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Annual Report of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz) to the Committee of Ministers (January-December 2012)

Information document for the GR-C meeting on (date)

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1. The ECML: Promoting excellence in language education

The main objectives defined by the Council of Europe in the area of education are:

- personal development;
- preparing for active citizenship in a democratic society;
- acquisition and consolidation of a large knowledge base;
- preparing for the labour market.

Language education is a fundamental element of all these objectives. Language use plays an essential role in all forms of life and, specifically, in all forms of education. It involves more than just a command of linguistic means of communication. Language is a tool for acquiring and transferring knowledge. It is perhaps the most important aspect of the development of human beings, both as individuals and as members of society. Language helps us to understand and make sense of reality, while being a vehicle for creativity.

The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria, is an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, set up in 1994 to provide a practical response to a need expressed by the Council of Europe's member states: the reinforcement of cooperation in the field of language education and respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe. 31¹ states subscribed to the Partial Agreement in 2012.

The ECML's mission is to support its member states in the implementation of their language education policies taking account of the recommendations of the Council of Europe. It does so by promoting innovative approaches and disseminating good practice in the learning and teaching of modern languages and in this way addresses issues directly related to good quality education as a pre-requisite for social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and democratic citizenship. These were identified as priority issues for the work of the Organisation as a whole at the Warsaw Summit in 2005 and highlighted again in May 2011 in the report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe entitled *Living together; Combining diversity and freedom in 21st century Europe* and in Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation (1975)2011 as a follow-up to the report.

Through its focus on promoting excellence in language education, based on quality, standard-setting and innovation, the Centre is well placed to assist member states in addressing challenges within their national education systems as well as to offer support in improving provision in line with key international developments in education such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the European qualifications frameworks.

The ECML is an initiator and coordinator of European and international cooperation. The Centre runs 4-year medium-term programmes of projects organised in cooperation with European experts in the field of language education.

Through its programmes, consisting of expert meetings, workshops, conferences and projects to which participants from the member states are invited, the ECML provides a platform for gathering and disseminating information, stimulating discussion and training multipliers in matters related to language education. It also maintains Europe-wide networks for teacher trainers, researchers and educational administrators.

The Centre maintains close links with professional bodies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), working in language education. Formal cooperation agreements have been signed so far between the ECML and twelve INGOs having participatory status with the Council of Europe.

¹ Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

The ECML works in close cooperation with the Language Policy Unit, whose primary responsibilities are the elaboration of policies and guidelines for promoting linguistic diversity and plurilingualism and the development of policy planning and standard-setting reference instruments.

As defined within a memorandum of understanding between the Austrian authorities and the Council of Europe, the Austrian host authorities invest approximately €400,000 each year in the ECML, in addition to the obligatory contribution to the ECML budget. This sum is managed by the Austrian Association and largely covers the Centre's costs related to the seat in Graz and the associated running costs, i.e. the rental of the premises and its infrastructure. The other member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement benefit through this financing as their contributions to the budget of the Centre are directly invested into the ECML programme and assure its functioning through staffing.

2. Summary of 2012

The ECML's new programme, *Learning through languages: Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education (2012-2015)*, reflecting both the Centre's mission and the current key concerns of its member states and partners in the area of language education, was launched in January.

The programme focuses on developing inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural pedagogic approaches reaching beyond the foreign language classroom and encompassing all linguistic abilities and needs of all groups of learners in a lifelong-learning process (in-school and out-of-school). It is based upon concepts developed by the Language Policy Unit and recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

10 of the 15 language education projects within the programme started their activities in 2012. A new area of activity, ECML training and consultancy for member states, was also initiated. This area, which potentially represents a major new instrument for enhancing the ECML's visibility and impact in member states, offers language education activities based on themes of ECML expertise on a bilateral basis. The activities are tailored to the particular context and needs of the individual states. The pilot phase of operation of the scheme was approved by the Centre's Governing Board in April and activities in 3 areas were launched in August: developing online teaching skills, relating examinations to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and supporting the use of electronic language portfolios. The piloting of these areas has proved to be successful and up to 5 other areas of the Centre's expertise are to be offered to member states in 2014-15.

The new programme, which sets out to widen the ECML's outreach to groups beyond the foreign language classroom, has attracted a different clientele to its work. Projects with a 'mediation' focus, promoting approaches and tools developed by the Centre to new stakeholders who can influence change, are addressing groups such as parent associations, community language associations and non-formal mentoring groups. In 'developmental' projects, where innovative instruments are being developed, projects have addressed new groups such as deaf learners, teachers of subject areas, majority language teachers, employers, corporate human resources managers, school managers and organisers of mobility programmes.

The economic climate remained very challenging. With a reduced budget and workforce in 2012 the Centre needed to outsource certain activities and redistribute tasks internally. Further training is still required in some areas in order to improve functioning. The experience has highlighted the need to seek new forms of cooperation which can attract 3rd party funding and thereby supplement the Centre's programme work.

In order to enable the secretariat to negotiate agreements with potential partners in a transparent manner the ECML Governing Board defined and agreed upon new procedures and criteria for the initiation and establishment of formal cooperation agreements. The procedures should facilitate new forms of cooperation and agreements involving 3rd party financing.

The Centre's cooperation with civil society in the form of the INGO-Professional Network Forum on language education demonstrated the ECML's strength as a network leader and harnessed the synergies of the Forum members, comprising 14 international associations and institutions which share common values and expertise in the field of language education and assessment. The associations' and organisations' members played an important role in enhancing the quality of the new programme and in promoting the ECML products and publications via their extensive networks. The Forum was joined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in July 2012.

Further progress was made in the development of cooperation with the European Union. In its statement on the occasion of the European Day of Languages the European Commission announced its intention to sign a formal partnership agreement with the ECML in 2013 which would strengthen cooperation on multilingualism and language learning in areas such as assessment, recognition of qualifications, exchange of experience and data, ICT-based tools, education in the language of the host country for adult migrants, and education in the main language of instruction for children of migrant origin.

