



the Digital Language Diversity Project

The Roadmap

Policy Recommendations & Timeline

Executive Summary

- » Many of the 6000 to 7000 languages spoken in the world today are in danger of becoming extinct.
- » In order to establish a sustainable policy for safeguarding and promoting European and global linguistic diversity, policies for digital development have to be embraced. With so much of our lives happening on the internet and with digital devices, securing the digital domain will be vital for speakers of lesser-used, regional, minoritised, or endangered languages (hereafter RMLs).
- » If we are to ensure European digital language diversity for future generations we need substantive European level policies and legislation that acts to protect that diversity. If not, RML speakers are facing a digital time-bomb considering that current trajectories of digital development signal that they will be excluded from using their own language in an increasingly digitized society.
- » The European Union has 24 official languages and 60 lesser-used languages. While they should all enjoy the same status only the official languages are fully recognised. The potential of digital development presents us with the opportunity to bridge the digital divide and to progress towards greater digital language equality.
- » DLDP research has shown that digital development for lesser-used languages must be community driven and not driven by the interests of the LT industry and corporations.
- » Language equality and diversity are at the heart of the European project and the EU now has the opportunity to empower all citizens to be able to use their own languages digitally. With these factors in mind, and in order to ensure language equality for the digital future, the DLDP consortium makes a wide-ranging set of recommendations.
- » Key recommendations are for: 1) legislation to ensure that States develop digital services in lesser-used languages so as to deal with the impending digital time-bomb. 2) The extension of the Digital Language Diversity Project to conduct a Europe-wide survey for the EU on the digital needs of all European lesser-used languages.

Imprint

The DLDP Roadmap

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THE DLDP ROADMAP

DLDP Policy Recommendations

Language equality and diversity are at the heart of the European project and the EU now has the opportunity to empower all citizens to be able to use their own languages digitally. RML speakers are facing a time-bomb considering that current trajectories of digital development signal that they will be excluded from using their own language in an increasingly digitized society. With these factors in mind, and in order to ensure language equality for the digital future, the DLDP consortium makes the following Europe-wide recommendations:

- 1 Recommends European legislation that acts to ensure that lesser-used languages (RMLs), including smaller state languages, have the digital provision required to function in the digital era. For example, if the Digital Single Market is to succeed citizens must have access to it in their own languages including in RMLs and smaller state languages. Not to do so undermines the EU project as well as raising numerous rights issues.
- 2 Recommends that current language legislation and international treaties protecting regional or minority languages (e.g. the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) have protocols added so as to ensure the digital provision of public sector services in RMLs and for digital RML development to keep pace with that of more widely-used languages.
- 3 Recommends the extension of the Digital Language Diversity Project (DLDP) to assess all European RMLs and make recommendations for their digital development. In order to collect data on RML digital needs so as to build the evidence base required to inform policy and planning, the DLDP needs to be extended to cover all European RMLs and smaller state languages that are lacking in digital provision. In order to facilitate this the EU could either establish a closed call for a project proposal or set up a Partnership with the DLDP consortium.¹
- 4 Recommends, further to 3 above, a Europe-wide survey on the status of language technologies and resources for all European languages.
- 5 Recommends a large-scale, long-term research and development and innovation funding programme at European and State level, in order to develop innovative technologies and services, as well as contributing to the reduction of the technology gap between European languages.
- 6 Recommends the creation of a European language technology platform with representatives from all European languages that enables the sharing of language technology-related resources. Furthermore, promote technology transfer and sharing of resources and methodologies through the creation of co-operation programmes, including transnational programmes, between related languages.
- 7 Recommends that EU institutions raise awareness of the benefits for companies, public bodies, and citizens of the availability of online services, contents and products in lesser-used languages, in overcoming language barriers, as well as for the preservation of the cultural heritage of language communities,
- 8 Calls upon administrations at all levels to improve access to online services and information in lesser-used languages, and to use pre-existing language technology such as machine translation, speech recognition and text-to-speech, in order to improve the accessibility of those services.
- 9 Recommends that social media and LT /ICT companies work with the DLDP to ensure digital development for language diversity.
- 10 Recommends ensuring the production of open data, in the sense of data that is easily obtainable and can be used with few, if any, restrictions. Availability of open data is of paramount importance for the rapid development of software and technologies for languages for which data are relatively scarce.

¹ Note that these recommendations are included in the European Parliament Report 'Language Equality in the Digital Age.' (Jill Evans MEP).

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Road Map Timeline

Short term (2018-2020) measures with European and international institutions.



1

European Parliament (EP) Report in support of digital language diversity,

In the September 2018 Plenary of the European Parliament the “Language Equality in the Digital Age” Report² (2018/2028) , rapporteur Jill Evans MEP (EFA-Greens), passed with a huge majority - 592 votes for and 45 against. ELEN and the DLDP helped to draft the Report and DLDP advisors were consulted on it. While the Report is an Own Initiative Report and not a legislative report (i.e. it does not oblige the Commission to make it into EU law) the huge cross-party support for the Report reflects the opinion and strong support of the European Parliament for the proposed measures, one of which is for the EU to extend and expand the DLDP to survey all European RMLs and make recommendations for their digital development.

