

## Developments relating to multilingualism

The year 2007 has brought a quantum leap in efforts to promote multilingualism within the EU. In fact, the Commissioner responsible for Multilingualism, Leonard Orban, intends to present in the second half of 2008 a new **Strategy on Multilingualism**. In preparation of this strategy, there has been a multitude of initiatives, meetings, conferences and speeches. Further measures are planned for the coming year.

All those events reflect the enormous importance which multilingualism has gained in the political, cultural and economic fields.

### Political importance

On the European Day of Languages (September 26, 2007), the **High Level Group on Multilingualism**, which had been set up in response to the 2005 Communication *A new framework strategy for multilingualism*, submitted its [final report](#) with recommendations to the Commission for actions in the field of multilingualism.

On the same day, Commissioner Orban chaired a **Round Table on Linguistic Diversity** which also dealt with *English as a lingua franca*. David Graddol, director of the English Company (UK) Ltd., showed himself convinced that global English was paving the way for multilingualism (see his publication [English Next - Why global English may mean the end of English as a Foreign Language](#)).

In early 2008, a **Ministerial Conference on Multilingualism** will be held. Furthermore, the Commission will propose a **Community programme for Interpreters (2009 – 2013)** and will further promote the **EMT (European Master in Translation)** project.

### Cultural importance

2008 will be the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Therefore, on June 29, 2007, a **Group of Intellectuals for Intercultural Dialogue** was established to advise the European Commission on the contribution of multilingualism to Intercultural Dialogue (see [press release](#)).

On November 14, 2007, the Translation Service of the European Commission (DGT) launched the Europe-wide translation contest [Juvenes Translatores](#).

### Economic importance

On February 23, 2007, Commissioner Orban presented the results of the study *Effects on the European Economy of Shortages of Foreign Language Skills in Enterprise* ([summary, complete study](#)) carried out for the European Commission during 2006 by CILT, the UK National Centre for Languages. While the report confirms the importance of English as the world's business language, the analysis reveals that there is a need for a range of other languages if business relationships are to be built successfully. Leonard Orban urged EU companies to invest in language skills to improve their business opportunities and promised to place multilingualism at the heart of the Lisbon Strategy for more growth and jobs.

On March 16, 2007, Commissioner Orban took the opportunity to discuss with businesses the link between “Multilingualism and Competitiveness” at the European Business Summit in Brussels (see his [speech](#)).

On September 21, 2007, Commissioner Orban hosted the business conference *Languages mean business – Les langues font nos affaires – Unternehmen Sprache* (see [programme](#)) the main conclusion of which may be summarized as follows: Global English is not enough for global business.

The conference also launched a new **Business Forum on Multilingualism** chaired by Vicomte Etienne Davignon, which will examine how to make operational use of multilingualism to maximise business results.