With regard to accessions to the Partial Agreement, following a series of negotiations throughout the year with potential new members Denmark became the 32nd ECML member state on 1 January 2013. Serbia and Ukraine indicated their intention to join the Enlarged Partial Agreement in 2013, with the Ukraine's deputy Minister of Education, Boris Zhebrovski, visiting the Centre in July. South Africa showed strong interest in cooperation initiatives with the ECML and the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of Canada renewed and extended its Memorandum on Cooperation and Liaison with the Centre, with the explicit intention of Canada becoming a member state.

The ECML Director was invited to act as a keynote speaker and panellist on round tables organised at numerous high-level events around Europe in the course of the year. The Centre was also quoted as a key reference point in language education in a number of internationally recognised studies, publications and journals which appeared throughout 2012.

3. Learning through languages: promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education

In January 2012 the ECML launched its 2012-2015 programme reflecting the Centre's mission and the current key concerns of its member states and partners in the area of language education. The *Learning through languages* programme aims to develop inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural pedagogic approaches to education. The learner, the learner's needs and the learner's perspective are at the core of the programme. Focusing on the right of the learner to good quality language education, the programme builds upon the Centre's previous work, widening the scope of its activities to move beyond the foreign language classroom and include all linguistic abilities and the needs of all groups of learners. In addition to the foreign language classroom the programme addresses the teaching of the language of schooling, of other languages present in the educational environment and the languages used in subject teaching (formal learning). Projects also focus on informal and non-formal language learning and on the dialogue with stakeholders involved in the education process (mediation). The projects within the programme also seek to promote approaches for valuing all learners' languages and cultures as a means of successful integration in learning communities and societies.

The rationale for the programme as outlined below is based upon key issues raised during a thorough consultation process which took place during 2010-11 with the ECML partners and stakeholders:

Context and challenges in language education in Europe:

- Linguistic and cultural diversity combined with migration and mobility characterises contemporary European societies. This phenomenon should not be viewed as an obstacle or a 'problem', but rather as an asset and a potential benefit to society.
- Social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship, together with economic prosperity, represent important aims in building a more humane and inclusive Europe.

Implications for the learner:

- The learner has a fundamental human right to unrestricted and fair lifelong access to good quality education.
- The learner requires adequate support for the development of language competences. The provision for support will take into account, make use of, and build further on the learner's existing language competences. At the same time, the learner seeks, among other things, to develop the language skills required for his or her educational career in a given context.
- Learners with low socio-economic status, special needs and those whose linguistic or cultural background may disadvantage them in the educational system require special attention and support for the development of the language abilities necessary for educational success in a given context.

Assumptions for good quality education based on inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural pedagogy:

- All education uses language as its vehicle. Therefore well-developed language competences are a necessary basis for access to good quality education and successful learning.
- Good quality education provides adequate support for the appropriate development of learners' language competence – efficient and effective use of more than one language is both necessary for successful education and one of its desired outcomes.
- Good quality education acknowledges and includes the learners' "own" languages, especially if they are minority or migrant languages, as they are important features in their successful integration into the world of learning and help them in becoming self-confident and responsible members of society.
- A modification in approach is required, moving away from the teaching and learning of languages as separate, unrelated and thus isolated (school) subjects. The aim is to provide coherent support for the lifelong development of transversal, individual strategies in order to deploy available linguistic resources purposefully, thus making efficient use of one's own range of language competences.
- Effective use of communication technologies can play an important role in this strategy.

A core programme of activities based upon 15 projects was adopted by the Governing Board of the ECML at its 20th meeting on 27-29 September 2011. Following approval by the Governing Board at its 21st meeting on 26-27 April 2012, the programme was further supplemented by a new strand of ECML training and consultancy activities, intended to respond in a targeted and bilateral way to the needs of ECML member states requesting support for developments in language education, enhance the impact of the ECML activities in member states and highlight the value of the Centre in areas of its expertise. Initial activities relating to three areas of expertise of the ECML were introduced.

The programme activities are structured within the following strands:

- Development
 - Formal learning
 - Informal /non-formal learning
- Mediation
 - Mediation projects
 - ECML training and consultancy for member states

In 2012 the following 10 projects and three training and consultancy activities were initiated.

Formal learning

- Plurilingual whole school curricula
- Mobility programme for sustainable plurilingual and intercultural learning
- Diversity in majority language learning – supporting teacher education
- Signed languages for professional purposes
- Language descriptors for migrant and minority learners' success in compulsory education

Informal non-formal learning

- Languages in corporate quality
- Developing migrants' language competences at work

Mediation

- Empowering language networks
- Plurilingual and intercultural competences: descriptors and teaching materials
- Using open resources to development online teaching skills

Training and consultancy

- Constructing and validating language tests linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
- Developing online teaching skills
- Supporting local networks of users of the European Language Portfolio through an e-platform

The projects and activities within each strand address key issues faced by states, provide professional development, establish ongoing international network and promote quality in the respective areas to specified groups. In a bottom-up approach, working with professionals at grassroots level, the Centre acts as a catalyst for innovation, seeking to assist member states in implementing change in practice. Over its life span any given project or activity can involve between 100-200 professionals in its activities.

In line with its mission the ECML has established four fundamental priorities for its work:

- enhancing the professional competence of (language) teachers;
- strengthening professional networks and the wider community of language educators;
- enabling language professionals to have greater impact on reform processes;
- contributing to better quality of language education in Europe.

The sections below present an overview of how the Centre addressed these priorities in 2012 and contributed to the overall goal of the programme of enhancing awareness of the value of inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education.

3.1. Enhancing the professional competence of (language) teachers

ECML activities seek to encourage teachers and other actors in language education to acquire new knowledge in their field of expertise, and to see that this knowledge is put into effective practice in their working environment. Through this process of professional development the Centre aims to facilitate individual language teachers in contributing to change and innovation in their work.

Within the 10 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2012, 96% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the event they participated in contributed to developing their professional competence (93% in 2011).²

The 2012 programme involved the direct training and professional development of 600 language education professionals. The programme of activities comprised seminars, network meetings, national training events, project coordination and consultancy meetings. Although the learner is considered as the ultimate beneficiary of the programme, teachers with a multiplying function and teacher trainers are most often the direct partners of the ECML in acting as agents of change.

