



Number 111 -
April/May 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

[Language community urges EC to provide equal language treatment](#)

[European Language Diversity Summit in Donostia/San Sebastian](#)

[After learning new words, brain sees them as pictures](#)

[Delegation of Bunjevci community visits Fryske Akademy](#)

[Further deterioration of Crimean Tatars' situation after annexation](#)

[Minority languages in Croatia: new evaluation report published](#)

[LangOER: International Challenges for Less Used Languages](#)

[Getting rid of EU geoblocking is good for minority languages and creators](#)

[Third LEARNMe Workshop in Barcelona: Conference Report](#)

[Expert in the Spotlight for May 2015: Prof. Dr. Leonie Cornips](#)

INTERESTING LINKS

EVENTS

NEWS

Language community urges EC to provide equal language treatment

The European language community urges the European Commission to provide equal treatment for all EU languages in the digital age. In an open letter, the community is petitioning the College of Commissioners to address the multilingual challenge in Europe. "Linguistic diversity is and must remain a cornerstone and treasured cultural asset of Europe," the letter states. "However, the language barriers created by our 24 official EU languages cause the European market to be fragmented and to fall short of its economic potential."



The signees urge the European Commission to fully support the continued development of IT solutions for bridging language barriers, providing equal treatment for all EU languages regardless of their size or economic power. "We believe that such technology solutions, based on excellent European industry innovations and research results, will provide all European citizens, businesses and public institutions access to high-quality machine translation and additional sophisticated language solutions for businesses,

consumers and cross-border public services."

A major gathering to promote solutions supporting multilingual Europe will be held at the **Riga Summit on the Multilingual Digital Single Market** on April 27-29 in Riga, Latvia.

The Open Letter is online for signing at: multilingualeurope.eu

[top](#)

European Language Diversity Summit in Donostia/San Sebastian



The European Language Diversity Summit has been organized by the Basque language platform Kontseilua and the Donostia/San Sebastian European Capital of Culture 2016 foundation, along with six other international organizations ECMI, ELEN, LINGUAPAX International, PEN International, CIEMEN and UNPO.

The project involves a wide process of discussion and agreement among experts and others who work with languages and human rights. The result of this process will be a protocol with a series of essential measures to ensure the linguistic rights of every group or community. Any person or association working in these areas will be able to use this valuable tool. The Protocol to Ensure Linguistic Rights will be presented in Donostia/San Sebastian in December 2016.

The Summit's objectives included (1) to declare that guaranteeing language diversity and ensuring language development are keys to peaceful coexistence; (2) to create an effective instrument for language equality and revitalizing languages in unfavourable situations; (3) to ensure that language communities are the actors in this process and assert that civil society's involvement guarantees fair play; and (4) to constitute a milestone in Donostia and its European Capital of Culture.

Source: [Kontseilua](#), 13 April 2015.

[top](#)

After learning new words, brain sees them as pictures

When we look at a known word, our brain sees it like a picture, not a group of letters needing to be processed. That's the finding from a Georgetown University Medical Center (GUMC) study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, which shows the brain learns words quickly by tuning neurons to respond to a complete word, not parts of it.



Neurons respond differently to real words, such as *turf*, than to nonsense words, such as *turt*, showing that a small area of the brain is "holistically tuned" to recognize complete words, says the study's senior author, Maximilian Riesenhuber, PhD, who leads the GUMC Laboratory for Computational Cognitive Neuroscience. "We are not recognizing words by quickly spelling them out or identifying parts of words, as some researchers have suggested. Instead, neurons in a small brain area remember how the whole word looks -- using what could be called a visual dictionary," he says.

This small area in the brain, called the visual word form area, is found in the left side of the visual cortex, opposite from the fusiform face area on the right side, which remembers how faces look. "One area is selective for a whole face, allowing us to quickly recognize people, and the other is selective for a whole word, which helps us read quickly," Riesenhuber says. The study asked 25 adult participants to learn a set of 150 nonsense words. The brain plasticity associated with learning was investigated with functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), both before and after training.

Using a specific fMRI technique known as fMRI-rapid adaptation, the investigators found that the visual word form area changed as the participants learned the nonsense words. "This study is the first of its kind to show how neurons change their tuning with learning words, demonstrating the brain's plasticity," says the study's lead author, Laurie Glezer, PhD.

Read the paper in the [Journal of Neuroscience](#).

[top](#)

Delegation of Bunjevac community visits Fryske Akademy



A delegation of representatives of the Bunjevac minority in Serbia, including Suzana Kujundžić Ostojić, president of the National Council of the Bunjevac national minority, community activist Apolon Savanov, and intermediary Dragan Kostadinović, visited the Fryske Akademy on Thursday 26 March.

Bunjevci, as they call themselves, are a South Slavic ethnic community living mostly in Northern Serbia and in Southern Hungary, in the transnational Bačka region. They identify themselves either as Bunjevci, Croats, or Bunjevac Croats. Bunjevci are predominantly Roman Catholics who speak a Serbo-Croatian dialect most commonly referred to as Younger Ikavian. Mrs Kujundžić Ostojić is actively working on the issue of standardization of the Bunjevac speech, and is one of the authors of the Bunjevac grammar issued last year.

The Bunjevac delegation was received by Hanno Brand, director of the Fryske Akademy, and Cor van der Meer, project leader of Mercator Research Centre, and had further exchanges with representatives of the Council of the Frisian Movement (RfdFB) and the European Agency for Smaller Languages (EBLT). The Bunjevac representatives expressed their desire for future cooperation with the Fryske Akademy and other European institutions and minority organizations.

[top](#)

Further deterioration of Crimean Tatars' situation after annexation

Most of Crimea's Tatar-language media has been shut down after a deadline for re-registration expired on April 1, Amnesty International has said. Even children's shows face closure.



Tatar-language media outlets in Crimea were forced to close on April 1, or face heavy fines and criminal prosecution, Amnesty International announced on its website. Amnesty's International's deputy director for Europe and Central Asia, Denis Krivosheev, said that the Tatar language media came "under a sustained assault" after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula a year ago. Most of Crimea's 300,000 Tatars took a pro-Ukrainian stance during the takeover. "This blatant attack on freedom of expression, dressed-up as an administrative procedure, is a crude attempt to stifle independent media, gag dissenting voices, and intimidate the Crimean Tatar community," Krivosheev said.

While all Crimean media was obligated to re-register under Russian legislation before April 1, applications from Crimean Tatar websites, publications and broadcasters have been arbitrarily rejected or left without a reply, the human rights watchdog claims. Even the popular children's television channel *Lale*, as well as children's magazine *Armantchikh*, face closure. So far, only the Tatar-language newspaper *Yeni Dunya* has managed to obtain the re-registration.

Source: [Deutsche Welle](#), 31 March 2015.

[top](#)

Minority languages in Croatia: new evaluation report published?



The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued on 15 April a new [evaluation report](#) on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Croatia.

The Council of Europe appreciates the positive climate of dialogue with the Croatian authorities on minority language protection. The evaluation report commends the Croatian authorities on the extension of the application of the Charter to German, Slovenian and Roma languages.

It also welcomes the adoption by the Croatian authorities of a new Action Plan for the Implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities as a useful framework for the achievement of concrete and measurable objectives in the field of minority language promotion. However, the Action Plan does not cover all undertakings chosen by Croatia under the Charter, the report notes.

Source: [Council of Europe](#)

[top](#)

ICDE (International Council for Distance Education), partner in the EC-funded project LangOER, (<https://langoer.eun.org>) published a policy brief giving recommendations for governments to take action for the development of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Less Used Languages.

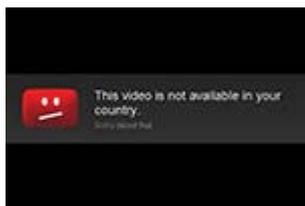


A large-scale communication campaign targeting senior government officials and regional associations will be launched in Europe with the aim to move OER in less used languages higher up on the agenda for many countries across Europe.

The policy brief is available in eight languages (Dutch, Frisian, English, Polish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Greek and Swedish) and can be downloaded [here](#).

[top](#)

Getting rid of EU geoblocking is good for minority languages and creators



German Pirate MEP Julia Reda's [copyright report](#) calls for an end to geoblocking within the EU market, which is inarguably required to create a single digital market. If a European can buy something in one EU member state, she should be able to buy it in the other member-states, too.

The objection that this will be bad for minority language audiovisual materials is a non-sequitur. For the most part, geographic restrictions are a proxy for language restrictions. In other words, geoblocking isn't an existential requirement -- it's a profit-maximisation strategy used by the most popular works in the most widely-spoken languages.

Works in minority languages are vanishingly unlikely to find distributorship outside of the territories where that language is spoken. No one outside of Spain is buying the Catalan-language distribution rights to copyrighted works. But there are Catalan speakers all over the EU -- especially since austerity has sent so many Spanish citizens abroad looking for economic opportunity. The Catalan diaspora would like to buy Catalan works from Amazon.es, from the Google Play store, and from other Internet-accessible services. However, all of these services routinely block access to Catalan material outside of Spain, because the distributors have marked them for distribution within the territory they control -- or because in the absence of evidence to the contrary and in the face of stiff penalties for distribution outside of licensed territories, the digital platforms simply resolve all territorial ambiguity by refusing to sell to anyone they aren't dead certain they have the rights to sell to.

Source: Cory Doctorow, [BoingBoing](#), 27 April 2015.

[top](#)

Third LEARNMe Workshop in Barcelona: Conference Report

On Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 April, the third Workshop of the LEARNMe project took place in Barcelona. Under the title "Recent developments regarding the legal protection of minoritized languages: different European perspectives", the workshop brought together specialists from a wide range of European regions. Aim of the sessions was to share a number of legal and political developments regarding a variety of European languages, and to explore the sociolinguistic consequences of these developments. Presentations were followed by discussions, each moderated by a different expert. The workshop was organized by CUSC, the *Centre Universitari de Sociolingüística i Comunicació* of the Universitat de Barcelona, which has replaced CIEMEN as a partner in the LEARNMe project.



Each of the two days of the workshop had a separate thematic focus. The first day had as its description "Recent developments regarding the legal protection of minoritized languages: a legal approach". Speakers included Dr. Vesna Crnić-Grotić, chair of the Committee of Experts of the ERML, who spoke about the role of the ERML in Spain, and Ms. Ania Rolewska, MA from Aberystwyth University, who discussed the role of nationalist and regionalist parties in driving minority language promotion, focusing especially on her home region of Wales. Presentations on the second day focused on the effects of legal changes on the sociolinguistic reality of different regions. Subjects ranged from the position of Catalan in three regions where it is a minority language to the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of Brussels and its surrounding.

While this newsletter is not the place for a more extensive overview, the full programme of the workshop can still be found on the website of [CUSC](#). Furthermore, short quotes from presentations and pictures can be found on the Mercator [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts and

videos of all presentations and discussion will be made available online soon.

[top](#)

Expert in the Spotlight for May 2015: Prof. Dr. Leonie Cornips



Prof. Dr. Leonie Cornips is researcher Variation linguistics at the **Meertens Institute**, the Centre for Research and Documentation of Dutch Language and Culture of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam. She is also professor and extraordinary chair "Language culture in Limburg" at **Maastricht University**.

"The challenge is to analyse language or dialect as a process and not as a monolithic, fixed and bound object," Cornips says. "This has a lot of repercussions since in this perspective the concepts of bilingualism or multilingualism are superfluous. Speakers put into use whatever they need of linguistic features to construct their identities."

Read more [here](#)

[top](#)

INTERESTING LINKS

Speaking a second language may change how you see the world. Linguistic difference seems to influence how speakers of two languages view events, according to psycholinguist Panos Athanasopoulos of Lancaster University.

The Sociolinguistic Events Calendar is designed to list all sociolinguistic events around the world, including conferences, public lectures, training events, PhD summer schools, etc.

New publication: Hofmann, R. et al. (eds)(2015): *Rahmenübereinkommen zum Schutz nationaler Minderheiten. Handkommentar.* Baden-Baden: Nomos.

My Favorite German Words, My Barber and I at *Learn Languages Online*.

[top](#)

EVENTS

16 May 2015, Poznań (PL): Second Conference on Languages for Special Purposes and Small Languages, conference organized by the Institute of Linguistics, Adam Mickiewicz University.

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.

29-30 May 2015, Kaunas (LT): Sustainable Multilingualism: Language, Culture And Society, international conference organized by VDUKI Institute of Foreign Languages.

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

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.

22 June 2015, Caen (FR): Natural Language Processing for French and European Regional Languages, Caen, France. Call deadline 4 April 2015.

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.

8-11 July 2015, Graz (AT): World Conference on Pluricentric Languages and their Non-Dominant Varieties, Graz, Austria. Call deadline 30 March 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.

29-30 October 2015, London (UK): Interpreting Communities: Minority Writing in European Literary Fields, conference at the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR), London.

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.

[top](#)



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



This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.