002 work programme and served a triple purpose.

Firstly, it was meant to produce *the* central information portal on regional and minority languages, which is now called Lingualia and is hosted at [www.lingualia.net](http://www.lingualia.net). It thus aimed to streamline and enhance the web presence and visibility of RMLs, and to offer the visitors information in their minority language via, amongst others, an

encyclopaedia, searchable databases, a directory of links, and a news section. In this sense, it came as a logical extension of earlier projects working with the new technologies and internet presence, such as DART or the Web of Words.

Secondly, it aimed to provide these language communities with a free web hosting service in their respective minority language, based on open source software and multilingual technical instruments. Thirdly, the project had been suggested as a joint operation to EBLUL and the Mercator Centres, in order to enhance communication and cooperation amongst them.

The project ran into several problems along the way, delaying operational capacity until early 2004.<sup>53</sup> One setback was the difficult coordination between EBLUL and the Mercator Centres as to who would assume responsibility for the technical construction and who for the content and, correspondingly, how the financial resources for the project would be distributed in accordance with these functions. In the end, EBLUL assumed responsibility for the technical matters pertaining to the set up of the portal, and was assigned the entirety of the available budget. The Mercator Centres therefore prepared to contribute content and data, as well as some of the volunteers engaged in the translation of the tools and contents. Along the way, an editorial board to accompany the process was set up, which counts with the representation of each centre.

Due to the financial factor, MININF can be considered to have been mainly an EBLUL project within the period in question, although the institutional relations with the Mercator Network were affected by its development. The concept of the function and design of the portal also underwent changes. The original plans were for a search engine on a quantity-driven database – similar to the web engine Google, but dedicated exclusively to RML. On the entrance of the new Commission administrators, coinciding with the ongoing negotiations surrounding the management of the portal, this concept was overhauled. Lingualia has now become a quality-based, interactive portal.

The importance of the MININF project to the mission and function of EBLUL is clear, given that it meant to provide an independent, but linked information service that would target all RML communities, while giving them a prominent place on the web. However, as the main development of the portal has taken place outside the evaluation period, it is not for this evaluation to comment on further developments in this regard.

## **Dissemination**

### **Dissemination strategy**

From the questionnaires distributed among representative organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages, it has emerged that the greatest part of these, concretely 84.2%, are aware of the EBLUL's existence. Of the beneficiary organisations, too, the largest part (68.9%) are aware of the Bureau, a knowledge which is virtually independent of size and number of staff (cf. table 1.14).

**Table 1.14. Knowledge of EBLUL and Mercator, per size of organisation (number of part-time and full-time paid staff).**

Among beneficiary organisations that replied to a questionnaire.

Centre/ Size of org	1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 40	41 – 100	101 – 400	400 or more
EBLUL	73%	55%	70%	100%	63%	83%	80%
Mercator	45%	38%	30%	86%	56%	50%	20%
<b>Respondents</b>	33	29	10	7	16	6	5

These numbers indicate that EBLUL's dissemination strategy has been successful in achieving a general knowledge of its existence. However, these numbers do not take knowledge of the content of EBLUL's work or of European policies into account, nor do they reflect the efficacy of the Bureau's dissemination strategy.

From a diachronic analysis of the work programmes over the past 5 years, however, it has become evident that **EBLUL's emphasis on dissemination strategies has increased, as has the variety in the format this dissemination takes.** Apart from distributing a great variety of brochures, leaflets and invitations, holding press conferences and announcing publications, more concerted information campaigns have also taken place. For example, the cultural services of nation states' embassies in Brussels have been explicitly targeted to increase its audience. Furthermore, a great emphasis has been placed on the website, as will be discussed below in greater detail, along with the Contact Bulletin, the newsletter of the Bureau.

**Furthermore, EBLUL has over the years in question released a wide range of publications.** Although a full list of publications is not available to this study, these seem to cover small and cost-effective information brochures, such as the series called "European Languages" or "Unity in Diversity", as well as large research-based collection, such as the *Vade-Mecum*, a collection of legal documents on RML in Europe.

**Notwithstanding this trend, research carried out for this study shows that the objectives have not as yet been achieved.** While responses to the questionnaires sent out to entities in the sector show that the greatest part of the sector know EBLUL, analysis of the actual sources used, and the depth of information sought, suggest that in-depth knowledge of their work is much lower. **As table 3 shows, only 23% of RML entities actually seek their information from the EBLUL website and 22% from EBLUL publications, in comparison to 38% using the EU websites.**<sup>54</sup>

**Table 1.15. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per language**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiaries and other organisations active in the field of RML (Languages with less than 5 responses not represented)

	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/ regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/ regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
Basque	13%	19%	12%	0%	0%	6%	13%	6%	0%	6%	6%	69%	16
Breton	0%	22%	0%	22%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	9
Catalan	17%	6%	11%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	18
Frisian	33%	83%	17%	83%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	6
Galician	50%	38%	13%	25%	13%	0%	0%	38%	13%	0%	0%	25%	8
Ladin	20%	20%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	60%	0%	0%	40%	40%	5
Occitan	41%	6%	29%	18%	6%	18%	6%	6%	6%	0%	0%	47%	17
Slovenian	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	0%	33%	33%	17%	17%	0%	0%	6
Multilingual	62%	31%	28%	31%	17%	20%	24%	14%	17%	17%	3%	0%	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	38%	23%	20%	22%	15%	11%	10%	8%	8%	7%	3%	36%	
Note that for the benefit of relevance, languages with less than 5 responses have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average and totals for this and related tables. This includes respondents representing Griko (4), Alsatian, Aragonese, Romani and Yiddish (3) and 13 other languages. For the full table see chapter 2.													

If we read these figures against those in Table 1.16, we can conclude that they do not vary greatly depending on the size of the organisation in question. As evidence shows, knowledge of EBLUL's website is highest among the medium to large sized organisations (41-100 employed), while its publications are most known to even larger organisations. Nevertheless, no particular tendency can be read in these figures regarding the size of entities concerned; EBLUL seems to come through to small as well as large organisations.

**Table 1.16. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per number of workers**

Taken from questionnaires to project beneficiaries and other representative entities from the sector

paid workers	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/ regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/ regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
<b>1-5</b>	38%	24%	16%	28%	14%	4%	8%	4%	6%	6%	2%	42%	50
<b>6-10</b>	47%	24%	29%	15%	12%	20%	12%	6%	6%	18%	6%	35%	34
<b>11-20</b>	25%	19%	13%	19%	6%	0%	19%	0%	6%	19%	0%	50%	16
<b>21-40</b>	47%	20%	20%	20%	27%	7%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	40%	15
<b>41-100</b>	60%	45%	25%	15%	15%	15%	25%	30%	5%	0%	0%	20%	20
<b>101-400</b>	38%	13%	50%	50%	25%	50%	13%	13%	13%	0%	0%	0%	8
<b>401+</b>	50%	25%	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	0%	13%	13%	0%	13%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	38%	23%	20%	22%	15%	11%	10%	8%	8%	7%	3%	36%	

**This seems to suggest that while EBLUL is generally known well across the European sector, independent of country and organisation, this knowledge does not extend to the main tools of dissemination that EBLUL has at its disposal to inform the communities on the developments of the sector, nor the European dimension.** The publications and the website – meant to be *the* tools for distributing up-to-date information on Europe within the sector – are not as yet able to reach the desired audience.

These findings are corroborated by interviews with project beneficiaries and other experts from the field. These interviews suggest a great dichotomy – which cannot be read from the tables – between those institutions involved in one way or other with EBLUL (MSCs or sub-committees mainly), and those who have had only sporadic contact with it (by hearsay, infrequent information booklets, conferences in the regions).

## **Website and Contact Bulletin**

Two editions of the EBLUL newsletter, the Contact Bulletin, tend to be produced per year, with printed copies and an online PDF version available for both. EBLUL describes its purpose to be not only “the voice of the Bureau”, but also “to link and service RML communities, local and regional authorities in EU Member States, by reporting about their activities and projects”. The option on the EBLUL website to subscribe to the Bulletin seems to be well used. Nonetheless, responses from representative entities in the field suggest that slightly more people know the Contact Bulletin than the website, although the questionnaire did not make a distinction between the online and the paper version (cf. Table 5.).

**Table 1.17. Knowledge of EBLUL website and Contact bulletin.**

Taken from questionnaires to representative entities from the sector

<b>Know EBLUL website?</b>	50.8%
<b>- Usefulness? (rate 0-10)</b> (27 out of 57 have answered)	6.88
<b>Know CONTACT?</b>	57.9%
<b>- Usefulness? (rate 0-10)</b> (33 out of 57 have answered)	6.76

**The average number of visitors to EBLUL’s website, however, is good and seems to balance just below 200 per day now. The time of a visit seems to be stable at around 10 minutes.** Generally, the most frequently used services are the link search and the information search. As it stands, the website provides good basic information on EBLUL and its MSCs, its current and previous projects, some (if incomplete) data on the content of the Documentation Centre, and the Contact Bulletin Archive. Most importantly, probably, it has a part on current relevant EU calls for proposals and how to access these, as well as offering further documents on EU funding possibilities in downloadable format.

While the Annual Reports mention that many sections have over the years here studied been added to the website, such as DART, a database on terminologies in different languages, a discussion forum for board members, an online database, etc., not all of these are currently available. It is therefore difficult to judge the performance of the site during the evaluation period.

Clearly, however, there are indications that it is into the internet performance that efforts are invested. The *Web of Word* project, carried out in the framework of the European Year of Languages 2001, the MININF project (see below), are other relevant projects in this case. Ever more content and information is put up on the web, which seems to be the most efficient way to prop up data and knowledge within the target groups. **While this is regarded a positive and reasonable tendency, publicity, marketing and dissemination of its web presence and internet tools could be increased.** As the campaign around the Web of Words showed, when visits temporarily went up to around 500 per day, such concerted campaigns can be highly effective.

However, **while it is believed that the technical hitches that both the EBLUL side and the Lingualia site have been experiencing for a considerable time now are a temporal occurrence, such prolonged difficulties shed a fairly unprofessional light on EBLUL’s dissemination and representation activities.** Furthermore, the fact that both sites have been continuously down from mid December

2003 on (the last 1,5 months of this study) has made a thorough analysis virtually impossible.

## **Evaluation and assessment**

Internal assessment is assured by regular staff and board meetings, the coordination and distribution of functions, as well as the preparation of work programmes and reports. About four months are spent on preparing each annual work programme, added to which every six months a separate report on the activities carried out in the first term has to be submitted. The final report of these is substantial in its size. In addition to these internal assessments, other external evaluation mechanisms are also in place. There are four financial audits undertaken by external agents per year on EBLUL as an institution, as well as separate audits of what are considered sub-parts of EBLUL, such as EuroLang.

The above list implies a great deal of continuous paperwork to be done, which takes up a sizeable amount of EBLUL's regular activities, including people/hours of managing, secretarial and project staff. While the need for increasing transparency and budgetary control are acknowledged and appreciated, the increasingly strict rules and bureaucratic obligations undeniably impact on the distribution of work the Bureau has to carry out. The changes introduced to improve transparency and counteract corruption on a European level have implied increasing bureaucratic problems, as procedures of declaration do not always coincide with the external conditions of, for example, invoicing and outsourcing services.

It is duly noted that this factor is subject to general European Commission regulations regarding budgetary control, approval of funding cycles and lines, and transparency. Due to these, it is clearly evident that any call for the implementation of longer funding cycles or a reduced number of audits is beyond the realm of the possible. Mention should be made, however, of the effect these structures have on the resources and distribution of functions of the Bureau.

### **1.3.3. External relations**

#### **Institutional relations**

Originally established through a European Commission initiative following the so-called Arfé resolution of the European Parliament in 1982, the Bureau's contacts to the Parliament have always remained strong. This is expressed, amongst others, in that EBLUL has assumed the role of secretariat for the Intergroup on Regional and Minority Languages, a group of MEPs, individuals and organisations relevant to the field of RMLs in the EU context. Apart from these, it has consultative status with the Council of Europe, and the UN Economic and Social Council, and has operational relations to the Committee of the Regions, UNESCO and the OSCE, as well as with other NGOs, such as the Federal Union of European Nationalities.

The closest working relations are however to the European Commission, especially the Language Policy Unit, from which it has received the major part of its funding throughout these years, and for which EBLUL clearly constitutes an object of interest.

These working relations find expression through regular contact and frequent meetings between both. Particularly, the responsible Commission administrator follows EBLUL's work closely, attends conferences, monitors progress and makes clear suggestions as to the course EBLUL should be taking. The design of the annual work programme of the Bureau is a clear sign of this, as it is discussed and approved in a joint session.

Over the years covered by the present evaluation, relations between the Bureau and the EC also involved cooperation in a series of individual projects. These included the commissioning and publication by the European Commission in 2002 of the report *Support for Minority Languages in Europe*, co-authored by EBLUL's then Secretary General Tom Moring and François Grin from the European Centre for Minority Issues.

It has been noted that relations between the Commission and EBLUL have at times been complex. There have been cases, for example, when conferences on RML issues organised by the two institutions coincided on the same dates, suggesting that communication may not always have been ideal. Furthermore, the Commission has a clear understanding of how EBLUL should ideally be functioning – indications which EBLUL, being mainly funded by the Commission, has the brief to follow, although they may not at all times coincide with perspectives held by the Bureau's board or constituencies. Nonetheless, working relations between EBLUL and the Commission have always remained constructive, close and productive.

Further to the relations with the bodies on European or otherwise transnational level, **EBLUL and its MSCs are pursuing increasing institutional relations to national, regional, and local authorities.** By now, EBLUL receives financial support from, amongst others, the governments of Ireland and Luxembourg, the Community of Wallonia-Brussels in Belgium, or the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol. These partnerships, vital to the future success of EBLUL's activities, are set to increase with the continuation of the Partnership for Diversity project.

### **Relations to the RML sector**

As we have mentioned before, a total **84.2% of questionnaire respondents declared knowledge of EBLUL. This is a very positive figure and could be corroborated by field visits**, in which EBLUL was generally considered a very important entity, primarily because of the experience of liaising, informing and lobbying within Europe, and because of the sheer necessity to have a body representative of all regional and minority languages present in Brussels.

However, as earlier observations on the use of the website and knowledge of publications has made clear, **not in every case does this appreciation of EBLUL guarantee an in-depth knowledge of its activities, nor an entirely uncritical opinion of these.** As the following table demonstrates, for instance, nearly half of all the respondents knowing EBLUL think it needs improvement; a number equalled by those who have participated in its activities in one form or another. In fact, the overall position of EBLUL on a scale from 0 to 10, judging its utility, balanced at 6.75 points. This number seems to reflect the general state of affairs between an appreciation of EBLUL work, and the desire for it to be improved.

#### **Table 1.18. Assessment of EBLUL.**

Responses from representative RML entities

- Usefulness of EBLUL? (rate 0-10)	6.75
- % less than 6	35%
- % more than 8	30%
EBLUL needs improvement?	40.4%
Has your organisation participated in EBLUL activities?	40.4%

Two tendencies in this particular wish for improvement are discernible. **Firstly, there is a sense that the sector thinks well-established RML (Basque, Welsh, Breton, etc.) are over-represented, and that the small communities are not well enough considered.** Comments such as the following on how EBLUL could improve, although widely subjective, are examples of this tendency.

*EBLUL is too much considering only the small languages approved by the state governments and not enough those that do not enjoy official recognition.'*  
[ONG working in Language Promotion]

*'Sectorial continuative information about some lesser known ethnic groups.'*  
[University]

Whether or not these perceptions correspondent to the actual state of affairs, they portray a recurrent concern of organisations working in the field. And in fact, they are related to the **second tendency, which is the concern that EBLUL is not well enough aware of and related with the realities "on the ground"**:

*'To have links with the field.'*[Organisation working in Language Promotion]

*'More contact with institutions which are lesser known.'* [Regional Authority working in Arts & Culture and Language Promotion]

These comments refer to the sense that a certain "elite" is forming around the RML support in Europe, with a strong representation of researchers, activists, professionals and experts from various countries and positions meeting in the conferences and events of the sector. This elite, if we may call it such, is of course a very positive attribute, as it assures excellence and expertise. However, it may also prove detrimental to the inclusion of new audiences, and the opening towards new opinions. Concern was voiced by all agents in the field that EBLUL, Mercator or comparable conferences tend to have always the same names figure in its lists. **Efforts should thus be made to strengthen this basis but also and importantly to open it up for the next generation of activists and experts in order to guarantee continuity, new perspectives, and methodologies.**

These concerns and the wishes for an improved service apart, which also indicate the motivation and at their best the constructive critique of the sector towards their representation, it has been noted throughout the evaluation that **EBLUL's relation to the field are wide-ranging, strong and probably further improving.** It enjoys a good reputation in the field, and has been generally acknowledged to be of vital importance to the concerns of the regional and minority language communities of Europe.

#### **1.3.4. Assessment of strengths and weaknesses**

##### **Strengths:**

- A diverse, strong and fairly even spread user base and target group, with a good visibility in and assessment from the sector, including its MSCs.
- An increasingly diverse networking and partnership base, opening up possibilities for enhanced cooperation with national or regional authorities
- A currently unmatched function of providing information and documentation to and about regional and minority languages in Europe.
- EuroLang and Partnership for Diversity are the most successful initiatives to have emerged from EBLUL over the last few years. They are also interesting in their ability to raise funds from third parties, which may show a way for future EBLUL work.

##### **Weaknesses:**

- High rate of staff turnover, which may impact on continuity and stability of staff, as well as a more urgent need to provide staff training and guarantee excellence.
- Not well enough defined and delimited mission statement, including a high number of projects, which may not be covered by current budgetary and staff arrangements.
- Despite a good knowledge of EBLUL in the field, the dissemination through its website and the targeting of new audience groups are still underdeveloped. The actual content and details of EBLUL's work seems to be less known in the sector.
- Slow and insufficient reactions to the technical difficulties with the website experienced of late.

## **1.4. Analysis of the Mercator Network**

### **1.4.1. General introduction**

#### **Origins of Mercator**

Mercator was founded as an initiative of the European Commission in 1987 to meet the growing interest in various aspects of minority and regional languages and the increasing need of the language communities to exchange experiences and cooperate in a European context.

The Mercator network was thus set up to collect and store documentation and information and to carry out research on minority or regional languages in the European Union. To do so, a database with up to date material on the position of the languages has been prepared over the years. Mercator is therefore an information and documentation network that aims at improving the exchange and circulation of information on minority or regional languages and cultures, its mission being "to provide reliable objective information about the minority languages both to the majority-language populations and to the minorities themselves for whom the data provide the basis for cross-border contacts and long-term strategies". It provides the general public as well as people with special interests and professionals with up to date and reliable information on the situation of the linguistic communities. Mercator also seeks to encourage cooperation and networking between 1. Institutions and organisations, 2. Universities and 3. Local, regional and national authorities.

Mercator is a thematic network. There are three centres that cover different domains of language use: Education, Legislation and Media. Mercator Education is housed at the premises of the Fryske Akademy in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, in the region of Friesland, The Netherlands. Mercator Legislation is based in the premises of the Centre Internacional Escarré per a les Minories Ètniques i les Nacions (CIEMEN) in Barcelona. Mercator Media is based at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Alongside EBLUL, the three Mercator Centres have received main funding from the European Commission since their inception. While this funding has to be applied for annually – each Mercator centre submitting work programmes to the Commission's approval on an annual basis -, it has to date been granted every year (with the sole exception of the "crisis year" 1998), and tends to cover around 70% of the Centres' expenditure. From 1987 to 1997, funding was supplied under the B3-1006 line, and from 1999 on under the A-3015 line as "Organisations of European interest".

The analyses below contain each a description of structure, context and budget of the centres, an analysis of their activities, including an assessment of effects and outcome, and a description of their relation to the RML sector. Following the individual analyses, the Mercator Network's relationship to the European Union, the coordination between the three centres, and the relation of the centres to EBLUL will be presented and described in a joint analysis covering all three centres.

### 1.4.2. Analysis of Mercator Education

#### Introduction and basic description.

The Fryske Akademy, the institution that hosts the Mercator Education Centre, was founded in 1938 and has become over the years a renowned scientific centre for research and education in the Netherlands. The work of the Akademy focuses on the language, culture and history of Friesland. In 1991 it became allied to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences. The Akademy's work is divided into three departments (Social Sciences, Linguistic Studies and History), whose activities go clearly in line with the interests of the Mercator Network in general and the Mercator Education centre in particular. The prestigious work of the Fryske Akademy is of great social interest and highly valued in a region without any other centre of higher education. The Akademy collaborates with the University of Amsterdam in the organization of a Master's Degree program on Frisian language and literature and has plans to increase the courses offered in the future with a masters program dealing with minority languages. In these activities, the collaboration with the Mercator centre in this issue is very close. E-learning and the use of new information and communication technologies will be a challenge for the future projects of the Akademy.

Up to the current year, the Fryske Akademy has published almost a thousand books and thousands of articles on the Frisian history and language. As an average, about 25 books and 100 articles are published yearly by the Akademy. The institution's work on the Frisian language is, thus, one of their main areas of research. This work is carried out both from a philological point of view, with the preparation of dictionaries as one of their main tasks, and from a sociolinguistic perspective, raising the status of the Frisian language in Friesland as well as in The Netherlands.

#### Summary of principal activities

The Mercator Education Centre is integrated into the Department of Social Sciences of the Fryske Akademy and its main current activities can be summarized as follows:

- The **publication of regional dossiers** on regional or minority languages of the EU. At the time of the visit to the centre, 26 regional dossiers covering linguistic communities in most EU countries have been published. All of them are downloadable on the Mercator Education website.
- The renovation and development of the **website**. The number of web pages have increased enormously in the last years (from 80 to 180 in the period 2002-03).
- The creation of a **European Network of Schools**. A network of 30 schools with bi- or trilingual education systems has been set up. The aim of this network is to exchange experiences and information between the schools.
- The updating and development of the **databases**, the creation of a Digital Library (in collaboration with the Fryske Akademy) and the continuation of the Question and Answer service.

- The **coordination** with the other Mercator centres and the EBLUL and the cooperation on certain projects.

Other activities carried out in recent years by Mercator Education have been:

- Up to 2001 when the European Commission was still allocating funds for individual projects, the Fryske Akademy jointly with the Mercator Education centre conducted research on the following projects: Teacher Training (EMOL), Minority Languages in Primary Education (EMU), European Models of Bilingual Education, Provision of Learning Material (LEMA), Pre-Primary Education Report (PREP), Language Movement and Language Loss among Frisian Migrants, Trilingual Primary Education in Europe (TPEE). As can be inferred by the project names, the **individual projects accomplished up to the end of the budget line were in clear connection with the day-to-day work undertaken by Mercator Education** and a way to get deeper knowledge about specific areas in the field of language and education. Even though the results of the research can be useful at an international level for different linguistic communities, the research carried out by the Mercator Education centre logically focuses on Europe, and more specifically on the European Union countries. With the disappearance of the funding for individual projects, a type of innovative and complementary research to the day-to-day work has been lost. **Research, however, is no longer part of the core-contract of the Mercator Education Project**, although the Fryske Akademy continues its research work in the field of regional or minority languages with projects such as the 'European Survey Language Network', 'Frisian Emigrants' or 'Trilingual Schools'.
- The Digital Library project (Digibyb) is also developed at the Fryske Akademy. The project's objective is the creation of a digital library on European minority languages with text, image and sound. The pilot project will take one and a half year and will be carried out with Frisian material. The content is scientific and concerns linguistics, sociolinguistics, dialectology, cultural history, education, media and language policy. This pilot project is an ambitious and multidisciplinary work funded by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences and carried out with the assistance of the Mercator Education staff.

