



OBSERVATOIRE EUROPEEN DU PLURILINGUISME



# La Lettre de l'OEP N°54

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Traduit par Sylvie Aubert

**Editorial** : The European linguistic regime, a topical issue.

The OEP does not comment either on the programs of the political groups in the European Parliament or the personality of any of the candidates\* to the position of president of the European Commission. Nevertheless, as was to be expected, the institutional evolutions implied by the Lisbon Treaty raise anew the issue of the linguistic regime of the European Union.

Remember the innovation of the Lisbon Treaty on this subject.

The president of the European Commission is no longer "appointed by the European Council", this choice being then "approved by the European Parliament", but he is "elected by the European Parliament after a proposition of the European Council", who will have to "take into account the results of the election to the European Parliament".

The consequences of these significant changes are many.

1) We will start with what could have been but a news item. On 15 May 2014 will take place, or took place, depending on when you are reading this article, the great debate for the election of the president of the European Commission.

The candidates to the presidency of the European Commission having been chosen by the political groups of the European Parliament, some of them have already begun their campaign, in the language of the country welcoming them.

They could not follow more naturally in the wake of the distant forerunners of the European idea who had perfectly understood the importance of linguistic issues.

Though we do not want to carry this comparison too far, we will consider some events of our European history. Charles V (1500-1558) had learned the languages of his empire, as he expanded it with dynastic alliances. He is alleged to have said : "A man who speaks four languages is worth four men". The other reference is more remote.

When Charles the Bald and Louis the German wanted to build a union between a German realm and a Romance realm on the ruins of the Roman Empire, they took an oath in Strasbourg (14 February 842) in both Romance and medieval German (theodisc). Charles the Bald took an oath in German to his brother Louis and Louis took an oath to his brother Charles in the Romance language which would become French. The Strasbourg oath could have been written in Latin. For political reasons, it was written and proclaimed in the three founding languages : medieval German, medieval French and Latin. This was a powerful symbol and it was conveyed by the languages. ->

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La Lettre de l'OEP is translated by volunteers in [allemand](#), [anglais](#), [bulgare](#), [croate](#), [espagnol](#), [grec](#), [italien](#), [polonais](#), [portugais](#), [roumain](#) et [russe](#).  
The texts can be read on-line.  
Thanks to the translators.  
You can add other languages.

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## In this issue

- Édito : Spotlights on education
- Announcements and publications
- Recent articles not to be missed

->...Now the times have changed :

The rules of Eurovision on 15 May provide that the presentation will be in English, that the candidates will start with a one-minute presentation in English and that the debate will be held in English.

For the OEP, this editorial choice made by a professional body without any political legitimacy is a legal, intellectual, strategic and political monstrosity.

A **legal** monstrosity first of all because to regulate a television debate in front of several hundred millions of people is a political act and its regulation should be made by an independent and legitimate body, a body created by political power. ->

->...An **intellectual** monstrosity too because none of the candidates is an English-speaker. Their mother tongues are German, Dutch, Greek and French. Moreover, all of them are multilingual.

Of course, they all speak English, being part of the European cultured elite. But their multilingualism, which should be enhanced, is a better answer to the necessities of today's world than simplistic media monolingualism. The Americans themselves, who are mainly monolingual even though the internal influence of Spanish changes somewhat the situation, are beginning to understand the necessity of plurilingualism in a world where their domination has declined a lot. Why then hang onto this anglo-maniac vision trying to appear modern, when in reality it is outmoded, dated and offbeat against the necessities of the present times ?

A **strategic** monstrosity because the European peoples who tend to turn away from Europe will not take any more interest in it unless they are addressed in their own language. Should the gap between the politicians and the populations be further widened ? The exact opposite strategy should have been adopted...

A **political** monstrosity lastly because English is not and never will be the language of Europe. The fact that European Commission officials, among whom native English-speakers are a small minority, use English more than the other European languages, influenced by sociological norms more than actual need, is not enough to turn English into the language of Europe. The reality on the ground is far from it...

Europe's motto is *United in diversity* and the principle of linguistic and cultural diversity has been restated by the Lisbon Treaty. The treaties established plurilingualism, that is, from the institutional point of view, equality between the languages of the member states.

Umberto Eco once said that "the language of Europe is translation". It is also plurilingualism, that is not only the recognition of the equality of the European languages but also the objective that every citizen should be able to communicate in at least two languages besides the mother tongue.

At the time when we are writing these lines, we do not know how the debate in 'Eurovision will take place. The organizers have refused to change their [rules](#) but they could not deny the candidates the right of any European citizen to speak their own language and any chosen European language, a right that the European Parliament knows how to manage regularly for almost 800 members. We made a [statement](#) on this.

2) Another important topic : the frame of mind of the candidates regarding the linguistic question. We made a test : we examined their websites. We are giving the [results on-line](#). If you are not satisfied with our ranking, please contact your favourite candidate and draw his or her attention to the importance of linguistic matters and to the necessity to abandon the use of English-only, a sign of conformism and a total lack of a critical gaze on today's world. It is important to know how the future president of the European Commission will act on linguistic matters, in his public appearances and in the general operations of the Commission.

