

EAFT–ELETO Symposium

“National Languages and Terminology in Higher Education, Science & Technology”

Athens, Greece, 7 November 2013

Video message from:

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, to the

Higher Education Symposium: “Hellenic language and terminology”

Athens, Thursday 7 November 2013

Speech

(+/- 550 words)

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to send you this greeting from Brussels, wishing you a very successful symposium.

I have a close personal interest in the themes that you will be discussing. Making sure that our beautiful Greek language remains as alive and vibrant as it has been for more than 4000 years is an ambition I fully share.

The European Commission is built on the motto “Unity in Diversity”. Linguistic diversity is one of the cornerstones of the European construction as well as a major competitiveness factor for the EU.

That is why we promote multilingualism, as a policy in itself and through all our policy initiatives.

In July this year I presented an initiative on "European Higher Education in the world", which aims to promote European universities on a global scale and attract more students from outside Europe.

In the implementation of this initiative, we aim to make sure that several European languages are offered in international university courses.

I can assure you that there is no lack of interest. In China for example, universities already offer courses in all official EU languages, including Greek! This summer we hosted a group of Chinese language teachers who participated in language and culture immersion courses in five European countries.

Through another recent initiative, “Opening up Education”, we wish to promote the creation, the sharing and the use of high quality Open Educational Resources in all European languages.

We have launched a portal in 23 languages called Open Education Europa, which encourages schools and Higher Education Institutions to share their resources and increase collaborative learning and teaching. I invite you to explore this portal and to contribute to its development and use within your respective networks.

Our main policy objective is for every European citizen to learn two foreign languages. That is why we have proposed to the Council of Ministers a European benchmark, which I hope will be adopted next year.

By 2020, 50 % of all 15-year olds should reach the level of independent user in their first foreign language, and 75 % of all children in lower secondary education should be studying a second foreign language. I regard this as a clear priority.

Support for language learning and linguistic diversity will of course be available through our new funding programme for education, training, youth and sport, Erasmus+.

The programme will make it possible for even more people to experience studying, training or working abroad. We have introduced an assessment of language competences before and after mobility and we will offer free online language courses to people who need to improve their language skills before going abroad.

And finally, we must not forget that the European Commission itself is host to the world's largest body of highly qualified translators.

These colleagues work to ensure that all our policy initiatives appear in the 24 EU official languages. The fruits of their efforts are made public through terminology databases such and through the millions of documents produced all over Europe which incorporate EU translations.

The results of this conference will with no doubt feed into several of the areas I have mentioned, contributing to the debate on linguistic development in Higher Education.

I wish you fruitful discussions and look forward to the outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.