

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, academics oppose such activity through their writings and speeches and try to mobilize public opinion for a just society.

Now, more than ever, as our contemporary world 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. It is also in this light that we created the CURUM constituent, which is constantly evolving.

The CURUM constituent of the ECSPM

The ECSPM honours the interrelationship between civil society, academia and social action, by generating the **Cluster of University Research Units** focusing on **Multilingualism (CURUM)** and related issues such as language learning, teaching and assessment, as well as language in society/the public space. The university units that are members/partners of the ECSPM so far are:

- The Babylon Center for the Study of Superdiversity, University of Tilburg, NL
- Cambridge Language Sciences, Interdisciplinary Research Centre, University of Cambridge, UK
- CCERBAL (Canadian Centre for Studies and Research in Bilingualism and Language Planning at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa, CA): Represented by Nikolay Slavkov
- CeLM, Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism, University of Reading, UK
- The Center for Multilingualism, Universität Konstanz, DE
- Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Division of Multilingualism, Technische Universität Darmstadt, DE
- GLML, Greek Language and Multilingualism Laboratory, GR
- Mercator, European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning

Pending CURUM members:

- CDL (Centre for Diversity & Learning), Ghent University, BE.
- MIRCo (Multilingualism, Social Identities, Intercultural Relations and Communication), the Autonomous University of Madrid, ES.

Candidates for ECSPM-CURUM membership:

- Centre of Excellence of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, GR. “Multilingualism and Language Policy”.
- University of Cardiff Multilingualism Research Network, UK
- FRLC (Fédération de Recherche Langage et Communication), Université de Strasbourg, FR
- GS/FL Research Group, Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, DE

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