3) The linguistic grievances towards the Commission are triple :

- The website Europa is very heterogenous : whereas a majority of general directions respect the rules of plurilingualism, their websites being generally in all the languages of the European Union, or at least in three languages, some of them do not respect the rules at all and their websites are 99% in English, without any reason of course.->

-> - About half the executive agencies, though referring in their statutes to the rule 58/1, do not respect the linguistic regime of the European Union in their communication and more particularly in their websites. There is no other explanation than the personal preferences of their teams. These practices are totally inadequate.

- We all know that 80% of the texts produced by the European Union are first written in English by officials who are not English-speakers. To guarantee the quality of English, the texts are revised by a team of professional translators. It is rather surprising that a German writer should write in English a text that will be translated into German. This is but an example of what happens to officials of the European Commission, whatever their language.

It is time to free the minds !

These are linguistic matters, among many other important matters, that should be addressed by the new president of the European Commission. Let all those who believe as we do that these matters are not incidental, work so that the future president of the European Commission is attentive to them and draws practical implications.

\*Jean-Claude Juncker (European People's Party), Franziska Keller (The Greens), Martin Schulz (Party of European Socialists), Alexis Tsipras, president of the Party of the European Left, Guy Verhofstadt (Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe).

## Articles not to be missed

<p><a href="#"><u>Communiqué : 15 mai 2014 - un débat en Eurovision qui concerne tous les citoyens !</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>UNESCO fait sien l'objectif de 2 langues en plus de la langue principale d'enseignement (1+2)</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Élections européennes - Des cinq candidats à la présidence de la Commission, lesquels sont les plus plurilingues ?</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Débat Eurovision 15 mai 2014 - Élections du président de la Commission européenne - L'anglais doit-il être la langue de la campagne ?</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>E.U. Fights to Get Everyone Speaking Same Language on Education</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Cortes nas despesas do Parlamento Europeu ameaçam o multilinguismo</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Lettera aperta di protesta dei lettori linguistici di lingua tedesca alle università italiane</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Keep Your Multilingualism to Yourself</u></a></p>	
<p><a href="#"><u>ASAP, FYI, brainstorming : les 15 anglicismes les plus insupportables du bureau (Huffington Post)</u></a></p>	

## Announcements and publications

	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#"><u>In Paris, a museum to discover the languages of the world</u></a></p> <p>The language plays a central role in our lives, even in our dreams. The 170m<sup>2</sup>-wide permanent exhibition MUNDOLINGUA invites you to discover the secrets of language during an unusual visit with many different themes.</p> <p>The exhibition is open to all, either beginners or experts. It proposes several levels, reading and listening on touchscreens, games, many unusual objects such as a sound head, a language tree, syntax cubes and bricks, many instruments used by linguists, a copy of the Rosetta Stone, the encrypting machine Enigma, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ASSOCIATION MUNDOLINGUA 10 rue Servandoni – 75006 Paris - tél. +33 (0)1 56 81 65 79 <a href="http://www.mundolingua.org/">http://www.mundolingua.org/</a> - <a href="mailto:contact@mundolingua.org">contact@mundolingua.org</a> Open every day from 10am to 7pm</p>
	<p>The review <i>Synergies Italie</i>, review of the GERFLINT, launches a call for contributions for the publication of the n°11 on the theme :</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Le commerce de la parole entre linguistique et économie</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Coordinated by Giovanni Agresti, University of Teramo Date limite de soumission des propositions : 30 mai 2014 <a href="http://gerflint.eu/publications/synergies-italie.html">http://gerflint.eu/publications/synergies-italie.html</a></p>
	<div style="text-align: center;">  <span style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">Nebrija</span>  <span style="font-size: 1.5em;">Universidad</span> </div> <div style="border: 2px solid yellow; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>EN CAMINO HACIA EL PLURILINGÜISMO</b> <b>DEL 26 AL 28 DE JUNIO DE 2014</b></p> </div> <p><i>Ist International Congress of Linguistics Applied to the teaching of Languages : Towards multilingualism</i>, a meeting place where researchers and teachers, either experts or beginners can share the results of their studies and their teaching experience.</p> <p><a href="#">&gt; More information</a></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>XI Congreso Internacional Traducción, Texto e Interferencias</b></p> <p>El Congreso de 2014 versará, como bien aclara su título, sobre la amplia temática de la teoría y la práctica de la traducción, con especial incidencia en los tipos de traducciones, y los traductores.</p> <p>La <b>fecha límite</b> para la presentación de los resúmenes finalizará <b>el 30 de junio de 2014</b></p> <p><b>Lengua(s) oficial(es) del evento:</b> español, inglés, alemán, francés</p> <p><a href="#">&gt;&gt; Más información &gt;&gt;</a></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Colloque du CERIE (CEntre de Recherche Interdisciplinaire en JuritraductologiE) (Interdisciplinary Research Center in legal Traductology) 19 and 20 June 2014 in Paris, in the Maison de l'UNESCO.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>« La pertinence d'une juritraductologie : pour les universitaires, les juristes, les traducteurs et les citoyens »</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The aim of this conference is to show the stakes of the role of translator-interpret in the world and legal contexts</p> <p>More information : <a href="http://www.cerije.eu/manifestations-scientifiques-1/">http://www.cerije.eu/manifestations-scientifiques-1/</a></p>

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