

TOWARDS A SHARED EUROPEAN PROGRAMME FOR MULTILINGUAL EUROPE 2020: NEXT STEPS

7.1 SUMMARY

In this Strategic Research Agenda META-NET recommends setting up a large, multi-year programme on language technologies to build the technological foundations for a truly multilingual Europe. We suggest to concentrate future efforts in this field on three priority research themes: Translingual Cloud; Social Intelligence and e-Participation; Socially-Aware Interactive Assistants. We also suggest to concentrate on two additional themes. On the one hand there is the overarching issue of researching and further developing core language resources and base technologies that are needed by the three priority themes and that, for many of Europe's languages, do not exist yet. On the other, we recommend to design and to implement the European Language Technology Platform as a means to collect and to offer all language technology-related applications and services, designed and built in Europe for the European citizen.

The research strands and associated sets of applications we suggest to build in the next ten years are of utmost importance for Europe. Through these technologies we will be able to overcome language barriers in spoken and written communication, we will be able to carry out country- and language-border-crossing debates and we will enable new forms and means of communication. We are confident that the impact of our technologies will be so immense that they will be able to help establishing a sense of a European identity in the majority of European citizens. The research plan described in this agenda will generate

a countless number of opportunities, it will significantly participate to Europe's future growth and will secure Europe's position in many global markets.

7.2 SPECIFIC ROADMAPS

The roadmaps presented in this Strategic Research Agenda provide indicative information as regards the actual research lines and phases within the priority themes. The roadmaps show the current state of discussion within META-NET and our recommendations how to move forward. Upcoming EC-funded projects will continue work on the roadmaps, preparing more detailed and more concrete phases. The project QTLaunchPad, which started in June 2012 and which puts an emphasis on quality translation, is taking care of pushing forward the roadmap for the Translingual Cloud priority theme (Section 6.2). It is expected that two or three additional projects which will be funded under the final FP7 call, starting in late 2013, will take care of the roadmaps for the two other priority themes (Sections 6.3 and 6.4) and most likely also the European Language Technology Platform (Section 6.6). Only when more details are known with regard to the available research steps and interdependencies and also the potential funding instruments can our plans and the shared programme be specified in a more detailed way. For the field of language technology the scope of the shared programme is unprecedented: we recommend to set up a ten-year programme in a total of five areas, involving the European Union and additional countries.

7.3 TOWARDS A SHARED EUROPEAN PROGRAMME

The plans foreseen in this SRA can be successfully realised and implemented using several different measures and instruments, for example, through clusters of projects or a certain number of coordinated projects. Due to the scope and duration of the suggested action, our preferred option is to set up a shared programme between the European Commission and the Member States as well as Associated Countries. First steps along those lines have been taken at META-NET's META-FORUM 2012 conference in Brussels, Belgium, on June 21, 2012, when representatives of several European funding agencies (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, The Netherlands, Slovenia) who participated in a panel discussion on this topic, unanimously expressed the urgent need for setting up such a shared programme [54].

A sizable portion of the research proposed in this SRA under the umbrella of the three priority themes is to be carried out in the Horizon 2020 programme. The European service platform for language technologies is a very good fit for the Connecting Europe Facility programme (CEF) while large parts of the core technologies for language analysis and production, especially monolingual base resources and technologies, are good candidates for support through national and regional programmes (see Section 6.8). Furthermore, it is important to include the technological needs and innovative ideas of Europe's SMEs, bigger companies and the startup scene in the further shaping of the shared programme.

The shared programme will include a carefully planned governance structure. First steps towards establishing a structure have already been taken within META-NET. The network of excellence has an Executive Board with currently 12 members, the operations of the network and its bodies are specified in the META-NET Statutes [55]. Furthermore, a legal person for the META-NET network was established. This legal person, META-TRUST

AISBL, is an international non-profit organisation under Belgian law [56]. These proven and established structures can be used as starting points for the governance structure of the future programme but we are open to any suggestions for modifications, especially as the final governance structure will also be partially determined by the concrete funding instruments to be used for establishing the programme. The main responsibilities of the governance structure will be to perform checks, to monitor and to evaluate progress and to maintain and to modify the strategic agenda and roadmaps. All major research strands and paths specified in the roadmaps will be complemented with evaluation campaigns that set quality levels for the implemented technologies. These evaluation campaigns will act as major quality assurance instruments so that the research and development results comply with industry expectations and performance standards.