² All survey figures presented in the report result from the ECML's evaluative scheme which was initially introduced in 2008

Whilst the majority of meetings held in 2012 related to project launch meetings primarily involving the coordination teams significant progress was made towards establishing a secure basis from which to develop the projects. The following section provides an overview of several of the projects with regard to their progress in year 1.

Teachers of the majority language face a challenge when they are teaching classes in which many of the children come from linguistic and cultural backgrounds which are not that of the school. The “Diversity in majority language learning – supporting teacher education” (MALEDIVE) project began the development of a set of plurilingual activities which teachers will be able to try out and experience; the activities establish relationships between, for example, folk tales and literature from different cultures in a way which will enable the learners to relate more closely to the language and traditions of the school. This allows them to have a real contribution to make to the culture of the class, instead of being excluded from it.

The “Language descriptors for migrant and minority learners’ success in compulsory education” (Language Descriptors) project focused on children whose home language is not the language of schooling and who frequently perform less well in education because they have not mastered the discourse of subject learning. The project began carrying out an analysis of the kind of discourse required for learning history and mathematics and relating this to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, so that children whose language levels are not yet completely fluent can progressively develop the cognitive academic proficiency needed to achieve academic success.

The “Plurilingual whole school curricula” (PlurCur) project established a network of teachers/head teachers from 10 partner schools which can test, assess and provide input on the whole school approaches to plurilingualism which have been developed. The aim is to help schools become more effective; through integrating all the different elements in which language affects educational effectiveness – in the subject areas, in the learning of foreign languages, in the language of schooling, in the acknowledgement of the learners’ home languages and the value given to them. The work of the project can provide an important tool for schools in ensuring that learners from all backgrounds can be successful.

The “Developing migrants’ language competences at work” (Language for work) project established a rich collection of materials relating to practice in different countries. It is one of the stated aims of the project to develop a European learning network to support the professional development of language teaching professionals in what is still emerging field: learning of the majority language by migrant and ethnic workers in the workplace. Significant interest has already been achieved in the project which was presented at 7 major conferences in 2012.

The “Plurilingual and intercultural competences: descriptors and teaching materials” (PluriMobil) project which is a follow-up and extension of a project originally conducted in 2010-2011 has taken on significant importance at a time of growing educational mobility at all levels of education. The PluriMobil project offers very practical assistance in the implementation of plurilinguistic and intercultural approaches in the daily work of teachers responsible for mobility programmes and to learners participating in them. The project does so by offering easy to use materials in the form of lesson scenarios. Lesson plans have been structured so as to provide material for activities before the mobility, preparing learners for the mobility programme, helping them structure their experiences while mobility takes place and facilitating their reflection on their experiences after the mobility programme. Networks of teachers involved in mobility programmes can strongly contribute to the empowerment of the profession. The project also serves to promote the previous work carried out by the ECML by primarily using instruments and publications developed by the Centre as its materials.

The “Using open resources to development online teaching skills” (More DOTS) project which encourages the use of ICT in language education by teachers provides easy to use materials based on commonly used applications such as Blogs, Videoconferences, Wikis etc. It is also a follow-up to a project within the previous programme and seeks to tackle the lack of ICT knowledge and skills in education which is a significant issue in many countries. The team coordinated a very successful workshop in October. As a result of its popularity and success an adapted format of the activity is now available within the ECML training and consultancy scheme and is also being offered to educational establishments within Austria by the Austrian association of the ECML.

Comments such as the following were typical of the reaction of the participants who took part in the workshop and also demonstrate the significant dissemination potential of this project:

“There is a huge variety of online tools that can be used in the teaching/learning process making it more varied and interesting. Before the workshop I had only a vague idea that there are so many of them. The workshop made me realize that these activities can contribute to the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process. Since they are so easily accessible, every teacher can use them.”

"I have already informed through meetings both my colleagues and teachers of our region which is the biggest in my country with approximately 300 teachers, on the benefits of the project and I will hold workshops on a national scale in cooperation with national or international structures operating in our country in the field of FL....I will write an article for the Teachers' magazine to inform on the benefits of such tools to a larger audience and translate some activities for teachers and students of other languages as well."

3.2. Strengthening professional networks and the wider community of language educators

The dissemination of the major principles and instruments promoting enhanced standards in language education developed by the European organisations can only be achieved via effective information and communication structures. The sharing of knowledge, ideas and initiatives throughout the wider professional community of practice has a powerful impact on the content and quality of the work of the individual, on overall developments in theory and practice, and on the cohesion of the educational community and its public profile.

Within the 10 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2012, 95% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the ECML event they participated in motivated them to become more active networkers (95% in 2011).

The inclusion of the new groups within the Centre's programme represents a concerted effort to involve not only the primary actors in the process of language education, the teachers and learners but also to include those groups who exert significant influence on this process and on the attitudes of learners, as well as widening the relevance of the programme to other areas which could benefit from the work conducted by the ECML.

The area of sign languages is new to the Centre. The “Signed languages for professional purposes” (PRO-Sign) project extends the know-how which has been developed in Council of Europe work on the Common European Framework of Reference and in the Languages in Education project to deaf learners. Ultimately it will provide a number of tools and assessment procedures for professional contexts and for interpretation. Its major outcome will be to provide deaf communities and employers (especially of signed language interpreters) with standard reference levels to guide them; and teachers and lecturers will be able to benchmark curricula across Europe and benefit from networks of shared practice. A proposed language portfolio for deaf learners will contribute to their integration generally into mainstream education. The website was well developed this year with both written and signed input and the project was presented to key networks in its area such as the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters. The main focus of the project in 2012 was on preparing a review of existing proficiency levels for sign languages. The draft proficiency levels were developed and will be reviewed at a workshop in 2013.