## **Budget**

The annual budget of Mercator Education has remained consistently low, especially in terms of staff expenditure, if compared to the other Mercator Centres or indeed EBLUL. As is the case with the other Mercator Centres, the centre depends fairly heavily on other sources of financing, such as the funds received from the Fryske Akademy, in order to continue carrying out its activities. Staff working at the centre regularly comprises one director (p/t), one coordination and information officer (f/t), one documentalist (p/t), one website editor (f/t), one secretary (p/t) and one researcher (p/t). For a detailed description of recent years' budgets, see below.

**Table 1.19. Annual budgets for Mercator Education**

1999-2000 and 2000-01, according to work programmes and activity reports

**1999-2000**

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	59,465.00	61,815.64
General Expenditure	4,016.00	2,796.08
Travel and Subsistence	600.00	596.78
Conferences/Seminars	0	0
Production, dissemination, information	9,000.00	8,892.29
Other	5,053.00	5,187.05
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78,134.00</b>	<b>79,287.84</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	64,853.00	64,853.00
Other subsidies	0	0
Revenue generated by project	0	0
Self financing by applicant	13,281.00	14,434.84
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78,134.00</b>	<b>79,287.84</b>

**2000-2001**

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	63,300.00	40,097.00
General Expenditure	2,775.00	24,625.00
Travel and Subsistence	2,684.00	1,942.00
Conferences/Seminars	0	0
Production, dissemination, information	25,410.00	28,841.00
Other	9,417.00	5,581.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103,586.00</b>	<b>101,086.00</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	70,000.00	67,500.00
Other subsidies	0	0
Revenue generated by project	0	0
Self-financing by applicant	33,586.00	33,586.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103,586.00</b>	<b>101,086.00</b>

**Analysis of activities****Research**

As can be inferred from the information provided below, all the activities of the Mercator Education staff are much in line with EU priorities regarding the promotion of linguistic diversity. As regards the enlargement process, for instance, a study on

minority languages in Eastern Europe has been accomplished and an inventory of the languages and education in the new Member states has been produced. This research study has thus paved the way for necessary future dossiers on the minority language communities of Eastern Europe (the Cashubian language in Poland, for instance, is contemplated for a future regional dossier). Reviewing current editions is also a priority, since the sociolinguistic situations described in the dossiers are by nature dynamic and continuously changing.

## **Publications**

The **preparation and edition of the regional dossiers** is one of the major tasks of Mercator Education. With these dossiers, Mercator Education succeeds in providing concise, descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in specific European regions. The information is designed to serve the needs of policy makers, researchers, teachers, students, journalists, etc. All the dossiers are now downloadable on the website both on PDF and Word versions: this has resulted in a greater distribution, visibility and accessibility to the information, apart from the minimization of printing costs. From June 2002, the statistical package of Mercator Education has been able to track the number of views and downloads of the dossiers, being the one on Irish in Ireland the most popular dossier (downloaded around 500 times). **The demand per average of the dossiers is of about 115 issues a month.** The intention of Mercator Education is to try to include all the minority languages of the EU in their dossiers and has even planned to cover very small language communities (linguistic enclaves) such as Aranese or Mirandés. In this sense, the work of Mercator is balanced, as regards the choice of the languages communities researched, and comprehensible, since it attempts to give a place to all the language communities spread over the European Union.

The regional dossiers also allow staff members of Mercator Education to get in contact with external experts and be responsive to their suggestions and advice. The edition of the dossiers implies continuous interaction between the authors and the editors as well.

Taking into account the importance of the dossiers in the general work of Mercator Education, **new software is being developed by the centre so that it will be possible to compare and analyse the dossiers on line as well as to search for more specific information in their contents.** This innovative tool will allow researchers to do comparative studies on the educational systems represented in the dossiers and will contribute greatly to improve transnational knowledge about the reality of RMLs in Europe.

Considering the expertise of the Mercator Education as a centre of information brokers and the already proven quality and usefulness of the dossiers, **it might be a fruitful task to include, in future revised editions of the dossiers, a set of recommendations for each of the linguistic communities studied.** These recommendations should focus on the necessary improvements that communities can make in the field of language planning and education. The regional dossiers might then become not only pieces of descriptive information of the different sociolinguistic realities in Europe, but also a tool that can be used to change in a positive way the actual situation of the particular regional or minority language dealt with in the dossiers.

## **Dissemination**

The centre's website went through a major renovation in 2001. Since then, many sections have been added (for example, the network of schools, the news section, the fact sheets and some language maps), general information on minority languages has also been included and the research work of recent years has been uploaded and is now consultable on line. Due to the wide range of information offered by the Mercator Education website (around 180 pages), both the specialist in language and education and the non-professional can get useful information from the different web pages offered. The growth in the amount of information, though, **should probably go parallel with a more clear and user-friendly distribution of the web pages.** Surprisingly though, especially if compared with the two other Mercator centres, the website is practically monolingual in English and the presence of other languages, especially of Frisian, is insignificant. As a comparative example, the survey that the Mercator Legislation centre offers in order to get feedback of their users is available in four languages, while the one offered by Mercator Education is only provided in English. Two or three languages are used on the website of the other two Mercator centres.

In general, there is a willingness on behalf of the Mercator staff to create a more modern, interactive and updated website so that the number of visitors increases in the future (**the average number of visitors per day is roughly 60**), giving more visibility to the work of Mercator. With the inclusion of the website in different search engines, an effort has been made to gain visibility on the web.

Participation by staff members in congresses and other meetings also helps publicize the work of the Mercator Education centre. Mercator staff members have given lectures in a number of conferences around Europe, including events in Extremadura (June 2000), Barcelona (April 2001), Luxembourg (April 2001), Udine (May/June 2001), the World Congress on Language Policies (Barcelona, April 2002) and the 5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on European Languages and Legislation (Miranda do Douro, April 2002).

## **Services rendered**

Mercator Education has evolved in the last few years from being a central data-storage place to a **centre of information brokers**, where those who seek or request information on RMLs can be guided to the most relevant sources. This change has probably to do with the growth of Internet and the spread in its use and, consequently, with the massive amount of information that can be obtained via the web. The amount of information available on the Internet is of differing quality, being thus essential the advice of professionals in the field.

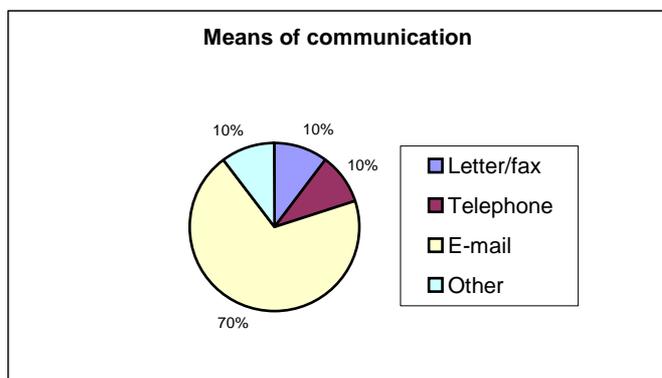
As for the setting up of a joint web portal for minority languages called Lingualia, Mercator Education staff stresses the need for more cooperation between all three Mercator Centres and the EBLUL so that a more qualitative approach can be given to the up to now gathered information. Cases of overlapping and double work have been reported in the setting up of the Lingualia portal, as shall be seen later.

Through field visits and the publication of articles in different specialized journals, **the expertise of the Mercator Education staff has also been put into practice, giving advice on the design of educational language policies.** One example of these visits is the participation in an International Committee on Linguistic Rights in Asturias (Spain). These kind of activities should become in the future one of the basic tasks of Mercator Education.

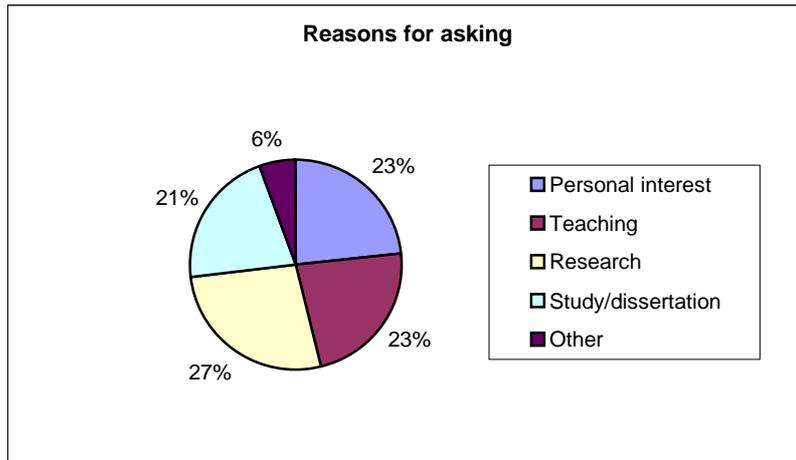
Statistics of Mercator Education website include the number of (unique) visitors to the website, the origin (both country and continent) of those visitors, the database and the regional dossiers usage. On demand, Mercator Education gives information about its activities and about multilingualism in education. **There has been though a decreasing use of the Question and Answer service.** The approximately 200 questions a year received are, in any case, an important number of enquiries. According to the Mercator staff about half of them are basic questions that can be answered quite straightforwardly, while the other half require some time of consideration. The statistics show that **questions regarding the regional dossiers, education and the Frisian language account for almost 70 % of the questions received.** In general, there seems to be a need to make an effort on behalf of all Mercator centres to publicize more its services and activities. The general perception is that **the degree of knowledge and visibility of the centre and its activities is still low in spite of its long existence.**<sup>55</sup>

More detailed information about the Question and Answer service included in the 2002-2003 report is shown in the following figures.

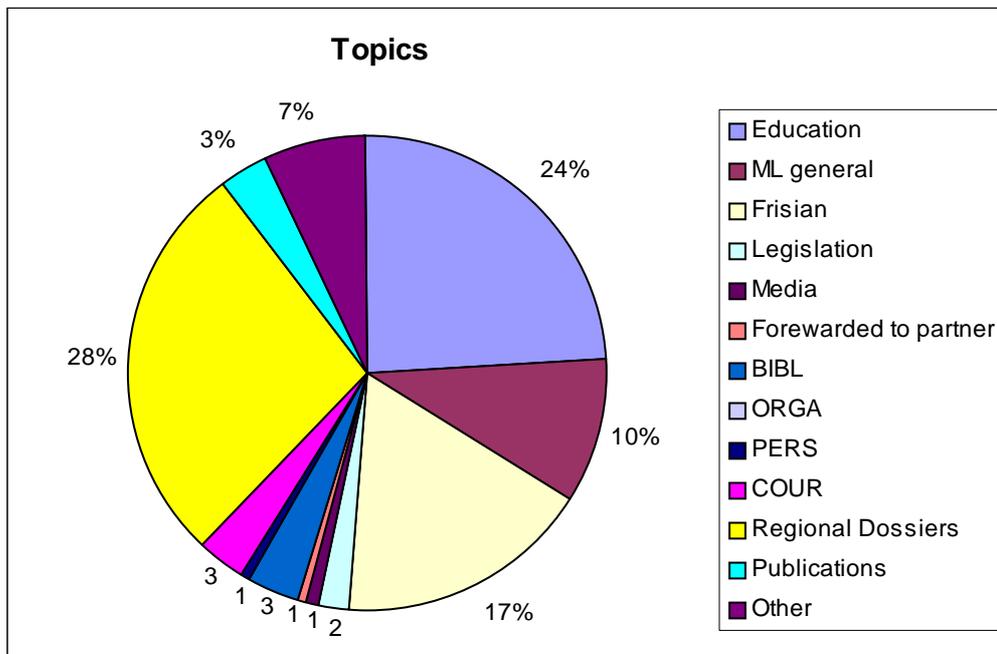
**Figure 1.1. Means of communication through which queries are received**  
According to the Activity report, 2002-03



**Figure 1.2. Reasons for asking.**  
According to the Activity report, 2002-03



**Figure 1.3. Topics raised by questions received**  
According to the Activity report, 2002-03



### **Evaluation**

The Mercator Education self-evaluation methods take different forms. One of them is the staff coordination meeting that takes place approximately once a week in order to exchange information on the development of every person's activities. Once a month the Social Sciences section of the Fryske Akademy, in which the Mercator centre is included, has a meeting where the work of Mercator is discussed. There are also annual reviews that are carried out for every staff member.

Furthermore, an annual report on completed activities is produced and sent to the European Union, in which the progress of the centre's activities and plans for the future are thoroughly presented. This report serves both as a reflection on the work

done by the centre and as the presentation of the centre's priorities for the coming years. As expressed by the staff of Mercator Education, a **more frequent and deeper feedback from the European Commission (more specifically from the Language Policy Unit) to the annual reports could certainly help** the centre design and implement new activities in line with the priorities on language policy of the EU. There is a general concern on behalf of the Mercator Education centre in regard to the role that European minority languages are to play within the framework of the general EU language policy. The feeling remains that knowledge generated by the Mercator centres is not sufficiently integrated in EU policymaking, e.g. in programmes related to education and educational exchanges which could benefit from first-hand data gathered by the centre. In spite of these concerns, the staff's motivation is high, which proves fundamental to the work generated by Mercator Education.

The Fryske Akademy's general activities, in turn, are evaluated every year by an Advisory Board and every five years by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (RNAAS). The last evaluation by the RNAAS considered the work of the Mercator to be of extremely high quality. The report, covering the period 1995-2001, includes an evaluation of the Department of Social Sciences, including the activities of the Mercator centre. The evaluation commission of the RNAAS holds a high opinion of Mercator Education's work: it particularly highlights its usefulness, as well as external appreciation for the quality of the research conducted, and underlines the importance of the network-building role of Mercator. An excellent qualification is given to Mercator Education, as well as to its head director, Prof. Durk Gorter, for the quality of their work and initiatives. This is an added value for the work of the Department of Social Sciences. It recommends to deepen the aspect of theoritization on the basis of the materials obtained by Mercator Education networks. Whereas RNASS is impressed by the successfulness of this sector to obtain contracts for scientific and educational support research, **it points to the risk that the quest for contracts could jeopardize the consistence/coherence of the scientific research programme.** Particular appreciation is given to research on trilingual education, as well as its relevance in the context of progressive European integration.

## **External relations**

### **Relation to the RML sector**

Responsiveness to interest and petitions from the RML Sector is given due consideration by Mercator Education, and takes predominantly form through the development of action-research oriented regular activities.

Past involvement in tertiary training schools led to the creation of a European network initiated in 1993 as a result of Mercator Education presence to which it continued side-wise involvement.

Thus, preparations of the regional dossiers and field trips to RML areas often result in demands about the existence and regulations of RML schools were formulated and crystallized in moving towards the creation of the Network of RML schools. The creation of a database concerning RML in Education entries equally responds to demands formulated to Mercator Education to facilitate comparative materials concerning legislation and institutions concerning RML education.

Whereas the degree of responsiveness largely follows from the interaction between the Mercator Education regular activities and the feedback on these by actors in their network, consideration and final decision-making to reply positively to these demands remains with those responsible for the Mercator Education. While this continues to be the case, the developments since 1998 have meant maintaining this level responsiveness has become a more complex task.

Within the RML sector, Mercator-Education is reported to have various collaborations with the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI, Flensburg), the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (South Tyrol), the European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz, Austria), the EastWest Institute in Prague as well as with the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme of UNESCO.

Weak contacts characterized by an occasional relationship without cooperation on joint programmes are reported to have been established with the UK-based Minority Rights Group and the Germany-based Society for Threatened Peoples/Gesellschaft für Bedrohte Völker. Relations with these organisations take the form of mutual petitions for information on specific issues as well as mutual exchange of documentation and information materials.

In conclusion, **relations with representative entities of RML sector indeed exist, although their scarce frequency and regularity impede a higher visibility of Mercator Education.** Existing contacts, including occasional collaborations, clearly indicate that Mercator Education is not only known to these organisations, but moreover that its work is respected.<sup>56</sup> Provided adequate resources are found, investment in deepening existing contacts and broadening its contacts and collaboration may prove to be a cost-effective way to enhance Mercator Education's visibility, optimise its output, and to contribute to setting the RML agenda of these organisations.

### **Coordination and multiplier effect**

As described above, Mercator Education activities have indeed been channelled towards other thematic networks or third projects. The multiplier effect towards academic networks is a special feature of the Ljouwert Centre as the director of Mercator Education combines his dedication to Mercator with a position at the University of Amsterdam, **allowing for optimisation of interaction between academic and Mercator activities.**

The above-mentioned academic networks and the applied Mercator networks are mutually supportive and complementary, ensuring Mercator spin off to the academic world while providing the Mercator network with scientifically sound academic input. **Major Mercator Education efforts in this field aim at main-streaming RML related concerns and priorities into the broader academic fields of e.g. linguistics and education:** thus Mercator Education experts focus on Linguistic Landscape from the perspective of RML as their specific contribution to ongoing academic mainstream research on the linguistic landscape.

Moreover virtually every thematic project executed by Mercator Education brings a network of its own around. Whereas some of these may be formalized – the Network of Schools – a vast majority is to be seen as loosely operating “resource” of contact

points operating on an ad-hoc basis with low visibility. Relations evolve on an ad-hoc basis and are primarily needs-based. The life cycle of such networks is quite short as these heavily depend on persons rather than on institutions. Funding possibilities condition the maintenance and promotion of these networks, including the sustained interest of its contact points.

Whereas the intertwining of Mercator and academic networks contributes to ensure the academic quality of Mercator Education and the complementarity of the network actions are mutually reinforcing, the question arises whether this degree of dependence does not stem from the lack of alternative resources to guarantee RML activities and, if so, what will happen to those RML activities if one of the two networks will face budgetary restrictions. The need to ensure budgetary resources needed to ensure high level RML activity risks to oblige Mercator Education not only to invest in fund raising activities but also, as a result, to the diversification of these very activities. Indicative for this dilemma seems to be **the short-lived experience with the short life cycle of networks in which Mercator has been participating and whose continuity have stranded due the lack of adequate funding.**

## Assessment of strengths and weaknesses

### **Strengths:**

- The support of the Fryske Akademy to the Mercator Centre, acting as a host institution and providing for Mercator Education an excellent working environment.
- The high quality of the regional dossiers and in general of all the publications and research of Mercator Education.
- The promotion of networks through initiatives such as the creation of a network of trilingual schools where teachers and parents from diverse geographical origins will be able to exchange experiences.
- The technologically innovative projects that are currently being developed such as the Digital Library or the new software that will be used to compare the information provided by the regional dossiers.
- The high motivation, expertise and commitment to the field of regional or minority languages of all the staff members to the Mercator Education centre and the preparation and capacity to face up to future challenges such as the EU enlargement.
- Increasing coordination and avoidance of overlapping over the years among all Mercator centres and EBLUL.

### **Weaknesses:**

- Visibility and impact of work done should be greater. Awareness and knowledge of the Mercator Education centre activities seem to be still relatively low. The organization, as from the Work Programme 2002-03, of an annual symposium could counterbalance this weakness.

- A monolingual and little user-friendly website. The growth in the number of pages should be accompanied by a more clear distribution and layout of the information.
- Some overlapping and lack of coordination between EBLUL and Mercator centres still exists as shown by the information gathered regarding the setting up of the MININF project.
- Related to the previous point, asymmetry in size and scope of EBLUL, on the one hand, and the three Mercator Centres on the other hand hinders a clearer definition in the distribution of functions among them.

### 1.4.3. Analysis of Mercator Legislation

#### Introduction and basic description

The Mercator Legislation centre has its premises at the site of the Centre International Escarré per a les Minories Ètniques i les Nacions (*International Escarré Centre for Ethnic Minorities and Nations*, CIEMEN) in Barcelona.<sup>57</sup> A non-profit cultural

<sup>57</sup> Escarré refers to the late Aureli Maria Escarré (1908-68), former abbot of the Monastery of Montserrat and a well-known symbol to the Catalan cause under the Franco regime.

<sup>58</sup> Only 6 of 65 documents published in issues 34-50 were more than one year old. In a few cases, delay was due to the non-publication of any issues in late 1998 and 1999 – due to technical reasons -, whereas the inclusion of *Dossier* as a complement to several *Bulletin* issues meant that older documents complementing the issues covered in *Dossier* were included in *Bulletin* (eg. a 1977 document concerning Greece was included in *Bulletin* 44 alongside *Dossier* 5, which focused on that country).

<sup>59</sup> See Mercator Legislation, *Final Report 2002-03*, p. 28, which includes a chart for documents printed from the centre's website.

<sup>60</sup> Through a Google-led analysis conducted in January 2004, 66 web pages were found to include a link to Mercator Legislation, including the current addresses [www.ciemen.org/mercator](http://www.ciemen.org/mercator) and [www.ciemen.org/mercator/index-gb.htm](http://www.ciemen.org/mercator/index-gb.htm) and the no-longer operational [www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator](http://www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator) and [www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator/index-gb.htm](http://www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator/index-gb.htm). Universities referring to the page include the University of Lleida, the University of Wales at Aberystwyth, the University of Wrocław and Québec's Université Laval, plus – for the old address – Exeter University, Université Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle, University of Pennsylvania and Freie Universität Berlin. Other organisations which feature the page include a research group related to the Organisation de la Francophonie, a UK-based Forum for Germanic Studies and one Latvia-based link page. While acknowledging that a reduction in references to the centre's website may have been the result of its server and address change in late 2002, the time elapsed since should have served to correct this.

<sup>61</sup> Although the scope of the present evaluation ends in late 2002, reference is made in a few cases to later developments where this serves to complete the framework. In the present case, the fact that Mercator reports – as those of EBLUL – are drawn for 12-month periods ending in April and Mercator Legislation's change of server in late 2002 – which led to a sudden drop in visits and users in October that year – made it advisable to gather data in the subsequent months – the figure of 15,000 monthly visits was reached in March and April 2003.

<sup>62</sup> In both cases, an extension was granted by the EC for the events to be held after the initially suggested dates.

<sup>63</sup> This includes 4 conferences in Nantes (France), Ortisei (Italy), Aberystwyth (UK) and Andorra funded under project 98-06-CON-0144-00 and the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on European Languages and Legislation in Valle d'Aosta, Italy (98-06-CON-0142-00). In addition, Mercator Legislation staff took part in another meeting in Bolzano, Italy, on the days subsequent to the Ortisei and Valle d'Aosta events (April 2000), thus suggesting that project funding, in that it allowed to be in Italy at the time, was an indirect factor in this participation.

