

CLUSTERLINGUA: the Catalan Association of Language Industries

Tenesoya Pawlowsky

Abstract

An introduction to Clusterlingua, the Catalan Association of Language Industries, by way of the main conclusions in its Strategic Plan and its medium-term objectives. Clusterlingua's Strategic Plan is based on a study of the business volume and trends of multilingualism at an international level.

Paper

CLUSTERLINGUA: THE CATALAN CLUSTER OF LANGUAGE INDUSTRIES

- Competitiveness of companies from all sectors requires multilingual solutions
- Languages are markets
- Cooperate to compete
- "The language of Europe is translation": a €8.7 billion business

Introduction

The cluster of the Catalan Association of Language Industries (CLUSTERLINGUA) was founded in Barcelona on 20 January 2012. It was created thanks to the impetus of nine of the most representative companies of the sector in Catalonia:

CPSL

NOVA TRADUCTORS I INTÈRPRETS

IDISC INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

INTERTEXT TRADUCCIÓ I DOCUMENTACIÓ MULTILINGÜE

AUTOMATIC TRANS

BCN NET TRANSLATIONS

LINGUASERVE INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN DE SERVICIOS

CBG INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING AND TRANSLATION

FUNDACIÓ PRIVADA DIGITALENT

In the short term, it aims to attract up to twenty companies from the sector and other agents in the value chain.

Origins

CLUSTERLINGUA came into being through a process of strategic reflection within the language industries in Catalonia. This began in 2010 and was promoted by Linguamón – Casa de les Llengües and Barcelona's 22@ district: in other words by the Generalitat of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council.

The first task was to create the cluster's Strategic Plan, including an analysis of the international market. In late 2011, the process was launched to formally set up an association that could oversee the action plan stemming from this analysis of the sector and market trends.

One of the conclusions the analysis drew was that the association could be more competitive in a globalised world. Languages are vital because languages are markets. It therefore follows that

the more languages –those spoken by customers in a global market– the greater the competitiveness. While it might seem like a paradox, globalising the economy and communication not only generates greater uniformity but encourages the development of cultural and linguistic diversity. The role of languages as a business factor will continue to grow in all sectors of the economy.

The technical partner responsible for the entire process undergone until now is Cluster Development, with the participation of Marc Papell and Albert Vilardaga, who have designed everything from the Strategic Plan to the association's start-up and constitution.

Now a process begins that requires the members of the cluster to strive to ensure that their ideas have positive outcomes in Catalan society and the Catalan business sphere.

The Clusterlingua project: cooperate and compete – the essence of a cluster

This association's main objective is to promote the language industry, offering greater visibility to a sector that has become a necessary ally of any business aiming to launch an internationalisation process. Language industries are an exporting company's greatest accomplice.

To achieve this goal, we will develop actions to improve competitiveness in companies, encouraging the development of innovative products and services which provide support for the company's internationalisation through national and international projects.

Clusterlingua aims to become a meeting platform where companies can network, identify and create cross-cutting innovation projects in collaboration with universities and research centres, as well as participate in and promote their own joint projects (such as market studies, specialised training activities, meetings with experts, and so on), which they could not do alone.

In short, the cluster's central idea is COOPERATE TO COMPETE.

The multilingual industry in Catalonia today

In Catalonia, language industries include over 250 companies, more than 1,500 direct jobs and have a turnover of more than 150 million euros. They embrace diverse segments such as translation and interpretation, localisation, semantics, voice technologies, dubbing and subtitling, and content and language teaching. This is a sector which in Europe moves around 8.7 billion euros and has an estimated potential of 38 billion euros worldwide.

The research carried out through the Strategic Plan provides data that, despite the severity of the current economic crisis, encourages us to be optimistic and accept the great challenge we are facing.

What currently defines our sector in Catalonia? What is our starting position? We could sum it up by saying we are defined by:

- A local market made up of SMEs which is growing at a rate of 5.5% compared to a global market that is increasing at 17.25%
- A limited range of services
- Little technological integration (knowledge and technology)
- A worrying disconnection between science and business
- Extreme fragmentation and polarisation of the business sphere
- Extreme associative fragmentation – little activity at a business development level and poor visibility

What challenges are thrown up by this reality? How can we improve our competitiveness?

- Develop markets and internationalisation: multi-localisation of markets (language and geographical)
- Verticalisation of services (specialisation)
- Sophistication of the national market
- Better level of technology
- Draw science and business closer together
- Business consolidation
- Improve visibility and coordination of the sector

What should we do?

We all know that things do not get done by themselves. Having a sound action plan is vital when undertaking a venture in which the coordination and cooperation of all participants is essential.

Clusterlingua has defined the following areas of work/action for the short-term future:

- FINE-TUNE THE CLUSTER'S STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE
- PROVIDE THE CLUSTER WITH VISIBILITY AND POSITIONING
- START-UP LAUNCH PROJECTS:
 - DEVELOP MARKETS AND INTERNATIONALISE SERVICES
 - ENCOURAGE THE INNOVATION OF MULTILINGUAL DIGITAL CONTENT
- INTEGRATE AND SPECIALISE TECHNOLOGY
- PROMOTE CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

We are convinced that language industries have a great future before them. So we will do everything in our power to be at the forefront of the multilingual solutions required by companies worldwide.

You can find us at www.clusterlingua.cat.