There are several options how to organise the research proposed in this strategic agenda. In June 2012 we have started discussing two possible instruments within META-NET that mainly aim at establishing a shared European programme – other options still have to be screened; new options might emerge from the Horizon 2020 and CEF programmes. The two candidate instruments are an Article 185 Initiative (see Section 7.3.1) and a Contractual Public-Private Partnership (PPP, see Section 7.3.2).

7.3.1 Article 185 Initiative

To quote Article 185 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU): “In implementing the multiannual framework programme, the Union may make provision, in agreement with the Member States concerned, for participation in research and development programmes undertaken by several Member States [...]” Currently there are four joint programmes running as Article 185 Initiatives [57]: Ambient Assisted Living (AAL), Baltic Sea research (Bonus), a programme in the

field of metrology (EMRP) and a programme for research performing SMEs and their partners (Eurostars).

A key idea behind Article 185 is to coordinate national programmes in order to reduce the fragmentation of research efforts carried out on the national or regional level. Among the goals to be achieved are to reach critical mass in certain research areas, to ensure better use of scarce resources and to find common answers and approaches to common needs and interests. Member states are given the opportunity to exchange good practice, to avoid unnecessary overlaps of efforts, to exchange information and expertise and to learn from each other.

The Seventh Framework Programme states that an Article 185 Initiative can be launched in areas to be identified in close association with the Member States on the basis of a series of criteria: relevance to EU objectives; the clear definition of the objective to be pursued and its relevance to the objectives of the Framework Programme; presence of a pre-existing basis (existing or envisaged research programmes); European added value; critical mass, with regard to the size and the number of programmes involved and the similarity of activities they cover; efficiency of Article 185 as the most appropriate means for achieving the objectives. Each Article 185 Initiative is set up individually through a decision of the European Parliament and of the European Council, following a proposal from the European Commission. The implementation requires the establishment or existence of a legal Dedicated Implementation Structure (DIS) which should exist before the Council's decision. The DIS takes care of programme management and calls for proposals, selection of projects and follow-ups and financial management.

7.3.2 Contractual Public-Private Partnership

While many details of the upcoming programme Horizon 2020 are still under discussion, Contractual PPPs are currently emerging as the primary model to implement parts of the programme objectives with regard to

sizeable, roadmap-based research and innovation efforts within the technology pillar of H2020, drawing also on resources beyond the EU support and related matching funds. The EC's proposal for Horizon 2020 states that "greater impact should also be achieved by combining Horizon 2020 and private sector funds within public-private partnerships in key areas where research and innovation could contribute to Europe's wider competitiveness goals and help tackle societal challenges" [58]. PPPs are an important mechanism for focusing research and innovation, ensuring stakeholders engagement and, above all, for improving the impact of EU support on Europe's competitiveness, growth and jobs creation (see [5], p. 24). A public-private partnership is defined as "a partnership where private sector partners, the Union and, where appropriate, other partners, commit to jointly support the development and implementation of a research and innovation programme or activities". Similar instruments are JTIs (Joint Technology Initiatives), ETPs (European Technology Platforms) and institutional PPPs which are a counterpart to Contractual PPPs.

For Contractual PPPs, a Contractual Agreement is foreseen between the EC and private and public partners that specifies the objectives of the partnership, commitments of the partners, target outputs and the activities that require support from Horizon 2020. PPPs are to be identified in an open and transparent way based on all of the following criteria: the added value of action at Union level; the scale of impact on industrial competitiveness, sustainable growth and socio-economic issues; the long-term commitment from all partners based on a shared vision and clearly defined objectives; the scale of the resources involved and the ability to leverage additional investments in research and innovation; a clear definition of roles for each of the partners and agreed key performance indicators over the period chosen (see [58], p. 21).

Setting up a contractual PPP does not require a decision in the European Parliament.

7.4 CONCLUSIONS

The research plans specified in this SRA are, among others, a good match for an Article 185 Initiative and also for a Contractual PPP. It remains to be discussed which instrument is considered the most appropriate one to realise and implement the three priority research themes, the set of core technologies and shared resources and also the European service platform for language technology. Due to the scope, size and duration of the shared programme, a

combination of instruments could also be a promising avenue, for example, to fund the actual research to be carried out in the three priority themes through Horizon 2020 and to concentrate on CEF concerning the development of the European Language Technology Platform.

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