



Number 109 -  
February 2015



The Mercator newsletter informs you about the news of the five Mercator Network partners:

**Mercator Research Centre of the Fryske Akademy**

**Mercator Media**

**Mercator Legislation**

**Stockholm  
University**

**Research Institute for Linguistics**

Newsletter focusing on multilingual regions dealing with regional or minority languages, but also immigrant languages and smaller state languages, with emphasis on language needs arising from migration and globalisation. Submit your subscription request, comments or suggestions to: **Richard de Boer** (Fryske Akademy).

## NEWS

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### Linguistic minorities launch European Roadmap for Diversity

The European Union's minority languages, such as Welsh, Frisian or Basque, should be accorded equal status with the official languages, according to a linguistic diversity road map presented in Brussels last week.

Its first aim is a request for a return of the formal and public support by the EU to all languages of Europe, including smaller state, regional, national, minority and endangered languages. At the present this only concerns the official and main school languages of Europe. Neither is there a Commissioner responsible for issues pertaining to multilingualism in the European Commission at the moment.



A second aim is to try to decrease the gap between stated support to multilingualism and diversity on the one hand in EU rhetoric and in the principles laid down by the Council of Europe, and on the other, the poor outcome in practice for all European languages of such statements, in the EU programs, in its language policies, for the role of language in social and economic cohesion, for ICT development covering all languages of Europe, and the lack of practical support to the threatened languages of Europe. The latter implies both a more widespread ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Language, and the implementation of the existing ratifications.

Patxi Baztarrika, the Basque government's Vice-Councillor for linguistic policy, presented his European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity in Brussels on 5 February. Also present were the Executive Director of the NPLD, Welshman Meirion Jones, the President of the NPLD, Jannewietske de Vries from the province of Fryslân (the Netherlands), and Joe McHugh, the Irish Minister for Gaeltacht (the region where the Irish language is spoken). The final version of the Roadmap will be presented to the European Commission in October 2015.

The implementation of the Roadmap may lead to an increasing cooperation between NPLD, FUEN and Mercator Network.

Source: [Jarmo Lainio](#) (Stockholm University), [EurActiv](#) and [NPLDtop](#)

## 21 February: International Mother Language Day



Announced by UNESCO in 1999, **International Mother Language Day** celebrates cultural diversity and commemorates the "language martyr" students of 1952 Bangladesh. These students are honored by the encouragement of multiculturalism and the promotion of protective measures for endangered languages. It's hard to imagine the challenges faced by students who have been ordered to learn in a foreign language, as without linguistic inclusion, there is no equal access to education.

Current International Mother Language Day events include multicultural festivals which promote the hearing of all voices, and display social cohesion, cultural awareness, and tolerance. The unique nuances and subtleties of linguistic communication which connect individuals to culture and personal identity are valued and encouraged.

In Leeuwarden (NL), the award-winning Welsh feature film *Y Syrcas* (2013) will be screened on this occasion at [Slieker](#) cinema.

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## New campaign encourages to use more Welsh

As the Welsh team prepares to face England to kick off this year's RBS Six Nations championship, Pethau Bychain - an ongoing Welsh Government campaign encouraging people to do "little things" in Welsh every day - has teamed up with the WRU and Welsh songstress Sophie Evans to launch a new drive to help people in Wales use the language on and off the stands.



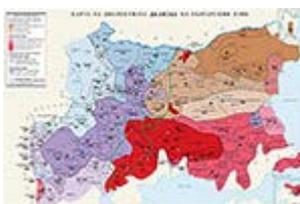
The national campaign is aimed at Welsh people of all ages and of all levels, from Welsh learners to fluent Welsh speakers, and this latest phase - C'mon Cymru - is designed to capitalise on the fact Welsh people are at their most patriotic when the Six Nations begins. The Pethau Bychain campaign has so far used events, competitions and a national week to encourage people to work more Welsh into their everyday life.

Now the campaign is turning to the rugby, with fans being encouraged to build on the flair shown before every Welsh game during the national anthem. The campaign will ask rugby fans to harness that passion for the Welsh language and continue to use Welsh in their everyday lives after the final line of Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau has been sung.

