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Culture and Theatre are Key Motivators for a Multilingual Europe

European project culminates 2-day conference by signing Declaration Linking Culture, Theatre & Multilingualism

PRESS RELEASE: 20 November 2012 – The **European Theatre Convention (ETC)** and the **Poliglotti4.eu** project confirmed their commitment to reinforcing culture and theatre as key motivators for a multilingual, integrated and prosperous Europe, when they signed a joint declaration to this effect at the Poliglotti4.eu closing conference in Parma, Italy, on 16 November 2012. The declaration calls upon European policymakers to recognize and utilize the role of culture, and specifically theatre, in the promotion of language diversity and multilingualism and highlights the mobility, employability, new language learning tools and social inclusion that theatre easily fosters.

The Poliglotti4.eu conference, entitled ***One continent, many tongues: a spotlight on Europe's linguistic wealth***, was presented by the ETC at the Teatro Due, Parma, in collaboration with the Poliglotti4.eu consortium. It brought together an eclectic mix of artists, academics and EU policymakers for two days of panels, debates and round table discussions to share the research findings of the Poliglotti4.eu project and discuss the idea that different languages are concepts of cultural identity. The project, co-funded by the European Commission, originated two years ago from the work of the civil society platform and focused on enhancing language skills for EU citizens not in formal compulsory education. Special emphasis was given to early and lifelong language learning, languages in social and community services and as a tool to promote social inclusion. The principle outcome of the project is the multilingual On-line Language Observatory, a web-based resource for the gathering and disseminating of best practice in language policy and language learning which will continue beyond the life of the project itself.

The high calibre and diversity of speakers and panellists at Parma's closing conference guaranteed two days of inspirational and passionate discussion. Participants in the first day's events included **Dr. Aleksandra Jovičević**, from La Sapienza University, Rome, and the Faculty of Drama Arts, Belgrade, **Pascal Rambert**, Artistic Director of the Théâtre de Gennevilliers and **Antonio Latella**, Theatre Director and Professor at Ecole des Maîtres. The second day of the conference also brought together brilliant thinkers in their field, including **Paolo Fabbri**, professor of semiotics at the University Institute of Foreign Languages, Milan, **Paolo Leon**, economist and co-founder of the Rome Tre University, **Walter Le Moli**, Director of the Corso Laureate and specialist in Science & Techniques of Theatre and **Dubravka Vrgoč**, ETC President and director of the z/k/m and World Theatre Festival Zagreb, Croatia on a panel moderated by **Philippe Cayla**, President of European TV channel, EURONEWS.

The public in attendance at the conference was just as diverse as the speakers and panellists, both in age (from young students to active seniors) as well as walks of life (students, professionals in the culture industry, municipal officials and retirees). In keeping with the theatrical and dramatic theme, the two days were interspersed with short works of theatre that showcased the themes of Culture and Multilingualism: A Reading from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* by Christopher Sawyer-Luçanno and a lively tri-lingual (Croatian, German, Italian) theatre performance by Holger Shober.

Concluding the conference, project partners agreed that not only had it been a fruitful collaboration and an enlivening experience but that involvement in Poliglotti4.eu had given added value to the individual work carried out within the various sectors to increase awareness on the importance of multilingualism. As **ETC President**,

Dubravka Vrgoč and **Uwe Mohr**, Director of the **Poliglotti4.eu** project, signed the declaration, it was acknowledged that culture would continue to be a principle contributor to the EU's overall multilingualism strategy.

"The role of culture, and theatre, in particular," asserted Ms. Vrgoč "has the potential to contribute to the goal of a more multilingual Europe. If our European policymakers play an active role in realising our suggested calls to action, the potential for positive impacts both sociologically and economically is very promising."

Additionally underscoring the linkage between culture and multilingualism, **Uwe Mohr** added, *"We stand in solidarity with The European Theater Convention since we are readily conscious of the fact that culture is directly linked to language. By promoting cultural activities in local languages, policy makers are promoting a more integrated and prosperous Europe."*

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Poliglotti4.eu is a project promoting multilingualism in Europe - the result of the deliberations of the EU Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism. The project will result in the creation of an On-line Observatory, reporting on best practice in language policy and language learning. The observatory will provide policymakers, teachers, learners and civil society organisations with a powerful toolkit for benchmarking and enhancing their activities, in non-formal and informal education and learning sectors. The project is co-funded through the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP).

The nine project partners are: Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE); British Council (BC); Danish Cultural Institute Benelux (DKI); EU National Institutes for Culture in Brussels (EUNIC in Brussels); European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA); European Theatre Convention (ETC); Fundación Academia Europea de Yuste (FAEY); Goethe-Institut Brüssel (GI); Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator).

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Multilingualism