The “Languages in corporate quality” (LINCQ) project is addressing corporate language users and their employees, by developing the use of informal approaches to language learning and assessment. The project seeks to make employers aware of the different resources available for language learning and assessment – those that avoid the frequent logistical problems involved in setting up formal courses and using formal examinations. Through the use of a focus group of corporate stakeholders the project seeks to ensure a genuine impact.

The LINCQ project, which is coordinated by the President of the Conseil européen pour les langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC) also exemplifies the importance, in terms of outreach, of the ECML's cooperation with the members of the INGO Professional Network Forum (described below).

Cooperation with professional INGOs

The INGO Professional Network Forum (<http://www.ecml.at/professionalnetworkforum>) is formed of international associations and institutions that share common values and expertise in the field of language education and assessment. The Graz Declaration of 2010 defines the basis and objectives of cooperation. Each of the partners has signed an individual Memorandum of Cooperation with the Centre. The network is coordinated by the ECML.

Together with the ECML the INGO Forum comprised the following associations and institutions in 2012: The International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), the Conseil européen pour les langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC), the Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services (EAQUALS), the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA), the European Parents Association (EPA), the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), the World Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV), the International Association of Multilingualism (IAM), the International Certificate Conference (ICC), and the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa, Canada. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) became the 14th member of the Forum in 2012, again highlighting the importance of the ECML and the Forum even beyond the borders of Europe.

The INGO Forum represents a major pillar of cooperation for the ECML and has attracted through their operating networks and memberships a worldwide audience to the work of the Centre. At their meeting in February 2012 the partners highlighted the influence of globalization and migration on education, the economic value of language skills and the impact of ICT on education as priority areas where the sharing of expertise and working on a common front could benefit the wider language education community in the current challenging economic situation.

The partners also looked at future joint actions, enhancing the information flow among the members and making use of the dissemination and lobbying opportunities created through the Forum, with a potential worldwide outreach to millions in the language education profession.

National contacts

The ECML's network of National Contact Points (NCPs) was set up in 2001 and was in operation in 31 member states and in Canada in 2012. NCPs are responsible for dissemination of information on the ECML and its work, particularly its publications and other products, to relevant target audiences at local, regional and national level through their own established networks.

The network played an important role in 2012 in the wide scale promotion of the results of ECML projects disseminating 21 publications/websites emanating from the Centre's previous "Empowering language professionals" programme.

National expertise in the ECML in 2012-15 activities is highlighted on the Centre's website dedicated to its National Contact Points (<http://contactpoints.ecml.at>), which registered approximately 12,000 page views per month. The page "Experts involved in ECML activities" includes the contact details and the activities in which nominated experts were. The annual reports of the respective Contact Points focused in particular on the activities organised, the target audiences, and the impact achieved at national level.

The following examples illustrate the type of work carried by the Contact Points, which greatly assists in raising the profile of the Centre at national level and in tailoring approaches and instruments to the context of the country:

- the Contact Point for Austria, the Austrian Centre for Language Competence, published a brochure in 2012 within its series 'Language innovation from Austria and Europe' focusing on how the results of 5 projects on e-learning, majority language teaching, mobility programmes, multilingualism and interculturality and early language learning could be implemented in the Austrian context in a step-by-step way.

- *Le Courriel européen des langues* is a free online newsletter, issued three times in 2012 by the International Centre for Pedagogical Studies (CIEP), the National Contact Point for the ECML in France. The newsletter provided information on the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of language policy, with articles on ECML activities and publications and on French participation in the Centre's workshops.
- in Poland, the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) published articles on the work of the ECML within the widely read online Journal for foreign teachers *Języki Obce w Szkole*. The FRSE also signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the ECML in December which will greatly support the visibility of the ECML's work in the country.

Canada

Although the ECML's networks are primarily based in Europe, since the signing of a Memorandum on Cooperation and Liaison with the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) based at the University of Ottawa in 2008, the Centre has developed ever closer contacts with Canada. In 2012 based on the success of the initial period of cooperation and with the explicit intention of Canada becoming a member state of the Partial agreement, the ECML Governing Board and the Canadian authorities decided to renew and extend the scope of the Memorandum for the period of the Centre's 2012-15 programme. Within seven of the Centre's projects there is ongoing cooperation between Canadian and European experts. The projects selected were those which appeared most relevant to the Canadian context, and where Canadian experts could be identified who could positively contribute to the development of the projects.

The participation of Canadian experts in the ECML projects provides mutual benefits. It contributes to highlight at the international level the Canadian expertise and competencies in language teaching and learning in the specific area of the respective project and Canada can greatly benefit from the European methods, strategies and best practices in language education and research in a plurilingual and multicultural environment. Among the points of added value of the Canadian involvement is the increasing awareness of the ECML and its services in Canada.

Cooperation with the European Commission

The Council of Europe and the European Union share the aims of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and promoting learning and use of languages as a means to support intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and democratic citizenship, and as an important economic asset in a modern knowledge-based society. There is a recognised need on both sides for more consolidated cooperation. This is specifically important in the context of the Centre's launch of its 2012-15 programme of activities.

Following the European Council's conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility on 28-29 November 2011 which encouraged the European Commission to "provide a link between vocational education and training qualifications that include language skills and the CEFR, whilst making good use of the resources and experience of all relevant European institutions and stakeholders, in particular the Council of Europe and its European Centre for Modern Languages", negotiations continued throughout the year to determine the most effective format of cooperation. In its press release on the occasion of the European Day of Languages the Commission announced its intention to sign "a formal partnership agreement [with the ECML] in 2013 which would strengthen their cooperation on multilingualism and language learning in areas such as assessment, recognition of qualifications, exchange of experience and data, ICT-based tools, education in the language of the host country for adult migrants, and education in the main language of instruction for children of migrant origin".

The 2012-2015 ECML programme includes a number of themes relevant to the work of the European Commission such as 'young learners', 'Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)' and 'mobility', where cooperation is envisaged. The Centre is currently working on a cooperation action plan related to common priority areas together with the Multilingualism Policy Unit.