<sup>64</sup> Travel budget under the 2002/03 work programme amounted to €1,675.

<sup>65</sup> The latter was held in April 2003. While this is technically out of the period covered by the present

organisation first established in 1974, CIEMEN combines awareness-raising and cooperation tasks into a wide programme of activities related to cultural minorities on an international scale. Its range of activities includes research, documentation, dissemination, networking and campaigning in selected cases. **Through its involvement in research, grass-roots activities and international contacts, CIEMEN is a well-recognised organisation in Catalonia and its surrounding areas.** Through its related Foundation, the CIEMEN premises host a number of NGOs and other third-sector organisations, including the Catalan Federation of NGOs for Human Rights. Observing CIEMEN's activities makes it plain that a rather visible overlap exists between CIEMEN and Mercator Legislation's activities – in a way, this makes separating activities difficult, yet guarantees synergy and provides a domestic constituency to the Mercator centre. Mercator Legislation, whose focus includes linguistic rights, linguistic legislation and the use of minority languages in administration, has been based at CIEMEN since the Mercator network was set up in the late 1980s.

Within the Mercator centres' general aims of providing a high quality, specialised documentation and information service on the situation of regional and minority languages within the European Union, Mercator Legislation's objectives are as follows:

- to attend to information and documentation queries concerning the situation of linguistic rights in Europe, the juridical framework on the protection of linguistic diversity, linguistic policies currently carried out within EU member states, and governmental and parliamentary initiatives (including the EU level) concerning the promotion and protection of minority languages;
- to maintain and permanently update a free, publicly-accessible database on linguistic rights and legislation (the Mercator – Linguistic Rights and Legislation Database);
- to translate juridical documentation and texts, enabling a wide audience to access them;
- to disseminate specialised information and documentation on the aforementioned issues;
- to critically analyse the legislative and normative production and linguistic policies in general.

### **Summary of principal activities**

Activities to reach such objectives are organised in three main areas, namely:

- **Research**, which comprises research in the field of international, constitutional and ordinary law, and the study of the theoretical and practical framework of linguistic rights and derived legislation; and research on legislative novelties and the development of the current regulation as regards lesser-used languages.
- **Dissemination**, which includes permanent updates of the database, with texts related to the juridical framework of minority languages in Europe; publication of legislative, constitutional and doctrinal novelties; publication of specialised dossiers in which particular subjects are analysed; publication of specialised monographs by external experts; writing and publication of a news service concerning the legal situation of minority languages; publication of books on linguistic rights,

disseminating the novelties in the legal and political framework of linguistic rights; publication of bibliographical news in the field of linguistic rights, the juridical and regulatory framework and the general sociolinguistic situation of languages in Europe; organisation of and participation in conferences, workshops, meetings, etc.

- **Institutional relations**, including the provision of expert advice to institutions and governmental and non-governmental organisations; consultations with academic institutions and centres of research; exchanges of information and documentation; organisation of joint activities; and networking with EBLUL and the other Mercator centres.

The most relevant outcomes that materialise these work strands are a series of publications, a website which currently summarises and presents Mercator Legislation's output, an information and documentation centre (which also responds to users' demands) and special symposia on the issues that are Mercator's matter of concern. Of utmost relevance to the present evaluation are the following activities:

- **Question and Answer** service, whereby users send queries concerning legislation and linguistic rights by telephone, fax, e-mail, post or in person.
- **Publications**, including *Mercator Bulletin* – which compiles recent national legislation and relevant intergovernmental decisions and lists bibliographical references and Internet websites -, *Dossier* – complementing the Bulletin, it provides an introduction to one selected theme, for which relevant legislation is presented -, *Working Papers* – a digital-format only, external expert's view on one subject relevant to ongoing language-related debates -, newsletters – published since early 2003 by the three Mercator centres – and books – on an occasional basis, often presenting the proceedings of international conferences.
- **News service**, which distributes 1 or 2 weekly news items concerning legislation and policy relevant to the field of regional and minority languages.
- **Website**, currently hosting most Mercator Legislation's publications (except books) and information services, plus extensive bibliography and data on European RMLs.
- **Events**, meetings and conferences which over the period under study have witnessed a trend towards concentration, leading to the organisation – as from Work Programme 2002-03 – of a single annual event, the Mercator International Symposia that the three Mercator centres organise jointly since. Also included here were the two events for which CIEMEN received funding under the 1998 call for proposals – namely the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on European Languages and Legislation, which was held in Valle d'Aosta and its proceedings published in the form of a book, *Les nouvelles législations linguistiques dans l'Union Européenne*; and a series of 5 conferences on language legislation which were held in Andorra, France, Italy, Spain and the UK. The 5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on European Languages and Legislation, which dealt with linguistic enclaves in the EU, was held in Miranda do Douro in April 2002.

## **Budget**

In order for these activities to be completed, Mercator Legislation currently comprises a team of five, including one director, one coordinator, two project officers (1 p/t) and one financial manager (p/t). European Commission funding over the period under study has roughly increased from €63,000 (1999) to €75,000 (2002). The latter accounted for approximately 65% of the €115,000 annual budget the centre had in 2002/03, the remainder coming from CIEMEN's own funds. On previous years, support has also been received from local and regional authorities. Observation of budgets over the years shows an increase in the share devoted to dissemination and information and the loss of resources devoted to the organisation of seminars and to travel and subsistence. This was due to the EC's decision to concentrate event attention on a single Mercator symposium per year and to reduce travelling for other purposes.

**Table 1.20. Annual budgets for Mercator Legislation**  
1999-2000 and 2000-01, according to work programmes and activity reports

**1999-2000**

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	103,325.20	102,772.90
General Expenditure	10,326.58	9,138.60
Travel and Subsistence	2,226.20	1,951.60
Conferences/Seminars	0	0
Production, dissemination, information	4,050.00	4,705.80
Other	10,299.00	11,259.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,226.98</b>	<b>129,828.30</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	63,000.00	63,000.00
Other subsidies	49,327.00	48,741.00
Revenue generated by project	8,800.00	8,800.00
Self-financing by applicant	9,099.98	9,287.30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>130,226.98</b>	<b>129,828.30</b>

**2000-01**

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	77,645.00	77,645.00
General Expenditure	5,374.00	5,436.98
Travel and Subsistence	9,141.00	6,770.85
Conferences/Seminars	12,670.00	14,216.30
Production, dissemination, information	22,200	22,739.42
Other	8,000	8,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135,030.00</b>	<b>134,808.55</b>

Category	estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	67,514.00	67,500.00
Other subsidies	49,639.00	49,639.00
Revenue generated by project	10,200.00	9,992.55
Self-financing by applicant	7,677.00	7,677.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>135,030.00</b>	<b>134,808.55</b>

## Analysis of activities

### Research

As with its sibling centres, Mercator Legislation submits work programmes to the Commission's approval on an annual basis. To a certain extent its research agenda evolves with EU's priorities, while also encompassing issues that go beyond the strict EU domain, including debates within UNESCO and the Council of Europe, as well as language issues in neighbouring regions such as the Southern Mediterranean and the CIS. Over the period under study, **key issues of the EU debates including the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Year of Languages and linguistic diversity in accession countries have all been the subject of Mercator Legislation's research and publications.** In the meantime, constitutional changes and major pieces of legislation being put forward in EU member states, accession countries and other European states have continued to form a key element of research, as has recent jurisprudence in the aforementioned countries.

Other research priorities contrain strong advocacy elements, including research on existing legislation in Europe vis-à-vis the fostering of a Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights, which CIEMEN was instrumental in promoting. The fact that **little scope may be left for the updating of data once certain issues have passed to the back of agendas, and the self-acknowledged difficulties in understanding and translating legislation from certain accession countries** are two potential shortcomings.

### Publications

The following table presents a summary of the main works and publications to have emerged from Mercator Legislation in the period 1998-2002. In the course of these years, **the centre witnessed an increased variety in the publications produced**, with *Dossier* and *Working Papers* first emerging in 2000 and 2001 respectively. Observation of issues published by each of these titles shows a rather wide range of themes being covered, with candidate and accession countries progressively gaining ground, particularly in *Dossier*, a trend which continued in 2003, also in *Working Papers*. An interest is also shown in developments in other regions, including the Russian Federation and other CIS member countries, Latin America and Morocco.

### Mercator Legislation's Working Papers

Issues 1-9, 2001-2002

- 1 – *The Promotion of Minority Languages in the Russian Federation and the Prevention of Interethnic Conflicts: the Case of Kalmykia*, by Marc Leprêtre.
- 2 – *The Main Concepts in the Recognition of Linguistic Rights in European States*, by Neus Oliveras.
- 3 – *The Political Status of the Romani Language in Europe*, by Peter Bakker and Marcia Rooker.
- 4 – *The Juridical Defence of Rhaeto-Romansh Languages, with Particular Reference to the Friulian Case*, by William Cisilino.
- 5 – *Languages and Institutions in the European Union*, by Manuel Alcaraz Ramos.
- 6 – *Minority Languages of the Russian Federation*, by Eduardo Ruiz Vieytez.
- 7 – *European Linguistic Diversity – For Whom? The Cases of Finland and Sweden*, by Jarmo Lainio.
- 8 – *The Ratification of Spain of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, by Santiago Castellà.
- 9 – *Linguistic Legislation and Normalization Process: the Catalan Case in Spain*, by Agustí Pou.

### Mercator Legislation's Dossiers

Issues 1-12, 2000-2002

- 1 – Legislative Novelties in Central and Eastern Europe
- 2 – Linguistic Rights in South American Constitutions
- 3 – Rom Language, also a European Language
- 4 – Linguistic Rights in the Constitutions of the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia
- 5 – The Legal Protection of the Linguistic Otherness in Greece
- 6 – The Slow Recognition of Spanish Plurilingualism
- 7 – Protection of Ethnic Communities in the Republic of Slovenia – the Case of the Italian Community
- 8 – Sign Languages in the Context of the European Union Regional or Minority Languages
- 9 – The New Covenant on the Frisian Language and Culture
- 10 – Hungary or the Inherited Diversity
- 11 – Towards Linguistic Rights in the EU 2004 – the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity as Part of the New Constitutional Treaty of the European Union
- 12 – Transfrontier Cooperation and Language Policy: the Case of the Lëtzebuergesch Language

On the other hand, the *Bulletin* has continued to reproduce documents related to recent developments concerning linguistic legislation in European countries and intergovernmental organisations which are relevant in the European context. Including

constitutional developments, new legislation and relevant jurisprudence, it is worth noting that **over 90% of documents published were one year old or less.**<sup>58</sup> Generally speaking, those EU states where more regional or minority languages are spoken (eg. Spain, Austria, Italy, France), those with devolved competences in the fields of education and culture (eg. Spain and Italy, where legislation introduced by autonomous communities and regions has been reproduced) and those which have gone through constitutional changes recently (eg. Italy) have more frequently been featured. Absence of other EU countries is more likely related to the lack of relevant developments in this field over the years under study, whereas the varying degree to which developments in candidate and accession countries have been covered may be due, depending on the case, either to the absence of documents of worth or the lack of appropriate correspondents to identify, channel and translate emerging contributions. The fact that new antennae or working relations have recently been established in countries including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, according to the 2002/03 activity report, should be noted. Finally, relevant documents from EU institutions (including the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the Committee of the Regions) have also been published, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights and resolutions concerning linguistic diversity.

### **Mercator Legislation Bulletin**

Documents published, per country or institution, issues 34-52, 1998-2002.

<b>EU Member States</b>		<b>Candidate and accession countries</b>	
Austria	5 documents	Bulgaria	0 documents
Belgium	4 documents	Cyprus	0 documents
Denmark	0 documents	Czech Republic	2 documents
Finland	1 document	Estonia	0 documents
France	5 documents	Hungary	0 documents
Germany	0 documents	Latvia	1 document
Greece	2 documents	Lithuania	0 documents
Ireland	0 documents	Malta	0 documents
Italy	8 documents	Poland	1 document
Netherlands	0 documents	Romania	0 documents
Luxembourg	0 documents	Slovakia	0 documents
Portugal	2 documents	Slovenia	1 document
Spain	13 documents	Turkey	1 document
Sweden	3 documents		
United Kingdom	0 documents		
<b>Other European countries</b>		<b>Intergovernmental organisations</b>	
Andorra	1 document	EU institutions	5 documents
Switzerland	1 document	Council of Europe	5 documents
Yugoslavia	1 document	UN institutions (+ UNESCO)	3 docs

### **Dissemination**

Whilst the variety of issues and countries covered by the publications above is worth noting, **some concern may be raised at the dissemination of results.** Both the *Bulletin* and *Dossier* reach an audience of about 90 organisations in their paper versions. Although the figure is very likely to be sensibly higher through the digital

version of these publications, which can be freely downloaded, and whereas the dissemination of *Working Papers* appears to be more successful – at approximately 300 downloaded and printed issues per month in early 2003<sup>59</sup> -, an effort could be needed to ensure that the quality of contents is matched by a wider, more diverse readership.

According to research conducted within the framework of the present evaluation, Mercator Legislation's website appears to be the less widely-referenced of the three centres. Despite its catering for maybe a more reduced audience than Mercator Education, the fact that only 4 university websites were found to refer to Mercator Legislation and the little geographic diversity of sites with links to it – mostly being based in Catalonia, Italy and the UK - need being addressed.<sup>60</sup> An effort should be made to ensure that the centre's output reaches a wider audience, one made of RML-related organisations and other research centres, as both its quality and the range of interests being covered – generally surpassing the mere limits of linguistic minorities and being of interest to linguistic legislation researchers at large – deserve an increased awareness.

Staff representing the Mercator Legislation centre actively participate in conferences and events concerning regional and minority languages in Europe, as well as in more specialised events in the field of language legislation. Thus although here again a concentration is perceived on events that were held in Catalonia and the rest of Spain (15 of 25 events organised or attended by Mercator Legislation staff in 1999/2000 took place there, as did 11 of 14 in 2002/03), it should be noted that the centre's location facilitates its being invited to events close by, even when legislation is not the focus subject – it therefore becomes a Mercator "ambassador", as the other network members certainly are in their regions. Nonetheless, **the need to update research data and contacts and the increased attention due to developments in Central and Eastern European countries should probably go hand-in-hand with an increased ability to travel** – financial support for attending events and establishing contacts in the region could be an issue to discuss.

### **Services rendered**

Mercator Legislation's activities also include the publication and dissemination of news stories related to linguistic legislation in Europe and elsewhere. Recent years have witnessed a slight decrease in the number of stories published (72 were published in 1999/2000, 63 in 2002/03), as opposed to the increase in publications per year noted above. It should be borne in mind that the simultaneous production of news items in Eurolang may render Mercator Legislation's effort less necessary nowadays, though the centre's focus of attention leads it to highlight issues that would not be covered by the former's mainstream-RML oriented approach and an effort is made not to duplicate news subjects. Thus stories from a variety of news sources (including Minority Electronic Resources, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, BBC, Eurolang and several local and regional newspapers and media organisations) are translated and a progressive increase in news from candidate and accession countries has been perceived. Again, Spain, Italy and France appear to feature strongly within the stories published, whereas references to debates within EU institutions are common and developments in candidate and accession countries are increasingly widespread. News are distributed to e-mail addresses in Mercator Legislation's electronic list and stored in the centre's website. Overall **the news section provides a rich background to the**

**subjects covered by Mercator Legislation’s mission, and the ability to consult it in an extensive, search-function enhanced archive becomes a useful tool.**

Other activities of Mercator Legislation include **the updating of a database with bibliographic references and documents of interest to the centre’s subject matters and the provision of answers to users’ questions, both of which have witnessed a regular reduction over the period under discussion – arguably as a result of the centre’s website becoming a more powerful information tool** and of an increased focus on documents which are available on the Internet. Whereas 307 items had been introduced to the centre’s database in 1999/2000, only 124 were added in 2002/03, and a sharper drop was noticeable among questions received – which went from 311 to 98 over the same period. Questions from private organisations and public authorities experienced the most visible reduction, whereas petitions from the public at large (including private individuals and students, they amounted to 18% in 1999/2000, 33% by 2002/03) and universities and research centres (31% to 41%) gained ground in relative terms but were reduced nonetheless. Over the same period, the centre’s website multiplied its number of visits fivefold – 2800 monthly visits in 1999/2000 becoming 3200 by 2001 and 15,000 by early 2003<sup>61</sup> - although the number of different visitors only doubled – from 1533 per month in 1999/2000 to 3000 in late 2002.

The increased relevance of the website to the centre’s activities is also shown by the fact that 83 of 98 questions received in 2002/03 reached the centre via the website’s question form, the remainder arriving mostly by telephone. Questions generally involve the identification and provision of documentation or information on news and events, and at times require extra effort in unearthing documents or providing specialised documentation in the field of linguistic rights. Even though the centre’s success in producing a useful website which renders users’ additional questioning less necessary is a welcome development, scarce diversity in the origin of questions (over 50% came from Spain in 2002/03, and organisations in Belgium, the UK and Italy were the source of less than 10% questions each, percentages remaining somehow stable over the years under study) remains an issue worth considering.

### **Individual projects**

The reduction in the number of events organised or attended by the centre’s staff that was noted above is partly the result of the decision to focus efforts on a single annual Mercator event which brings together efforts of the three network units, as well as an effect of the disappearance of project funding. Indeed, as seen earlier, the centre received two grants under the 1998 call for proposals to promote and safeguard regional or minority languages and cultures, which provided for the organisation of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on European Languages and Legislation in Valle d’Aosta (April 2000) and a series of 5 conferences on language legislation which were held in Andorra, France, Italy, Spain and the UK (June 1999 – April 2000).<sup>62</sup> If the subject matters of the conferences and meetings were strongly in line with the permanent activities of the centre, **a certain additionality vis-à-vis regular work can be found in the dissemination being pursued within these funded projects and their ability to reach out to scarcely-visited places** – indeed, 5 of 10 visits abroad in 1999/2000 were the direct result of additional project funding.<sup>63</sup> Although funding for travel is provided under the present budget,<sup>64</sup> it is linked to meetings with other Mercator centres, EBLUL and the European Commission, and thus serves little to

the purposes of external dissemination, of networking beyond the present reach of Mercator and EBLUL or of research. In 2002/03, attendance of events outside Spain was reduced to one conference in Biarritz (part of a four-conference visit to the Basque Country), a Council of Europe seminar in Strasbourg and Mercator's International Symposium in Aberystwyth.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the centre failed to obtain funding under the 2002 call for proposals of the Joint Actions strand of the EC's Socrates, Leonardo and Youth programmes, after an application was produced alongside the other Mercator centres, EBLUL and two other organisations, with a view to organising a series of seminars for young people. According to the centre's responses to the questionnaire to project beneficiaries that was distributed in the course of the present evaluation, no funding has been obtained under non-language programmes of the EC in the period 1998-2003. An application under Culture 2000 was unsuccessful – the feeling remains that priority is given to projects of a larger scale than those the centre can currently sustain.

## **Evaluation**

Under existing funding guidelines, Mercator Legislation must present reports on an annual basis, which provide information on the activities conducted over the previous 12 months. They provide a sound basis on which to develop internal or external evaluations, although slight changes in the indicators presented over the years – particularly those related to the website's use - complicate diachronic analyses.

**One interesting form of feedback has been established through the online survey** which website visitors are invited to complete. While the rest of the website is available in Catalan and English only, the survey exists in four languages, including French and German, and Mercator Legislation states positive responses have generally been obtained from respondents. It would be wise to ask for survey replies to be gathered and presented in Mercator Legislation's activity reports, and for the other Mercator centres to add similar functionalities to their websites.

## **External Relations**

### **Relations to the RML sector**

Activities carried out by both CIEMEN and Mercator Legislation have enabled the centre to build a long list of contacts in the field of regional and minority languages over the years. This is also evidenced by the lists of antennae and contacts presented in activity reports and the fact that a wide list of issues is presented in publications – such as *Working Papers* and *Dossier* – with contributions of experts from several countries and backgrounds. **Activity reports have listed contacts with departments in several European governments, its geographic pattern often following that of annual priorities** (eg. the 2002/03 report notes contacts with governmental representatives from Slovakia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Yugoslavia and Luxembourg, the latter being the subject of a 2002 *Dossier* on cross-border cooperation), and with a range of university departments and experts. The latter include those centres with which contacts are established on a regular basis or in accordance with annual priorities (including the University of Wales; Université de

Corse; Università di Pisa; Université de Perpignan; several other universities in Catalan-speaking areas; Adam Mickiewicz University; Tilburg University; Université de Rouen; Université Pierre Mendès – Grenoble; University of Glasgow; University of Latvia at Riga; University of Pécs; Institute for Ethnic Studies – Ljubljana; Charles University of Prague; Adnan Menderes University – Nazili, Turkey; and others), as well as a few Catalan and Spanish universities with which work of a more permanent nature unfolds (Universitat de Barcelona; Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona; Universidad de Deusto / Deustuko Unibersitatea at Bilbao), thus allowing the centre's research priorities to gain a more prominent place in mainstream university research (eg. permanent work with the Department of Constitutional Law at Universitat Rovira i Virgili, the Department of Human Rights at Deusto, etc.).

Likewise, CIEMEN and Mercator Legislation take part in a series of NGO platforms on issues concerning minorities and languages and on debates relevant to the EU and UNESCO. This includes membership of the international committee advocating the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights, alongside representatives of several PEN Centres and other NGOs, and participation in discussion projects recently including those concerning the European Convention.

On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that CIEMEN – in the person of its current president and Mercator Legislation director Aureli Argemí i Roca – **chairs the Catalan Subcommittee and the Spanish Member State Committee of EBLUL**, therefore playing a pivotal role in awareness-raising and information activities in the field of regional and minority languages, and making it at times difficult to distinguish activities undertaken by Mercator Legislation and those of its parent organisation.

### **Coordination and multiplier effect**

Prestige acquired enables the centre to take part in events which do not exclusively deal with linguistic minorities but with European affairs of a wider scope, including the above-mentioned debates on the European Convention in Catalonia and civil society based initiatives such as the Civic Forum for a European Constitution. Likewise, **contributions have been made to mainstream newspapers on issues concerning the situation of regional and minority languages in Europe.** Again, this poses questions as to the dissemination of the centre's output – a current series of articles for Catalan newspaper *El Punt* appears to be of potential interest to a much wider audience if only resources for translation and promotion would exist.

