



MIME
Mobility and Inclusion
in Multilingual Europe

Summary of the MIME Event for policy makers:

Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe (MIME)

A preview of research results

27 April 2017 – Fondation Universitaire – Brussels, Belgium

Welcome and Introduction: The MIME Vademecum concept.

The meeting started with a few words of welcome and a general introduction by project leader Prof. François Grin, recalling the structure, scope and objectives of the project. With its 25 teams from 16 European countries, the MIME project is structured in six work packages (WP) spanning several disciplines such as political science, sociology, education, and policy analysis. Two additional WPs (dissemination and management) ensure the integration of the six work packages dedicated to specific research questions. This integrative structure and interdisciplinary scope ensure that the MIME project adequately covers a large array of challenges emerging from an increasingly complex, global, and multilingual Europe.

In addition to strict academic research and scientific publications, the MIME project is intended to deliver a consistent set of policy proposals, offering well-targeted solutions to specific multilingual challenges. This objective is materialized through the MIME *Vademecum*. It builds on the fact that each situation is unique – and thus deserves a unique treatment – but that, nonetheless, some elements of successful practice developed in certain contexts can be transferred to other situations. Hence, the *Vademecum* proposes solutions that combine a novel integrative analy-

sis of the challenges of multilingualism, combined with the identification of successful experience with dealing with those challenges in practice. This body of knowledge generates informed policy proposals for the selection and design of future language policies.

The second part of the event was dedicated to the presentation of such questions and possible ways of resolutions.

Sample questions from the MIME Vademecum – Novel approaches to Europe's multilingual challenge.

Prof. László Marác (WP1; "politics") presented elements revolving around the question of *how existing government arrangements for European minority languages can be adapted to facilitate mobility for members of other language groups*. He showed that multi-level governance (MLG) can facilitate the expansion of linguistic rights in the direction of migrant languages. For instance, as regards children of *Internally Mobile European Citizens*, the learning of their original mother-tongue could thus be promoted and facilitated.

Prof. Peter Kraus (WP2; “society”) focused on the following question: *What do laboratory-like ‘real’ cases tell us about the chances (and risks) of multilingualism?* He presented the complex cases of Barcelona, Luxembourg and Riga, highlighting the importance of a common public sphere and the need to ensure that inclusion into the local sociolinguistic fabric is conceived of in a diversity-sensitive perspective and operates accordingly.

Prof. Célio Conceição (WP3; “education”) tackled the question of *how to define strategies for higher education under conditions of tension or conflict between the local and the global*. The tension basically stems from the fact that a large proportion of academic publications appear in English (that is, at a high, international level) while educational practices are linguistically split, with most of the basic courses (typically at bachelor level) being provided in local languages. To achieve a better balance, and to allow for mobility (linked to “internationalisation”) without compromising inclusion (which requires anchoring in the local fabric, with the local language(s)), it is useful to bear in mind the distinction between various tasks performed by academic institutions (e.g. teaching; local and regional dissemination; international communication, each of which can further be sliced more finely).

Prof. Nike Pokorn (WP4; “mediation”) highlighted to benefits and difficulties associated with the provision of public-service interpreting and translation (PSIT). Such services have been called into question on the grounds that offering them could lower immigrants’ incentives to learn the host country language. However, such services may be critically important in high-risk situations, such as in healthcare settings. Empirical data shows that migrants generally have a strong motivation to learn host language; this justifies increasing efforts to provide free language courses in the host language, while maintaining access to free T&I services in high-risk situations.

Dr. Guillaume Fürst’s (WP6; “frontiers”) presentation targeted the possible *relation between multilingualism and creativity at the individual level*. Summariz-

ing results of four mutually compatible studies (with total sample size of 592 persons), Dr Fürst showed that multilingual people indeed tend to be more creative. Multilingualism is also positively related to foreign experience, which is in turn also known to favor creativity. In this context, foreign language learning should be supported, both for its direct impact on creativity and for the boosting effects it can have on multicultural experience.

General discussion and feedback: Policy needs from the terrain.

Following these presentations, a general discussion was chaired by Prof. Wolfgang Mackiewicz (Freie Universität Berlin), special advisor of the MIME project. Representatives of the European commission involved in this discussion included Ms Kristina Cunningham, Ms Elisabetta Degiampietro, Ms Silva Kauko, Ms Ana Maria Stan, Ms Aleksandra Wesolowska, and Ms Sylvie Rohanová (MIME project officer). The questions addressed a variety of topics, including the increasing role of technology (automatic translation), the trade-off between the costs and benefits of learning foreign languages, and the contested impacts on effective communication of using various *lingua francas* (primarily English) or impoverished versions of the latter, such as those variously called “ELF” or “Globish”.

Concluding remarks

Prof. François Grin concluded the event emphasizing the specificity of the approach developed in the MIME project, which is unique in comparison with other projects, owing to its integrative structure that makes it possible to address, in a coordinated fashion, the extremely different facets of the challenge of multilingualism.