The Centre's also cooperated in 2012 on the initiative "Quality education in Romani for Europe" (QualiRom) under the European Commission's Key Actions 2 programme. Under the agreement, the ECML receives funding over the 3 years of the project as one of the partners in the initiative which is coordinated by the Karl-Franz University in Graz. In 2012 the project, involving 8 partners and 7 associated partners, piloted the Curriculum Framework for Romani (CFR) and the corresponding European Language Portfolio models developed by the Council of Europe.

The Centre is also an associate partner in 5 other Commission-funded projects.

Within the "Language-Rich Europe" initiative of the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), headed by the British Council, in which the ECML, was an associate partner over 80 interactive events took place across Europe to discuss the key findings of the initiative on developing better policies and practices for multilingualism. Network members were drawn from the fields of education, business, public services and the media. Ultimately the project seeks to bring about changes in perception regarding the importance of languages and institutional change as well as assisting in agenda setting in European countries and in policy change. In 2013 recommendations to policy makers at national and European level will be published.

Other networks

Cooperation with the International Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV) provided the basis for the "Empowering language networks" (LACS) project within the Centre's programme. The project focuses on mediating of ECML work through language teacher associations and other networks at regional and national level. The project also seeks to motivate people to adapt ECML projects to their local environment in order to facilitate widespread impact on learning and teaching. The ECML Director made a keynote speech at the FIPLV world congress which took place in Helsinki on 8-9 June.

Other institutions acting as cooperating partners in ECML projects in 2012 and offering access to their networks were the Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services (EAQUALS), the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), the Dutch Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), the CLIL Cascade Network (CCN), the Institut national de recherche pédagogique (INRP), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), Moscow State Linguistic University (MSLU), the International German Teacher's Association (IDV), the Fédération internationale des professeurs de français (FIPF) and the Education and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity International Association (EDiLIC).

'Associate partnerships' are also widely used within the ECML's 2012 -15 programme as a special form of collaboration to further promote cooperation at institutional level and/or as a means to familiarise representatives from non-member states with the activities of the ECML in order to promote accession to the Partial Agreement.

On a local level the ECML continued its cooperation with the Sprachennetzwerk Graz (Language Network Graz, <http://www.sprachennetzwerkgraz.at>), a Graz-based network of institutions working in the area of language education (see also section 5). The ECML also pursued its involvement in the implementation of the European Language Portfolio in local schools – a project initiated by the Sprachennetzwerk. The ECML is a key partner through its European dimension and expertise.

European Day of Languages (EDL)

The Day differs from the Centre's other activities in that it is not focused on a specialist target public but encompasses everyone interested in languages. With activities often organised as large-scale events in city and town centres around the continent as well as in schools, universities, adult learning centres, and businesses the EDL has a potential audience of millions of Europeans.

Upon the initiative of the Council of Europe, the European Day of Languages is celebrated each year on 26 September to promote cultural richness and plurilingualism in Europe and to encourage lifelong language learning. Since its launch in 2001, every year hundreds of events in celebration of languages are organised around Europe.

The Day is coordinated jointly by the European Centre for Modern Languages and the Language Policy Unit. National Relays nominated by the participating Council of Europe member states act as multipliers, circulating EDL information and disseminating the promotional materials provided, as well as carrying out promotion for the Day at national/regional level and through the press.

The coordination of the Day principally involves launching communication initiatives, liaising with National Relays, distributing EDL promotional materials and maintaining and developing an EDL web platform.

An indication of the success and popularity of the Day in 2012 were the many events which took place well beyond Europe, as far afield as Uzbekistan, South Korea and Senegal as well as in the United States, Canada, India and Australia. The activities came in all shapes and sizes from quizzes, language cafés, language taster sessions to multilingual choirs, twinning projects, language festivals, poetry competitions and major language education and language policy conferences.

Some of the 2012 highlights of the Day:

- the EDL „Talk to me“ video clip, developed by the ECML and featured on the main page of the website, was broadcast on both the French and German channels of ARTE throughout 26 September;
- thanks to the translation work carried out this year by the National Relays, the EDL website was available in 17 languages by 26 September : Albanian, Croatian, Czech, English, Estonian, French, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish and the ‘Evaluate your language skills’ game was available in the 12 languages;
- the site’s most significant feature presenting a cross-section of the events taking place on the Day of Languages around both Europe and the world featured over 670 events (more activities than ever before!);
- the winner of the 2012 ‘most innovative EDL event’ (either due to its creativity, transferability or just because it truly represents the spirit of the Day) was the Bahçeşehir Koleji Diyarbakır Anaokulu Kampüsü school from Turkey. The event, entitled "[Around the world in 248 days](#)" received over 1,350 votes during the 1 month voting period;
- there were over half a million page views of the EDL site in September (over 200,000 greater than the previous year)
- The European Commission announced its intention to sign a formal partnership agreement in 2013 with the ECML (as indicated above);

This year the ECML participated in a number of events taking place in celebration of the Day:

- Warsaw – 24 September: The international conference on “ICT and Social Media in Language Education” involved a keynote speech by the Director of the ECML, Waldemar Martyniuk and a workshop by the “Developing Online Teaching Skills” team of the Centre.
- Graz – European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) - 25 September: A press conference and open day was held at the ECML.
- Cyprus – 26-28 September: the Council of Europe was represented by the Director of the ECML, Waldemar Martyniuk at the “Multilingualism in Europe” conference sponsored by the European Commission.

A glance at the [2012 EDL picture gallery](#) illustrates the enthusiasm and continued popularity of the Day as well as the sheers variety of actions organised.

Substantial credit for the continued success and celebration of the Day goes to the EDL National Relays.

Networking tools

In addition to 32 websites managed and updated by the ECML in 2012, activities benefited from increased interactive communication via Facebook and Twitter, especially to promote the European Day of Languages. Given the fact that pupils and students now make widespread use of social media, the Centre has added these to its range of networking tools. The “Empowering language networks” project also uses Twitter as a means of ongoing communication to its primary target group, language teacher associations. A Moodle platform for exchange was also actively used within two of the Centre’s projects in 2012. Increasingly the Centre used short video interviews and audio podcasts as testimonials of ECML events to offer variety in the way of presenting information.