Although the large network of contacts developed over the years clearly ensures that Mercator Legislation be a well-respected centre in its sector, evidence shows that much remains to be done concerning its visibility. In addition to the website's dissemination noted above, research undertaken as part of the present evaluation found that **only 39% of the representative RML organisations questioned said they knew of Mercator Legislation, the figure being relatively similar to that found for its two network partners.**<sup>66</sup> As with both Mercator Education and Mercator Media, only

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<sup>66</sup> 22 out of 57 respondents of the questionnaire to organisations representing regional and minority languages said Yes when asked about Mercator Legislation in the question "Do you know the Mercator Centres' activities, focusing on issues of education, legislation and media concerning regional and minority languages? (Mercator has a centre specialising on Education in Leeuwarden, Netherlands; a centre specialising on Legislation in Barcelona; and a centre specialising on Media in Aberystwyth, Wales)... You know Mercator (Y/N/?); You know Mercator Education (Y/N/?); You know Mercator Legislation (Y/N/?);

*You know Mercator Media (Y/N/?)*' Figures were 44% for Mercator Education and 40% for Mercator Media.

<sup>67</sup> 40.4% of the RML sector is aware of Mercator Media, which is only below Mercator Education (43.86%), and above Mercator Legislation (38.6%). Furthermore, questionnaire responses showed that in fact, Mercator Media was judged to be the most useful of the three (scoring 6.05 out of 10, in comparison with 5.83 for Mercator Legislation and 5.57 for Mercator Education). See also below, *Relation to the RML sector*.

<sup>68</sup> For the general visibility and assessment of Mercator Media from the sector, see below, *Relation to the RML sector*.

<sup>69</sup> One of the influences has been the set up of the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS), in the process of which Mercator Media's Academic Director Ned Thomas participated.

<sup>70</sup> We are referring here to representative entities from the RML sector, which have *not* received project funding under the RML budget line over the past five years.

<sup>71</sup> Medgyesi, E. (ed.) "Vade-Mecum. A guide to international documents on lesser-used languages of Europe", EBLUL Documents 4 (Brussels: EBLUL 2003)

<sup>72</sup> The 2000 call for proposals to promote and safeguard regional and minority languages and cultures was introduced as follows: 'With a view to submitting a proposal for a multiannual programme to support regional and minority languages and cultures in Europe, the Commission intends to set aside EUR 2,5 million under budget heading B3-1000 to finance projects which can put the content and methods of a programme of this kind to the test.' *Official Journal of the European Communities*, C 266/15, 16 September 2000.

<sup>73</sup> European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*, COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 9.

<sup>74</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 7. Original in bold.

<sup>75</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> 2 of these organisations, the Welsh Language Board and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, have also been successful in securing funding under the Action Plan this year.

<sup>78</sup> Data is based on those organisations that responded to the questionnaire only. Only those programmes that were suggested in the questionnaire (Socrates, Leonardo, Youth, Culture 2000 - and previous cultural programmes including Raphaël, Ariane, Kaleidoscope -, Town-Twinning and Interreg) have been taken into account.

<sup>79</sup> The organisation received grants under the 1999 (*Lhéngua*, 1999-1537) and 2000 calls for proposals (*Planalto*, 2001-266).

<sup>80</sup> The centre received a grant for the production of a CD with educational booklet under the 1998 call for proposals (*Edition d'un CD, de livrets-élève et d'un guide du professeur pour enseigner la musique, la psychomotricité et l'euskara au cycle I de l'enseignement primaire (maternelle)*, 98-06-MDD-0061-00).

<sup>81</sup> The centre received a grant to undertake a wide consultation and to produce events and a video on young people's view of Basque culture under the 1998 call for proposals (*Le patrimoine culturel basque vu par les jeunes*, 98-06-AUT-0194-00).

<sup>82</sup> The centre received a grant to publish training materials for trilingual education under the 1998 call for proposals (*Didattica di insegnamento bilingue provenzale/italiano + Francese*, 98-06-EDU-0136-00).

<sup>83</sup> The region has a population of approximately 40,000, roughly 50% of whom can speak Griko, a language rooted in Modern Greek and written in Roman characters. The Consorzio dei Comuni della Grecia Salentina, as it was then called, received a grant for the production of training materials to raise awareness about local culture under the 1999 call for proposals (*Grecia Salentina: la lingua, gli oggetti, la storia*, 1999-1542).

<sup>84</sup> The University of Patras' Wire Communications Laboratory received a grant under the 1998 call for proposals (*Electronic dictionary of pronunciation and usage of the Graecanic dialect of Southern Italy*, 98-06-NOR-0090-00).

<sup>85</sup> The report was a result of an invitation to tender by the European Commission. European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages / European Centre for Minority Issues, *Support for Minority Languages in Europe. Final Report* (European Commission, 2002).

<sup>86</sup> The organisation received grants in support of its educational activities under the 1998 and 1999 calls for proposals (*Campanya El País a l'Escola*, 98-06-EDU-0048-00 and 1999-1347).

<sup>87</sup> "Decision n° 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 February 2000 establishing the Culture 2000 programme", *Official Journal of the European Communities*, L 63/1, 10 March 2000.

<sup>88</sup> PLS Ramboll, *Interim Evaluation of the Culture 2000 Programme – Final Report* (Brussels: European Commission, 2003).

<sup>89</sup> The organisation received a grants for the production of training materials under the 2000 call for

in a few cases was evidence found of organisations which recalled participating in Mercator activities. In a few other cases, knowledge of Mercator Legislation was due to respondents' knowledge of CIEMEN – in fact, recorded awareness of Mercator Legislation may possibly have been higher had our question explicitly mentioned CIEMEN.

## **Assessment of strengths and weaknesses**

### **Strengths**

- Recognition of centre's activities in its surrounding region and among specialised operators. Recognised role as a pivotal agent in civil society initiatives on a range of issues.
- Provision of specialised research on areas which EBLUL and the other Mercator centres do not cover (complementarity).
- Research generally focused on issues of interest to the EC and relevant to ongoing EU debates, as well as to subjects of a wider international relevance, with ability to change according to emerging issues.
- Increased coordination with the other Mercator Centres, a welcome development.
- Diversity of issues tackled.
- Regular updating of data on constitutional and legislative developments.
- Very useful pool of knowledge and background to documents provided by the centre's database of references and the news archive.
- Some contacts with mainstream university departments and research centres, providing for the centre's issues of concern to reach out to research in other fields.
- Interesting feedback source in the form of an online survey.

### **Weaknesses**

- High rates of staff turnover, partly the result of insecurity about financial stability of the organisation.
- Difficulties encountered when facing languages from the EU's candidate and accession countries, which complicate speed in adding documents to databases and reproducing them in the centre's own publications.
- Little cooperation hitherto with EBLUL, as shown in the latter's compilation and publication in the context of the Work Programme 2002-03 of the Vade-mecum on linguistic legislation, which would have benefited from Mercator Legislation's output and/or leadership – the centre had actually planned to publish one such work for some time.
- Low dissemination of printed publications.
- Little geographic diversity of centres which refer to Mercator Legislation in their websites. This is linked with uneven dissemination of Centre's outputs – visibility generally restricted to Catalonia, Spain, Italy and the UK.
- Little visibility of the centre on the Internet, with few universities and research centres providing a reference.
- Lack of additional funding has affected the centre's ability to disseminate its results, particularly in events and publications.
- Little evidence of multiplying effect (i.e. research projects by third parties emerged as a result of Mercator Legislation's activities).

- Rejection of applications submitted under non-language programmes of the EC.

#### 1.4.4. Analysis of Mercator Media

##### Introduction and basic description

The Mercator Media project is now hosted at the Department of Theatre, Film and Television of the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, which is the biggest department at that University and provides the centre with the offices and the infrastructure needed. The Mercator Media project had moved to this department in 1998 after financial difficulties at its then home department, the Department of Information and Library Studies (a fairly small and poor department) coincided with the suspension of funds from the B3-1000 budget line due to the European Court ruling of the same year.

In fact, what has started out as the Mercator Media project has evolved during these years to include a series of other thematically related projects, which have joined to form what is now known as the Mercator Centre. This Mercator Centre, which grew around (the reputation of) the Mercator Media project, is therefore not identical with the latter, but provides it with a context for interaction, exchange and mutual cooperation. This arrangement strengthens both the Mercator Media project and the other integral projects of the centre. These projects currently include the Culture 2000 funded "Literature across frontiers" (since 2000; cf. [www.transcript-review.org](http://www.transcript-review.org)), and the "Welsh Literature Abroad" project funded by the Welsh Arts Council (since 1998; it had led to the "Literature Across Frontiers" project), or the production of a Welsh-medium reader for students and teachers of Media Studies at University level.

The structure of the Mercator Centre also guarantees a stability of funding and continuity of staff, which complements the funds from the European Commission. Yet it is most important to assure such a continuity of work (and with it the necessary knowledge base and experience) to maintain the standard, networks and working arrangements built up by the Mercator Media project. Therefore, **the arrangement of the Mercator Centre provides for a more sustainable funding cycle, as well as for a cluster of similar projects and research areas**, and has thus become an effective model of administrative and content management. It also assures that the name Mercator (and its expertise) is carried along with other projects, while it is itself benefiting from the activities of additional lines of research (and thus from an influx of information and networks).

This is especially important as the context in which Mercator Media works is strictly University related and departmental. It does not therefore count with the specialised prestige and resources that the CIEMEN (**a research and cooperation centre for minorities**), or the Fryske Academy (**a renowned scientific centre for research and education with a strong Frisian emphasis**) can provide **to the other two Mercator centres. This is a major factor to take into account when comparing the visibility, output and cooperation activities of the three centres.**

Mercator Media defines itself as a *research* centre with *information* and *documentation* functions. As such, the work of Mercator Media is divided up in different areas:

- To research and analyse the media and information sectors in regard to regional and minority languages
- To collect, document, update and publish data on RML.
- To disseminate research and information via its website and database, as well as through publications, conferences, and networks.
- To foster cooperation and exchange.
- To act as an information broker, facilitating the access to data and relevant research at its own base and at other's.

This division means that the general and continuous activities of the Mercator Media project are varied. **A substantial part of its work is technical – updating the database, working on enquiries, preparing applications, administration and management, preparation of work plan, coordinating projects or conferences, and so on. Nonetheless, their focus is more academic.** Apart from carrying out research themselves, they are looking for and maintaining contacts with researchers, scholars and experts on regional and minority languages as well as on the media, in order to contribute to conferences or publications. Currently, Mercator Media has a 46 strong Network of Correspondents from different European countries.

### **Summary of principal activities**

The following is a brief list of the main activities, which the Mercator Media project has carried out during the years falling under the scope of the evaluation (1998-2002) as well as those carried out up to the time of the commencement of this study. A more detailed survey will be given thereafter.

- **Research and publications.** The research carried out at the centre is published in form of articles (also on the web), or presented as lectures at conferences. The *Mercator Media Forum* journal is published annually, and a newsletter used to be published quarterly – under Work Programme 2002-03, the latter has now been joined with those of the other Mercator Centres.
- **Maintenance and development of the website and the database.** On average, around 280 operations are carried out on the database each year. The website is continuously updated and expanded.
- **The coordination** with the other Mercator Centres and EBLUL, and the cooperation on projects such as MININF or the Mercator Symposium.
- **Answering questions and queries** via e-mail, phone, post or in person (between 140 and 230 each year).
- Setting up the **Minority Language Media Network**, a collaborative project between Stirling University and the Mercator Media Project.
- Apart from its general activities, the Mercator Media project also had three individual projects funded by the European Commission under the specific budget

lines for regional and minority languages. These were a "Summer Course for students and teachers of journalism and librarianship on information sources for LUL" (1998), a Mercator Conference on "Audiovisual Translation and Minority Languages" in 1999, and in 2001 a 2-year project on "Researching a New Minority-Language Daily Newspaper in a European Context".

## **Budget**

Over the period studied, funding from the European Union has been decreasing gradually, with the exception of the year 1998, in which no funding was granted (apart from an individual project funded under the B3-1006 line). Another exception was the year 2002-3, officially outside of the period to be examined, in which the amount rose up to €90.000 to cover the extra expenses incurred by organising the first Mercator Symposium (part of the Annual Working Plan 2002-03). Generally speaking, the amount funds an estimated 1,6 full-time members of staff and covers a great part of the activities carried out during the year. To assure continuity, the complementary funding granted by the University of Wales Aberystwyth (usually around 30% of the revenue) is paramount.

In practice, activities undertaken by the Mercator Media Centre under the Work Programme 2001-02 were carried out by a team comprising one project director (p/t), one academic director and consultant (p/t, on volunteer basis), one senior research officer (f/t) and another research officer (p/t). Additionally, a freelance technician provided support on an occasional basis. For full budget figures (in € EURO), according to annual reports and work programmes, please see below.

**Table 1.21. Annual budgets for Mercator Media**

According to work programmes and activity reports, 1999-2000 and 2000-01

<b>1999-2000</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Estimated expenditure (€)</b>	<b>Actual expenditure (€)</b>
Staff	77,360.00	79,299.81
General Expenditure	3,000.00	3,463.31
Travel and Subsistence	5,680.00	5,594.61
Conferences/Seminars	0	0
Production, dissemination, information	4,895.00	5,302.60
Other	7,155.00	7,155.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98,090.00</b>	<b>100,815.33</b>

<b>Category</b>	<b>Estimated revenue (€)</b>	<b>Actual revenue (€)</b>
EC grant	74,040.00	74,040.00
Other subsidies (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)	24,050.00	26,503.39
Revenue generated by project	0	0
Self-financing by applicant	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98,090.00</b>	<b>100.543.39</b>

**2000-2001**

Category	Estimated expenditure (€)	Actual expenditure (€)
Staff	76,628.00	80,334.27
General Expenditure	3,500.00	3,910.52
Travel and Subsistence	5,422.00	8,155.88
Conferences/Seminars	0	0
Production, dissemination, information	6,140.00	6,760.59
Other	6,418.00	6,418.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98,108.00</b>	<b>105,579,26</b>

Category	Estimated revenue (€)	Actual revenue (€)
EC grant	67,500.00	67,500.00
Other subsidies (University of Wales, Aberystwyth)	30,608.00	30,608.00
Revenue generated by project	0	995
Self-financing by applicant	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>98,108.00</b>	<b>99,103.00</b>

**Analysis of activities****Research**

Mercator Media's field of research is defined broadly and inclusively, as it comprises the broadcasting field (radio and television), the press (newspapers and magazines) and the book trade (including publishers and libraries), as well as electronic communication and the new technologies (including internet, software and new media).

The lines of research, as mentioned earlier, depend among others on the invitation to events, and are thus varied as to their specificity and topic. Over the years reviewed, however, there have been a number of concrete topics of special interest to the Mercator Media project. In the earlier years of the period here surveyed, the advent of digital television and its impact on minority languages was one research focus, with an early trend towards the internet and different forms of translation (audiovisual, machine translation) into regional and minority languages. Language practices and policies of broadcasters, as well as regional representation on minority language television were also foci of investigation.

Some research is also suggested by activities related to the Mercator Media website (such as the broadcast media and press maps, researched and published on the site in 2001-2). Another factor influencing the lines of research are the projects approved and funded by the European Commission, such as the Mercator Conference on Audiovisual Translation and Minority Languages (1999), or the Research on a New Minority-Language Daily Newspaper in a European Context (2000).

**The general trend in Mercator Media's work has been to shift from an emphasis on TV and broadcasting to an emphasis on newspapers and the daily, while also moving towards the new media and communication**

**technologies**, such as open-source software. While the Mercator Media project has been consulted on and helped to establish regional and minority languages in TV and broadcasting by supporting specific projects over a number of years, it now has set itself the goal to do the same for the printed press and software.

The development of research and topics of interest is due to several factors, one of them being the dynamics of the media sector, and another the context in which the centre operates. Not necessarily is there a pre-set research agenda spanning a variety of years, but rather do the annual working sessions with the Commission inform longer-term tendencies and priorities. Some plans and programmes have developed naturally out of discussions, conferences and developments in the sector (e.g. the creation of the network MIDAS and preceding conferences triggered the research on minority dailies), and some are suggested by the other projects making up the Mercator Centre. Furthermore, much of the data gathered before 1998 is now being further developed. **There is a sense therefore that the development of research topics takes place organically, triggered through circumstances within the sector, as well as those in the field of research of each member of staff.**

The European Commission has a set of thematic priorities, which change according to political developments and concerns. These include, for instance, transnational cooperation, mainstreaming of programmes and linguistic diversity, and the upcoming EU enlargement. **The research and the documentation and information services of Mercator Media, while always media focussed, can be said to correspond to these priorities.**

As regards enlargement, for instance, it has only recently been taken up in the annual work programmes. Before this explicit inclusion in the work plan, which is elaborated in conjunction with the Commission, no concrete action was undertaken in this field. Notwithstanding, it has increasingly become a thematic concern for activities carried out by members of staff. For instance, of the 22 countries that are covered in the Media country profiles and published on Mercator Media's website, 10 concern states that are due to join the EU in May 2004. Of the 24 press country profiles, in turn, a total of 9 describe future EU member states. Equally, the Mercator Centre currently includes a Culture 2000 sponsored project (*Literature across frontiers*) that deals with enlargement countries, and study visits or contacts have already been established in Hungary. However, although Mercator Media describes itself as being pro-active in the field, it recognises that much more is left to do on that front.

**In reference to the mainstreaming concept put forward by the European Commission, the response of the Mercator Media staff is cautiously positive**, its implications interpreted as being 1.) to put RML on an equal footing with majority languages, and 2.) to make larger amounts of project funding available to regional and minority languages. However, there is a strong concern that especially the smaller language communities may not reach the necessary thresholds.

## **Publications**

With the exception of the year 2002-3, one edition of the *Mercator Media Forum* has appeared per year. Published in a practical journal format, it carries a number of articles by experts and academics across the minority languages of Europe. The latest issue, n° 7, is to appear this year 2004. For the 6<sup>th</sup> issue, a publicity campaign was

launched especially in the regions where the issue might be of interest, although – according to the respective annual report and personal opinions – no tangible effects have been measured yet. Nonetheless, it represents a step into the right direction, and it could be of interest to follow this up an assessment of the effectiveness of this dissemination and publicity effort has had. **Further to these improved publicity initiatives, the publication of the *Mercator Media Forum* in electronic format on the web is another positive trend of improving dissemination.** However, as the link has been down, access to the electronic issues has not of late been possible.

The great majority of articles represented in the *Mercator Media Forum* are written in English, although every edition also includes some articles in German, Spanish, French or Italian. The target languages covered showed an inclination towards the Spanish minority languages (especially Basque), although topic-specific research across languages or articles on special language situations (for instance, the minority languages in Greece or radio in Austria) also appear.

The *Mercator Media Guide*, formerly published in paper format as a handbook to the press and media entities in different RML across Europe, has seen its last publication in 1998. The Media database on the website now fulfils this role interactively, by providing both overviews and addresses/contact information. This move represents a reasonable development towards electronic resources and a reduction in publication spending. However, as the last publication of the Guide was prepared before the years concerned in this study, no further effort was made to analyse its performance.

The proceedings of the *Mercator Conference on Audiovisual Translation* were also published in book format as well as on the web in 3 major languages (Welsh, English and Spanish), where each article not presented in English is complemented by an English summary. The papers generally delved into contextual questions that are structurally relevant to the topic of the conference, and thus not necessarily case specific. Examples tended to be taken from Welsh and the Spanish RML, but a specific contribution also concerned the Breton TV Breizh. In comparison, the spread of languages presented at the Mercator Symposium in April 2003 was to be much wider.

An **electronic newsletter** used to appear 4 to 5 times a year to 361 subscribers (stand 2002). This newsletter has now been amalgamated with those of the other two Mercator Centres in order to create a joint publication. There have been 3 issues to date, sent out to a total of 1419 subscribers. The move to join the three newsletters into one is an important step towards a more coherent and effective representation of the Mercator Centres, and also contributes towards a reinforced dissemination of each of the centre's work.

All members of staff have also published **articles** in journals, books or other publications; there have been between 5 and 9 published articles per year. All staff have also been invited regularly to speak at conferences or give lectures; around 13 to 19 conference were attended per year.

**There is certainly a tension between the need to intensify research, publication activities and conference attendances, and the priority to improve the internet presence and performance of Mercator Media.** The tendency to publish electronically should be welcomed and encouraged; indeed, **the Mercator Media website would benefit from an increased number of electronically available articles and academic material.** With the recent

additions of the two conference proceedings a positive trend has been set, which should be expanded to include other papers written by staff or by expert correspondents.

Its publications are also more specialised and less generally applicable than may be the case of legislation or education. Clients are usually language groups that aim to set up a minority language or bilingual TV channel, radio or newspaper, or a more academically minded set of researchers working on the impact of minority language media on the linguistic and social context of its distribution.

Yet while the clientele served by Mercator Media may be more specialised and the publications less sensitive to the general public, the work being done by the centre is not necessarily less effective. **There is however ample scope to widen the existing audience, and especially to attract the attention of the ever-growing youth population interested in software, internet and the new technologies.** This is a largely untapped market for Mercator Media, which would perhaps benefit from a closer investigation into this particular target group.

As regards the distribution and employment of languages in publications, generally speaking one must keep in mind that the percentage of representation a language may receive at a given conference or in a special publication is not just the result of a selection process, but also depends on the availability of quality research produced on the topic, as well as the availability of up to the standard experts and researchers. For a more detailed discussion of the geographical spread below.

## **Dissemination**

**The maintenance and upgrading of the Mercator Media website and database represents a core element of the staff's work**, and is equally of central importance to the mission and function of the Mercator Media project. Changes and improvements have been made continuously to the site during the years here studied (a more identifiable address, an improved database interface, new software); a task which has taken up a great part of the available working hours of staff. In 2001-2, an additional effort went into preparing up-to-date records for the common database to be used in the MININF project.

Equally, enlarging and updating the database has been an ongoing occupation of the responsible staff member. On average, 285 operations have been carried out on the database per year, many of which concerned the updating of already existing entries. Generally, between 45 and 85 new entries were added to the database each year, tendency rising. The database now contains just over 1200 entries, distributed over 3 categories (media, press, and "others") plus subcategories, and 51 languages. The link list has also been extended, and now contains an approximate 415 links. The content of the data available is therefore very good and corresponds to the objectives set out for it. The search is made user-friendly and the service is fast.

The website now also contains online articles, which were presented at the Mercator Conference on Audiovisual Translation and Minority Languages (also available in book format), and the Mercator Symposium held in April 2003. As mentioned above, the publication of complete articles on the web presents a good opportunity to improve the

profile and competence of the website, and should ideally be expanded in the years to come.

Over the years, the web log has continued its hit analysis, and results suggest that **visits to the Mercator Media website remained fairly stable at an average 3,000 visitors per week** (an estimated 156,000 per year). An exception proved the year 2001-2, when the average went down slightly to 2,500 visitors per week (130,000/year).

As regards internet presence, when looking for links established to the Mercator Centres from other websites, we got 69 references to the Mercator Media website. While this is significantly lower than the results for Mercator Education (110), it is in fact marginally higher than that of Mercator Legislation (66). Equally, the sources of the links are interesting. Besides the obvious ones, results also came from a large number of English language sites about theatre, education, languages or diasporas. Other references included websites from minority languages, such as Friulian or NGO's websites, as well as a number of University references (from University of Wales Swansea; University of Cambridge; Lancaster University; University of Lleida; Cardiff University; Santiago de Compostela University). Similarly, an entry (in English) in the web search engine "Google" returns 617 hits for Mercator Media, compared with 161 for Mercator Legislation and 995 for Mercator Education.

