

The Project

Translating : why?

If the "intercultural dialogue" is in a need for reinvention, this is because it has chronically neglected the importance of diversity in languages, mentalities and modes of representation, and the need to place them in a situation of translation over the long term. In a world largely dominated by images that are often manipulated, and by a simplification of the mass media discourse, language has become impoverished, vocabulary has shrunk, representations of the self and others have turned into shadows of themselves. Concepts that had seemed to be globalised are in fact heterogeneous, if not contradictory, interpretations of various realities, with the result that misunderstandings proliferate.

Issues related to translation are at the heart of linguistic and cultural development, and they need to be given a central role in exchanges across the Mediterranean region through a restoration of languages to their proper place, in all their richness and complexity, their diversity and depth of field. But besides this, translation can put into perspective entrenched differences and "untranslatables" that must not be glossed over. A broad view of translation should make it possible to stimulate new, and more profound, forms of interaction in artistic, intellectual and social activity. Over the next ten years, the Mediterranean region needs to become a fabric of translation. The Union for the Mediterranean has to contribute completely to it.

The project background

In 1995, responding to this long-observed deficit, the journal *Transeuropéennes* set up cultural cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean region and the Balkans, founded on shared thinking, education, the translation and communication of ideas and cultural output. This initiative was intended to highlight the complexity and linguistic diversity that are characteristic of cultures and democratisation processes, while sounding a warning against the identity-based politics that induces fragmentation and hatred of the other; and, indeed, hatred of the self. In 2006, the work that had been done since 1999 under the title "Translating, between cultures" was further extended by *Transeuropéennes*, during the Cultural Workshop in Paris in 2006, with the presentation of a project for a structured initiative in the Mediterranean region that would create dynamics of reciprocity – translating not only from North to South, but also from South to North, East to West and West to East

This proposal is leaning on past significant experiences, such as the one, for example, of the European Cultural Foundation, and current relevant dynamics.

During Spring 2008, *Transeuropéennes* took action towards relevant public authorities and raised the issue of translation as a major one to be included in the perspective of the Euromed Cultural Strategy, which was on the agenda of the Euromed Ministers of Culture conference (29th and 30th of May). The Athens Declaration (paragraph 22) stipulates: "Ministers underline that translation, as it relates languages and cultures and provides wide access to works of art and ideas, is an essential

tool for dialogue between cultures, and should be subject to a joint effort from the partner countries as well as relevant EU institutions.” This constitutes an important step forward.

The aims

The major objective is to create within ten years a fabric of translation in the Mediterranean region, with exacting standards of quality, based on networks of translators, publishers, intellectuals, artists and media representatives, while also incorporating, and giving due recognition to existing initiatives.

More specifically, the project aims:

1. To encourage fast, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, the translation of theoretical and artistic work, through funding, encounters, alternative education, distribution, not just from North to South and from South to North, but also from East to West and from West to East;
2. To encourage a coordination of State policies, private initiatives, intergovernmental strategies and contribute to it;
3. To ensure that the rights of authors and translators are protected in translation processes;
4. To give prominence to the diversity and wealth of languages in all the diverse spheres of exchange, and to encourage cooperation between the different parts of civil society, esp. cultural actors, on the basis of translation;
5. To open up new paths for cooperation and research in the world of art and ideas as well as in the social field.

Towards concrete action

1. Mapping of the situation in the Mediterranean, which will serve as a reference for the region and will be of an easy access and will lead towards policy recommendations for the stakeholders; implementing on the long term observatory mechanisms which will aim at developing concrete actions;
2. Contributing to the setting of priorities for translation ; encouraging the development of concerted public cultural policies in the field of translation;
3. Encouraging financial supports to structuring translation projects in the field of social and human sciences, literature, theatre and cinema in general, with a qualitative and quantitative focus, and a specific attention paid to coherence between the various initiatives; help for access to financial supports; later on, whenever needed, development of an autonomous fund for translation projects;
4. Training of translators (long life learning process) , esp. in the frame of thematic seminars, collective workshops, along with a consolidation of professional translation, and its accompanying rights;
5. Promoting the dissemination of translated works, in cooperation with libraries, as well as publishers and bookshops;
6. Encouraging networking and promoting the development of a cooperative platform;
7. Highlighting translation as a social and cultural practice;
8. Creating an autonomous, structuring space for the exchange of practices and ideas about translation stakeholders, history of translation, theory of translation ("Translating in the Mediterranean" website);
9. Disseminating systematically in various languages the project results.

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Notes
