We are pleased to send all of you the second Newsletter on the lang. harmonization project. Lots of interesting things have happened since we issued Newsletter 1 last May. So read on and let us know if you have any questions or comments.

BROADENING OF THE PROJECT SCOPE

The new Assistant Secretary-General of OHRM, Martha Helena López, suggested that we reframe the harmonization project so that its ultimate aim is to promote multilingualism throughout the Organization by creating a new UN Framework of language levels, including the “working level”. This new shift in focus expands the project and makes it easier for stakeholders, including senior management across the Secretariat, to see the relevance of the project to their departments and their staff. Their engagement, in turn, will give the project more visibility and help it to advance.

In the beginning of September, Lea Loensted presented the project on behalf of the ASG to the Staff Management Committee (staff and management representatives from across the UN Secretariat who advise the SG on human resources issues). The presentation delivered at that meeting (attached) is a concise summary of how the harmonization project fits into the overall goal of promoting multilingualism.
DEFINITION of the UN WORKING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The final name of the new UN proficiency level is the “Working Language Proficiency” (WLP). The descriptors for the WLP were updated, based on the feedback you gave during the July 2017 workshops. Thank you very much for all the valuable comments, many of which we integrated into the WLP document. Please see attached, Compiled Feedback and FAQs, in which we include your comments and explain how we dealt with them.

The finalized WLP draft (attached) contains a section on the institutional background, drafted by members of the LPE Working Group (from LLODS, ETS and Policy); an academic background section, drafted by the Harmonization Working Group in consultation with Neus Figueras, the specialist in second language assessment; and the descriptors.

TERMS of REFERENCE

We are in the process of drafting a Terms of Reference (ToR) for all stakeholders (language teachers, chiefs, learning managers) to specify the objectives and scope of the project (i.e., what does “harmonize” mean; what will we harmonize, and to what extent; what impact on the language programmes do we envisage, etc.). We thank the LCP and LTP heads, Felipe and Virginie, who helped the working group to define the ToR at the beginning of the term.

WORKING GROUP

The Working Group (WG) is excited to welcome two new members this fall:

- Li Bourrit, a full-time teacher with the UNOG Chinese Language Team, joined in September.
- Javier Serrano, from UNON, also joined in September for a three-month consultancy.

Anna and Fabienne continue at the helm and Jerome and Mary also remain on board.
COLLABORATION EXERCISE

The Working Group would like to thank you for your invaluable input to the language harmonization project via the Collaboration Exercise, starting last term. The goal of the exercise is threefold:

• to give LTP and LCP the opportunity to break silos and work together, which can only prove beneficial to both programmes
• to identify existing work that can be recycled in the new framework (to avoid reinventing the wheel) and to discover areas that could benefit from more uniform practices
• to help the WG formulate the outlines of the common curriculum and course programmes, which the LTP- LCP defined and agreed upon earlier this year.

NEXT STEPS UNTIL DECEMBER 2017

Feedback from Stakeholders
Senior management and Executive Offices across the Secretariat will be requested to appoint focal points to the harmonization project. The finalized draft WLP and a survey will be sent to them and to Learning Managers at Offices Away from Headquarters. The survey will ask what practical implications they can foresee for the WLP and UN Competence Levels in their department and for their staff (e.g., pre-screening tests for recruitment and mobility; performance management, etc.). The survey will also ask them to suggest ways in which the LPE could be more UN-specific.

Finalizing the WLP
Neus Figueras will continue her consultancy until February 2018 to create the final WLP, to create evaluation criteria for the revised LPE and to make recommendations for exam tools.
Drafting the UN Language Competence Levels

- There is a possibility that Neus Figueras will extend the scope of her consultancy to help us define the UN Language Competence Levels.
- The WG will define the UN Language Competence Levels above and below the WLP: their names, draft descriptors for each level, and a graphic visualization to show how they build upon each other. We will share a first draft by the end of October.
- The WG will create draft outlines for the common “curriculum” and “course programmes”, which were defined and agreed upon earlier this year.
- The WG is in the process of defining a specific timeline of actions until the end of 2019; it will be shared very soon.

Fabienne's mission to UNHQ

Fabienne will be in New York 23-26 October 2017. To give everyone the possibility to participate without adding to your workload, the following is planned:

- a presentation during the LLODS meeting on 24 October on the ToR and timeline for 2018-2019
- a presentation in the Coordinators’ meeting
- a number of voluntary meetings and workshops - we will share a calendar with you soon

UNON contribution

Javier Serrano’s consultancy ends December 2017. His main tasks will be to complete the same descriptive table that the LCP and LTP completed last spring and to write a short report on the language programmes, and to present the harmonization project to his supervisors.

Attachments:

- Ppt on broadened scope of project
- Compiled feedback and FAQs
- Finalized draft definition of the WLP

Thanks for reading and staying updated on our shared project. We look forward to your feedback any time and we welcome your comments and questions.