The higher data available for Mercator Education certainly have to do with a wider scope of potential audience, as well as the higher coverage achieved through the regional dossiers. Notwithstanding, the data point towards a lack of efficient dissemination in the case of Mercator Legislation especially, but also in the case of Mercator Media. Notably, the low number of Universities with a link to Mercator Media meets the eye (especially considering that of the 6 Universities, 4 are in the UK, and of these in turn 3 are from Wales). **The reconsideration of the dissemination strategy (if indeed there has been one for all three centres) is certainly one of the most urgent recommendations this study wants to make.**

Despite the considerable effort, which has gone into the maintenance and improvement of the website, the performance of the site is not entirely satisfactory, especially when compared with the sites of the other two Mercator centres. While the database is sound, extensive and user-friendly and the country profiles informative and well structured, the overall presentation and content of the website is less so. **A series of technical, stylistic and conceptual shortcomings suggest that the current state of the website, and the service it renders on part of the Mercator Media project, is far from ideal.**

The most notable defect of the website is in our opinion the lack of a news section, which would provide users with an up-to-date overview of events and news relevant to their concern. This is of particular concern as users should have the impression that work on the page is carried out continuously, and that all information contained therein is hence up-to-date. Such an impression would also directly invite users to regularly revisit the page in order to keep themselves informed – a multiplying effect not to be underestimated. The absence of any visible option to subscribe oneself to the newsletter, is in this context particularly remarkable.

Equally, a lack of reference to newly published research or bulletins, of dossiers to be downloaded or the reduced amount of sections available of the site, also contributes to

this. The impression is that, despite the database and the enormous effort which goes into maintaining it, the page is weak on additional content. Stylistically, the Mercator Media website does not shape up to the other two Mercator sites either, which have a more similar typeset and lay-out, thus suggesting a link between the pages. While a coherent internet presence of the entire Mercator Network is nonetheless still absent, the page that differs most widely from the others is the Media website.

Having assessed the structural weaknesses of the Mercator Media page, it is nonetheless important to allow for the context and situation of its production. The tasks demanded of the Mercator Media project are wide spread and time-consuming and **we consider that a profound change in its internet performance simply within the framework of an annual work programme would not be feasible.** This is particularly so as the Mercator Media cannot rely – as the other Mercators can – on the context of a well-established, specialised and independent research centre to provide technical assistance and management. Already, the majority of the time is invested in maintaining and improving the page as it stands, with little other people-hours available to dedicate to a technical renovation of the page and its contents.

Therefore, while a remodelling of the website is indeed being recommended, realistically speaking this renovation can not in its entirety be expected from Mercator Media staff alone as part of its annual work programme. Neither do we wish to suggest that the weak assessment of its website has caused a singularly detrimental effect on its external perception and performance. As regards the latter, the hard data made available by this study in fact suggest that the Mercator Media is not doing badly in comparison with the other Mercator Centres, and external assessment as a result of the questionnaire responses has also been fair.<sup>67</sup>

What the analysis of the website and of the external perception demonstrates, however, is that neither Mercator Centre has been particularly successful in making itself known. **Therefore, a new dissemination and publicity strategy for all three Mercators is strongly recommended, and should ideally include a coherent visual presence on the internet, marketing of its newsletters, presence on other websites, and a general campaign to improve its profile and external knowledge.**

### **Services rendered**

While many questions come from Wales and the UK in general, the user base of Mercator Media is very diverse, and includes national and regional authorities, NGO's and associations, private companies and individuals. Although the exact profile of the user base is not known, the general target group includes 1. minority language professionals, academics, students, and activists, 2. policy-makers, 3. the academic community at large, and 4. the general public. The processes of Europeanisation and the increasing role of activism contribute to the user profile.

Generally, there are fewer FAQ's now than earlier, yet they are often of a more obscure and complex nature. The questions tend to be comparative, as not all the information on the web can be digested. Sometimes, however, Mercator Media is approached for queries on European funding, and at other times even mistaken for a grant-giving body. They are also always consulted on – and thus are involved in – the set-up of minority TV-channels or radio broadcasters. We have been able to trace

positive responses from the field, where Mercator Media played an instrumental part in the set-up of such media entities by providing contacts, establishing links and granting advice as well as a European dimension to the project.<sup>68</sup>

The information service is also a point of overlap with EBLUL. **Mercator Media considers that its aim should not be to provide only an information service for minorities, but rather an information broker about minorities, thus addressing a much larger, and also potentially more specialised public.** The heart of this problem is the assignation of tasks and duties, and will need to be addressed by fine-tuning the mission statements and work plans together with the other Mercators, and EBLUL.

The general enquiries answered have declined recently, from 233 in 2000-1 to 141 in 2002-3. The great majority of enquiries is received via e-mail, with phone, fax or letter consultations reduced to a minimum. Every year, Mercator Media also receives some visitors on specific study or information visits.

### **Individual projects**

**The projects and the general work carried out by Mercator Media tend to feed off each other**, drawing on the sources and contacts made available by each. In a sense, the projects are considered additional, separate and temporal undertakings, which nonetheless continue the same work that is done for the Mercator Media project in general.

While it can be said that the projects were always well designed in content and activities in their own right, it is realistic to say that they were also needed to sustain the income of the Mercator Media project, especially since funding has decreased. This should not be considered negatively, as **the projects seem to have contributed constructively towards Mercator Media's general activities and research foci, as well as to dissemination**, networking, cooperation and promotion of minority language media in general.

**1998:** Summer Course for students and teachers of journalism and librarianship on information sources for LUL. (98-06-EDU-0160-00). €20.000

**1999:** Mercator Conference on Audiovisual Translation and Minority Languages (1999-1515). €25.000

**2001:** Researching a New Minority-Language Daily Newspaper in a European Context (2001-115). 2 years, €50.000, 39%

Interesting about the projects is that most were born out of experiences, petitions or circumstances derived from Mercator's activities in the field, and equally, that most aimed at integration into the immediate or international environment for reasons of dissemination and coherence. **Two of the three projects also had concrete and tangible outcomes and lasting effects.** In the case of the conference on Audiovisual Translation, it was from the beginning integrated into the context, as it responded to various petitions from the sector, provoked a positive feedback from participants, and managed to be presented at a Festival on Celtic Film and TV the day after conference closure. Lasting results are a follow-up publication in electronic and in

paper format, as well as the set-up of a new Network of Minority Language Media, which is now about to begin operations.

In the other case (Researching a minority daily newspaper) a new independent company with the task of creating the first-ever Welsh Daily Newspaper has been set up as a direct result of the research project. At the moment, the University Department grants the project a room for one year, and one person is currently working there. This is an exceptionally concrete result of a study, which itself came as the result of conferences, meetings and movements from within the sector.<sup>69</sup> In this case, the projects all served to improve relations with the sector, achieve transnational exchange and the maintenance of networks, and contributed to new developments in the field.

With the first of the three projects being probably the weakest and least sustainable, **the tendency has been to increasingly use resources and transnational contacts to add sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency to its work.** This is especially so as no budget is now granted for travel visits that are not directly related to EBLUL or Mercator meetings, and the necessity to meet professionals from the field could during these years thus be resolved through the project funding. Finally, although a short comment in this section must suffice, **the reduced budget made available for travel may eventually prove to be a hindrance to an effective dissemination strategy.**

## **Evaluation**

Mercator Media has no institutionalised methods of auto-evaluation. It holds regular informal staff meetings to review work in progress, and also meets to discuss outcomes of projects, but no regular evaluation procedure has been implemented.

Nonetheless, Mercator Media has to prepare a work programme for each year of activities, which is presented at a meeting with the other Mercator Centres and the European Commission. These programmes are based on the activities and experiences of the previous year. Equally, the centre each year submits an Annual Report to the European Commission, in which the centre's activities are presented and analysed, thus reflecting the work already carried out as well as indicating tendencies for the future plans. The annual report is not as detailed and analytic as it could be, and the planning ahead would certainly benefit from a more detailed analysis of past activities, although the complexity and required length of the report have also varied over the years. **As concerns the Commission, Mercator Media has mentioned that a more detailed and content specific feedback from the Language Policy Unit might be desirable,** so that new priorities and expectations towards the annual reports and work programmes may be better integrated.

## **External Relations**

### **Relation to the RML sector**

**Due consideration is given to petitions and suggestions from the RML sector,** as long as these are viable and possible to integrate within the activities of the centre. Examples to be mentioned are the recent integration of the sign language into 2003

Symposium as the direct result of a petition from respective professionals, as well as the research on minority language daily newspapers, which was a concern that had arisen at conferences on regional and minority languages in Europe. Equally, **the database as well as the publications require exchange with expert correspondents from the RML sector and have ensured a good number of working relationships with RML agents.** Particularly the contacts to individual media projects that had been surveyed, helped along, or invited to conferences, are being maintained.

Moreover, the relationships with the foremost agents and institutions of the sector at a European level are necessarily regular, although they vary in actual intensity. Through activities within EBLUL committees contacts are also maintained with other organisations from the field. Similarly, contacts are established through the membership of Mercator staff in diverse bodies (the Publishers' Advisory Committee of the British Council, or the Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency). Nonetheless, it is realistic to say that **within the sector, and outside the already well established contacts, Mercator Media continues to have a low profile.**

Especially **the existing contact with Welsh regional or even local institutes or organisations is not satisfactory, nor has Mercator Media shown much knowledge about or contact with other project initiatives.** For instance, it has been curious to notice that there has not even been any contact with research centres in their own vicinity, which received project funding during the years under study. Neither part has there been any intent to establish working relationships or information exchange with these projects, nor have these considered contacting Mercator Media about their activities.

**Indeed, particularly within Wales the relation to other RML institutions seem to be strained, such as the Welsh Language Board, with which there appear to have been comparatively few direct contacts, cooperation, or attendance of conferences.** While they each cover different areas of expertise, the fact that the centres should not be optimising each other's resources is a cause for concern. Other projects interviewed in the course of this study also attested to the scarcity of contact and exchange with the Mercator Media project. Whether these tensions are the result of competing interests and competences (especially when applying for European funds), or whether these are of a more personal nature, is not of relevance here. Yet it is worrying that even within Wales, the integration and profile of Mercator Media remains low.

**Overall, the geographical spread of Mercator Media's activities is well-balanced and extensive.** A certain imbalance of emphasis towards languages such as the Spanish RML (and particularly Basque), Breton, and Welsh can be discerned within its publications, although a selection of other European RML is always covered in any edition. Some topical country-specific situations, which are of special concern to the RML community at a given moment in time, are also addressed (e.g. Austria, Greece).

The reasons for this slight imbalance lie in the structure of contributors to conferences and publications. For a qualitatively high working standard, Mercator Media depends on an established academic discourse, on strong universities and industries, and on professional writers. These standards cannot be guaranteed in all countries, and as such they represent a determinant in selecting potential contributions.

Individual events, such as the 2003 Symposium, have managed to attract new audiences, and especially an increased attendance from future member states from Eastern Europe, which has helped to expand the existing network of correspondents. The symposium thus worked as a multiplier in that it strengthened and enlarged the network of correspondents, fostered through discussions and workshops, and with it the geographical spread of the centre. The second network, apart from that of the correspondents, is the *Minority Language Media Network*, which brings together media professionals and academics. This network is in the process of being established, and is already announced on the website.

In general, there seem to be different understandings of the adequate field of operation for Mercator Media, the services they are meant to deliver, or the type of research and data collection they are supposed to carry out. It has even been mentioned by agents from the field that the Mercator expertise in minority language media and technology, as well as its contribution to language planning or European integration, is not always taken for granted. While these views are subjective and should not be generalised, they indicate that there remains much to do for Mercator Media in terms of external relations and cooperation.

**In conclusion, there are good contacts to selected representative entities from the field, but they are not necessarily frequent, regular or widespread enough to assure a higher visibility or integration of Mercator Media in the sector at large.** Especially outside the greater language communities or well established personal contacts, Mercator Media's input and profile among the sector seems to be limited. **Even where it is known by name, few interviewees were able to expand on the actual content of their work,** nor their regular activities.

These findings are backed up by data from the questionnaire responses, which show that representative organisations from the RML sector<sup>70</sup> are aware of Mercator Media if not to a satisfactory degree (40.4%), then at least only slightly less so than there exists awareness of Mercator Education (43.86%), and more so than of Mercator Legislation (38.6%). Most significantly, in terms of utility, Mercator Media was judged to be the most useful of the three (scoring 6.05 out of 10, in comparison with 5.83 for Mercator Legislation and 5.57 for Mercator Education). During the interviews held with selected project beneficiaries, however, it turned out that an appreciation of the Mercator network rarely went beyond a general approval of its existence. These factors indicate that it should be a special concern for all Mercator to review and intensify out their contacts to the RML sector, and improve the dissemination of their work.

### **Coordination and multiplier effect**

As the Mercator Media project understands its mission as primarily research based, it has developed connections with the academic world and research centres, especially in Scotland, Ireland, Spain and also, to a reduced extent, in France. Equally, because of its more recent aim to emphasise the integration of minority languages in courses and curricula of Media Studies at University level, it has directed itself towards more academic action.

Mercator staff also argued that events such as the Symposium 2003 serve to bring together RML researchers and non-RML research agents, although the list of speakers

does not necessarily reflect this. Together with Dr. Mike Cormack of Stirling University, **the idea to develop RML Media Studies is currently being followed up in various ways, and there seems to be progress on the matter.** This tendency would allow for a spin-off of Mercator research to established media studies and the University world, and simultaneously assure academic input and content based exchange.

At the same time, staff are indeed aware that they need more contacts and networking and that, although there is some publication exchange and contacts with other research centres, these should be greatly extended. **The attitude towards inserting minority languages into media studies is pro-active and a positive trend is discernible.**

### **Assessment of strengths and weaknesses**

#### **Strengths**

- The current arrangement of the Mercator Centre provides for a more sustainable funding cycle and a cluster of similar projects, thus contributing to improving administrative and content management.
- Provision of specialised research on areas which EBLUL and the other Mercator centres do not cover (complementarity). Diversity of research, adapting to new technologies.
- The network of correspondents, which works seemingly well and assures a good geographical spread and expertise. The *Minority Language Media Network* should add a new dimension to this type of cooperation and scope.
- The quality of the database and the links section that is related to minority language media. They form the core of their documentation function.
- The execution and integration of projects. Two of the three projects carried out had tangible and sustainable results.

#### **Weaknesses**

- Mercator Media is lacking the context of specialised, prestigious and independent research centre (such as the Fryske Academy or CIEMEN), and the resources this could provide.
- The visibility, dissemination and impact of Mercator Media is limited, as the awareness within the RML sector of their work remains comparatively low.
- The website has technical, stylistic and conceptual shortcomings. A news section, newsletter subscription, and a content based layout are particularly wanting. Not enough presence and inter-linking on the internet.
- A substantial part of the staff's work is technical and administrative. Not enough content production and networking can be done.
- Relations to the RML sector, especially the Welsh one, are not optimal. Not enough effort seems to be made to restart stalled relations, or encourage a transfer of expertise and good practice with other initiatives.
- Rejection of applications submitted under non-language programmes of the EC

#### **1.4.5. Institutional relations: Mercator Network, EBLUL and the EU**

##### **Relations between Mercator and the EU**

###### **European Commission**

According to the staff of all three centres, the point of contact with the European Union is the Language Policy Unit of the European Commission. Contracts between the Commission and each of the three centres are signed on an annual basis, dependent on the previous submission of a work programme proposal and the subsequent production of a report detailing the fulfilment of planned activities.

Contacts between the centres and the EC staff are described as serving the interests and needs of all parties well, as well as being cordial, useful, and generally informed by a real interest of the Commission to contribute to trouble-shooting and problem-solving. This has been especially so in the difficult year 1998, in which funding had to be suspended on short notice. There is an annual meeting to discuss the new Work Programme, contacts over the application of the budget and over the annual report and the final accounts. There are also ad hoc meetings and contacts in between them, if the context allows and the events demand it (for example the meetings held due to the MININF project).

Increasingly, contacts are maintained during the year, and EC's administrators attendance of recent Mercator conferences and interest shown in the centres' activities and difficulties have been greeted with satisfaction. In general, the turnover of staff at the Commission has required the Mercator Centres to periodically adapt their work to the resulting differences in expectations and methodologies, and satisfaction has been expressed on the current state of affairs. It has also been appreciated that efforts are being made to harmonise work plans and funding with the respective calendar years. On the other hand, a certain doubt seems to remain regarding the degree to which the Commission views the expertise and data generated by the Mercator centres as helpful for the actual design of its programmes or policy strategies on RML, and thus the degree to which their findings are integrated within the development of these.

The general perception is nonetheless that the Commission sees the Mercator Centres as the specialists in the field and has confidence in them carrying out the tasks entrusted to them in a proper way. There is also a due acknowledgement of the concerns the Commission seems to have in respect to some aspects of the Mercators' performance, and as a response, all centres demonstrate a great willingness to respond to improvements that may be proposed in due course.

###### **Mainstreaming**

Cautious and conditioned agreement best qualifies the Mercator Centres' reaction to the EC approach concerning mainstreaming of support to regional and minority languages. For the Mercator, the EC option to mainstreaming seems to emerge as a response to increased hesitance and sometimes reluctance by EU member states for a

specific treatment of RML languages. From this perspective mainstreaming is interpreted as a way in which the Commission wishes to give continued support for RML.

The shift from a positive discrimination of RML to that of non-discrimination of all languages in EU member states as a principle underpinning the new EC policy is however also an issue of concern to the Mercator Centres, as the national provisions to guarantee such a condition of equality is by comparison less developed. This is particularly so in reference to the number of actually endangered languages, such as Cornish or Lower Sorbian, which face an uphill struggle to conserve the basic preconditions of language use, and which may not be able to succeed without a certain input from the European Union.

It is duly acknowledged, too, that many other policy options have been tried before – although the Mercator Centres consider them to have been more successful than is generally assumed; a view partially sustained by the data gathered for the purpose of this report. However, especially with the increasing complexity of EU policies in regard to diversity and the protection of minorities, as well as the decreasing availability of funds, which the European Union will be facing in the coming years, the Mercator Centres have pointed out in these interviews that a number of qualified conditions should be introduced to the programmes in order to assure the success of the mainstreaming policy.

### **Relation to other EU bodies**

The relations between the Mercator Centres and Community institutions other than the Commission are far from frequent and occur generally speaking on an occasional ad hoc basis. Basically contacts depend on the type and scope of ongoing activities.

Contacts with the European Parliament have been established on some rare occasions, particularly concerning the elaboration of resolutions related to regional and minority languages. At present, the Chair of the Intergroup on RML is briefed on the work and activities of Mercator.

Whereas the relations with the Committee of the Regions are seen as potentially having the most interest, day-to-day practice reveals a limited and moreover very punctual and indirect contact. Only Mercator Education has pointed out that it is pursuing to intensify this relation via the delegate of the Provincial Government of Friesland to the Committee of the Regions.

Relations with the Council of Ministers are reported as not existing.

Generally, it is considered that the maintenance, promotion and extension of relations with the European Union, in particular with the other Community organs, is a task that should ideally be fulfilled by EBLUL.

<b>Coordination among the Mercator Centres</b>
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On the one hand, as for the clarity in the distribution of functions, at present the overlap between the activities of the Mercator Centres is perceived as virtually non-existent. The increased concentration and profiling of the Mercator Centres on their thematically delimited fields of activity has been a key factor to eliminate overlap in a progressive way. Enhanced contact and coordination regarding ongoing and planned activities have been clearly instrumental in achieving this goal.

On the other hand, coordination in the design and development of activities and projects is the result of regular contacts, mainly by telephone and e-mail, between staff members of the different Mercator Centres. This ensures continued updated information on the development of activities and projects of the centres concerned.

In addition to these contacts, Mercator staff are meeting on a regular basis, despite the fact that present budgetary guidelines prevent such meetings from happening as often as in the past. Present day practice is aided by email, and alternatives have been looked for. Currently, Mercator staff meet at least three times a year: once at the EBLUL meeting, once at the meeting with the EC and a third time on occasion of a thematic Mercator Symposium. The centres consider that on the whole, the level of trust between the Mercators is very high, as is the respect for each other's autonomy, and despite an increasingly competitive situation relations have never been adversely affected.

The above mentioned Mercator International Symposium is yet another example of a jointly planned and consulted initiative that seeks to optimise issues of common concern. The first edition was held in Wales in the framework of Work Programme 2002-03, the second one in Tarragona in February 2004 in the framework of Work Programme 2003-2004 and the third one will be held in Leeuwarden in November 2004. Conferences are furthermore subject of a common evaluation to improve their focus, functioning and output. Negotiations between EBLUL and the Mercator Centres to redivide the budget provided enhanced collaboration and coordination, and resulted in a 15,000 Euro supplementary grant for the Mercator Centre that hosts the annual thematic conference.

The Mercator Centres proceeded in recent years to establish working agreements. It is current practice nowadays that work plans be exchanged between all Mercators, and amended if necessary to avoid overlap or to optimise joint activities. This is done before the work plans are sent to the EU. Some funding may be necessary for meetings involving the three centres.

In the same vein, the Mercator Centres have since the Work Programme 2002-03 amalgamated their individual newsletters to form a single one informing their subscribers of all Mercator activities; it is a joint project of the different Mercator Centres. The resulting emphasis on synergetic and common interests demonstrates a progressively effective and efficient manner of work. One possible next step might be to suggest for a more unified image of the three centres to be established, as the current inconsistency projects a too incoherent image of the whole and renders identification difficult. Should a specific recommendation be made for the three centres to set on a standard image, this would require that specific means be made available for the technical changes necessary. This could take the form of a common Mercator project, somehow similar to the funding that currently supports annual symposia, whereby one centre undertakes responsibilities that benefit the whole network. In this case, the project could involve funding one external expert or one Mercator centre to

produce a common website template that individual centres would adapt thereafter. This should of course be in line with the contents and image of related initiatives, including EBLUL's Internet projects.

Since 2000 conscientious efforts have been undertaken by Mercator Centres to avoid overlap and to search for common initiatives based on shared interest. In 2002 a first step to a common database system was made, despite the practical difficulties resulting from the incompatibility of different software systems. We have not however been able to ascertain, which data this merger will affect, and in what relation it stands to the MININF project.

Although some flaws still persist, **there is a clear positive tendency towards an increasing coordination** and avoidance of overlap between the activities of the different Mercator Centres, and an increased interconnectivity between the EC and Mercator Centres on RML-related issues. This positive tendency has to be encouraged by stimulating the increase in coordinating contacts. **The increase of joint activities may provide an excellent opportunity to optimise coordination and planning**, that can further be strengthened via increased consultations, email and/or video conferences. Nevertheless, the importance given to these matters by the EC provides an additional reason to devise **specific budgetary provisions for coordination meetings** that are an extremely cost-effective manner to avoid expensive overlap resulting from the lack of coordination.

