

Lecture by Brian Fox, the European Commission's former Director of Interpreting

## ***The evolution of multilingualism and language professions: what are the stakes?***

"The ancients, Sir, are the ancients; but we are the moderns" (Molière, trans. C. Wall). An overview of the world of languages for everyone who would like to know more.

Who would have guessed that the European Union, amidst the frenzy of globalization, would almost double its number of official languages in 2004? That the country whose language became the global *lingua franca* would leave the Union? That "minor languages" such as Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Catalan would gain visibility?

While national policies can change abruptly, languages evolve constantly, without us even noticing. It's inevitable, since languages reflect the morals, customs, norms, organisation and legal framework of our societies, which are rapidly undergoing change. Language, identity and culture form a triangle that language professionals need to be aware of.

Then there's the question of technology: whether it helps or hinders, technology itself is in need of linguists. But what are the consequences for language professionals? One thing is for sure: language professions are diversifying more than ever today, and thus, quality is vital. So let's talk about it.

### **Biographical note**

After graduating from the University of Edinburgh, Brian Fox was awarded an internship in conference interpreting at the European Commission in 1976. He then specialized in training interpreters, managing relations with universities and multilingualism. As head of unit, he coordinated the interpreting preparations for the 2004 enlargement of the European Union and also launched the European Masters in Conference Interpreting.

As director of interpreting services, Brian Fox maintained and strengthened relations with universities and governments in order to prepare for the future. He promoted cooperation between the international organisations within the IAMLADP network (International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications). He headed the network's Working Group on Training for many years. He also took part in numerous projects, programmes and initiatives related to languages and multilingualism.