



Consensus statement EuroBABEL Review Panel (Final Evaluation)

What follows is an assessment of the level of scientific cooperation and interaction among the EuroBABEL programme members, the achievements of the EUROCORES programme and the lessons to be learned for follow-up initiatives.

What stood out in these reflections is the high degree of consensus among the Panel members on the overall success of the programme.

1. Progress in the Collaborative Research Projects (CRPs)

- Progress towards CRP goals and scientific highlights of the CRPs, including main achievements, contribution to knowledge and joint outputs:

All CRPs have achieved most of their project aims and have produced an impressive list of scientific results. All CRPs have demonstrated that the study of endangered languages feeds into and enhances theory building in linguistics. The main research areas investigated were: linguistic typology; historical, areal and comparative linguistics; sign languages and cross-modal typology; and language documentation. The CRPs have achieved valuable results of different kinds:

- excellent documentation and analysis, both quantitative and qualitative;
- production of detailed documentation and analysis by some CRPs of previously little known or investigated linguistic phenomena, thereby significantly contributing to language theory;
- contributions by some CRPs to a necessary, language-informed refinement of historical and pre-historical theories;
- at the local level, development by a few CRPs of rich and extensive contacts with speakers and communities of endangered languages, potentially contributing to a more acute awareness of language diversity and richness and of the necessity to preserve it;
- the development of home pages, elicitation kits and research protocols;
- the production of databases and bibliographical repertoires;
- steps towards the development and establishment of unified linguistic and metalinguistic conventions, such as in tagging, glossing and transliteration conventions.

In many instances, the work of the CRPs has fundamentally transformed our understanding of the relevant subject area, and produced a rich basis of data and analysis which will have a lasting and deep impact on the field.

The programme is rated very highly in terms of the work achieved by each project.

- Integration and collaboration within the multinational CRP teams:

All CRPs report very positive experiences of working together as part of an international team and note that the results from the CRPs could not have been achieved without the EuroBABEL programme. All CRPs have held regular meetings and workshops within and across CRPs, and designed a common scheme of research. The high level of integration within all CRPs is evident from the coherence and inter-connectedness of outputs and joined authorships and contributions from different IPs within the CRPs. Alor-Pantar and KBA stand out as exceptionally well integrated.

It is also noteworthy and indicative of the successful integration of the CRPs that all CRPs have secured funding and/or are currently preparing funding applications for follow-on projects and further research projects which directly build on the results of the CRP work.

2. Programme integration

Generally speaking, a high level of integration has been achieved. The contribution of EuroBABEL in terms of opportunities in sharing common interests and methodologies, disseminating results and getting feedback has greatly contributed to the results of all CRPS, which have therefore benefited from the EuroBABEL framework. The panel underlined the large number of joint meetings and publications that involved more than one CRP and, from the quality of presentations at the final conference and the high level of the conversation after each presentation, concluded that there was considerable added-value for each CRP to be part of the programme. Participants in the final conference found that it was exciting, both in terms of the content of individual CRPs and the integration between CRPs. The net benefit of EuroBABEL is all the more noteworthy given the huge diversity of issues, scientific goals, academic traditions and field areas and field conditions involved among the CRPs.

Integration has operated at the level of couples or groups of single CRPs, rather than at the global level of all CRPs.

3. Networking, training and dissemination

The panel underlined that making finances available for networking, training and dissemination activities was critical to the success of the programme.

Results from the CRPs have been made available to a wide range of audiences within and outside of academia through workshops, training and dissemination events, websites and electronic corpora, as well as a high number of high-quality joint publications, including a range of descriptive studies and grammatical descriptions of individual languages, edited volumes around a shared theme, and theoretical papers addressing specific topics.

All CRPs reported their results through presentations at conferences, workshops or through seminars and talks, and many members of the CRPs have been invited to present their work in keynote addresses at international conferences, thus providing a very visible platform for dissemination of EuroBABEL results.

The impact of these results ranges from very broad in terms of audience and academic prestige, to more local and specialized.

4. General comments and other feedback

This program offered a tremendous challenge, with three levels of structure, Individual Project, Collaborative Research Project and cross-CRP. The organizational challenges of this were huge, particularly in the cases of groups whose members did not already know each other well. The panel felt that cross-CRP work, while easily viewed as an additional burden, has been fruitful in uncovering for the IPs and CRPs materials and issues that they would not otherwise have considered. The panel also noted that it was impressed with developments since the mid-term reporting.

The panel agreed that the most important factor preventing the program from achieving its full potential is time – three years are simply not sufficient for this type of work.

The panel also stressed the importance of research on endangered languages. The Dobes programme, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, is no longer soliciting new proposals, and the ELDP program is in its final stages. Given the importance of research on endangered languages and with endangered language communities, the panel cannot stress enough the importance of finding ways for projects like those supported through the EuroBABEL programme to continue.