3.3. Enabling language professionals to have greater impact on reform processes

The ECML’s support for language education professionals and their networks assisted teachers to play a more influential role in their professional environment, also better equipping them to participate effectively in the consultations involved in decision-making processes.

Within the 10 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2012, 93% of survey respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that participating in an ECML event encouraged them to play a more influential role in reform processes in their professional environment (82% in 2011).

The activities within the mediation and training and consultancy for member states strands both have the potential to give language professionals a greater voice in reform processes.

In the case of mediation activities this is through the involvement in the project of stakeholders who can influence change. In cooperation with the ECML’s National Contact Points the “Plurilingual and intercultural competences: descriptors and teaching materials” (FREPA) project aims to support the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence of learning at all levels.

The project directly targeted and involved the National Contact Points in its workshop in November as well as in the national support events hosted/to be hosted in ECML member states in 2012 and 2013. The project was also successful in establishing, in close cooperation with the Contact Points, country pages in the national language/s providing details on its work, its publications and initiatives with regard to implementation within the country. The publication, *A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* produced in 2011, which underpins the work of the current project, represents a ground-breaking set of instruments opening ways for implementing pluralistic approaches in classrooms in order to develop the plurilingual and intercultural competences of learners of all subjects. The set of instruments comprise a theoretical framework, a “kit” to help teachers use the framework and a database of some 250 online teaching activities. In 2012 twelve further articles or publications were published on the Framework and the original publication *A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures: Competences and resources* was translated into Italian. Events focusing on the project were held in several countries in 2012 and the publication has truly become a reference point in its area not only in Europe but also in Asia in Japan and Taiwan and in Canada.

In 2013 a further two projects with a mediation focus will be added to the programme, “Involving parents in plurilingual and intercultural education” focusing on parents and parent associations and “ECML publications for plurilingual and intercultural education in use” which will again involve the ECML Contact Points in member states.

The ECML offer of training and consultancy in member states represents a flexible format of activities providing direct, targeted assistance to member states. Through its bilateral focus it is possible to customise the activities organised in the state according to particular needs. It is also possible to involve a large number of specialists from different institutions and in some cases Ministries in the country in the training and consultancy sessions, making it easier to feed into policy developments into the member states.

Following expert meetings with the coordination teams running these activities, network meetings were held in Graz for the RELEX and the E-ELP activities, bringing together representatives from the different countries which had requested training and consultancy activities. They served to highlight common issues in the different countries and to give the teams further information on the different national contexts which enabled them to prepare their workshops in a customised way. In total 5 national events were held in 2012, and although all related to different contexts and the events themselves were varied in format all received highly positive feedback.

In the case of the Constructing and validating language tests linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) activity in Cyprus in September, the request submitted by the state related to the introduction of a new curriculum based on the CEFR, which had created a need to develop teachers' skills to construct and validate tests linked to the CEFR. The results of the workshop were impressive with 100% of participants claiming to be 'fully satisfied' with the event and 93% 'strongly agreeing' that the activity was relevant to their context and needs – with one participant describing the workshop as “an eye-opening experience”. The potential impact of such activities seems large as the team was invited to deal with an issue of concern to the national authorities and was able to provide the required expertise to train a clearly defined target public who would immediately be able to put into practice the knowledge they had gained. A further indication of success was that the team was invited back to carry out a follow-up workshop in Cyprus in 2013. This area promises to be a particularly important area of work for the Centre with institutions frequently purporting to have linked testing to the language levels of the CEFR, without having a valid basis for this claim. 6 national requests for training and consultancy in this area have so far been received for 2013.

3.4. Contributing to better quality of language education in Europe

Through improved competences, stronger networks and greater impact of its members, the language-teaching profession can become more actively involved in improving standards in language education.

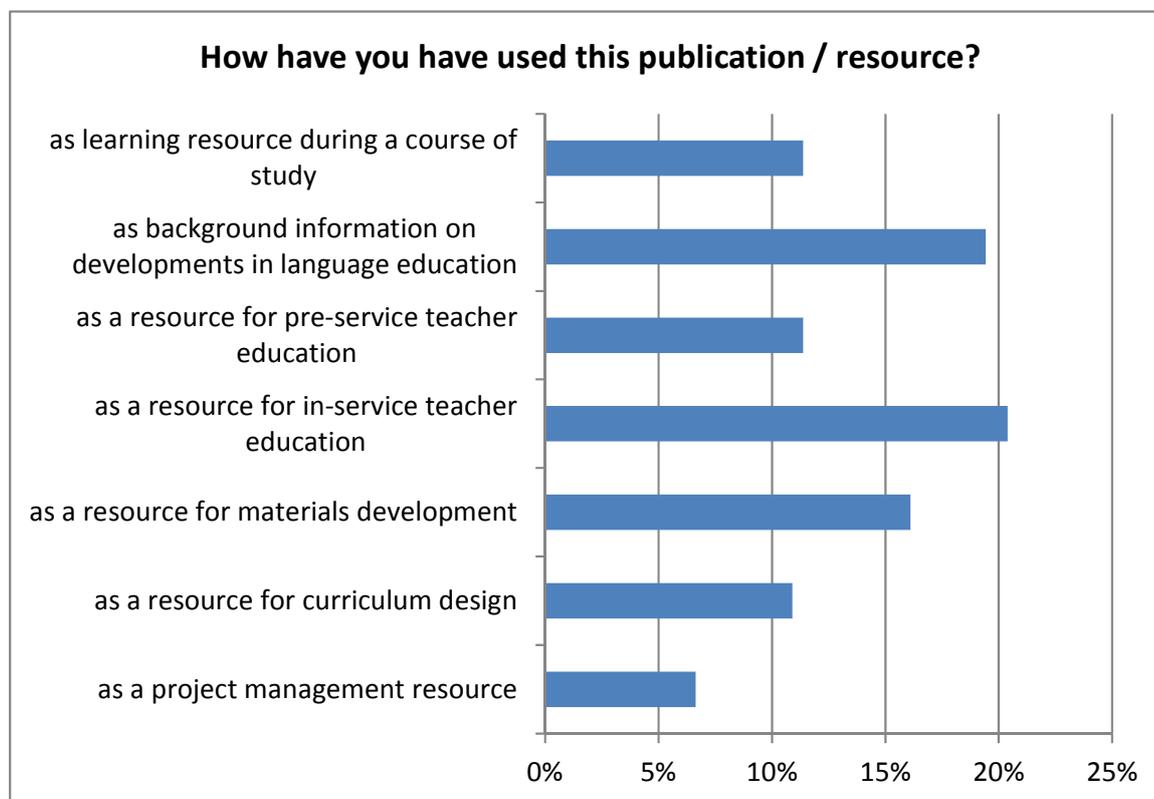
Within the 10 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2012, 96% of survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the ECML event they participated in highlighted quality aspects of language education that they will promote in their professional environment (92% in 2011).