#### **Relationship between Mercator and EBLUL**

The relationship between the Mercator Centres and EBLUL is one marked by common objectives but a significant difference in structures. While all four centres strive to inform, promote, document and advise RML communities in their respective competencies and domains, the funds at their disposal and their infrastructure cannot be compared. It is in part due to this asymmetry that the relationship between the three Mercator Centres and EBLUL is described as somewhat tense. The tension, however, does not only stem from said asymmetry in size and funding, but is also due to a certain **opposition between the thematically and substance oriented Mercators and the politically oriented EBLUL**, which is intensified by a growing competition and uncertainty as to what is expected of each of them, their respective missions overlapping at times. On a positive note, the relations between the organisations on a personal level are reported to be good.

#### **Distribution of functions**

In theory, EBLUL and Mercator clearly work for different target audiences, and thus with a clear distribution of funding. While EBLUL needs to inform, lobby, and disseminate, the Mercator Centres write for an informed and often academic audience. In reality, however, these target audiences frequently coincide and despite considerable progress made, avoiding a certain overlap between the different Mercator Centres and EBLUL seems to be difficult.

One reason given for this overlap is the fact that whereas Mercator activities are to target field-specific audiences, those of EBLUL involve broadly reaching out to varied

audiences, including those which are also the aim of the former centres. **The overlap in activities and target publics that sometimes unfolds from these divergent aims could be used to work in synergy, but hitherto opportunities for joint work have often been missed.** Thus the EBLUL initiative to make a directory of RML organizations clearly duplicated, at least partially, the work undertaken by Mercator Education in 1998 and which resulted in the Mercator Guide to Organisations. Whereas the Mercator Education initiative listed groups active in RML education, EBLUL offered a general view. However, data collection by EBLUL did not take into account Mercator Education's work and did not take stock of the Mercator Guide. Equally, the 2003 Vade-Mecum,<sup>71</sup> a guide to international documents on European lesser used languages published by EBLUL under its Work Programme 2002-03, is in fact a publication that would more appropriately have been done by Mercator Legislation.

Given the characteristics of EBLUL and the Mercator Centres, the overlap that is produced may be inevitable and sometimes even necessary. This is due to the fact that the need for general information on the general situation of RML necessarily overlaps at least partially with that of the more specialized Mercators. In that context, the fact that both the Mercator Centre Network and EBLUL will have to be dealing at times with questions and queries, which are not primarily of their domain, is not the key issue. Of greater concern – and puzzling for audiences – is the distribution of publication and organisation efforts (such as the books mentioned above), which directly affect the greater public of the RML sector, and which may be unfavourable to other activities carried out by each institution.

The fact that the existence of different software systems may make the duplication of certain RML data inevitable, should not be of concern here; indeed, a physical merging of the different databases would probably be too time consuming to be worth the effort. Therefore, the existence of entries in different bases only provides a problem in so far as a given user may receive the same information twice. There is however a need to distinguish the roles of the four centres web pages amongst themselves, and in relation to the Lingualia site.

As is made clear in the chapter analysing EBLUL and its activities over the past five years, the main factor that distinguishes the Bureau from the Mercator Network is its political dimension. Lobbying, political work, and the information of the RML sector on current political developments regarding regional and minority languages in general are certainly part of EBLUL's brief alone. EBLUL has also more tasks to build up and strengthen the constituencies across Europe, and bring national and regional authorities to support them. While these constituencies are also important informants to the Mercator Centres, the relationship here has to be more consultative and content based. Ideally, the academic fundamentals and research material to back up the political actions and to inform the discourse employed by EBLUL when representing European language minorities, should be delivered by (and asked for from) the Mercator Network.

## **Tendencies**

Mirroring the positive tendency that currently characterizes the mutual collaboration between the Mercator Centres themselves, the coordination between them and EBLUL also reveals a pattern of increased coordination and cooperation, especially after the intense negotiation that accompanied the MININF project. Nonetheless, and despite

noticeable improvements in cooperation, the difference in funding and size is difficult to subtract from any discussion on the topic. This is especially so, as the four centres involved feel that there is an increased tendency to have them compete amongst each other – a competition which adds a bitter element to the discussions, and hinders cooperation.

**Therefore, the major hindrance to full optimisation of the EBLUL-Mercator Centres relation seems to be rooted above all in the asymmetry in size and scope of these organisations, as well as in the lack of satisfactory definition or description concerning the distribution of functions.** A clearer definition of the respective functions in the near future seems to be key to avoid overlap, to enhance sound RML output, and to increase visibility of both Mercator Centres as well as EBLUL.

Nowhere has this problem come as much to the fore as in the project known as MININF, which we described in the chapter *1.3. Analysis of EBLUL*. MININF was meant to produce *the* central information portal on RML, and to provide these language communities with a free web hosting service. Most significantly, however, the project had been suggested as a joint operation to EBLUL and the Mercator Centres, in order to enhance communication and cooperation amongst them.

Precisely the difficulty relations and cooperation between the four centres however seems to have delayed the project start, as negotiations continued throughout 2002. It concerned mainly the assignation of funds and functions, as EBLUL assumed responsibility for the technical matters and was assigned the budget, and the Mercator Centre engaged to contribute content and data as part of the Work Programmes without extra funding. This issue remained a bone of contention during 2002 and beyond, clearly illustrating that the concerns and difficulties mentioned above are central to the relationship between the centres. Along the way, an editorial board to accompany the process was set up, which counts with the representation of each centre, and which was meant to balance the individual influences. At the time of writing, cooperation between Mercator and EBLUL had markedly improved and included two joint proposals to other European programmes to date.



## 2. The present context

Present plans for the European Commission's management of linguistic diversity in Europe were made public in July 2003 as the EC published its Action Plan *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity*. This document, the outcome of a consultation process which had started in late 2002, also evidenced the Commission's departure from previous policies. Indeed, up to a few years earlier the intention had been to establish a multiannual programme to support regional and minority languages,<sup>72</sup> whereas by 2002-3 RMLs were included in the Commission's overall aims of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity - *'Promoting linguistic diversity means actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises. Taken as a whole, the range on offer should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those with 'national' status, and the languages of our major trading partners around the world.'*<sup>73</sup>

While the present evaluation does not intend to analyse the content of 2003's Action Plan or the factors that led to its production, several elements need to be highlighted as they provide the present framework within which the EC's support for regional and minority languages is to operate. As regards previous EC documents concerning languages, the current Action Plan opts for an inclusive approach, where regional and minority languages are to be treated alongside all other languages being spoken in Europe. References to *safeguarding* or *preserving* languages do no longer figure in the Plan and are replaced by an overall emphasis on *promoting*. The Plan is also made on the basis of using already existing budgetary provisions for the period 2004-06 (*'The actions use resources available in existing Community programmes and activities; none of them requires additional budgetary resources to be allocated to the Commission'*<sup>74</sup>). This excludes thus the production of a specific programme for the promotion of language learning and linguistic diversity.

The Action Plan's success will therefore depend on the extent to which existing financial resources in other fields can support the Commission's aims concerning linguistic diversity. Of interest here are both programmes managed by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (*'The mainstream European education, training and culture programmes are already accessible to speakers of all languages, whether 'official' languages or regional languages, minority languages, languages spoken by migrant communities, or sign languages'*<sup>75</sup> – with the acknowledged exception of some Socrates actions, including Lingua) and other European funding programmes: *'In the longer term, all relevant Community programmes and the Structural Funds should include more support for linguistic diversity, inter alia for regional and minority languages, if specific action is appropriate.'*<sup>76</sup>

On the basis of these considerations, the following section aims to picture the main features of organisations active in the promotion of regional and minority languages in Europe and their credentials vis-à-vis EU developments, particularly mainstreaming. To this end, data has been sought on the awareness existing among RML organisations of current EU news and funding opportunities, on examples of activities funded by EU programmes in fields other than languages, as well as on the difficulties encountered by these organisations when seeking EU support. Likewise, an analysis has been made

of measures suggested in the Action Plan to determine how they could ensure the best impact for regional and minority languages.

## 2.1. EC awareness among RML organisations

### 2.1.1. Awareness and relevance of EU programmes

Information on the awareness that organisations representing regional and minority languages have of the EU funding programmes which could provide resources to them was first obtained through the distribution and analysis of questionnaires, and has also been one matter of discussion as interviews and visits to project beneficiaries and other representative entities from the field were carried out over the course of the present evaluation.

Table 2.1 below provides data on the knowledge that those organisations have of EU programmes such as Leonardo, Socrates, Youth, Culture 2000, Town-Twinning and Interreg, that received funding under calls for proposals between 1998 and 2000. The object of this query is to determine to what extent these programmes could partly replace the funding role previously carried out by the calls for proposals to promote and safeguard regional and minority languages and cultures.

While relevant differences arise among organisations that received funding under different calls for proposals – generally speaking, successive editions witnessed beneficiary organisations of an increasingly larger scale, often more aware of developments at the EU level (cf. chapter 1) – the most relevant information is provided by the degree to which separate programmes are known and by the number of RML project funding beneficiaries who claimed they also received funding under the former programmes. On aggregate terms, Socrates, Leonardo and Interreg appear as the best-known of the programmes mentioned, with over half of all respondents stating a knowledge. Over one third of respondents are aware of Youth and Culture 2000, whereas less than 30% of beneficiaries knew the EC's support to town-twinning arrangements.

**Table 2.1. Awareness of EC programmes and success in raising funds**

Answers to the question "Could you tell us which of these programmes you know and to which have you applied for or obtained funding from in the last five years (1998-2003)?" among organisations that received RML project funding, 1998-2000.

RML Call	Awareness + success	Leonardo	Socrates	Youth	Culture 2000	Town-twinning	Interreg	Others
1998 (78 replies)	% aware	48.7%	65.4%	34.6%	37.2%	33.3%	50%	29.5%
	N° success	3	10	5	1	1	9	-
	% success	100%	71.4%	55.6%	25%	100%	64.3%	-
1999 (25 replies)	% aware	76.0%	84.0%	44.0%	44.0%	16.0%	48.0%	40.0%
	N° success	3	3	2	2	0	3	-
	% success	100%	75.0%	100%	100%	0	100%	-
2000 (18 replies)	% aware	66.7%	72.2%	38.9%	61.1%	27.8%	72.2%	44.4%
	N° success	2	2	2	4	0	5	-
	% success	50%	66.7%	100%	66.7%	0	100%	-

Total (121 replies)	% aware	57.0%	70.2%	37.2%	42.1%	28.9%	52.9%	33.9%
	N° success	6	13	8	5	1	15	-
	% success	80%	71.4%	69.2%	58.3%	100%	77.3%	-

Note: "% awareness" indicates the percentage of respondents who stated knowledge of programmes mentioned. Non-awareness includes both respondents who stated they did not know one programme and respondents who did not reply to question. "N° success" indicates the respondents who claimed they had received funding under that programme. "% success" indicates the percentage of respondents who claimed they had received funding among all respondents who stated they had sought funding under that programme. There are reasons to believe that results under "% success" are overrated, due to respondents' omission of unsuccessful applications, forgetfulness, etc. 78 responses were counted for organisations which received funding under the 1998 call for proposals; 25 for 1999; and 18 for 2000. Some figures in the row "Total" do not add up exactly to the sum of previous rows, as some organisations were funded under more than one calls for proposals and thus are counted separately but cannot be added to one another. Figures for "Culture 2000" actually refer to this and other cultural programmes, as Kaleidoscope, Raphaël and Ariane were also mentioned in the questionnaire.

On the other hand, table 2.1 also provides evidence on the degree to which former RML beneficiaries have actually received funds from the programmes they applied to. The resulting data indicate clearly that only a minority have managed to benefit from initiatives other than those directly aimed at the promotion of languages.

42 responding organisations (representing slightly over one third of questionnaires received) indicated that they had raised funds from other EU programmes since 1998, comprising 31% respondents from the 1998 call for proposals, 40% from 1999 and 44% from 2000. These figures show that the beneficiaries selected over successive editions were increasingly well-prepared organisations. In fact, it seems that a majority of the organisations selected are something of "EU veterans", i.e. entities led by experts who are very active at a European level, and which have consequently accumulated expertise and know-how also of administration processes. This fact seems to have been reflected in the application forms themselves, which for the years 1999 and 2000 were increasingly complex to fill in, and included an additional question (not asked in 1998) on whether applicants had previously received EU funding.

It is not surprising therefore, that respondents were increasingly able to raise funds from more than one EU programme. 8 different organisations funded in 2000 indicated that they had received a total of 15 different grants at some stage of their career – thus, the average of 1.88 funding programmes to which successful applications had been made clearly overcame previous years' averages of 1.21 and 1.30.<sup>77</sup> 3 of these organisations – Portugal's Instituto de Desenvolvimento Social (IDS), which had also been funded in 1999, Spain's Diputación de Málaga and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya – stated that they had received grants under at least three other EU funding programmes.<sup>78</sup> IDS, an organisation operating in different fields of local development in cooperation with grass-roots agents, benefited from two RML grants for the promotion of Mirandese language and culture – one aimed at increasing young people's participation in culture and enhancing local culture's national and international connections, the other focusing on the uses of new technologies to teach the language and disseminate cultural events.<sup>79</sup> Related initiatives, aimed at research and promotion of the ancient routes through the Mirandese region and at the development of a multilingual Internet portal on culture and heritage, have led to its obtaining funding under Leonardo, Culture 2000 and Interreg, as well as the no-longer-existing Multilingual Information Society (MLIS) programme.

An organisation that had two research related projects funded during these years in Wales, had also previously received funding under the no longer existing programmes

MLIS, Info 2000, and Adapt. Another Welsh project – Menter Môn, which had originally been funded in 1998, went on to benefit from a great range of other programmes, mostly directly at regional development (Interreg, Objective 1 ERDF, etc.). In fact, data included in table 2.1 above shows that **Interreg and Socrates are by far the programmes which have more often aided organisations, even – in some rare cases – organisations whose small size rendered application difficult under the last editions of the RML calls for proposals.** As far as Interreg is concerned, these findings were corroborated by interviews with project leaders, many of whom either had received funding, had applied, or had considered to apply.

### Interreg

Indeed, 7 of the 15 different beneficiaries which claimed to have received funding under Interreg were associations and NGOs, some of a rather small size. In the French Basque Country, the Centre pédagogique basque Ikas – which has a staff of 6 – has produced educational CD-ROMs on the Basque natural environment with Interreg support,<sup>80</sup> whereas the neighbouring Institut Culturel Basque – with 8 members of staff – received another Interreg grant to produce CD-ROMs documenting its extensive research work *Kantuketan, l'univers du chant basque*.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, Interreg IIIA priorities being set on a country-per-country basis, this may not be the case for all potential applicants. Indeed, former beneficiary associations in other countries, including Italy, often felt that funding under Interreg targeted projects of a larger scale than those they could provide for. Among the initiatives from RML organisations that have benefited from Interreg funding are two projects by Italy's Coumboscuro Centre Prouvençal, the Occitan umbrella association involved in education, culture and research, which received grants for a new library and for a cross-border publishing house, which brings together initiatives from Italy and France. In the meantime, two Culture 2000 applications on issues concerning the local culture have been rejected.<sup>82</sup> In Southern Italy, Interreg funding has helped the Unione dei Comuni della Grecia Salentina, a consortium bringing together local authorities in the Griko-speaking region, to bring several initiatives to completion, including the building of several information offices which guide visitors and provide documents on the local culture.<sup>83</sup>

### Socrates

On the other hand, 6 universities, as could be expected, formed the core of the 13 different organisations which stated they had received Socrates support. These included universities in Belgium, Greece, Ireland and Spain. However, university activities funded under other European programmes are not necessarily linked to the learning of a regional or minority language. Thus the University of Patras, where the Wire Communications Laboratory and the Department of Linguistics were involved in the development of an online electronic dictionary of Griko with RML support in 1998, has also received European grants under Socrates and IST, for a range of activities including technology for language learning and man-machine communications. The centre provides an interesting example where technological tools are applied to minority as well as to majority languages.<sup>84</sup>

2002's *Support for Minority Languages in Europe* report, funded and published by the European Commission, which conducted research, among others on the extent to which existing EU funding programmes had provided for projects benefiting regional

and minority languages, identified 5 Comenius projects that had benefited regional and minority languages, including a few that focused on Romani.<sup>85</sup>

Several associations active in the field of education in Spain, France and Italy have benefited from this programme as well. Among the latter is Acció Escolar del Congrés de Cultura Catalana, which has received both Socrates (Comenius) and Interreg funding to pursue projects where schoolchildren encounter traditional Catalan culture and develop arts activities thereby. The initiative has also led to exchanges with pupils in French Catalonia.<sup>86</sup>

Comenius grants have on a few occasions supported projects involving schools and other educational centres providing tuition of Romani. The multiannual project *Roma (Electronic Learning and Information Materials for and with Gipsies)* was coordinated by Universität Graz, with partners in Austria, the Czech Republic, France and Slovenia. Between 2000 and 2003 it developed educational materials on Romany issues: ethnology, culture, history, society and politics. Language learning was one of the priorities of the project, as a resource to safeguard the cultural heritage.

### Leonardo

The Community vocational training action programme Leonardo offers room for programmes having as theme “Regional Development” and “Language Skills” that could serve as framework for RML and employment related projects. In the last eight years two applied research pilot projects coordinated by the Dublin City University (1995) and the Odense Tekniske Skole (2002) have included lesser-used languages like Basque, Irish and Gaelic among their targets. In 1995 was approved the project *Vocational Terminology for Less Widely Used and Taught Languages (LWUTLs)*, coordinated by the Dublin City University. It was a pilot project aiming at the production of a technical glossary in Greek, Irish and Portuguese that could be extended to other languages. One relevant project funded in 2002 was *BPBLTM: Best Practice - Best Language Teaching Method*, coordinated by the Odenske Tekniske Skole in Denmark with partners from Germany, Spain, Romania, Belgium, The Netherlands and the UK, and including Basque, Danish, Gaelic, Dutch and Romanian among its beneficiary languages. The project intended to develop and distribute teaching materials available online for teachers of lesser taught languages. The project’s results are to be annually presented at the international conferences of the European Forum of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (EFVET).

### Town-Twinning

Although its flexibility and width appear to make the Town-Twinning programme rather open to incoming applications from diverse local authorities in Europe, including those where regional or minority languages are spoken, very little evidence has been found in the course of the present evaluation of town-twinning initiatives happening as a result of minority languages – either among local authorities sharing one RML or local authorities representing different RML communities. One interesting case is shown by the Comune di Cormons, with a population of 7,500, in Friuli-speaking Italy. Cormons is twinned with towns in Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, some in regions where minority languages are spoken. In 2002, Cormons invited its partners to attend a three-day conference on musical heritage. This initiative

won Cormons one of the EC's Golden Stars of Town-Twinning in 2002. **Given the abundance of small local authorities in several regions where regional and minority languages are spoken and the opportunities brought about by cross-border sharing of a language – including languages shared by current EU member states and accession candidate countries – town-twinning arrangements such as this could be an example to follow.**

## Culture 2000

Through their focus on the promotion of cultural exchanges and the support to cultural diversity, cultural programmes of the EU are to cater as well for the needs of linguistic communities. The decision that established the Culture 2000 programme in 2000 highlighted – when referring to the Treaty establishing the European Community – that *'special attention should be devoted to safeguarding the position of Europe's small cultures and less widely-spoken languages'*.<sup>87</sup> In spite of this, only in a few cases has the programme been effectively used by organisations representing regional and minority languages – partly the result of lack of knowledge. According to the interim evaluation of Culture 2000, only 5% of projects developed in the 2000 and 2001 editions of the programme had included improving access to culture to linguistic or ethnic minorities among the aims described by their projects leaders<sup>88</sup> – the figure is expected to include projects that targeted ethnic minorities of non-European origin, which are not deemed regional or minority languages for the purposes of the present evaluation.

Three translation projects related to regional and minority languages have been found to receive funds from Culture 2000, as did in 2002 two annual projects concerning literature, books and reading. *Babelexpress. Une bibliothèque numérique Européenne* was coordinated by Tournesol Conseils in Belgium and included Basque and Catalan among its target languages. The *EMLIT Project - European Minority Languages in translation* was coordinated by Brunel University in the UK and brought together 5 European Universities – Barcelona, Regensburg, Liege, Málaga and Palermo -, each of which identified two writers working in a minority language (Scottish, Welsh, Sicilian, Gaelic and Catalan). A translation of their works into English, German, Italian and Spanish was published by an online free magazine at Brunel University. On the other hand, the multiannual project *Literature Across Frontiers* is currently underway, the Mercator Centre at the University of Wales coordinating tasks for the promotion of literature written in minority languages.

Among the projects funded in the field of artistic and literary creation in 2000 and 2001, some included partners which are active in the field of regional and minority languages. *Enfants d'ici, contes d'ailleurs* aimed to help children discover the cultural richness of minority groups by publishing a collection of children stories in Armenian, Berber, Kurdish and Romani (translated into French and Spanish) aimed for multicultural primary schools. One partner was Spain's Union Romani.<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, the *Archipel* poetry project included the Institut de les Lletres Catalanes among its partners. Organisations promoting the use of Catalan have also benefited from several other initiatives, including *ClioH's Workshop II: Innovative books and multimedia materials for comparing and connecting the histories of European Peoples*, a multinational network of 48 European Universities that develops materials to enhance

general awareness on cultural diversity in Europe. The project has produced multilingual educative materials on diversity of the historical heritage of European nations and peoples for three special target groups: children, the visually impaired and people with severe hearing impediments. Catalan-speaking Universitat de Barcelona is one member of the network.

Whereas several of the projects mentioned so far focus on the field of literature or are primarily aimed at the production of tools for educational purposes, less evidence was found of initiatives making a more direct contribution to arts agents. One exception is 2002's *Offspring co-productie*, a performing arts initiative led by Friesland's Tryater and including the Deutsch-Sorbisches Volkstheater among its partners. The project's stated objectives included to improve the position of regional theatre companies and to offer opportunities for professional development to young theatre makers from regional cultures and to include a European dimension in regional theatre.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Tryater received a grant for another of its youth theatre activities under the 1998 call for proposals (*Offspring – Stimulating Youth Involvement in Regional Theatre*, 98-06-AUT-0156-00).

<sup>91</sup> Please note that data was obtained from the questionnaires received. Therefore, averages do not refer to all beneficiary organisations but only to those organisations that replied to questionnaires in the course of the present evaluation. This also applies in the following two figures.

<sup>92</sup> Please note that the average figure of full-time members of staff for all responding organisations excludes one organisation with 7,500 staff to avoid misrepresentation.

