

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 due to constant transformation due to mobility and technological developments, as well as 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.

The CURUM constituency of the ECSPM

The ECSPM honours the interrelationship between civil society, academia and social action, by generating the **C**luster of **U**niversity **R**esearch **U**nits focusing on **M**ultilingualism (**CURUM**) that carries out research with regard to language use in society, the public space and education, as well as in relation to the discursive construction of reality.

At the moment the CURUM is composed of a body of 15 constituents in total, forming a research alliance and a communal space for academic work, which is to contribute to the development of a European Education Area. This is a target we share with the European Commission, which is taking initiatives so that, by 2025, the first decisive steps to reinforcing the cultural dimension of the European Union will have been made, while monitoring educational attainment cross-nationally. These steps are to take forward the European Council's mandate, comprising of proposals including the improvement of the teaching/learning of languages to ensure Europeans' multilingual habitus and awareness raising regarding Europe's shared heritage. The mandate also highlights the importance of collaborative work in the academic sector by networks of existing universities to boost cross-border cooperation through long-term institutional strategies.

The members of CURUM, which is constantly enriched are:

- 1) Babylon Center for the Study of Superdiversity, University of Tilburg, NL
- 2) Cambridge Language Sciences Interdisciplinary Research Centre, University of Cambridge, UK
- 3) CCERBAL (Canadian Centre for Studies and Research in Bilingualism and Language Planning) at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), University of Ottawa, CA
- 4) CDL (Centre for Diversity & Learning), Ghent University BE
- 5) CEM (Centre for Excellence for Multilingualism & Language Policy), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, GR
- 6) CeLM (Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism), University of Reading, UK
- 7) Center for Multilingualism, Universität Konstanz, DE
- 8) Centro di Eccellenza della Ricerca (with a permanent linguistic observatory of Italian) of the Università per Stranieri di Siena, IT
- 9) GEO (Groupe d'Études orientales, slaves et néo-helléniques/Centre for Research in Greek, Slavic and Oriental Studies), Université de Strasbourg, FR
- 10) GLML (Greek Language and Multilingualism Laboratory), University of Thessaly, GR

- 11) GS/FL (German as a Second / Foreign Language, Research Group), Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, DE
- 12) Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies, Division of Multilingualism, Technische Universität Darmstadt, DE
- 13) LiLPa (linguistique, langue, parole), Université de Strasbourg, FR
- 14) Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning
- 15) MIRCo (Centre on Multilingualism, Discourse and Communication), the Autonomous University of Madrid, ES
- 16) MRN (Multilingualism Research Network) University of Cardiff, UK

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