Source: [Wales Online](#) (5 February 2015)

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## Dialect map of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences angers Balkans neighbors



A [map of Bulgarian dialects](#), created by the Institute for Bulgarian Language of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia, recently sparked angry reactions in neighboring Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, and Albania.

Serbian daily newspaper [Blic](#) commented that the Bulgarian dialects have not remained within Bulgarian boundaries, and that the map includes Macedonia, Albania, Turkey and Serbia. According to the map's data, most of the Balkans' countries speak some Bulgarian dialect. The Greek news website [Iefimerida](#) stressed that the "provocative" map was funded by

the EU's European Social Fund under the IPA operational programme Human Resources Development.

European Parliament member Jordi Sebastià (European Free Alliance) submitted **questions** in December 2014 to the European Commission regarding the EU-funded controversial dialect map, which in Sebastià's words "has very little to do with science and which clearly promotes outdated Bulgarian ultra-nationalistic ideology".

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## LEARNMe Second Position Paper published

In December 2014, the **Second Position Paper** of the LEARNMe project 2013-2015 was published. The paper was developed building on the one hand on the experiences and First Position Paper made during the first LEARNMe workshop held in Aberystwyth (17-18 October 2013), and on the other, the second LEARNMe workshop held in Stockholm, 8-9 May 2014.



On 22 January, a research seminar was arranged at Stockholm University at the Section of Finnish, to present and discuss the Second Position Paper.

Both Position Papers can be found at the website of **LEARNMe**. The Position Papers are to be followed by the compilation of a White Paper during the summer of 2015, as the final result of the LEARNMe project. This should be presented at the final conference in Budapest in September 2015.

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## Features of language show links to spread of human populations



Geneticists have famously tracked small differences in the human genetic code to trace the evolution and spread of humans out of Africa. Languages can change more quickly than genes and are not necessarily inherited from one's parents, although linguists are able to follow similar clues to uncover how languages have changed and migrated over millennia.

Now, scientists at Stanford and other universities have combined large databases of globally distributed linguistic and genetic data, revealing in greater detail how languages might change in parallel with genes.

The results were recently published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The researchers incorporated genetic data from 246 worldwide populations with 728 phonemes from 2,082 languages.

Read more at: [Phys.org](#) (2 February 2015)

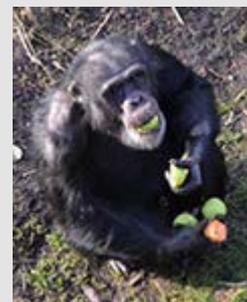
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## Chimpanzees may have their own forms of bilingualism

Chimpanzees can learn to grunt "apple" in two chimp languages – a finding that questions how unique our own language abilities are. Researchers have kept records of vocalisations of a group of adult chimps from the Netherlands before and after the move to Edinburgh zoo. Three years later, recordings show, the Dutch chimps had picked up the pronunciation of their Scottish hosts.

The finding challenges the prevailing theory that chimp words for objects are fixed because they result from excited, involuntary outbursts. Humans can easily learn foreign words that refer to a specific object, and it was assumed that chimps and other animals could not, perhaps owing to their different brain structure. This has long been argued to be one of the talents making humans unique.



The assumption has been that animals do not have control over the sounds they make, whereas we socially learn the labels for things – which is what separates us from animals, says Katie Slocombe of the University of York, UK. But this may be wrong, it seems. "The important thing we've now shown is that with the food calls, they changed the structure to fit in with their new group members, so the Dutch calls for 'apple' changed to the Edinburgh ones," says Slocombe.

"It's the first time call structure has been dissociated from emotional outbursts."

Source: [New Scientist](#) (5 February 2015)

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## INTERESTING LINKS

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**Is bilingualism really an advantage?** The bilingual advantage may not appear in the exact guise researchers think of it today. *The New Yorker's* Maria Konnikova reports on Angela de Bruin's research on publication bias favoring studies with positive result.

