

**Breaking down barriers and bridging borders: Multilingualism as a catalyst to cross-border mobility, employability and cultural cooperation**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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During the 23rd anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Poliglotti4.eu project participated in three events under the joint umbrella of the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) and The Soul of Europe's "Berlin Conference 2012". The events were highly successful in further disseminating the project's research findings and best practices as well as broadening and deepening the exposure of the project through informal networking and formal activities such as signing a joint Declaration and joining the "Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe" which underlines the importance of promoting the language diversity of Europe to foster European Citizenship.

The first conference on **8 November**, the AEBR annual meeting and General Assembly, had the aim to exchange experiences in cross-border labour market cooperation and to discuss current challenges and problems with experts from European border regions and politicians representing regional, national and European levels. To further underscore the Poliglotti4.eu project's efforts and the work of the AEBR related to Multilingualism, Project Director, Uwe Mohr, and Secretary General of the AEBR, Martín Guillermo Ramírez signed a **joint Declaration confirming both organisations' commitment to and support for continued efforts to expand the multilingual capabilities of European citizens, businesses and influence policy makers.**

*"It gives me great pleasure to join our forces together and declare our steadfast support for the promotion of Multilingualism under the auspices of the AEBR Annual Conference",* shared Uwe Mohr. *"By keeping the spotlight focused on Multilingualism, we are providing one of the imperative inputs for cross-border and cross-cultural cooperation and understanding".*

As co-signatory of the declaration, Mr. Ramírez added, *"We sign this declaration with high appreciation for the work that the Poliglotti4.eu project has done for the cause of Multilingualism. Enabling mobility and employability across border regions, Multilingualism is a skill that all Europeans must enhance within their own capabilities, not only for the economic health of border regions but for the European continent overall."* During the conference, over 20 attendees were interviewed giving their personal opinions about the positive impact of Multilingualism for labour mobility across border regions. These interviews will be viewable on the [www.Poliglotti4.eu](http://www.Poliglotti4.eu) website.

The second conference on **9 November**, "Cities for Europe - Towards a Europe of Citizens" brought together representatives of European cities, mayors, artists, cultural workers and engaged citizens to discuss the concrete measures cities can take to help build a "Europe of Citizens". The driving force behind the 'A Soul for Europe' initiative is a group of 50 young Europeans from more than 20 different countries. Participants in this conference were just as diverse as the organisers as were the multiple languages they brought to the discussion and debate. Individual city projects were presented from Portugal, Poland, Denmark & Germany. Capping the day's events was a "State of Europe" speech given by Martin Shultz, President of the European Parliament.

The third event, "Berlin Conference 2012" on **10 November** focused on strengthening the level of participation and the partnerships between European civil society, the European institutions, and European citizens. These partnerships should work together to foster positive European development, which can be achieved by motivating all parties to become actively involved in a "Cultural Coalition for a Citizens' Europe". Integral to this "Cultural Coalition" is the integration and exploitation of Multilingualism. The richness of the panellist composition was broad and deep: policy makers, artists, authors, politicians and environmentalists were represented. The attendance of Viviane Reding, Vice President and Commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship and MEP, Doris Pack, underscored the high-level support for "A soul for Europe". MEP Hannes Swoboda's comment, "***We offer too little in learning languages,***" was also a call to arms to provide more and better opportunities for language training especially given the currently high frequency of migration across borders.

Contributing to one of the panel discussions, Miguel Ángel Martín Ramos, Counsellor of the European Academy of Yuste Foundation, and representing the Poliglotti4.eu project in the "Berlin Conference 2012", pointed out that "***There are many hats that we wear that relate to our responsibilities as Citizens of Europe. One of this is primary: that is, to exploit and foster European's multilingual competencies to better ourselves as Europeans, both personally for cross-cultural co-operation, dialogue and mutual understanding, and professionally for improving employability and, in turn, making a positive contribution to the European economy and integration.***"

In sum, the three days in Berlin were a fitting run-up to the official finalisation of the Poliglotti4.eu project approaching next month in Parma, Italy. The continued diffusion of the project's main outputs and the broadened exposure of the on-line Observatory ([www.Poliglotti4.eu](http://www.Poliglotti4.eu)) were achieved against a backdrop of motivating and fascinating debates and efforts still to come in the creation of a "Europe of Citizens". The focus placed on Multilingualism at all three events was key and served to illuminate and enhance the efforts to achieve the outlined objectives. Clearly, Multilingualism is a major part of the "glue" that bonds these efforts together and the Poliglotti4.eu's project's contribution was valuable in both directions: constantly highlighting the element of Multilingualism to the conference participants and also widening the dissemination of the Poliglotti4.eu project's achievements.

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

**Poliglotti4.eu** is a project promoting Multilingualism in Europe - the result of the deliberations of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism. The project will result in the creation of an On-line Observatory, reporting on best practice in language policy and language learning. The observatory will provide policymakers, teachers, learners and civil society organisations with a powerful toolkit for benchmarking and enhancing their activities, in non-formal and informal education and learning sectors. The project is co-funded through the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The nine project partners are: Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE); British Council (BC); Danish Cultural Institute Benelux (DKI); EU National Institutes for Culture in Brussels (EUNIC in Brussels); European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA); European Theatre Convention (ETC); Fundación Academia Europea de Yuste (FAEY); Goethe-Institut Brüssel (GI); Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator).

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\*Platform member organisations are: **ACT** - Association of Commercial Television in Europe, **ALTE** - Association of Language Testers in Europe, **CEATL** - Conseil européen des associations de traducteurs littéraires, **CEPI** - European Coordination of Independent Producers, **CMFE** - Community Media Forum Europe, **Culturelink** Network, **EAEA** - European Association for the Education of Adults, **EAFET** - European Association of Terminology, **EBLUL** - **EuroLang** European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, **ECA** - European Council of Artists, **ECSWE** - European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education, **EEE-YFU** - Youth for Understanding, **EEU** - European Esperanto Union, **EFIL** - European Federation for Intercultural Learning, **EFNIL** - European Federation of National Institutes for Language, **EfVET** - The European Forum for Vocational Education and Training, **ETC** - European Theatre Convention, **EWC** - European Writers' Council, **EPC** - European Publishers Council, **Club of Madrid**, **EUNIC** - European Union National Institutes for Culture: **BC** - British Council, **DKK** - Det Danske Kulturinstitut, **GI** - Goethe-Institut, **EUROCLIO** - European Association of History Educators, **FEP** - Federation of European Publishers, **FUEN** - Federal Union of European Nationalities, **ISSA** - International Step by Step Association, **MERCATOR** - Network of Language Diversity, **Literature Across Frontiers**, **RECIT** - Réseau européen des centres internationaux de traduction littéraire, **YUSTE** - European Academy of Yuste Foundation