<sup>93</sup> Although one distinction was made in the questionnaire between public authorities' publications in one's own and another language, we believe this has proved somehow irrelevant upon counting responses – at least in aggregate, EU-15 terms. This is so because to speakers of certain RML languages "own language" may refer to the country's majority language, while in other countries this would not be the case. The fact that only 3.3% pointed at the existence of national governments' publications in another language (replies coming from Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK), as opposed to almost 15% who claimed to have national governments' publications in their own languages (replies coming from 12 different states), seems to confirm this confusion.

<sup>94</sup> Measure I.4.1. This and subsequent measures are taken from the European Commission's *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity. An Action Plan 2004-2006* (COM(2003) 449 final).

<sup>95</sup> CLIL refers to pupils' learning of a subject through the medium of a foreign language.

<sup>96</sup> Measure I.2.7. Previous Eurydice publications, such as 2001's *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe*, have already taken account of examples concerning regional and minority languages.

<sup>97</sup> Measures III.3.2 (b) and (c).

<sup>98</sup> Measure III.1.2.

<sup>99</sup> Measure II.4.2.

<sup>100</sup> Measure III.1.1.

<sup>101</sup> Measure III.1.3.

<sup>102</sup> Measure IV.1.6.

<sup>103</sup> Measure III.3.3.

<sup>104</sup> Measure IV.1.1.

<sup>105</sup> Measure IV.1.4.

<sup>106</sup> Measure II.1.1.

<sup>107</sup> Measure I.2.1.

<sup>108</sup> Measure I.2.5.

<sup>109</sup> Measure II.2.2.

<sup>110</sup> '[Within Erasmus] Funding is ... available for countries to organise additional intensive language courses before the start of the academic year for Erasmus students arriving in the country and students can receive grants to attend such course. This particular action is limited to the less widely taught official languages. Under Socrates I (but not its follow-up) courses for learners of Welsh, Catalan or Basque, for instance, attending universities where these languages are used as media of instruction, were also eligible for EU co-funding.' EBLUL / ECMI (2002), p. 48.

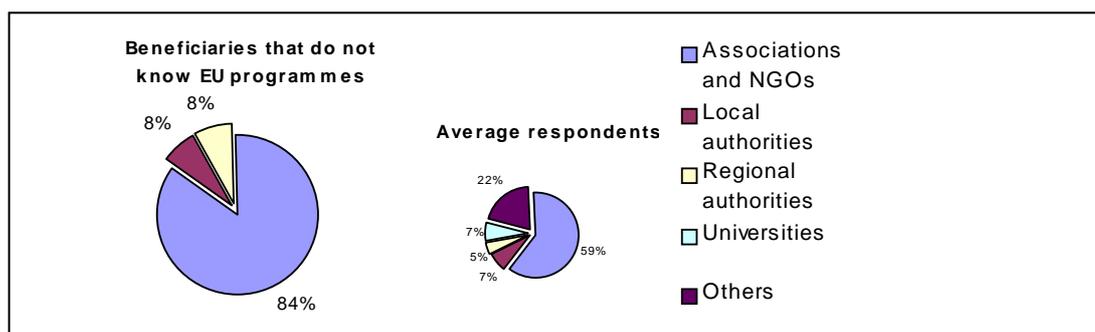
To sum up, **Culture 2000 projects which in some way were related to regional and minority languages have generally been relevant only to the better-off RMLs, including Catalan and Welsh, and more often than not have involved cooperation with official EU languages.** In a few cases, solid, professional organisations active in the promotion of one regional or minority languages have been able to benefit from funding to fulfil their cultural aims. These are welcome developments in the wake of inclusiveness and mainstreaming, but **prove the difficulties that are to be experienced by less widespread RMLs** to pursue activities in the field of cultural cooperation, let alone to establish networks active in the promotion of regional or minority cultures. The fact that under current guidelines Culture 2000 provides funding to initiatives with a minimum budget of €100,000 may also hinder activities in this field.

### 2.1.2. Difficulties

In the meantime, 13 organisations (10.7%) said that they did not know any of the programmes suggested.

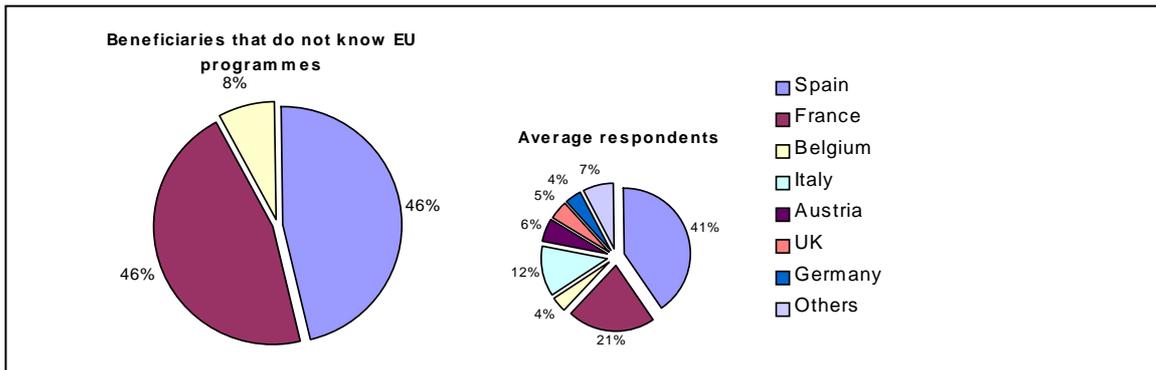
In the course of the present evaluation, **some organisations operating in the field of RML were seen to feel that only programmes explicitly aimed at promoting RMLs would be liable to support their initiatives.** In many instances, organisations that received funding to carry out individual projects under the former RML calls for proposals were utterly unaware of the past and present context of EC funding. They had once received information about the possibility to apply for funds which were specifically for RMLs, had lost contact with EU developments since and their belief was that mainstream EU programmes would not be relevant to them. A rather consistent profile emerges of the organisations which showed no knowledge of present EU funding programmes. **Generally speaking, associations and NGOs seem to be particularly under-resourced in terms of EU information.**

**Figure 2.1. Organisations not knowing EU programmes, per type**  
Among beneficiary organisations that replied to questionnaires, as compared to total figures<sup>91</sup>



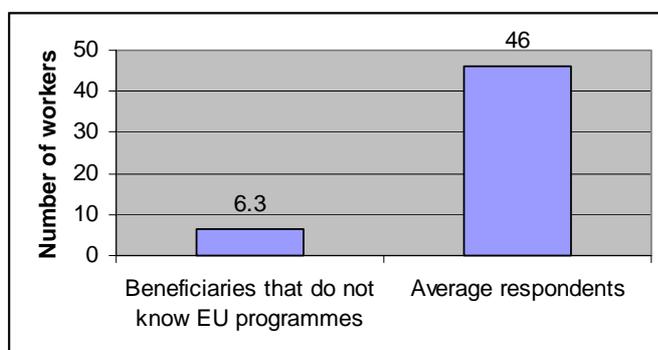
The following figure is based on the country of residence of the organisations that claimed not to know any of the funding programmes, as compared to the average profile of all beneficiary organisations which replied to our questionnaire. Although rather visible differences exist between the two circles, indicating that organisations in Spain and France are rather badly positioned in terms of EC awareness, the small size of the sample on which figures are based certainly over-represents their shares.

**Figure 2.2. Organisations not knowing EU programmes, per country of residence**  
Among beneficiary organisations that replied to questionnaires, as compared to total figures



The profile of organisations that are less aware of the EU funding programmes suggested is completed with a reference to their size, in terms of paid full-time members of staff. **There is enough evidence to believe that organisations' size plays a key role in their ability to know – and therefore to benefit from – funding opportunities at the EU level.** Indeed, the average size of beneficiary organisations was seven times that of organisations that did not know about any of the funding programmes included in the questionnaire.

**Figure 2.3. Average size of organisations<sup>92</sup>**  
Organisations not knowing any EU programmes vs. average for all respondents, in number of full-time paid members of staff



Data presented in table 2.2 confirms that lack of information may be the single most determining factor that prevents organisations representing regional and minority languages or with an interest in them from accessing EU funding. The factors that prevent organisations from applying to European programmes have been ordered according to the percentage of respondents that selected each of them, more than one answer being possible.

**Table 2.2. Difficulties preventing organisations from accessing EU funding**

Percentages of replies to question 'What factors make it difficult for you to access European Union funding?', with suggested answers, among organisations that had received EC funding for RML projects and other organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages

<b>DIFFICULTY FACTORS</b> (decreasing order)	<b>%</b>
<b>Lack of information on existing programmes</b>	41.9%
<b>Lack of time</b>	39.7%
<b>Lack of own funds</b>	38.5%
<b>Lack of information on possible partners</b>	32.4%
<b>Non-meeting of eligibility criteria</b>	25.7%
<b>Loss of interest after previous unsuccessful applications</b>	12.9%
<b>Lack of language skills</b>	5.1%
<b>Others</b>	16.1%
<b>Total number of projects = 179</b>	
Note that as more than one reply was accepted, percentages do not add up to 100%.	

In the course of the present evaluation, as indicated elsewhere, several examples were found of organisations that – despite receiving project funding at a time – had little awareness of regular EU procedures, of the exact programme under which funding had been received or whether that sort of support was still available. **On several occasions, the feeling was one of aid being encountered by chance**, the result of personal connections in the local community and a low threshold for the acceptance of projects by the EC at the time, particularly for the 1998 call for proposals. With criteria becoming more stringent and requiring more than a one-off information source, it seems likely that a large share of organisations funded then face increased difficulties. This is made more evident by the fact that lack of own funds to prepare an application and to provide a sufficient financial basis on which to carry out a European project arises as one factor of difficulty for over 38% of responding organisations. For yet another third of responses, lack of information on possible partners is an element of concern – this indicates a task to be continued by EBLUL and its information points, among others.

Evidence of the relevance of organisational size to the ability to be active at the European level is presented in table 2.3, which crosses figures related to factors of difficulty with those stating the number of paid members of staff (part- and full-time) in respondents' organisations. Even though some irregular patterns appear in a few cases, lack of information – on both European programmes and on possible partners – emerges as being one impeding factor to a large share of organisations with 40 or less workers.

**Table 2.3. Difficulties preventing organisations from accessing EU funding, per size of the organisation**

Replies to question 'What factors make it difficult for you to access European Union funding?', with suggested answers, among organisations that had received EC funding for RML projects and other organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages

paid workers	Lack of information on existing programmes	Lack of time	Lack of own funds	Lack of information on possible partners	Non-meeting of eligibility criteria	Loss of interest	Lack of language skills	Other factors	N°
1-5	60%	40%	44%	42%	26%	14%	6%	10%	50
6-10	32%	32%	35%	29%	21%	12%	12%	9%	34
11-20	44%	50%	38%	13%	25%	13%	6%	13%	16
21-40	33%	27%	27%	40%	33%	0%	0%	20%	15
41-100	25%	40%	30%	15%	20%	20%	0%	35%	20
101-400	13%	62%	38%	25%	38%	13%	0%	25%	8
401+	13%	38%	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	13%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	42%	40%	38%	32%	26%	13%	5%	16%	

Note that respondents which did not include data on the number of paid members of staff within their organisations have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average for this and related tables.

The hypothesis that organisations with more resources generally have a better and more diverse knowledge of EU developments is confirmed by the following table, which provides evidence on the extent to which awareness of the suggested funding programmes is distributed according to the size of beneficiary organisations (in terms of paid staff, both part-time and full-time). Categories showing a higher-than-average knowledge of one given programme have been highlighted in green. For several programmes (Leonardo, Socrates), only those organisations with 20+ staff have a rate of knowledge over the average. Although slightly less clear patterns emerge for other programmes (including Town-twinning, awareness of which seems rather thinly spread across organisational sizes, probably indicating its relevance to local authorities of small or medium size; and partly Interreg, maybe due to similar reasons), **the general impression is clearly that a direct relation exists among organisational size and awareness of EC programmes – and thus that larger organisations are much better positioned to face funding opportunities at the EU level.**

**Table 2.4. Awareness of EU programmes according to size of organisation**

In number of paid staff (part- and full-time), according to questionnaires, among organisations that had received EC funding for RML projects

	NUMBER OF PAID STAFF, PART- AND FULL-TIME							Total
	1 – 5	6 – 10	11 – 20	21 – 40	41 – 100	101 – 400	400 or more	
Leonardo	55%	48%	20%	71%	75%	100%	100%	57.0%
Socrates	67%	66%	50%	86%	75%	83%	100%	70.2%
Youth	36%	31%	20%	43%	31%	67%	80%	37.2%
Culture2000	39%	41%	10%	57%	38%	50%	80%	42.1%
Town-twinning	18%	28%	40%	14%	19%	17%	80%	28.9%

<b>Interreg</b>	52%	62%	30%	71%	50%	33%	100%	<b>52.9%</b>
<b>Others</b>	21%	24%	20%	71%	56%	17%	60%	<b>33.9%</b>
<b>N° respondents</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	

Note: total figures of respondents may be lower than those given in other tables as some respondents did not give data on the number of paid staff in their organisations. Figures for total awareness have been taken from the wider sample of all beneficiary organisations responding to the questionnaire. Figures higher than the average of knowledge for that particular programme have been highlighted in green.

While these data seem to provide very relevant information to identify those organisations which face more difficulties vis-à-vis international funding opportunities, it is also important to bear in mind that their minority nature is simply one more factor affecting this outcome. **Similar conclusions – i.e. tiny associations in peripheral regions being rarely aware of EU funding opportunities – would probably be found among organisations representing majority languages and cultures. Yet their belonging to minority languages means that added hindrances are likely to be experienced, some related to the availability of information in one's own language.**

### 2.1.3. Sources of information on EU developments

As noted earlier, in the course of the present evaluation evidence was found that the obtaining of funding for individual projects promoting or safeguarding regional and minority languages was often due to beneficiaries' face-to-face contacts with local experts or larger organisations. **In several cases, organisations had known of the availability of funding not through a regularly-examined publication or frequently-visited website, but thanks to first-hand information provided by someone living close-by (e.g. one member of the organisation's board or one collaborator).** Particularly for the 1998 call for proposals, several funded projects were found to be based in neighbouring locations, even the same premises, probably the offspring of one inspired source of information.

Yet as funding requirements became stricter in latter editions of that programme, and once funding was to be sought elsewhere, often requiring transnational exchanges, it seemed unlikely that such ways of communication could continue to reign. Increased availability of information on the Internet has also made it probably the most reliable source on ongoing EU developments, while publications of both the EU and national and regional authorities are relevant, often better-targeted sources of regular information to many would-be funded organisations. These were issues covered by our question on the existing sources of information on EU developments, which was posed to organisations that received funding between 1998 and 2000 and to other organisations representing or with a clear interest in the development of regional and minority languages in Europe. The aim was also to measure the extent to which EBLUL and the three Mercator centres were relevant sources of information to the wide sample of organisations responding, while acknowledging that providing information on funding opportunities is not necessarily part of the mission of the Mercator centres.

**Table 2.5. Regular sources of information on EU developments**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiary organisations and among the latter and other organisations active in the field of regional and minority organisations.

<b>SUGGESTED SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b> (decreasing order)	<b>beneficiary organisations</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>European Union websites</b>	44.7%	38.1%
<b>EBLUL website</b>	23.1%	23.2%
<b>Local or regional authority publication in own language</b>	21.5%	21.5%
<b>EBLUL publications</b>	19.8%	21.6%
<b>National government publication in own language</b>	14.9%	15.5%
<b>Publications by another European network or organisation</b>	11.6%	10.5%
<b>Mercator Centres' websites</b>	9.9%	9.9%
<b>Local or regional authority publication in another language</b>	7.4%	7.7%
<b>European Union printed publications</b>	6.6%	7.2%
<b>Mercator Centres' publications</b>	6.6%	8.3%
<b>National government publication in another language</b>	3.3%	2.8%
<b>No regular source of information</b>	<b>33.9%</b>	<b>38.2%</b>

Note that as more than one reply was accepted, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Table 2.5 above shows that over one third of respondents do not have regular access to current EU news. It is worth noting that the figure is valid as well for respondents who had received funding at least once in the period covered by the present evaluation. The lack of regular information seems to confirm the hypothesis that face-to-face information had been one key element under the calls for proposals analysed here. It may also prove that organisations were quick to mobilise at the view of an opportunity directly targeted at them, but had hardly been in touch with news since. **The fact that almost 40% of organisations surveyed state not to have a regular source of information on EU developments could be interpreted as a worrying sign.**

On the other hand, official EU websites appear to be relevant to almost one half of the organisations which benefited from EU funding and a large share of other organisations, thus proving the most regularly-accessed tool to be aware of EU developments. **EBLUL's website (23%) and its printed publications (22%) fare relatively well (32% of respondents stated they used at least one of EBLUL's tools)**, whereas information provided by local, regional or national authorities is slightly less frequent.<sup>93</sup>

## States

An interesting pattern is evidenced by table 2.6, which relates the use of the aforementioned sources of information on EU developments and the country of residence of responding organisations. Only countries for which five or more replies existed are shown. Cells highlighted in green indicate that a figure is above the average for that particular category in the case of sources of information, whereas cells highlighted in red indicate the countries (France and Spain) where an equal-to or above-the-average share of respondents claimed not to have regular sources of information on EU developments. In contrast with this, **organisations in Austria, the UK, Italy and Germany are on or above the average in over half of the**

**suggested sources of information and a rather small share of respondents in these countries states not to have regular sources of information.**

**Table 2.6. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per country**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiary organisations.

	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
<b>Austria</b>	57%	43%	29%	43%	43%	0%	14%	14%	0%	14%	0%	14%	7
<b>Belgium</b>	60%	20%	20%	20%	0%	40%	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	20%	5
<b>France</b>	19%	12%	12%	27%	4%	4%	4%	0%	8%	0%	0%	46%	26
<b>Germany</b>	80%	60%	40%	40%	40%	40%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5
<b>Italy</b>	60%	33%	20%	13%	7%	13%	13%	20%	0%	7%	7%	20%	15
<b>Spain</b>	39%	18%	20%	8%	8%	8%	10%	10%	8%	2%	2%	47%	49
<b>UK</b>	67%	50%	17%	50%	17%	33%	50%	0%	0%	50%	17%	17%	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	45%	23%	22%	20%	15%	12%	10%	7%	7%	7%	3%	34%	123

Note that for the benefit of relevance, countries with less than 5 responses have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average and totals for this and related tables. This includes respondents from Denmark (2), Finland (1), Greece (1), Ireland (1), the Netherlands (1), Portugal (2) and Sweden (1). Figures higher than or equal to the average use of that particular source of information have been highlighted in green. In the case of organisations that have no regular sources of information on EU developments, countries above average have been highlighted in red.

A similar pattern emerges in table 2.7, which has added responses from organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages that did not receive funds from the EC under the calls for proposals that are the object of the present evaluation. If anything, differences among countries seem to be less pronounced here.

**Table 2.7. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per country**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiaries and other organisations active in the field of RML

	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
<b>Austria</b>	56%	33%	22%	33%	33%	0%	11%	11%	0%	11%	0%	22%	9
<b>Belgium</b>	38%	13%	13%	13%	13%	25%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	38%	8
<b>France</b>	18%	13%	11%	21%	3%	5%	3%	3%	5%	3%	0%	53%	38
<b>Germany</b>	40%	60%	20%	60%	50%	10%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	10
<b>Italy</b>	54%	38%	21%	21%	4%	8%	8%	17%	13%	4%	4%	25%	24
<b>Spain</b>	37%	19%	19%	9%	7%	7%	12%	12%	7%	2%	2%	49%	57
<b>UK</b>	50%	25%	17%	42%	17%	25%	25%	0%	0%	42%	8%	25%	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	38%	23%	20%	22%	16%	8%	9%	8%	7%	8%	3%	38%	179

Note that for the benefit of relevance, countries with less than 5 responses have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average and totals for this and related tables. This includes respondents from Denmark (3), Finland (4), Greece (1), Ireland (2), the Netherlands (2), Portugal (4) and Sweden (4). Figures higher than or equal to the average use of that particular source of information have been highlighted in green. In the case of organisations that have no regular sources of information on EU developments, countries on or above the average have been highlighted in red.

## Languages

As in the case of countries, information on the availability and use of certain sources of information has been split according to the languages which responding organisations represented. Only languages for which five or more replies existed are shown. Cells highlighted in green indicate that a figure is above the average for that particular category in the case of sources of information, whereas cells highlighted in red indicate the languages (Basque, Breton, Catalan and Occitan) where an equal-to- or above-the-average share of respondents claimed not to have regular sources of information on EU developments.

While this provides relevant information – somehow in line with the countries which were shown to have less available information in the previous table, though Galician appears to fare significantly better than Spain's average -, it should be taken into account that results are closely linked to the success of languages in old calls for project proposals – i.e. Basque organisations' relative failure to be aware of EU developments may be due to the fact that a significantly high and diverse number of organisations was funded in previous calls, which leads to the present sample being made up of a large number of organisations which are smaller in size than those representing other, less widely-represented languages.

**Table 2.8. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per language**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiary organisations

	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
Basque	7%	13%	13%	0%	0%	7%	7%	0%	0%	7%	7%	73%	15
Breton	0%	20%	0%	20%	0%	0	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	60%	5
Catalan	20%	7%	7%	7%	0%	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	15
Galician	43%	29%	14%	14%	14%	0	0%	29%	0%	0%	0%	29%	7
Occitan	46%	9%	36%	18%	9%	27%	0%	0	9%	0%	0%	36%	11
Slovenian	60%	40%	60%	20%	40%	0	40%	40%	0%	20%	0%	0%	5
TOTAL	45%	23%	22%	20%	15%	12%	10%	7%	7%	7%	3%	34%	

Note that for the benefit of relevance, languages with less than 5 responses have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average and totals for this and related tables. This includes respondents representing Griko (4), Alsatian, Aragonese, Romani and Yiddish (3) and 13 other languages. Figures higher than or equal to the average use of that particular source of information have been highlighted in green. In the case of organisations that have no regular sources of information on EU developments, languages above average have been highlighted in red.

Little relevant differences can be found in the next table, which includes responses from both beneficiaries and other organisations active in the field. The sample being wider, more languages have been included.

**Table 2.9. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per language**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiaries and other organisations active in the field of RML

	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	Nº
Basque	13%	19%	12%	0%	0%	6%	13%	6%	0%	6%	6%	69%	16
Breton	0%	22%	0%	22%	0%	0%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	9
Catalan	17%	6%	11%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	18
Frisian	33%	83%	17%	83%	50%	33%	17%	0%	0%	17%	0%	0%	6
Galician	50%	38%	13%	25%	13%	0%	0%	38%	13%	0%	0%	25%	8

Ladin	20%	20%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	60%	0%	0%	40%	40%	5
Occitan	41%	6%	29%	18%	6%	18%	6%	6%	6%	0%	0%	47%	17
Slovenian	67%	50%	50%	33%	33%	0%	33%	33%	17%	17%	0%	0%	6
TOTAL	38%	23%	20%	22%	16%	8%	9%	8%	7%	8%	3%	38%	

Note that for the benefit of relevance, languages with less than 5 responses have been excluded from this table, although their responses are included in the average and totals for this and related tables. This includes respondents representing Griko, Mirandese and Welsh (4), Alsatian, Aragonese, Asturian, Danish, German, Romani, Sardinian, Swedish and Yiddish (3) and 13 other languages. Figures higher than or equal to the average use of that particular source of information have been highlighted in green. In the case of organisations that have no regular sources of information on EU developments, languages above average have been highlighted in red.

