

MIME STAKEHOLDER FORUM – BRINGING TOGETHER PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic diversity as a general context, and individual and societal multilingualism as its consequences, are emerging as major issues for institutions (states, regional and local authorities, inter- and supranational organisations) and citizens at large, whether as individuals, companies, or civil society organisations. These stakeholders have to navigate complex interconnected demands at many levels, including education and training, family, interpersonal relationships, work and employment, production, consumption, and participation in social and political life, all of this in a world that is rapidly changing - also in terms of expectations regarding language skills and language use.

FP7 project MIMÉ *Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe*, which includes 22 partner organisations from 16 different countries, has adopted four principles for understanding these challenges and coming to terms with them: (1) a built-in interdisciplinarity; (2) the linking up of hitherto relatively disconnected micro- and macro-level approaches; (3) a policy analysis approach providing a framework to combine the findings from different disciplines and use them in the formulation of policy orientations; and (4) the necessity to take into account **stakeholder input and feedback**. The fourth principle will be realized via the standing MIMÉ **Stakeholder Forum**, serving as a locus for exchange and debate between stakeholders and the project team.

RATIONALE

The FP7 MIMÉ project places high value on outreach and stakeholder involvement at all stages of project implementation, based on the premise that managing multilingualism in Europe of necessity involves the participation of a wider range of actors from both research and practice, who share and scale-up best ideas, practices and innovative solutions to complex challenges of linguistic diversity management. Guided by this rationale, MIMÉ will organize a standing Stakeholder Forum as an important part of the project design, envisaged as an online discussion group on the MIMÉ website (<http://www.mime-project.org/>), as well as arrange meetings between

the Stakeholder Forum and the MIME Consortium, to bring together key actors, facilitate a discussion of a variety of issues concerning multilingualism, enable direct exchange and close interaction to generate partnership opportunities, especially among public and private sector stakeholders, academia and civil society, as well as to provide a backdrop for policy-makers. The core function of the Stakeholder Forum is to provide constant feedback from the field regarding the practical needs of these different groups of stakeholders and their constituencies.

WHY JOIN THE MIME STAKEHOLDER FORUM?

We consider stakeholder feedback to be useful not only in strengthening the validity of the scientific work itself, but also the likelihood that public policy orientations informed by research will be more relevant when it resonates with the stakeholders' experience. At a subsequent stage, actual policies adopted by local, national or supra-national authorities may be more appropriately designed.

The MIME project output will be based on extensive carefully tailored research of the highest quality, designed to establish current trends, provide guidelines for future policies in the field of multilingualism, and offer novel and in some cases paradigm-altering solutions to numerous challenges in linguistic diversity management. Participation in the Stakeholder Forum will provide stakeholders with the opportunity for direct dialogue with researchers and offer them first hand access to cutting edge research results, which may in turn help stakeholders shape and steer their future actions and practical operations in line with the newest developments in the field. Conversely, the Stakeholder Forum will provide the opportunity for the MIME research team to acknowledge stakeholders' insights, needs and experience, and to incorporate their immediate feedback and unique practical take on research needs, project findings and their relevance, all of which will aid the project research teams in enhancing their research design, defining relevant research questions, making more practically relevant interpretations of research results and giving both research and practice-based recommendations for future developments. In addition, contact with stakeholders is obviously a logical means to ensure a well-targeted dissemination of the project results.

Finally, Stakeholder Forum meetings with the MIME Consortium will allow for closer networking within and across the Forum and the Consortium, creating partnership opportunities for future frontier interdisciplinary research in the field of multilingualism.

A number of institutions and organizations have already recognized the importance of this approach and decided to join the Stakeholder Forum even during project preparation stage. As the project had been selected to receive community funding,

the implementation started on 1 March 2014, and MIME is now is looking to expand the scope of the Stakeholder Forum.

COMPOSITION OF THE MIME STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The Stakeholder Forum brings together professional associations, businesses and policy makers from both private and public sectors, who will be invited to present their activities and discuss needs related to linguistic diversity management. The MIME stakeholder forum includes institutions and individuals interested in managing the challenges of multilingualism that are willing to make concrete contributions in terms of providing information, experience, good practice, and identification of future needs, as well as raising awareness in wider target groups. It is composed of the following major groups of organizations:

- Professional associations in **translation, interpreting, mediation and language industries** (topics covered by WP4 MEDIATION – *Beyond Communication in a Multilingual World*);
- Professional associations in the field of **second/foreign language teaching** and, more generally, stakeholders in **language education** (topics covered by WP3 EDUCATION – *Language Teaching and Learning*);
- Institutions involved in **migration** issues with a particular emphasis on migrant integration (topics covered largely by WP2 SOCIETY – *Mobility, Identity, and Social Cohesion*);
- Institutions involved in **language policy and planning** at regional, national or international level (topics covered by WP1 POLITICS – *Language, Society, and Power* and WP5 POLICY – *Evaluation, selection and design*).

OPERATION OF THE MIME STAKEHOLDER FORUM

The MIME Stakeholder Forum will be organized as an online platform and discussion group on the MIME website, which will enable the exchange of information, open dialogue and discussion of challenges related to multilingualism, highlight current project work and its relevance for different stakeholder groups, and strengthen links between both stakeholders and the consortium, and the stakeholders themselves. The stakeholders will be invited to nominate one or more representative(s) who can act as contact persons, and who can take an active part in the discussions taking place in the dedicated section of the MIME website. Stakeholders are invited to take an active part in ongoing thematic discussions of open questions. The input expected from stakeholder representatives concerns various aspects of research, in particular:

- the fine-tuning of certain specific research questions, in order to increase their practical relevance;
- the identification and sharing of accurate factual information for inclusion in scientific research work;
- the “extra mile” that sometimes has to be run in order to make sure that research findings (in particular those that are designed to be part of suggested policy orientations) are presented in a way that makes them clear and accessible to practitioners.

Furthermore, the Stakeholder Forum will be timed to coincide with major project events, as members will be invited to participate in four *Stakeholder Forum meetings* with the MIME Consortium (in or around months 15, 29, 43 and 52 of the project) and possibly in targeted project activities. Each meeting will place the spotlight on one of the four main target groups of stakeholders, and the final consensus conference, based on the integrative policy-oriented work of WP5, will engage all groups of stakeholders.

The calls for public *Stakeholder Forum meetings* will be sent out to stakeholders in four target groups, with one stakeholder per meeting selected to give an invited thematic talk. Stakeholders participating in the Stakeholder forum meetings will normally pay their own travel and accommodation costs; only those stakeholders acting as invited speakers will have travel and accommodation costs covered by the project.

Brief provisional accounts of Stakeholder Forum meetings will be available one month after the meetings, intended to inform and guide research, followed by a more extensive and structured summary of *Stakeholder Forum meetings* to be used in preparation of the final MIME publication.