

## **European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL) Webinar 24-25 March 2020**

**Claire-Lyse Chambron, General Delegation for French Language and languages of France (DGLFLF), 24 March, 15h40**

*How EFNIL can exert greater political influence in the European institutions and on EU policies?*

### **I. Background information**

In the context of Brexit, and in a period of unprecedented health crisis, compliance with procedures for the use of working languages and multilingualism are paradoxically losing ground in the European institutions; the use of available tools such as interpreting or translation to defend this multilingualism is in retreat within the EU.

This is evidence by the recent decisions taken in some European institutions, such as the European Commission or the European Central Bank. This is reflected in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and the UK, where the only working language of the Partnership Council, and the language of proceedings before the Arbitration Tribunal is English

Europe seems to be turning away from the linguistic diversity that is part of its very nature, confusing the principle of equality with uniformity.

In particular, the COVID-19 crisis shows how fragile multilingualism is, and how much this pandemic negatively impacts the veracity of information and the effectiveness of actions on the ground.

It is crucial to share reliable and timely information in different languages in order to reach all populations, especially the most vulnerable, and to provide access to 'accurate and verified multilingual information; this was precisely the purpose of the "Verified" campaign launched last year by the United Nations.

But this crisis, which is deeply shaking Europe to its foundations, and threatening its very cohesion, is also an opportunity to rethink the European project.

Are linguistic diversity and plurilingualism issues that must be prioritised in the recovery and resilience plan of each European country and Europe as a whole?

## **II. In this context, what can EFNIL's role as influencer be?**

**The EFNIL network, which has proven its efficiency and relevance since its creation in 2003, will undoubtedly closely follow the implementation of EU policies in order to better influence them.**

**1. The regulations for these European policies and programs for the 2021-2024 programming period were adopted at the end of 2020.**

At the level of the European Commission, the culture, education and research axis is strong due to the portfolio and the commitment of the European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel for Culture, Education, Youth, Sport, Research and Innovation. This triangle of culture/education/research and innovation has obviously been strengthened by the will of the EU Member States. And it opens more windows for the challenges of linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

The three sides of this triangle of knowledge are represented specifically by the Creative Europe, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe programmes 2021-2027.

In the regulation of the Creative Europe program, the issues of linguistic diversity and translation, beyond literary translation alone, and regardless of the medium (subtitling, dubbing, machine translation ...) are now better taken into account than in the previous program. Creative Europe encourages cooperation and the development of networks and platforms.

Erasmus + aims to promote synergies in the fields of education, training and youth, in connection with actors in the world of work and civil society. This program, which supports mobility, development or transfer of skills, may involve translators, interpreters, linguists, professionals of content discoverability on the internet or of artificial intelligence.

Furthermore, Horizon Europe, with a significantly increased budget, as well as the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), will continue to support language technologies.

Finally, we should also bear in mind the Digital Europe program, referring to artificial intelligence and digital technologies including language technologies.

**EFNIL must therefore be attentive to the work programs that are drawn up annually by the European Commission in conjunction with the Council of the EU, and it should influence their orientations. These advances will then have to be amplified in the post-2027 generation of EU policies.**

**2. EFNIL may feel the need to raise its profile within the European institutions, including the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the European Parliament.**

When the health situation allows, meetings with targeted representatives of the European Commission, identified in units in charge of multilingualism in DG EAC, DG CONNECT DG RTD and JRC could be considered. Similarly, it might be appropriate to discuss with

members of the European Parliament who are interested in the issues of linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

As a matter of fact, the European Parliament pays particular attention to translation for the benefit of the citizen, and to the promotion of multilingualism through digital technology, as its recent interventions demonstrate (for example the report on artificial intelligence in the fields of education, culture and audiovisual, and numerous amendments in the Creative Europe program, emphasizing linguistic diversity and multilingualism).

Regarding the Council of the EU, at the initiative of France, and within the Work Programme of the Council of Ministers of Culture of the EU 2019-2022, a specific working group of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) focuses on plurilingualism/multilingualism and translation. This working group should deliver a report before the summer. A meeting of EFNIL with the chair of the OMC group, Xavier North, might be appropriate.

### **III. The French Presidency of the EU**

**Finally, I would like to inform EFNIL that linguistic diversity and plurilingualism will be priorities, under the French Presidency of the EU in the second semester of 2022. The Ministry of Culture / General Delegation for the French Language and Languages of France will organise a forum on "innovation, technologies and plurilingualism" in Lille, at *The Nouveau Siècle*, from 7 to 9 February 2022, in liaison with several ministries<sup>1</sup>.**

This event will be opened by the Minister of Culture and will bring together 500 French, European and international players in the field of translation whatever the medium, language technologies, digital technologies and artificial intelligence in the service of multilingualism in our societies.

**The forum could be followed by Council conclusions calling for a European strategy for innovation in the service of multilingualism, together with the issues of social cohesion and citizenship.**

**We could find synergies with EFNIL in this regard./.**

---

<sup>1</sup> The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Economy, Finance and the Recovery/Ministry of the Industry/Secretariat of State for the Digital Transition, the Ministry for the Armed Forces, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion.