



The European University of Post-Industrial Cities

D2.4 Multilingualism Guideline



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UNIC Multilingualism Guideline

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Authors of this version:

Esin Aksay Aksezer, Patrick Crowley, Mirela Krešić, Iva Lopižić,
Sara Muniozguren Ortiz, Souad Osseiran, Astrid Reich, Inge Uytterhoeven

Further Contributors:

Jean-Marc Defays, Iris Goldner Lang, Goranka Novak Lalić,
Eva-Maria Raudasoja, Laurence Wéry

Introduction

The European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC)

The European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) is an alliance of eight universities in post-industrial cities which all face similar challenges and opportunities in terms of mobility, inclusion and diversity. We are the University of Deusto Bilbao (Spain), Ruhr University Bochum (Germany), University College Cork (Ireland), Koç University Istanbul (Turkey), the University of Liège (Belgium), the University of Oulu (Finland), Erasmus University Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and the University of Zagreb (Croatia). We are partners in our endeavour to enhance and broaden regional high-quality education and research through inter-European cooperation in order to offer students a learning, teaching and working experience that is European. We will combine our educational and research experiences and devise new models for respectful intercultural exchange both within our classrooms and within our cities. Our ambition is to develop innovative and sustainable means of university collaboration that boost student and staff mobility while fostering and furthering societal impact. The question of language and languages will be critical to this project as we seek to advance and foster exchange, diversity, inclusiveness and mobility. How we negotiate the superdiverse, multilingual and plurilingual environments of our universities and cities will determine the success of our alliance.

UNIC aims

UNIC has three principal aims:

1. To become a model for European inter-university education that will provide students with the necessary skills to become European leaders of the future
2. To develop productive and inclusive connections between universities and cities that will promote the development of innovative solutions for the current and future challenges of post-industrial cities
3. To develop and implement a research-led approach to superdiversity which will result in greater urban equality and productivity.

To this end, UNIC will advance a multilingual policy that will enable effective physical and virtual exchange and mobility programmes for students and staff. Such a policy will include a recognition of the importance of effective plurilingual competencies as we take up the interwoven challenges of inclusion and diversity. Therefore, mobility and plurilingualism are two important pillars within the UNIC project that will enable a seamless and inclusive space for co-creation, systematic collaboration and institutional convergence in terms of research, training and exchange across our eight partner universities in a multilingual and multicultural world.

UNIC structure

To achieve these goals, the UNIC Governance Structure will provide a truly European collaborative structure of governance that will involve students, staff and all relevant stakeholders. It will be constituted by the following elements:

- The UNIC Inter-University Campus will enable virtual, real and blended mobility for students and university staff. The approach will be innovative and will include the following: Mobility Hubs that will provide support and advice; European digital learning opportunities; an open mobility agreement; a multilingual approach and a cross institutional recognition of courses to stimulate both staff and student mobility.
- The UNIC Superdiversity Academy will be our centre of excellence to advance thinking on how to build inclusive universities in the context of superdiverse cities. The Academy will develop models of practice within and between UNIC university teams to address superdiversity through research, educational and outreach programmes, executive training, and the provision of lifelong learning programmes.
- UNIC CityLabs will be developed. These are pop-up locations in post-industrial cities that are designed to bring science to the people of our cities in a challenge-based learning methodology that is predicated upon multi-cultural exchange.
- Finally, to enable mobility and the exchange of ideas, a UNIC Multilingual Policy will be central to the development of UNIC's structures.

These aims and structures will provide a solid basis for generating models of practice for the European universities of the future by:

- Creating an innovative UNIC European experience in teaching, learning, working and researching in post-industrial settings that is underpinned by excellent research and pedagogical expertise.
- Generating models for enhanced inter-university mobility by a differentiated approach targeted at superdiverse students.
- Generating models for university-city collaboration by research-oriented and challenge-based learning and teaching for European universities.
- Generating models for inclusive universities, capable of benefiting from Europe's superdiverse present and future with regard to research, education, university policies and administration.
- Investing in and deepening knowledge exchange within, between and beyond UNIC by addressing societal challenges in a multi-disciplinary approach.
- Creating international visibility of these cooperative efforts and generating impact beyond the UNIC Alliance.
- Creating a common language policy that will support and enable the models of practice listed above.

UNIC Multilingualism Policy

The geographical coverage of our universities brings together eight different teaching languages: English, Basque, Croatian, Dutch, Finnish, French, German and Spanish, along with two other national languages: Irish and Turkish. In addition, there are a large number of languages spoken by migrant and international communities in our post-industrial and multicultural cities, with the former being classified as heritage languages. As a European alliance, we seek to develop an ever-closer union while respecting the diversity of languages and cultures that exist within the European Education Area. This makes the UNIC bond a 'natural' alliance: it reflects a strong European post-industrial identity by shaping a new generation of Europeans who are able to cooperate and work within different European and global cultures in different languages and across borders, sectors and academic disciplines.

While the languages of instruction across institutions can be identified and enumerated, the wider diversity of languages spoken within our post-industrial cities represents an added dimension of superdiversity. The diversity of languages spoken is based on students who have acquired heritage languages as well as the international students and staff who come to us from other regions of the world. The UNIC alliance recognizes this linguistic diversity and seeks to address it in novel, innovative ways that ensure the participation of different groups and communities from our urban populations.

By supporting, enhancing and diversifying the plurilingual competencies of our students and staff, we are enabling them to make a greater and more profound contribution to a sustainable superdiverse world. To that end the UNIC Multilingual Policy does not simply promote educational opportunities for language acquisition but promotes a view of language and plurilingualism that emphasises the importance of linguistic diversity and agile, dynamic intercultural communication skills.

UNIC is strongly committed to the objectives of the European Education and Research Areas in which learning, studying and conducting research will not be hampered by borders. Our activities will contribute towards shaping the European Education Area in various ways. To that end UNIC stands for and will work on linguistic diversity and multilingualism so that its eight universities — with their students and employees representing a myriad of nationalities and languages — can exchange ideas and experiences and work together.

UNIC will encourage and facilitate multilingualism as one of our core principles, by agreeing on and implementing a UNIC Multilingualism Guideline. This guideline will focus on the following (cf. UNIC Part B 1 Technical Description, WP 2.3, p. 94):

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1. The need to identify and establish the preconditions for effective exchange, mobility and cooperation based on English.
 2. The conditions and structures required to provide all students and staff with the opportunity to learn and use two other languages¹ in addition to their mother tongue.
 3. The processes and measures that will enable UNIC to monitor, evaluate and learn from the implementation of this policy.
 4. The need to identify and establish principles that will inform the dissemination of ideas and the advancement of projects from a language perspective.

In addition, dedicated language courses will be offered in all the official languages used in the eight participating countries.

Legal framework

The European Union is a multilingual and multicultural community where 24 official and some 60 more languages co-exist in one geographical area. Successive enlargements of the EU since its foundation have resulted in the existing 27 Member States, almost 450 million inhabitants, and a vibrant and rich linguistic and cultural diversity. This has led to the need for a EU policy on multilingualism. The motto “united in diversity” was inaugurated in 2000 and places linguistic diversity and language learning as a core consideration for European unity. In the same way, the UNIC Multilingualism Policy shall reflect and promote the general principles laid down in relevant EU policy documents and regulations.

The following documents constitute the legally binding framework which applies to the UNIC Multilingualism Guideline:

1. The Charter of Fundamental Rights obliges the European Union to respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (art. 22) and prohibits discrimination on grounds of language (art. 21).
2. The Treaty on European Union (TEU) states that the European Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity (art. 3).
3. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) requires that European Union actions shall seek to develop the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States while fully respecting cultural and linguistic diversity (art. 165).

¹ The acquisition of language skills (linked to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR levels) will depend upon the baseline of the learner’s initial knowledge of the language.

Mobility, UNIC Framework and their implications for language – relationship to language

Academic mobility has a long history in Europe. Erasmus+ has provided one of the most important schemes for mobility and international education since its inception and growth. It also has practical implications for UNIC since student and staff mobilities are planned and implemented under this scheme. Apart from being closely linked to the Erasmus+ framework, UNIC offers additional learning opportunities for staff and students within an organised and multidimensional alliance.

The role of languages has been extensively discussed vis-à-vis the Erasmus+ mobility for study and traineeships. Even if the Erasmus+ program cannot be described as a direct language learning program, there are a considerable number of studies that emphasize the importance of the language learning aspect since it offers the opportunity to learn new languages and develop already acquired ones in addition to contributing to the intercultural competence skills of the participants. As one study underlines, the role of Erasmus+ on the attitudes of learners is extensive: “Erasmus+

1. Facilitates an engagement with other languages in more informal, unregulated settings, shifting the focus from an exam-based learning culture to a communicative one.
2. Leads to a reduction of ‘language anxiety’ and increases the learner’s linguistic confidence, reducing fear of making mistakes.
3. Increases the likelihood of participants working in an international context or seeking opportunities abroad;
4. Can have a fundamental impact on the social and cultural integration of minority groups, including the Traveller community.”²

Over time, the program has also resulted in the development of different mechanisms and projects relating to language acquisition. For instance, Online Language Support (OLS) has been one of the language learning tools available to students, allowing them to take assessment and online courses.³

Students with more advantageous financial and socio-cultural backgrounds are better positioned to participate in conventional physical mobility programs. This raises issues of inclusion and diversity. UNIC goes further than conventional mobility programs. Within UNIC, numerous opportunities (short

² See, <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/impact-and-experience-foreign-languages-erasmus>

³ OLS is available for the following languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, German, Greek, English, Estonian, Spanish, Finnish, French, Irish Gaelic, Croatian, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Maltese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian and Swedish. There is also Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support for Refugees. (https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/online-linguistic-support_en)

and/or long periods of time, curricular and/or extracurricular activities) will be provided to students and staff which will expose participants to foreign languages in different contexts.

As far as students are concerned, they will not only spend several months in another country but will have the chance to follow specific courses and activities before departure and upon return. Students who cannot physically travel during their studies will be offered virtual or online courses or classes. In this way they will benefit from an international curriculum and be able to plan their graduate studies or career accordingly. In fact, one of the most important added values of UNIC for students will be the opportunity to benefit from virtual mobility, i.e. the opportunity to take courses virtually from different UNIC institutions, as well as courses that are co-designed/co-taught by UNIC faculty members. In addition, as suggested by numerous studies, international/exchange students usually tend to spend time with other exchange/international students while being less integrated within local populations. Therefore, the “city” aspect of UNIC is valuable, since it supports exposure to local language(s) and socio-cultural realities through physical hubs and virtual platforms, thus bringing together different languages and stakeholders from superdiverse backgrounds.

It is important to stress that the UNIC multilingualism framework addresses not only students but also faculty, staff and organizational structures in a multidimensional way, which makes it a unique learning platform. The fact that institutional structures support the suggested schemes and also offer training opportunities to faculty members is important to ensure sustainability. Other short term and/or summer term courses or learning opportunities may also be provided to UNIC members to boost mobility and strengthen cooperation.

For students and staff who will participate in an on campus exchange pre-arrival language courses and associated activities will smooth the transition from one campus to another. In particular, online language modules (OLM) will include not only language exercises but also information relating to the university and to the culture of the city. These online preparatory modules will support staff and students as they prepare to live, work and study in a new socio-cultural reality.

UNIC Multilingualism Policy Measures

Preliminary remarks

With regard to languages, UNIC aims to achieve two general objectives:

1. UNIC advocates the overarching goal of promoting language learning as well as linguistic diversity across Europe, generally understood as "2 + 1" (mother tongue + 2 other languages) i.e. in addition to the mother tongue, Europeans should have the opportunity to acquire

competencies in two other languages. In the context of UNIC, one of these two other languages will most likely be English as a common lingua franca, in which most UNIC stakeholders already have a good working knowledge, but it is important to recognise that UNIC stakeholders will seek to learn or expand their competence in another language.

2. UNIC needs to be constructed and to function efficiently in terms of language needs. Stakeholders need to develop a common understanding of how to produce and disseminate different genres of documents in different registers and how to communicate effectively within the consortium and with the outside world, whether to represent its own needs and project within its constituent universities or in terms of its interaction with external partners.

The UNIC Multilingualism Policy will, on the one hand outline measures that ensure basic language protocols that will support and enable mobility based upon English and, on the other hand respect and promote customized mobility opportunities in the context of the linguistic and intercultural diversity of all UNIC member universities. UNIC will stimulate multilingualism in the partner organisations in several ways.

All UNIC alliance universities will develop or update existing multilingualism plans with a view to advancing the UNIC project. As such, these plans will need to give consideration to academic life — including teaching, learning and research — to the pedagogical-psychological wellbeing of students (including access to counselling), and to all extra-curricular activities that link our universities to the wider community and to the labour market.

Regarding academic life, the multilingualism plans of the UNIC partners will be informed by the Helsinki initiative.⁴ This initiative brings forward the concept of ‘balanced multilingualism’, which promotes equality between different needs and languages. In balanced multilingualism, English should in principle not have more weight than other languages in communication and, whenever possible, languages other than English should be used in academic contexts, and multilingual work should be fully acknowledged in scholarly assessments at universities. At the level of extra-curricular activities, UNIC will provide demonstrations of what multilingual success looks like and will promote the value of multilingualism for employability.

⁴ <https://www.helsinki-initiative.org/>

Multilingualism with respect to UNIC Work Packages

Before we present the UNIC actions required to strengthen, promote and implement multilingualism in greater detail, we will take a closer look at the different UNIC action areas, as multilingualism is not only an important issue in itself, but has a real cross-sectional relevance for each Work Package area:

Multilingualism for UNIC Project Management (WP 1)

At the UNIC project management level, all relevant activities in multinational meetings and settings are conducted in the common language (“lingua franca”) of English, as there are no stakeholders involved who cannot communicate effectively and efficiently in English. In bi- or tri-national settings where other languages are also common languages, these can be used by common agreement.⁵

Multilingualism for UNIC University Building (WP 2)

Within WP2 “Build the UNIC European University”, there are few deliverables and activities involving multilingualism. To ensure its overall functioning English will be the lingua franca.

One important objective of this WP is to develop the UNIC Virtual Campus as a central infrastructural portal for information, interconnection and exchange amongst universities, students and university staff as well at local structures and stakeholders.

In line with the WP2 project description, the establishment of the UNIC Virtual Campus is to incorporate the national languages of each university in relation to: the UNIC Website, the UNIC Online Learning Environment, and the UNIC Open Case Repository. As these elements are vital to UNIC’s integration and cohesion, they need thorough consideration. The UNIC website must be accessible and understandable to everyone, so it seems necessary to offer interfaces that are mainly in English. While the cases in the Open Case Repository will be originally developed mainly at the local level and in the native languages, they need to be at least summarized in English so as to be available to all UNIC users. If that will not be possible or necessary in all cases, then at least the most relevant ones should be available in English. The UNIC Mobility Hubs should function in the respective national language and in English. Finally, the documentation, terms of reference and agreements required for the implementation of the Governance Structure (e.g. the Consortium agreement on Student relevant policies and guidelines) need to be prepared or written in the language used for these purposes at the partner universities, as they have a legal dimension.

⁵ This informal use, by the way, reflects the overall use in recruitment for UNIC positions, where it was considered advantageous if candidates were to know more than one foreign language (English).

Multilingualism for the UNIC Inter-University Campus (WP 3)

The UNIC Inter-University campus addresses different target groups: students at different levels (BA/MA/PhD/lifelong learners) as well as teaching and administrative staff. Accordingly, the UNIC language policy must provide a clear framework for learning and teaching, including appropriate language training on a multilingual campus. The Inter-University campus should ensure that all UNIC students can acquire intercultural and multilingual competences to fully experience this transnational European exchange.

WP 3 aims at establishing the UNIC Inter-University campus by implementing different mobility formats within the degree programmes across UNIC. The co-creation of joint and double/multiple degrees implies changes in the binding regulations/guidelines of the study programmes/faculties/universities, will need to be published in the official languages used at the different campuses. The modules and structures enabling virtual mobility will be mainly in English, but UNIC would like to encourage students to attend courses delivered in other languages or to participate in virtual exchanges which include multilingual elements within their intercultural learning and teaching.

As mentioned above, the UNIC Joint Degree Programmes, i.e. the new UNIC-exclusive degrees and modules as well as the joint degrees, are to be mainly delivered through English.

1. Nevertheless, in the context of “Designing the superdiverse classroom”, consideration has already been given to including elements in local languages — such as the teaching and advising of non-native speakers — and to create modules in different languages, as the question of how to deal with multilingualism is crucial for teaching and learning in superdiverse environments. The joint degree is also likely to include a practical module carried out in collaboration with local partners (e.g., schools) in superdiverse environments.
2. Joint degree programmes (double/multiple) are likely to be conducted mainly in English. At the same time, parts can also be studied in local languages with some joint online courses or physical mobility periods spent in the partner country. This will result in the promotion of language learning and multilingualism.
3. The joint PhD programme involves similar considerations. If this programme eventually focuses on issues of migration and cities, issues relating to multilingualism will definitely be considered.
4. The UNIC elective module/course on urban resilience and post-industrial transitions is to be developed first in English, but the resulting MOOC will be supplemented with subtitles to make it available in all local teaching languages.⁶
5. The individualised Master’s programme within UNIC is designed to include a framework formulated in the local language along with a guideline to be translated into all partner languages in order to reach students effectively.

⁶ “If we decide to go for a digital MOOC/SPOC- format, it would be a big step for more multilingualism to provide subtitles in all languages for the videos.” (WP 3 response to questionnaire).

Overall, the double challenge formulated by WP 3 for the two joint MA degrees applies to all programmes: "MA degrees [delivered] only in English might be exclusive and not encouraging for all students. Therefore, we need to develop support systems for language learning in the preparation phase and put effort into the creation of a good and supportive working atmosphere for both joint degrees, so that the students feel encouraged to use foreign languages but to see their local language/minority languages at the same time as a source for knowledge and experience." (WP 3 coordination in response to a UNIC internal questionnaire)

Like many other subgroups, the WP 3 Inter-University mobility subgroup conducts its work in English, as the deliverables and activities have a high cross-sectional character and the people involved are members of their respective International Offices, which use English as a working language. One of the deliverables concerns UNIC Job shadowing. Here the challenge will be to find a common working language on a case-by-case basis, to encourage staff to participate and to remove language barriers for those who are willing, especially if staff are not so confident about their own foreign language skills. English will most likely be the predominant working language, except in cases where the parties involved are proficient in another relevant language (most likely: French, Spanish, and possibly also Turkish, the latter having the status of a heritage language in some partner communities). In daily job shadowing, some translation and interpretation activities are to be expected, with job shadowing at least providing the opportunity to learn relevant lexemes in the language of the visited partner.

Another subgroup of WP 3 deals with teacher training and training for teacher training. Here, too, it is clear that training courses aimed at interested parties from several partner universities and intended to promote intercultural dialogue must generally include the lingua franca, English. At the same time, the subgroup does not want to disadvantage stakeholders who are less proficient in languages other than their mother tongue and therefore explicitly encourages note-taking and documentation as well as small group discussions in languages other than English if they facilitate communication and mutual understanding.

One of the deliverables of WP 3 is the Online language modules that will be designed in each partner university for each language officially used on campus (English, Dutch, Spanish, Croatian, German, Turkish, Finnish, French, Irish and Basque). These modules are by definition an important starting point for the emerging multilingualism within the UNIC community. Each UNIC university is to create Online language modules and information materials that provide an introduction to each university, city and official university language. These modules are designed to combine language training, intercultural communication and understanding, as well as information about UNIC, specifically to support physical mobility. One of the challenges facing this subgroup is to identify the CEFR level needs for each partner language. For example, in the case of English, the lingua franca, a B2 level seems reasonable, for other

languages the goal of reaching a basic level (A1 or A2) seems more realistic. As Online language modules — as preparation for (mostly) physical mobility — can only be a starting point, UNIC is called upon to show ways in which interested students and staff can continue their language training in the respective language once on site.⁷

Multilingualism for the UNIC Superdiverse Academy (WP 4)

Based on its recognition of the superdiversity of our cities, UNIC relies on a superdiversity perspective to conceptualize engagement within the university as well as with our post-industrial cities. By applying this superdiversity lens to HEIs, UNIC seeks to expand the identity markers developed in the conventional conceptualization of superdiversity (e.g., migration background, ethnicity, religion, language) by also considering the socio-economic background, gender, age and other factors.⁸ In the process, UNIC seeks to bridge the gap between the superdiversity of student and administrative populations and existing inclusion policy and practices. The ‘Superdiversity in Higher Education Settings: A State-of-the-Art Report’ highlights the need for universities to develop inclusive policies that are dynamic, flexible and able to respond to the rapid changes occurring within superdiverse cities.

Language has been identified as one of the markers of superdiversity within the UNIC consortium. In recognition of this, UNIC commits to promoting different languages for increased participation, thus recognizing and celebrating the existence of different languages amongst students and staff, promoting the use of an inclusionary language in different settings such as classroom practices, extracurricular life, university procedures, and aim to develop competence by providing academic language programs and language supports for staff with training needs etc.

As with previous work packages/UNIC action areas and projects, the UNIC Superdiversity Academy will, on the one hand, rely on a common language — English — to promote mutual understanding and communication within the academic and social world, and on the other hand, will be multilingual in addressing local stakeholders and promoting the inclusion of individuals and communities. As mentioned above, at its core, the concept of superdiversity is the multidimensionality of diversity, which UNIC seeks not only to recognize and respect, but to engage with and realise the potential that arises from superdiversity in a positive and beneficial way. Multilingualism is central to this. Where, if not in superdiverse universities, cities and communities, can multilingualism be more easily accepted and developed for the benefit of our universities and surrounding populations?

⁷ “For the future, it would be interesting to open online courses [...] in other languages and not only in English (many students speak [...] Spanish, French, Turkish and German”); WP 3 response to questionnaire)” – as with other UNIC activities, more financial resources would be needed to develop such offers.

⁸ See Altiok, B., Demiryontar, B., Osseiran, S. (2021). ‘Superdiversity in Higher Education Settings: A State of the Art Report. UNIC.’ Available at: <https://unic.eu/en/news/superdiversity-higher-education>

The UNIC Superdiversity Academy focuses on developing best practices for working with superdiversity – this is, after all, its constitutive unique selling point. As the Superdiversity Academy aims to disseminate its findings across Europe, this can only happen in languages that are accessible to a wide audience. This will mainly be done in English, but can also be realised in other languages that have their importance in different academic contexts. Again, best practices will be developed first at local level, based on local efforts and needs, and most likely in local languages. Using the content and methods developed within the UNIC project, partners could also carry out internal implementation of the project in their different languages.

The work of the subgroup and the establishment of the Academy, the various reports envisaged, the UNIC-wide seminars and the UNIC Superdiverse Schools can only be realized if partners and stakeholders agree on a common language. The different languages within UNIC will be used in the various activities to promote and demonstrate inclusion at secondary and higher education levels (in particular, the Role Model talks in secondary schools; the UNIC Buddy couples; the exemplification of superdiversity and higher education cases in the UNIC Open Case Repository, and the UNIC Superdiverse Classroom Guideline).

In this context, UNIC's connections with post-primary schools will naturally be multilingual to meet local needs: “Role Models” will visit schools and present their experiences and insights in relation to the University and UNIC. The same practice will inform the seminars for high schools. Finally, some of the training sessions for university faculty and staff leading to the implementation of the Superdiversity agenda will have to be in English, as they will also be open to faculty and staff from the other universities. Depending on local needs and resources, staff training sessions could also be held in the languages of each institution to improve participation and access for staff with limited language skills.

Multilingualism for UNIC CityLabs (WP 5)

The concept of UNIC CityLabs poses a challenge to UNIC language policy and the issue of multilingualism. CityLabs, which is a core idea, involves practices of outreach from the university into the city and aims to achieve the highest level of engagement and participation. However, the public to whom this aspiration is addressed is sometimes not proficient in the local/national language and/or English; accordingly, this aspiration can only be achieved if this innovative concept and process of participation can be ensured through some kind of linguistic transmission (simultaneous interpretation/translation, visual or other supports and activities, as well as digital solutions —all necessarily multilingual).

Language considerations are central to UNIC CityLabs with its different levels of activity and its two main types of events, Pop-up CityLabs and Virtual Meeting Platforms, which have slightly different approaches:

1. Pop-Up CityLabs are local-level activities that focus on identifying problems and implementing creative solutions. Accordingly, they are mainly organised in the local language.
2. Virtual Meeting Platforms (VMPs) are UNIC-wide events which are aimed at gathering participants (students, staff, city stakeholders, citizens) from at least two or more UNIC locations to solve identified challenges collaboratively.

It is an open and unresolved question as to how to organise UNIC-wide VMPs in different languages. The challenge will be to promote interaction between different participants, in a way that does not prevent some from not being able to participate in the activities offered due to language barriers. In order to broaden participation — e.g. in a hackathon with multinational and multidisciplinary teams — the crucial question will be: “How would the teams communicate if members do not speak the same language? This is a tricky dilemma, because technically we should be as inclusive as possible and language should not pose barriers, but how can we accomplish that in practice?” (WP 5 coordination in response to a UNIC internal questionnaire)

The UNIC CityLabs Festival in Liège (October 2021) – one of the first major UNIC events – has already had to deal with the issue of multilingualism and has opted for the following solutions: a) it will have “linguistic tutors” in the home universities preparing the students before the beginning of the festival. It will also have “linguistic tutors” in situ upon arrival and during the festival; b) more generally ULiège will have students of translation and interpreting accompanying foreign delegations in Dutch, English, German and Spanish; c) multilingual cultural activities (e.g. theatre activities) will be organised.

Pop-Up CityLabs are conducted in the local languages to avoid exclusion through the exclusive use of English. However, sometimes these local Pop-Up CityLabs will have to be held in languages other than the local languages (e.g. English, Arabic, etc.), depending on the circumstances. In an effort to be inclusive and socially impactful, this decision has to be made as some groups do not speak the local language or English.

Finally, from the CityLabs’ point of view, it seems relatively easy to use different languages for marketing and communication, e.g., social media advertisements, posters, etc., which each organising party can easily translate from English into their mother tongue(s).

In summary, although parts of the UNIC CityLabs model are designed to be multilingual, the entire UNIC CityLabs co-creation process is currently not accessible to participants who do not speak English.

Multilingualism and dissemination (WP 6)

Within WP6 “Foster UNIC Sustainability and Dissemination” there are numerous deliverables and activities involving multilingualism. Here, too, in order to ensure its overall functioning a common linguistic basis is required, so English is recognised as the lingua franca. WP 6 affirms that it would be useful to extend multilingualism to more activities, but given the resources available, at present this is not realistic.

WP6 manages the UNIC communication channels, such as the website, the newsletter(s), targeted emails and social media profiles (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram), therefore they deal with all the UNIC teaching languages. Even though it was not originally envisaged, WP6 plans to repost social media content on some of the UNIC languages in English to reach a larger audience.

Recognizing the value of multilingualism, and in an effort to involve local citizens in UNIC activities, WP6 took a pragmatic approach to dealing with these activities by adopting the following rules: E-newsletters (approx. 300 words per e-newsletter) will be translated into all UNIC languages. On the UNIC website, events will only be broadcast in English, unless the event is multilingual in which case information will be given in the languages of the event. News articles on the UNIC website will always be published in English and translations into other UNIC languages will be provided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the contents of the article.

UNIC and Multilingualism Going Forward: Perceived Challenges and Suggestions

Based on the internal questionnaire distributed to the members of the UNIC work packages and discussions with different UNIC members, various challenges to achieving multilingualism have been identified. The challenges mentioned operate at different levels and affect different actors involved in building UNIC. These challenges often have a financial dimension, e.g. for translation and interpretation services or the production of online language modules. To be clear, if there was more financial support, multilingualism could be more easily established, institutionalised or formally structured within UNIC. Addressing these challenges will require a range of actions as well as the continuous assessment of UNIC's needs. In what follows, we offer twelve suggestions to address some of the challenges

highlighted so far. The suggestions are not binding, but rather aim to provide UNIC work packages with possible ways to address the challenges identified and in this way to strengthen the synergies of the consortium and further advance the different objectives outlined.

1. UNIC activities, documents and other means of dissemination will be held, conducted and written in languages other than English whenever practical, appropriate and affordable, so as to meet general European requirements for multilingualism to which UNIC subscribes and, in particular, to enhance communication and promote the overall objective of 1 language + 2.

Example 1

While English will be central to Mobility Hubs they will also provide services in the mother tongue of the students and staff in order to allow easy access to UNIC Mobility experiences and to reduce obstacles as much as possible.

Example 2

The use of more than one language (true multilingualism in practice) is welcomed and encouraged in order to facilitate the smoothest possible communication at meetings and events, on the UNIC campus or in UNIC classrooms, during informal UNIC community activities and in other multilingual environments.

2. English will be the main lingua franca within UNIC: Accordingly, its widespread use and impact upon multilingualism must be given explicit consideration. In addition, given the superdiverse student and staff population of the partner universities, it is to be expected that not all participants will have a sufficient command of the English language and will need to develop their skills further.

Example

UNIC onboarding includes a range of English courses or alternative learning formats to enable students and staff to participate in UNIC activities. These courses are action-oriented in the sense of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and in particular its specifications in the Companion Volume (CV). They promote authentic, text- and situation-appropriate use of academic and professional language (EAP and ESAP). UNIC authorities will need to decide whether this offer will be centralised – at least in part – or decentralised, whether it will

be a comprehensive offer during the academic year or whether it will be delivered as summer courses or in the context of summer schools or a combination of all of the above.

3. On the one hand, English is used in the UNIC working group meetings to facilitate communication between the different partners. On the other hand, this also poses a challenge as participants in the working groups may have different levels of English proficiency. In the UNIC context, language should not be used consciously or unconsciously in an exclusionary way (to demonstrate or exercise power). We must be careful not to enable some participants to dominate certain sessions or activities on the basis of their capacity to construct narratives or greater competency in a mode of discourse.

Example

UNIC will develop linguistic codes of conduct to help organise meetings, events and group activities to promote a balanced linguistic environment at all levels of the consortium, i.e. for both students and staff. In addition, training for students and staff will help to overcome unbalanced situations and to use language strategically.

4. UNIC respects minority languages within its regional areas of influence and actively fosters them. This applies in particular to Irish in Ireland⁹, Sami in Finland and Basque in Spain but also to heritage languages used in the context of migrant communities in UNIC cities.

Example 1

Oulu University already offers an online course in English on the Sami culture for all UNIC students.

Example 2

CityLabs involving local migrant communities will provide for translation / interpretation to enhance the participation of these local communities effectively and efficiently (cf. point 8).

⁹ We recognise that Irish is the official language of Ireland and that it is an official and working language of the EU. The reference to 'minority' in the context of Irish relates to its daily use.

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5. UNIC allows for the creation of multiple and varied opportunities to use languages relevant to the specific contexts of the partner universities.

Example 1

Students and staff do not come to UNIC as language-free individuals – many of them already have, besides English, competences in one of UNIC’s target languages and are interested in using and expanding them. Apart from structured institutional activities — be they virtual or physical in nature — UNIC promotes the use of these language competences in extracurricular or informal contexts such as tandem programmes, Hackathons or language cafés, among others.

Example 2

More importantly, UNIC students are encouraged to take courses in languages other than English as an international language in order to have multilingual and multicultural experiences with a more culture-specific, local “touch”, at the various UNIC partner universities.

Example 3

In addition, UNIC partners will implement activities through the medium of local languages, but may consider expanding the scope, or further systematizing the incorporation of local languages to increase the inclusivity of UNIC.

6. UNIC will create multiple and varied opportunities to LEARN new (UNIC) languages or to improve competences in the languages relevant to the context of the partner universities.

Example 1

The Online language modules to be developed by all UNIC partners for the language(s) relevant to their institutional context are considered a starting point. UNIC partners are currently exploring opportunities to offer stakeholders further development of their competences in the respective institutional languages at partner universities.

Example 2

UNIC partners will foster (existing) mechanisms to coordinate informal language development opportunities such as joint language cafés organized across UNIC partners, facilitating language focused student club activities across partner institutions or establishing language learning tandem programs.

7. UNIC will foster dialogue amongst language instructors and academics for further collaboration such as co-designing and co-teaching virtual offers (cross-university courses and cross-university student projects etc.).

Example

Language centres and other language teaching units at UNIC partner universities are encouraged to establish contact to explore possibilities for cooperation with regard to their language learning offers, but also their teacher training offers, and to further professionalise their work in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its Companion Volume.

8. UNIC fosters inclusive language use and barrier-free communication. Debate and discussion will be critical to superdiversity and the transformation of university life and language will be at the heart of this exchange of ideas. As we all know from literature and real life, conscious and/or unconscious language use reinforces certain stereotypes and images and may unfortunately contribute to the reproduction of certain exclusionary structures and practices. Recognizing this fact, and acknowledging the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), UNIC will support the use of inclusive language in different aspects of university life ranging from teaching, staff training, and student life to marketing and communications.

Example

UNIC students with disabilities have already highlighted the necessity to respect, and give consideration to, their language-related needs which should be met as much as possible. UNIC seeks to identify solutions to support student and staff with diverse linguistic needs to engage in UNIC activities (e.g., a CityLab to identify solutions/problems, or integration into WP 4 trainings)

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9. Multilingualism in the cities: UNIC actively recognises the linguistic diversity of UNIC cities and seeks to integrate that reality into its fabric. Language is considered one of the signifiers of superdiversity. UNIC cities are home to residents who may or may not speak and use the national or dominant languages or may have different language competencies. The inclusion of different urban residents in UNIC activities may require further strategies or mechanisms to make UNIC activities accessible.

Example

UNIC may seek to include interpretation guides in some of the activities to facilitate the participation of urban residents who do not feel confident expressing themselves or participating in the dominant or national language. E.g., ULiège is adopting such a method in the CityLabs Festival to be held in October 2021: In the festival, ULiège students will provide informal interpretation for visiting UNIC partner delegations to reduce language barriers and increase inclusivity (cf. point 4).

10. UNIC will be built upon a range of different activities such as Virtual Platform Events, Citylabs, Superdiversity academy and other such activities. UNIC partners, either as whole consortium or in smaller groups, will commit to organizing or creating special language events to enhance UNIC's engagement with linguistic diversity.

Example 1

It is possible for UNIC partners to organize Pop-up CityLabs focused on identifying solutions for linguistic challenges and barriers in our urban settings. These Citylabs could include students, researchers, urban residents and other stakeholders based on organizers' preferences. Participants would identify sites of challenge based on their local context and come up with ideas to reach innovative solutions to foster multilingualism in our urban settings.

Example 2

UNIC partners will organize a consortium-wide round-table or webinar for the UNIC-wide community to discuss multilingualism challenges, considerations and possible avenues for fostering multilingualism going forward. Such a round table, facilitated by the language policy subgroup, would also help to address the

limitations of this guideline making the guideline development process interactive and gaining more comprehensive and extensive feedback from a wider spectrum of persons involved with UNIC. It would help foster awareness across UNIC about linguistic challenges. It would better enable the multilingualism subgroup to identify how different partners foresee engaging with language issues in terms of UNIC's future.

11. Each partner university will develop (or continue to develop) a multilingualism plan in relation to UNIC in general and the local needs arising from the superdiversity of their respective cities.

Example

Some of the UNIC universities already have a language policy, albeit of varying degrees of development, which is institutionally approved or informally formulated. In most UNIC partner contexts, the language policy has been developed as a consequence of their national or regional political situation where language use plays a key role in the recognition of diversity. Regardless of the situation on the ground, each university is increasing its efforts to create or adapt a multilingualism plan to ensure structural measures that facilitate participation in UNIC activities and reduce language barriers.

12. UNIC will form a body responsible for monitoring multilingualism in order to institutionalise collective reflection on multilingualism and, in a concrete way, indicate how best to guide, evaluate and support the implementation of the multilingual approach within UNIC practices.

Example

This body will respond to requests for advice on how to address multilingualism challenges relating to UNIC and its activities and offer an open discussion on how to proceed with language-related issues or problems.

The Implementation of Multilingualism in UNIC: Looking to the Future

With its focus on superdiversity within our universities and in our post-industrial cities, the UNIC consortium seeks to develop the skills and capabilities of its students and members in line with the complexity, speed and scale of change. Language emerges as a key component in those efforts given the diversity of languages among consortium members as well as the diversity of languages used within our cities. Reflecting on the first anniversary of the project, the multilingualism working group's activities have sought to highlight and increase awareness of language as a consideration across the UNIC consortium. UNIC members have responded to this, highlighting emerging challenges, requesting advice, support and suggestions on how to account for language issues as we move forward.

This Multilingualism guideline provides an overview of several key elements concerning language use within UNIC and the wider European context. As part of this endeavour, UNIC work packages were asked to provide some initial feedback about how they approach language in their activities. Their responses, feedback and the financial challenges they identified have been integrated into this guideline. The guideline thus provides insights into the current situation in UNIC regarding language and the final section of this document offers UNIC key suggestions on how to approach language issues going forward. The guideline will be presented to the UNIC community with the aim of encouraging a wider discussion about language issues as well as arguing for the development of a UNIC language policy in the future.

The question therefore arises as to how UNIC's multilingualism policy should be brought forward. Apart from the 12 challenges discussed in the previous chapter, the Language Policy subgroup proposes the following steps, in cooperation with the respective stakeholders:

1. The Multilingualism sub-group agrees to continue the joint work on language-related issues and to advise on and/or monitor the implementation of multilingualism within UNIC. In light of the many linguistic challenges and existing linguistic diversity within UNIC, the group anticipates that new language-related issues will emerge in the coming years that UNIC stakeholders could not foresee in the first year. Accordingly, the group proposes to establish some sort of "advisory board" (or similar body) capable of commenting on and moderating language-related issues in order to facilitate multilingual practices within the various UNIC activities and projects, as well as to ensure regular monitoring with respect to language-related issues within the UNIC community.
2. The group suggests (see above) the creation of language-related events (CityLabs on multilingualism and / or multilingual practices; Round table; etc.) and is willing to advance the conception and organization of such events

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3. The group suggests that UNIC officials consider setting up systems of language support as well as language learning opportunities, especially for students who take advantage of the various types of mobility and in this context wish to participate in more locally organised activities (courses, etc.) in languages other than English. UNIC should conceptualise its language training for these students – and also for staff – in more detail and expand its range and scope as an additional offer that would respond to the needs of the inter-university campus. This is precisely the demand of the students themselves: “UNIC students coming in from other universities will be addressed in English mainly, but of course we are aware that students often want to go abroad to immerse themselves in another culture and language. Therefore, it is important to offer those students language learning opportunities as well as the possibility to get in touch with local students to practice the local language.” (Student response to questionnaire).

It is through multilingualism that the goal of an integrated, international, inter-university campus can be achieved in a manner that combines understanding regional and national cultures, old and new transnational migrant communities and the richness of cultures that comes from this diversity. It is through multilingualism that solidarity and mutual understanding are best promoted and the values of European democracy and education are enriched and are strengthened.