In addition, another wide-reaching Parliament initiative is the Human Language Project proposals as outlined in the EP Think Tank’s STOA document.³ If this succeeds it will be vital that the DLDP findings are taken on board and that RML digital development is embedded and prioritized within the project. (2018-2020)

2

DLDP results to MEPs/ Commission/ CoE. 2018

The DLDP project will be finishing in the autumn 2018. Before that the DLDP will have meetings with the relevant Commissioners (Ansip, Navracsics, Gabriel) in order to showcase the results of the project and to call for the project to be extended to all European RMLs. (2018-2019)

3

DLDP results to cross-cut into Digital Single Market debate, Geolocation, STOA Report.

The DLDP outputs and results will be used by DLDP members to intervene into several ongoing debates in the EU including DSM, geolocation, national minority report, in order to mainstream the DLDP findings and proposals into the ongoing debate and proposals. (2018-2019)

4

Build on existing support from Member-States

Several member states with under-resourced languages have shown strong support for digital language developments such as the Baltic states and Slovenia. This support can be used to help gain traction for the DLDP proposals to be mainstreamed into the broader debate on digital development and provision.

5

Council of Europe

DLDP results and proposals will be presented to the COMEX of the ECRML and the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for National Minorities, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. It will be highlighted how digital development for RMLs will aid better implementation of the Charter and FCNM. As with the EU, the DLDP will call for support for the project to be extended to cover all European RMLs. Call for monitoring and development of digital language provision for RMLs is added to the ECRML and FCNM as additional Protocols. (2018-2019).

6

United Nations

DLDP/ELEN will meet with the UN representatives from the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples and Forum for Minorities to discuss how digital development benefits lesser used and indigenous languages, and to recommend adoption of the Training Programme and Survival Kit. (2018/2019)

7

UNESCO

DLDP/ELEN will meet with UNESCO to present the DLDP outputs and findings. In 2019 UNESCO will be launching the Year of Indigenous Languages with ELEN participating. Meetings will be arranged with the Knowledge Society Division to promote the DLDP with UNESCO. (2018/2019)

² <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A8-2018-0228+0+DOC+PDF+Vo//EN>

³ [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_STU\(2017\)598621](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_STU(2017)598621)



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Short term (2018-2020) measures with European and international institutions.



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Build awareness of DLDP results with each European RML community.

Via the ELEN network of RML organisations, the DLDP will work to disseminate project findings to all RML stakeholders in Europe including NGOs, universities, research centres, and governments.

Work to ensure that RML communities take action and adopt DLDP findings.

Once RML communities are made aware of the DLDP findings and proposals it will be important for each of them to apply the findings, using the Digital Language Survival Kit and training course, to their own language. Each community may wish to conduct its own survey to ascertain digital language priorities and develop grass-roots initiatives to aid development.

Translate RML communities support into national and European level initiatives.

Once RML communities have acted to implement the DLDP proposals it will be important for them to develop local and national level initiatives, such as RML digital language projects that will focus on developing their languages' digital capacity. They may also introduce legislation to help this process.

Encourage RML community to develop working links with major digital language developers

DLDP will help RML communities develop their own links with the major digital providers e.g. Google, Microsoft, so as to ensure that the major companies work to ensure provision in their language. While ELEN will work for this at the political level it is more effective to have the actual language community engage with the major developers themselves to press their case.



Co-ordinate with Meta-Net and LT Innovate

Meta-Net issued its own detailed roadmap setting out the path for LT development. The road map is LT industry based whereas the DLDP roadmap is RML community based. Therefore, it is important that some coordination is planned in order for the LT industry to be made aware not just of the DLDP findings but of RML communities' digital needs, over and above the research Meta-Net has already conducted. Therefore, meetings will be held with Meta-Net and LT Innovate to establish a framework for regular dialogue between DLDP and ELEN on RML digital development. (2018/2019)

Co-ordinate with the LT industry on the Human Language Project

As mentioned above if the HLP is successful it will be vital for RML digital development to be prioritized in that project. It will require partnership with the LT industry and ongoing surveys of RML community digital requirements. (2020-)



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Medium to Long Term measures with European and international institutions.



EU Directive to ensure digital language diversity.

A Directive will help to ensure that States and the EU support the development of digital provision for under-resourced languages. The proposal will act to complement the existing Digital Single Market initiative. A draft document will outline the case for a Directive in 2018 which will be presented to the Commission and MEPs.



Embed DLD recommendations with ICT/LT industry

Following discussions with DLDP and ELEN, the ICT/LT industry will work to ensure that DLDP recommendations are adopted.



Embed DLD recommendations with public sector organisations.

DLDP and ELEN will work to ensure that Member States, autonomous governments and local governments implement DLDP recommendations with regard to RML digital provision.



Ensure synergy between DLDP proposals and the new Donostia Protocol to Ensure Language Rights.

The Protocol⁴ is the new standard-setting tool for the promotion and protection of RMLs with recommendations for ensuring LT development for RMLs.

⁴ See <http://protokoloa.eus/en/>

Review and Reporting

The aim of the road map is for the normalisation of RML digital provision in the ICT/ LT industry where all European languages are included as well as in public sector digital provision.

In order to monitor progress the EU will need to establish a reporting mechanism, established in the Directive, whereby RML digital provision is monitored and supported in each Member State.