Following the release of 21 publications and websites aimed primarily at language teachers and teacher trainers in late 2011, 2012 marked the first complete year where these instruments could be applied and feedback on their usage could be gathered. User statistics showed a large increase³ in the use of the sites related to European Language Portfolio, developing online teaching skills, young learners and plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in content teaching as well as smaller increases in the areas of mobility, Content and Language Integrated Learning. This represents an encouraging sign with regard to the sustainability of the Centre's work as the initial projects which developed the materials on these sites completed their activities in 2011. In a number of cases publications were translated into other languages by practitioners using the publications. This was the case with the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* which was translated into Arabic and Russian in 2012 as well as several other of the ECML products.

³ by over 100% compared to 2011

In a major survey conducted in 2012 among 3,000 persons who had downloaded the online versions of ECML publications, evaluations of the quality and relevance of the publications were consistently very high, with 90% of respondents assessing the relevance and clarity of the professional content at 'Good' or 'Excellent', and over 80% evaluating design, up-to-dateness and usefulness as 'Good' to 'Excellent'.

Also with regard to the application of publications the Centre was able to gain useful feedback as to how the materials are most frequently used (as indicated in the graphic below).



Quality within the Centre's programme is monitored and promoted on an ongoing basis by four programme consultants who identify synergies and point out potential overlaps. The consultants are supported in their work by a comprehensive Centre's evaluative scheme.

The evaluative system to gather quantitative data and qualitative feedback from the direct target groups of ECML programmes was introduced at the outset of the 2008-2011 programme. The system comprises a set of tools providing evidence of the quality of ECML services as well as indications of take-up and follow-up of projects in the member states. All data is made available to ECML national representatives (Governing Board members, National Nominating Authorities and National Contacts Points) to ensure transparency.

The data gathered through the scheme was used as the basis for an evaluative review of the Centre's *Empowering language professionals* programme (2008-2011). The review carried out by two evaluation consultants indicated that, "...the overall impact of the programme has been high and has contributed significantly to the objectives [of the programme]"⁴ The complete results will be presented to the ECML Governing Board in 2013, together with case studies focusing on ECML publications and on the Centre's work from national perspective.

One of the measures introduced to the programme in 2012 to have almost immediate effect was the designation as one of the team members as a 'media link person'. It is the responsibility of this person not only to promote the project to relevant target groups outside the work of the Centre but also to liaise with other ECML projects within the programme working on similar themes and develop synergies where possible. This has proved successful in creating close ties between the projects and further enhancing the coherence of the programme.

⁴ Further details of the evaluative review are available in document DGII/EDU/GRAZ(2013)10

Cooperation within the Council of Europe

As a Council of Europe institution, the ECML operates within the context of the ongoing language education work of the major European organisations. Several of the projects in its programme are therefore based on existing European language education principles and tools, particularly the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) developed by the Language Policy Unit.

The secretariats of the ECML and the Language Policy Unit actively promoted complementarity and coherence between work undertaken and ensured that relevant results from the ECML's activities fed into the Unit's work, where appropriate, and vice-versa. The two secretariats cooperated in particular on the coordination of the European Day of Languages, on the Centre's projects which deal with migrant language education, the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The "Quality education in Romani for Europe" (QualiRom) project piloted the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* (CFR) and the corresponding European Language Portfolio models developed by the Policy Unit.

Both the ECML and Language Policy Unit were involved in the organisation of the ACTFL-CEFR Symposium which took place on 21-23 June at the ECML. The symposium looked at the implications of 'cross-walks' between the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference for learning/teaching, for teacher training and for assessment/certification. This marked the 3rd annual event, building on the previous meetings held in Leipzig, Germany (2010) and Provo, Utah, USA (2011) which explored correspondences between the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) on theoretical and empirical grounds. The event also marked an occasion for ACTFL to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation with the ECML, becoming the 14th member of the INGO Professional Network Forum of the ECML.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was also regularly updated on relevant activities of the Centre in particular in relation to the "Minority languages, collateral languages and bi-/plurilingual education" (EBP-ICI) project, which released its publication in 2012.

4. Budget and staffing

Within the 2012-2015 programme the direct costing of project activities is based upon an overall figure of €2 million.

In establishing the programme, the secretariat has sought to balance the numbers of activities, in so far as possible, equitably over the four years so that the budget required for each of the years is approximately the same.

The 2012 budget of the ECML, comprising €1 425 700 in member state contributions, was adopted on 23 November 2011 at the 1127th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. This was supplemented by a carry-over of approximately €239,000 from the 2011 programme account and €37,000 from the 'staffing and overheads' budget. The ECML's working budget in 2012 therefore totalled €1.701.700. 2012, as the launch year of a new programme, was primarily comprised of meetings of project coordination teams to initiate their activities which are set to run over the next 2 – 4 years.

Total expenditure for 2012 amounted to €1.314 million (status 28 March 2013). The following categories represented the major areas of programme expenditure for the year (2011 percentages in brackets):

- Travel and subsistence: 39% (46%);
- Publications/promotional materials: 10% (10%);
- Honoraria: 17% (17%);
- Interpretation: 5% (5%);
- Web development/IT maintenance and telecommunications: 5% (5%);
- Postage: 5% (2%).

