

Academia as Civil Society

Although academia plays a crucial role in society, academic and research institutions are not instantaneously thought of as 'civil society' (defined as the space that exists over or against the state, as an intermediary between the private sector and the state). Yet, academics and intellectuals have always thought for society. When a problem or injustice occurs in society, academics oppose such activity through their writings and speeches and try to mobilize public opinion for a just society. Now, more than ever, as contemporary society is evolving, in response to technological developments and more nuanced changes within individual and supranational states, the role of academia is critical. The research expertise and dedicated skills of academic researchers, coupled with rigour in methodology, ethics processes and evidence validation are valuable compliments to practitioner approaches for fairer decision making and strategy planning by policy makers and public officials. Evidence-based arguments can better convince superiors and stakeholders to champion a fundamental rights cause.

In this light, we created a Multilingualism Expert Group (MEG) whose responsibility is to engage the wider academic community in meaningful discussions about issues related to languages & language policy issues, language education, translation & technology, and, finally, related to the arts, culture & media.

The CURUM constituent

Also, we have created and are developing a **Cluster of University Research Units** focusing on **Multilingualism (CURUM)**, language learning, teaching and assessment, language in society and the public space. The university units that are members/partners of the ECSPM so far are:

- Cambridge Language Sciences, Interdisciplinary Research Centre, University of Cambridge, UK
- Greeklanglab, Laboratory for Research of the Greek Language and Multilingualism, GR
- The Babylon Center for the Study of Superdiversity, University of Tilburg, NL
- The Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism, University of Reading, UK
- The Center for Multilingualism, Universität Konstanz, DE
- The Division of Multilingualism, Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Technische Universität Darmstadt, DE
- Mercator, European Network of Language diversity Centres
- The Multilingualism Research Group, University of Tübingen, DE
- OLBI – Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute of the University of Ottawa, CA

With other such units soon to join our CURUM constituent, the overriding goal is to attempt a to bring together European and international research into multilingualism from different disciplines.