

DISCUSSION MATERIAL ON DECENTRALIZATION AND LANGUAGE

Several communication problems have arisen recently due to the bilingual character of the Network. The increasing amounts of documentation that need to be translated take the time from organizational, operative tasks. The Coordinating Institution of NACEE proposed two possible solutions of the problem:

- Changing the bilingual character of the Network;
- Decentralization of the coordination tasks (with two closely cooperating centres – one for Russian-speaking countries and another for English-speaking ones).

Nine answers were returned to this suggestion. Two of the respondents were in favour of keeping only one Coordinating Institution and turning the Network into an English-speaking one, four voted for the bilingual character and decentralization of the Network. Three institutions suggested saving the bilingual character of the Network without decentralization.

There were serious arguments against both options. It was pointed out that decentralization could have destructive effects. Dividing the Network in two, however closely cooperating, centres will return the isolationist tendencies existing in the last 15 years, which still appear even within NACEE, and thus, will strongly reduce the efficiency and importance of the Network.

On the other hand, even if the bilingual character of the Network is abolished, translation of information will still be necessary for many institutions (even if the liaison officers generally speak English, many directors in Russian-speaking countries do not, and thus, if the information is to be presented to the directors, it generally involves the need for translation). Therefore, translation would still be necessary, with the difference that each institution would have to do it separately, which would require more efforts – and offer more possibilities for misinterpretation – than translating the materials centrally.

Proposals

On the basis of the feedback of NACEE members, the NACEE Coordinating Institution suggests both keeping the bilingual character of the Network and the existing structure, and solve the problem as follows:

- (1) Putting apart a certain amount of money from the NACEE budget each year for paying the work of translators.
- (2) Instead of dividing the coordination tasks, to divide the translation work. Thus, translations to English could be done in the Coordinating Institution, as before, while translations to Russian, in a Russian-speaking Member Institution (BIOS?). This could both improve the quality of translations and reduce the workload on the Coordinating Institution.