Due to the structure of the programme the first year is the least costly in terms of activities. The balance resulting from 2012 will be required primarily for years two and three of the programme which are estimated to be the most expensive with an increased number of workshops and network meetings foreseen. Additional income will also be generated through the “Quality education in Romani for Europe” project which benefitted from European Commission funding.

Due to financial cutbacks in 2012 (the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, Greece and Hungary reduced the budget by approximately €280,000) it was necessary to suppress 3 positions in the areas of PR and Communication and Translation and Terminology and also to cut one post related to Finance and Administration.

In 2012 two of the major challenges to address were to restructure in the area of staffing, making greater use of outsourcing in the light of a reduced workforce and to seek additional sources of income. Ultimately all staff have been affected by the restructuring process and although, thanks to the good will of staff members, this has gone smoothly further changes are still required to reduce bottlenecks and to cut down on ‘non-essential’ tasks. In certain areas, such as communication, further outsourcing was introduced and in others activities which were previously outsourced (such as translations of statutory documents) have been brought back in-house through training and subsequent use of the Centre’s translation memory software. Training or further training is required in certain areas.

With regard to attracting extra-budgetary resources, the Centre took up contacts with several potential partners, and following the approval by the ECML Governing Board of a set of criteria and procedures to establish cooperation agreements the secretariat will present concrete proposals for partnerships at the statutory meeting in March 2013.

5. The ECML in Austria

The Austrian Association of the ECML (*Verein EFSZ in Österreich*) acts as the local partner of the ECML in Graz, thereby fulfilling Austria’s commitment as host country to provide a seat for the Centre and a local secretariat. Its main function is to maintain and develop the premises of the ECML and provide assistance in day-to-day logistics. It also plays a valuable role in acting as an interface between the Centre and local, national and regional bodies.

As part of this function, the Austrian Association organises initiatives and facilitates synergies between the ECML and the region. It supports events aimed at a broader interested local or regional public and works to facilitate the transfer of ECML project results to the region.

In the framework of the ECML’s medium-term programmes, the Association organises a series of events entitled: *CONTEXT - Connecting tertiary education experts*. The aim of these is to make the Centre’s work better known locally by inviting ECML experts to take part in an event connected to a subject matter of one of the projects. The target group for these lectures, presentations or round table discussions is an audience of university students and teachers from Austria.

Another contribution to the dissemination process for the ECML’s work in Austria is the support that the Association provides for central activities for multipliers of the Graz-based Austrian Centre for Language Competence.

The Association has also invited all institutions in Graz involved in the field of languages to come together in the *Sprachennetzwerk Graz* (the Graz Language Network). This provides a platform for building up and strengthening synergies and exchange of information. Beyond the general objective of promoting plurilingualism, the Network aims to make the competences of the institutions based in Graz more visible both nationally and at European level and to underline the city’s specificity as a place of language-related expertise.

When the ECML’s premises are not being used for its programme activities, they may be used by outside institutions to host activities corresponding to the Centre’s vocation. The fact that the Graz Centre is one of the external Council of Europe offices has made it an obvious choice for events organised by or in cooperation with the Council of Europe, such as *Pestalozzi* workshops and seminars. A number of external international meetings and conferences have thus been attracted to Graz, drawn by the prestige of the

ECML. At the same time, national educational activities are held at the Centre whenever possible, one example being the dissemination events organised in cooperation with the Austrian Centre for Language Competence. These events raise the profile of the Centre and help to establish its reputation as an international meeting point within the region. External usage also provides a contribution to the considerable costs borne by the Austrian authorities for the provision of the ECML facilities.

Selected external events in 2012:

10-12 May	Austrian <i>Pestalozzi</i> workshop “Roma and Human Rights: cultural and linguistic aspects in society”
06-08 July	ÖGSD European Portfolio for Student Language Teachers conference
29 September	Annual meeting Austrian-Slovenian Society
16 October	Austrian multipliers’ meeting for the dissemination of ECML 3 rd medium-term programme projects

6. 2012 in figures

Activities and participation

- 600 language professionals took part in capacity building activities directly financed by the ECML
- 152 events (in total) were supported by the ECML
- 33 events directly organised and financed by the ECML
- 10 active projects within the *Learning through languages* programme
- 3 sets of training and consultancy activities

Publications

- 21 new publications distributed by the ECML

Web dissemination

- 32 websites within the Centre’s web platform
- 4.1 million page views of all sites on the ECML’s web platform
- 6,880 subscribers to the European Language Gazette
- 138 events registered in the ECML’s International Events Calendar
- 203 language education experts promoted their services via the ECML’s Experts’ Database

European Day of Languages

- 675 events organised in 47 European countries registered in the European Day of Languages events calendar
- Website made available in 17 language versions
- 1 million page views of the European Day of Languages website

Expenditure

- €1.314 million total expenditure of the ECML

In Memoriam

John Trim worked together with the Council of Europe for several decades. He was director of the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Projects from 1971 to 1997, overseeing developments ranging from the Threshold Level to the Common European Framework of Reference. His commitment and vision for language education and many features of his educational philosophy inspired generations of language professionals worldwide and provided invaluable contributions to the development of language education. He was a renowned expert around the world in the field of phonetics, linguistics, language didactics and policy.

He was a strong supporter of the establishment and the further development of the European Centre for Modern Languages and received the Council of Europe’s Pro Merito Medal in Graz in 2005 for his services to language education.

John Trim also donated his personal collection of books and documents (more than 3200 resources) covering his lifetime's work on languages to the documentation and resource centre of the ECML in 2004. The collection focuses on the work of the Council of Europe conducted between 1971 and 1997, studies related to the development of the Threshold Levels and the Common European Framework of Reference, and pedagogical resources.

On what turned out to be his final visit to the Centre in June 2012 he made a typically brilliant keynote speech on the CEFR pointing to its pedagogical and political foundations.

In honour of his work the ECML proposes to establish a John Trim fellowship for talented young researchers to focus on an aspect of innovation in language education.