**An Irish Language Act requires depoliticisation and cross community support**, says Belfast-based journalist Brian Walker. "Anything else is just another ploy in the politics of grievance and deal-making that we badly need to leave behind."

**Is dialect the new Latin?** Video talk of writer Gerard Stout about the future of Drents and other Lower Saxon dialects. Stout gave this lecture during the meeting *Do minority languages have added value?* on 30 January in Leeuwarden (NL).

**Language politics back in the spotlight in Afghanistan**, *Global Voices* reports. Foreign affairs minister Rabbani is facing criticism after using Pashto in a speech to the Afghan parliament.

**Art collective Slavs & Tatars on their "bazaar" approach**: interview in online magazine *It's Nice That*. Slavs & Tatars have recently been working on a continuation of their *Long Legged Linguistics* project, a multi-faceted study of language as a source of emancipation.

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## EVENTS

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**21 February 2015: International Mother Language Day**

**25 February 2015, Perugia (IT): More Than One Language in the Brain: Acquisition and Coexistence**, Università per Stranieri di Perugia, Perugia, Italy.

**27 February 2015, Bozen/Bolzano (IT): Protecting and including "new" and "old" minorities: challenges, synergies**, EURAC, South Tyrol, Italy.

**2-3 March 2015, Berlin (DE): Economics, Linguistic Justice and Language Policy**, symposium at Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.

**16-19 March 2015, Berlin (DE): Urban fragmentation(s): Borders & Identity III**, Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany.

**27 March 2015, Ghent (BE): Sociolinguistics Circle 2015**, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. One-day conference for sociolinguistics with a connection to the Low Countries.

**13-15 April 2015, Mainz (DE): Multilingualism in Baltic-Sea Europe**, interdisciplinary conference at Johannes Gutenberg Universität, Mainz, Germany.

**17 April 2015, Leeuwarden (NL): The Role of Lexicography in Standardisation and Purification of Lesser Used Languages**, international conference at Fryske Akademy, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands.

**19-23 May 2015, Teramo (IT): First Worldwide Congress for Language Rights**, XIV International Conference of the International Academy of Linguistic Law, IX Days of Language Rights, Teramo, Italy.

**20-24 May 2015, New Brunswick (USA): International Symposium on Bilingualism**, New Brunswick, NY, USA.

**22-23 May 2015, Egmond aan Zee (NL): Anéla Applied Linguistics Conference 2015**, Egmond aan Zee, The Netherlands.

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**27-29 May, Leipzig (DE): International Conference on Language Variation in Europe**, Leipzig, Germany.

**28-29 May 2015, Joensuu (FI): Receptive Multilingualism: Multilingual Resources in Service of Mutual Understanding**, University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland.

**28-30 May 2015, Belgrade (RS): XV International Conference on Minority Languages**, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia. Call deadline 31 December 2014.

**3-6 June 2015, Hong Kong (CN): The Sociolinguistics of Globalization: (De)centring and (de)standardization**, The School of English, University of Hong Kong, China.

**18-20 June 2015, Leiden (NL): Globalising Sociolinguistics**, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands. Call deadline 15 December 2014.

**1-4 July 2015, Valencia (ES): 12th International Symposium of Psycholinguistics**, Universitat de València, Spain. Call deadline 15 February 2015.

**2-3 July 2015, Tours (FR): Bi-SLI 2015: Bilingualism and Specific Language Impairment**, Tours, France. Call deadline 1 February 2015.

**26-31 July 2015, Antwerp (BE): Complex Linguistic Repertoires and Minority Languages in Immigrant Communities**, Antwerp, Belgium.

**31 July 2015, Cambridge (UK): 5th Cambridge Conference on Language Endangerment**, University of Cambridge. Call deadline 1 April 2015.

**14-17 September 2015, Barcelona (ES): 4th Barcelona Summer School on Bilingualism and Multilingualism Workshop**, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, Spain.

**23-26 November 2015, Auckland (NZ): 4th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity (LED 2015)**, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Call deadline 1 February 2015.

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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union.



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