### Organisations' size

Finally, evidence has been sought on the extent to which organisations' size determines their ability to make use of certain sources of information and to be aware of developments in the EU. Again, organisations' size has been measured in terms of their paid members of staff. In table 2.10 below, cells highlighted in green indicate that a figure is above the average for that particular category in the case of sources of information, whereas cells highlighted in red indicate the organisational sizes where an equal-to- or above-the-average share of respondents claimed not to have regular sources of information on EU developments. **Data appears to confirm that even though the use of the means of information suggested is rather evenly spread across the size categories – the sole exception being organisations with less than 6 workers, which repeatedly fall below average lines -, lack of information is the precinct mostly of organisations with 20 workers or less.** As noted above, the fact that the sample used here depends on funding provided under calls for proposals that were notably inclusive as regards the average funding programmes means that results encompass respondents with little regular contacts to the EC.

**Table 2.10. Regular sources of information on EU developments, per size of the organisation**

Replies to question "Do you have any regular sources of information on European Union news and funding opportunities?", with suggested answers, among beneficiary organisations.

paid workers	EU websites	EBLUL website	Local/regional authority publication, own	EBLUL publications	National government publ, own language	Publication by other networks /	Mercator centres' websites	Local/regional authority publication, another	EU printed publications	Mercator centres' publications	National government publication, another	NO REGULAR SOURCE	No
1-5	45%	18%	21%	18%	9%	3%	6%	6%	6%	3%	3%	42%	33
6-10	48%	21%	28%	14%	14%	24%	10%	0%	7%	17%	7%	34%	29
11-20	30%	20%	0%	20%	0%	0%	20%	0%	10%	20%	0%	50%	10
21-40	71%	14%	29%	29%	43%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	29%	7
41-100	63%	44%	25%	19%	13%	19%	25%	25%	6%	0%	0%	19%	16

<b>101-400</b>	17%	17%	50%	50%	17%	50%	17%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6
<b>401+</b>	60%	20%	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	45%	23%	22%	20%	15%	12%	10%	7%	7%	7%	3%	34%	

Note that figures higher than or equal to the average use of that particular source of information have been highlighted in green. In the case of organisations that have no regular sources of information on EU developments, categories on or above average have been highlighted in red.

#### 2.1.4. Summary

Summing up, there seem to have been a few key issues which may contribute to an understanding how existing financial resources, and the knowledge about them, can support the Commission's aims concerning linguistic diversity. Generally, Socrates, Leonardo and Interreg appear as the best-known of the programmes suggested, and it seems that the project beneficiaries selected over successive editions were increasingly prepared and successful in taking advantage of these and other programmes.

However, the data also clearly indicates that only a minority of the interviewees (generally a circle of "EU veterans") funded during these years have managed to benefit from initiatives other than those directly aimed at the promotion of languages. A further conclusion drawn from the data refers to the difficulties experienced especially by less widespread RMLs to access the larger programmes.

In terms of EU information, it seems that generally speaking, associations and NGOs are particularly under-resourced. Furthermore, there is enough evidence to believe that organisations' size plays a key role in their ability to know – and therefore to benefit from – funding opportunities at the EU level. It is this crucial nexus between information on EU developments and capacity to secure funding from the programmes offered under the Action Plan that should be taken into account when implementing the steps proposed by the plan.



## 3. Conclusions and recommendations

### 3.1. Conclusions

#### 3.1.1. Overview

**The European Commission's support for regional and minority languages in the period 1998-2002 has been conducive to strengthening the position of some regional and minority languages in Europe, as evidence gathered in the course of the present evaluation shows.**

**EU action in the field of languages has changed at a higher speed than regional and minority languages.** It has also sometimes ignored the contribution that the very EU-funded activities, whether individual projects or especially the outcomes of EBLUL and Mercator Centres' activities, could have made to the design of its policies and programmes.

#### 3.1.2. Support to individual projects

To many organisations active in this field, **financial support and morale enhancement brought about as a result of the EC's support have proven fundamental** to pursuing activities, although serious difficulties remain to many, not least in the legal position given to languages in individual EU member states, the weak financial and demographic footing on which certain languages exist and the lack of information available to operate on an international scale. The paucity of support for languages at the local, regional and national level somehow used to give the EC project funding a 'lifeboat' status to small organisations that will hardly apply to any other EU funds.

**Several policy premises of EU action in recent years have been proven correct by projects operating in this field**, particularly where individually funded activities were accompanied by the initiatives of other agents at the local, regional or national level. Indeed, examples have been identified where support for regional and minority languages has contributed to sustainable regional development, to social inclusion and to the enhancement of cultural and sustainable tourism. **Doubts exist, however, about the extent to which many language initiatives funded by the EC were sustained thereafter, except where they received an active external support, including that of local and regional authorities.**

A good number of projects seem, however, to have been able to contribute substantially to the effectiveness and impact of organisations' work by ensuring **long-term sustainability**. Some projects have gone on to develop into networks which are still very active, others have doubled their original capacity and gone on to receive the European Label for innovative language projects (e.g. the Bilingual Kindergarten Ferlach, Austria), whereas others again have branched out to become regionally active and multi-disciplinary services funded by mainstream European programmes (e.g. Menter Môn, Wales). A great part of these projects started off with a small contribution to their work through the budget for the promotion and safeguarding of regional and

minority languages, and have therefore put this **flexible start-up or seed money** to good use.

The treatment of the project results, especially where content production and research are concerned, has been found to be less efficient than had been hoped by some project leaders. Of special concern to some has been the fact that the **conclusions of their funded projects seemed not to have been taken into account as new calls for proposals were published** or to improve knowledge on factors determining language use, which could be used for drawing up future policy documents. This could also be valid for the present production of documents concerning linguistic diversity in Europe which include references to regional and minority languages.

### 3.1.3. EBLUL and Mercator

Core support provided to EBLUL and the Mercator Centres, as organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages, has also been of great importance to existing knowledge about linguistic diversity in Europe. Indeed, **a large share of the knowledge that currently exists about regional and minority languages in Europe has emerged from projects and organisations funded with EC support over the years – a fact that should be positively recognised and for which the European Commission and the centres funded deserve credit.**

**The role of EBLUL and the Mercator centres seems instrumental in pursuing the EC's aims in the field of linguistic diversity and language learning.** Both EBLUL and the Mercator Centres certainly provide expertise and can play a pivotal role in bringing together agents operating in the field.

Nevertheless, flaws have been seen to exist in the form that support for bodies active in this field currently takes, not least in the fact that **activities undertaken by the Mercator Centres and EBLUL appear to overlap with one another at times**, that little clarity as regards their missions exists and that **only recently have efforts to strengthen coordination among centres and to take advantage of existing synergies seemed to crystallise.** Ideally, the academic fundamentals and research material to back up the political actions and to inform the discourse employed by EBLUL when representing European language minorities, should be delivered by (and requested from) the Mercator Network.

EBLUL has in recent years developed a number of successful initiatives, including EuroLang and Partnership for Diversity, which have made possible an increasingly diverse networking and partnership base and which could open up possibilities for enhanced cooperation with local and regional authorities. Its name is recognised by most organisations working in the field of RML in Europe, but the regular dissemination of content and the targeting of new audience groups still appear to be underdeveloped.

**At times EBLUL gives the impression of trying to do too many things at once.** Success in achieving its aims is not helped by the high rate of staff turnover, a worrying development because expertise and continuity are at stake. Staff turnover is probably the result of financial insecurity (annual funding cycles, lack of major funding sources alternative to the EC) and the difficulties of trying to respond to many,

divergent priorities – those of the organisation’s Board of Directors being generally different to those of the EC. Internal changes and the management of these represent a part of its regular activities.

As indicated above, the three Mercator Centres provide research of good quality, which also tends to be in line with the EU’s political priorities, although some variations may exist among the centres. Even though the motivation of Mercator personnel appears to be generally high, rates of staff turnover tend to be high as well, particularly in some centres. As in the case of EBLUL, this remains a relevant issue.

On the other hand, dissemination activities do not seem to be particularly successful, Mercator’s visibility being low as a result, except in the vicinity of the centres and within core RML constituencies. The centres’ ability to render their research priorities relevant to third parties – their multiplying effect –, particularly to centres not directly active in the RML field, should also be strengthened.

#### **3.1.4. Mainstreaming**

Present guidelines intending to insert support for regional and minority languages within the larger framework supporting linguistic diversity in Europe have raised concern in many constituencies. **Reasonable grounds exist to doubt the likelihood of certain RML communities benefiting directly from European support to the same extent as in previous years.** Evidence collected in the course of this evaluation shows that a few regional and minority languages have increased their dynamism in recent years – often the result of European support being matched by keen local institutions and strong, willing civil societies. Where this is not the case, and where weaknesses experienced by languages at a local level are worsened by their difficulties in accessing international flows or being aware of EU developments, present policy proposals aimed at mainstreaming support for linguistic diversity within other EU programmes seem to offer little prospect for improvement.

**The low degree of international networking that is perceived among most RML organisations and their scarce awareness of existing resources renders the obtention of new funding rather difficult, and is generally a greater difficulty the smaller an organisation is.** The question is, to what extent other EU funding opportunities cater for the needs of larger RML organisations which do hold international contacts – and to what extent a fair trade-off can be expected from such operations (i.e. whether EU programmes in the fields of education, training, culture or regional development can be the source of funding targeted so as to promote regional and minority languages). Evidence collected in the course of the present evaluation indicates that only a minority of project beneficiaries (generally a circle of “EU veterans”) funded during these years have managed to benefit from initiatives other than those directly aimed at the promotion of languages.

**Difficulties in accessing the larger programmes are experienced especially by less widespread RMLs.** Whilst organisations developing projects which promote the use of Catalan, Welsh, Irish or Basque still happen to benefit from EU grants, languages with lower demographics or a lesser institutional footing have more difficulty in accessing them because they either lack the relevant resources or possess less international visibility and networking ability. It should be noted that the three Mercator Centres and EBLUL have poor records in this field as well.

On the other hand, some of the activities that the European Commission's funding used to cater for, including grants for educational publications or certain regional media initiatives, appear to be seldom serviced within present funding guidelines. In terms of EU information, it seems that generally speaking, associations and NGOs, regardless of the languages they represent, are particularly under-resourced. Furthermore, there is enough evidence to believe that the size of the organisations plays a key role in their ability to know about – and therefore to benefit from – funding opportunities at the EU level. It is this crucial nexus between information on EU developments and capacity to secure funding from existing EU programmes that should be taken into account when implementing the steps proposed by the plan.

While proposals for mainstreaming RML support are well-accepted by some communities and organisations – on the understanding that it is the result of increased external pressure, and a way for the Commission to give continued support for RML -, it is also clear that **some languages will never succeed in obtaining funds from most European programmes unless some sort of ring-fencing happens**. This should be taken into account when a new generation of programmes is designed, in areas such as education and culture, or should a specific programme for language learning and linguistic diversity be established as of 2007.

Changes are also needed within organisations representing or with an interest in regional and minority languages if they expect to achieve European support to a relevant extent. **Where support in the past appeared to have fallen from heaven in some instances, with only marginal efforts done in cross-border coordination or added European level, communities are to be asked for a more active approach to cooperation, including cooperation with organisations representing majority languages. There could be a proactive role for EBLUL to play** in the aggregation of interests, the support to networks, the involvement of new audiences and the outreach to mainstream organisations relevant to linguistic diversity. Measures should also be taken, as the ongoing MININF / Lingualia project intends to do, to provide new initiatives in the field of regional and minority languages with increased Internet visibility, this being a particular matter of concern to smaller communities.

### 3.2. Recommendations

This evaluation, completed in early 2004, has focused on the activities of the European Commission in the field of Regional and Minority languages during the period 1998-2002. The conclusions that have been drawn from the study are here translated into a series of recommendations for the European Commission on how to improve its activity in this field. Nevertheless, there is only limited scope for developing into concrete recommendations, given that many of the activities carried out during the period in question have now ceased to exist. This applies particularly to the individual project funding granted up to 2000, which has taken up a great part of the study, but whose corresponding budget line is no longer available, and for which therefore no recommendations on future action can be made.

Therefore, in the following sections recommendations are made in reference to EBLUL and the Mercator Network, which continue their work for the European Commission. Furthermore, and importantly, recommendations for future action are given based on the structural conclusions, which have emerged from the evaluation. Following the contractual bases established for carrying out this study these recommendations, which are based on the most central content-related findings of this study, aim to support the improvement, efficiency and effectiveness of future Commission activities in the field of regional and minority languages, and to serve as a reference point for the redefinition of its objectives, especially in view of its current implementation of the mainstreaming approach to RMLs.

Accordingly, the following section also takes account of the current framework of EC support for regional and minority languages, which has developed since the end of the period under study. The recommendations make mention in specific cases of the EC's management of support to organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages and the implementation of the Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity. Made on the basis of the previous evaluation, these recommendations aim to shed light on how future action in this field could be implemented.

### 3.2.1. General recommendations

General recommendations for future action have been based on the structural conclusions that have arisen from the evaluation. These correspond to a series of thematic foci that have emerged in the course of the study, and which form a core cluster of issues relevant to improved and more effective action at European level in the field of regional and minority languages, especially in view of the current implementation of the mainstreaming approach.

As indicated earlier, some of these recommendations referring to the mainstreaming approach include individual references to measures of the European Commission's 2003 Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006, which determined that the EC's support for regional and minority languages in the years to come would be part of the wider framework of promoting language learning and linguistic diversity in Europe. To this end, several measures geared towards the visibility and enhancement of linguistic diversity can be expected to contribute to the development of RMLs as well. This inclusive approach recognises that the Action Plan and related initiatives are formally outside the period under study, while testifying to their crucial pertinence to the current and future framework of European Commission activities in the field under study, to which our recommendations must of course refer.

1. **Information.** The present evaluation has found that almost 40% of organisations active in the field of RML do not have regular access to information on EU developments. This is the case even for over one third of organisations which *did* receive funding for pursuing RML projects over the period under study. On the other hand, EU websites were found to be the main entry point for information about recent developments and funding opportunities – 44% of beneficiary organisations stated this was a regular source of information for them. Therefore, finding ways for disseminating available information and maintaining and improving the EU's Internet portals concerning linguistic diversity appears critical. On a related issue, organisations active in the field of RML were found to face severe

visibility problems on the Internet. Some measures contained in the European Commission's Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006 seem relevant in this respect. The following information and awareness-raising efforts could devote some room to regional and minority languages:

- the web portal on language learning and linguistic diversity to be established in 2006 – containing information about the languages spoken in Europe, reasons for learning languages and on-line teaching resources and teacher training modules;<sup>94</sup>
- information gathered and disseminated by the European Eurydice Unit on the availability of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL<sup>95</sup>) in the European education and training systems;<sup>96</sup>
- a focus on good practices and more extensive annual publicity campaigns at national and regional level which are to be carried out within the European label for innovative projects in language teaching and learning in 2005 and 2006 - several projects concerning regional and minority languages have already been included in the European Language Label database in the past;<sup>97</sup>
- the revised and extended edition of the Euromosaic report on regional and minority languages which will be published in 2004 to take account of the Enlargement of the EU.<sup>98</sup>

2. **Sustainability and networking.** The present evaluation has identified a range of difficulties encountered by organisations active in the field of RML for sustaining activities in the long-term. This relates both to projects funded by the EC and to other initiatives. Relevant effects include the difficulties for maintaining international connections beyond an individual project's lifetime – only slightly over 50% funded projects could point to their outcomes' being relevant to projects carried out thereafter – and the low degree of cross-national networking found among organisations active in this field. Sustainability is also at stake concerning certain regional and minority languages' ability to transfer language training skills from one generation to the next, as identified during some field visits in the course of the present evaluation. On the other hand, certain measures contained in the European Commission's Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006 seem relevant in this respect, including the Symposium on the supply of qualified language teachers in Europe to be organised in 2006, where a focus on the difficulties experienced by regional and minority languages could be an issue to consider.<sup>99</sup> The Action Plan also indicates the Commission's willingness to organise a conference in 2005 to promote cooperation in issues affecting regional and minority languages in education systems, which could further contribute to their ability to network cross-nationally.<sup>100</sup>

3. **Sectorial approach.** Both consultations with organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages and the analysis of projects funded by relevant EU programmes in recent years have shown that RML activities in certain sectors are finding it particularly difficult to obtain support. These include educational publications, which used to be eligible under the RML project line, certain media activities – such as TV and radio stations which had been funded under the RML project line – and certain cultural projects, other than those in the field of literature. Certain measures contained in the European Commission's Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006 seem relevant in this respect. The following monitoring activities could take account of how initiatives by organisations active in the field of regional and minority languages have benefited from existing programmes:

- the annual monitoring report on culture which will monitor the implementation of the new mainstreaming approach concerning regional and minority languages;<sup>101</sup>
  - the collection and publication of information on the extent to which the European Commission's programmes in the field of education, training, youth, media and culture promote language learning and linguistic diversity;<sup>102</sup>
  - the publication in 2005 of a five-yearly monitoring report on the state of diversity in the supply of language teaching in the EU;<sup>103</sup>
  - the establishment in 2004 of a permanent high-level group of representatives of Member States, social partners, and the world of education, training and culture to assist in the monitoring of 2003's Action Plan, to stimulate public debate with stakeholders about language learning and linguistic diversity, and to monitor change in language learning and linguistic diversity in the Union.<sup>104</sup>
4. **Universities.** In the course of the present evaluation, a number of universities and research centres were found to have carried out successful projects concerning regional and minority languages. Their activities are particularly relevant in the context of mainstreaming, as universities often provide a meeting point for majority and minority languages, where concerns can be shared and research and technology developments can at times be transferred from one language to another. Certain measures contained in the European Commission's Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006 seem relevant in this respect, including priority 7 (Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society) of the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Research Programme, which in 2005 and 2006 will support projects on issues including the links between multilingualism and the multicultural society – opportunities for projects involving regional and minority languages could be taken into account.<sup>105</sup>
5. **Languages within regional development.** Several projects visited in the course of the present evaluation were found to have contributed to larger regional development strategies, their effects including tourism enhancement, social inclusion and employment creation. Interreg was also identified as one of the best-known EU programmes among beneficiary RML organisations (a knowledge rate of 53%) and the one – the RML budget line excluded – that had most often provided funding to them. In addition to individual projects funded under the former RML programme, contributions to regional development were also made by projects funded under a range of EC programmes, including the Comenius action of Socrates, Leonardo and Town-Twinning, even by relatively small grants. Exchanges involving schools in different member states but sharing a language, town-twinning arrangements bringing together local authorities where a regional or minority language is spoken and the production of training materials for teaching lesser-used languages have all been identified in the course of the present evaluation, and they all seem to marry language objectives to wider aims. Future activities for the promotion of regional and minority languages at the EC level could take account of this fact. Certain measures contained in the European Commission's Action Plan on Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity 2004-2006 seem relevant in this respect, including the following:
- Commission services and National Agencies' work to increase take-up of school development projects within the Comenius 1 action of Socrates, whose objective is to develop and implement holistic school language policies in primary, secondary or vocational schools – as a holistic approach to education in regional and minority

- languages appears key to guaranteeing their long-term sustainability and dynamism;<sup>106</sup>
- Commission services and National Agencies' work to increase by 25% the take-up of Comenius 1.2 funding allocated to school language projects which allow classes to work on joint projects with a class in another country – as shown in the present report, several examples were found of cooperation among schools in different member states which share a language;<sup>107</sup>
  - Commission's willingness to increase support to schools wishing to introduce a CLIL approach within the Comenius 1 action (School partnerships) of Socrates, with extended exchanges of teachers between partner schools being particularly encouraged – this could be relevant to schools in different member states which share a language;<sup>108</sup>
  - the e-twinning action of the E-learning programme's potential for helping European schools to build pedagogical partnerships with schools elsewhere in Europe, fostering language learning and intercultural dialogue, and promoting awareness of the multilingual and multicultural European model of society;<sup>109</sup>
  - multilingualism in the EU being an eligible topic for meetings of citizens and thematic conferences under call for proposals for town-twinning projects between 2004 and 2006.

More generally, recognition of the fact that some regional and minority languages play a role which is in practical terms similar to that of official languages, including the Less Widely Used and Less Taught languages (LWULT), would be something to consider – e.g. the fact that some regional and minority languages are used in university could maybe render them eligible for the intensive language preparation courses in the Erasmus action of Socrates.<sup>110</sup>

### **3.2.2. EBLUL and Mercator**

As indicated earlier, expertise acquired by EBLUL and the Mercator Centres over the years and the welcome trend towards increased coordination of their activities make it advisable that they continue to play a key part in the European Commission's support for regional and minority languages.

At the same time, shortcomings and needs identified in the course of the present report require that the EC's approach involve an increased emphasis on EBLUL's ability to be closer to developments on the ground and to provide advisory services to local and regional authorities.

A streamlining of EBLUL's remit, with a possible reduction in the number of ongoing projects, leading to a focus on the dissemination of information and on activities that ensure a greater multiplying effect and a presence on the ground – e.g. Partnership for Diversity, which could possibly be complemented with other networking activities –, appears to be commendable. Dissemination activities could probably benefit more from EBLUL's existing and future information points.

The European Commission could require EBLUL to focus part of its efforts on the promotion of international networks. The Bureau should also be asked to target new audiences, including young people and non-RML audiences.

Concerning the Mercator Centres, it appears necessary to stress the dissemination of outputs and their visibility beyond their own and neighbouring states.

A clear positive tendency towards an increasing coordination and avoidance of overlap between the activities of the different Mercator Centres, and an increased interconnectivity between the EC and Mercator Centres on RML-related issues can be perceived. This positive tendency has to be encouraged by stimulating the increase in coordinating contacts. The increase of joint activities may provide an excellent opportunity to optimise coordination and planning, which can further be strengthened via increased consultations, email and/or video conferences.

Nevertheless, the importance given to these matters by the EC provides an additional reason to devise specific budgetary provisions for coordination meetings that are an extremely cost-effective manner to avoid expensive overlap resulting from the lack of coordination.

In the future, Mercator Centres could also be expected to project a more coherent image through their websites. This would require that specific means be made available for the technical changes necessary, with maybe one centre taking the lead in one common Mercator project designed to develop a single website template which each centre would subsequently adapt.

The need for increased synergy, as indicated above, extends to relations among the three Mercator Centres and EBLUL – although progress has been made, steps still need to be taken, including more clearly defining the exact mission of each institution.