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## **Welcome notes**

The growing impact of ICT on the study but also on languages themselves sets an unprecedented challenge for what aspires to be the vision of the European Union, i.e. the promotion and development of multilingualism on the basis of a balanced and equal valuation of all languages. This conference concentrates on three, critical areas of research, aiming at exploring possible solutions against a potential side-effect or by-product caused by ICT: the use and exploitation of the medium of technology for the promotion of a market-oriented agenda for the sake of globalization; the transformation of language and languages into commodities instead of dynamic entities that can contribute to the multilingual and multicultural mosaic of modern Europe.

Within the framework of such a complicated environment, in which the ‘game’ of the linguistic market is determined by the tendency of ‘strong’ languages to impose themselves on ‘weak’ ones, the technologization of languages should develop in a cooperative spirit towards a ‘European’ *ethos* of communication. For example, we should aspire to make the internet –this contemporary informational highway– a real ‘contact zone’ between languages and cultures, rather than a means of (re)confirmation of linguistic and cultural hegemony. In fact, boosting multilingualism through the internet should become the critical turning point in the increasing crystallization of cultural and linguistic homogeneity.

In conclusion, I think we all agree that the thoughtful integration of technology in the sociocultural reality of our times constitutes a pressing demand, especially because its use is interwoven with the development of new forms of grammaticality.

Hoping that this most promising conference will bring about new insights on at least some of the issues it has set out to discuss, I welcome EFNIL and its distinguished guests to Thessaloniki and wish everyone a fruitful exchange of exciting ideas.