META-NORD

Baltic and Nordic Branch of the European Open Linguistic Infrastructure

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Action plan - Iceland

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term/definition
ICLT	Icelandic Centre for Language Technology
LT	Language Technology
R&D	Research and Development

1. Introduction

This document contains a preliminary action plan describing awareness, community mobilisation and dissemination actions to be undertaken in Iceland during the META-NORD project period, with the aim of maximising the impact of the project and ensuring its sustainability beyond the EU-supported phase. The action plan focuses on three main groups:

- research community in human language technology and other related domains;
- society, government and other public decision makers;
- economy, both language industry and other business sectors.

We will contact key persons and organisations in the research community, industry, and public sector in Iceland and introduce the project to them and ask for their input. We will maintain a website where information related to language technology can be found. We will also organise meetings and conferences with participants from academia, industry, government, public media and others to increase awareness of language technology and its importance in the society.

2. Target groups

We have identified a number of target groups, institutions, companies, organisations, and associations which have potential interests in LT. Our target groups include the following:

- Ministries
- The Parliament
- Research funds
- The Science and Technology Policy Council
- Innovation Center Iceland
- ICT companies
- Institutions in the health and social sectors
- Publishing houses and publisher's associations
- Newspapers and online journals
- The Icelandic Language Council
- Writer's and copyright owners' associations
- Translation bureaus
- Dictionary makers
- Television and radio stations
- Libraries and museums
- Icelandic Standards
- The Organization of Disabled in Iceland and its member associations

In the following, the different roles and motivations of these groups in awareness raising and dissemination are outlined.

2.1   Research community

The Icelandic research community in Language Technology is very small. The researchers are based at three different institutions; the University of Iceland (HI), Reykjavik University, and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. In 2005, researchers from these institutions who had been involved in LT R&D projects decided to join forces in a consortium entitled Máltæknisetur (Icelandic Centre for Language Technology, ICLT, http://iclt.is). The Icelandic META-NORD partner, HI, is a member of this consortium and hence we have a very good relationship with the research community as a whole.

Language Technology is a highly interdisciplinary field and the members of the ICLT come both from linguistics and computer science. The University of Iceland has a strong linguistic community, whereas Reykjavik University is strong in computer science. One of the main departments of the Árni Magnússon Institute works on lexicography and has developed many valuable language resources. The Icelandic META-NORD participants from these institutions will take measures to make their colleagues interested in LT and encourage LT related research in both linguistics and computer science. Many of these colleagues have developed language resources which we hope can be made accessible through META-SHARE.

The Icelandic LT research community has good international connections, both through META-NORD and other channels. The researchers have been active in presenting papers at international conferences, taking part in Nordic research projects and networks, and cooperating with prominent international researchers. Many of the basic resources and tools that have been developed in recent years for Icelandic are available under open source licenses, which has given a boost to R&D work on Icelandic LT.

2.2   Society, government and other decision makers

In order to increase awareness and disseminate knowledge it is important to locate people and groups who have potential interests in LT or could benefit – financially, physically, mentally, culturally, etc. – from the development and use of LT products and services. We have identified a number of target institutions, organisations and associations both in the public sector and in society.

We will contact at least three ministries; the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, the Ministry of Industry, and the Ministry of Finance. Two representatives from the Icelandic Centre for Language Technology who both also work on META-NORD (Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson and Sigrún Helgadóttir) are already members of an LT committee appointed by the Minister of Education, Science, and Culture. The role of this committee is to come up with ideas on how to implement the recently adopted Icelandic Language Policy in regards to software translation and localisation and the development of LT tools and resources.

We will also approach the Icelandic Research Fund and the Science and Technology Policy Council to try to influence their policy. In the Science and Technology Policy for Iceland 2010-2012   (http://www.vt.is/files/S&T%20policy%202010-2012_302180683.pdf),   strong emphasis is laid on the building of research infrastructures and open access to databases. This is of course much in line with the main motivation behind META-NORD and we will discuss possible cooperation with META-SHARE with the Science and Technology Policy Council.

One important target group are people who are physically disabled. It is obvious that LT tools such as speech synthesisers, speech recognisers, etc., can drastically improve the life of blind and deaf people, to name two examples. We cooperate already with the Icelandic Organization of the Visually Impaired and the Icelandic Library for the Blind on the development of a new text-to-speech system for Icelandic. We have on our mailing list the Organization of Disabled in Iceland and several of its member associations, and plan to approach these associations directly to discuss with them the potential usefulness of LT for their members. The same applies to several public institutions in the health and social sectors.

2.3   Language industry and other business sectors

At the beginning of the century, the Icelandic Government established a special Language Technology Program with the aim of making Icelandic LT self-sustained. Institutions and companies received financial support for building basic language resources and tools. During the lifetime of this program, a number of commercial companies were active in the LT industry, such as Síminn (Iceland Telecom), Hex Software, Frisk Software, Nýherji (IBM Iceland), Spurl, and a few others. Both an isolated word speech recogniser and a text-to-speech system for Icelandic were developed in cooperation between the University of Iceland, commercial companies, and Nuance Inc. The plan was to use these applications in commercial products and services, but due to lack of interest among the companies, this has only been done on a very small scale.

There are only about 320,000 people speaking Icelandic and this is not enough to sustain costly development of new products. The companies do not see LT as a profitable field and as a result, the number of commercial companies in the language technology industry in Iceland is close to zero. The only company in Iceland currently developing revenue-generating LT products is Clara, a recent start-up company, which, by using the techniques of opinion mining, provides service to companies that want to know what people think of their products and services.

Publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, translation bureaus, dictionary makers and writers are among potential users of LT products and services. They could benefit greatly from the use of various kinds of authoring and translation software. Good connections with these groups are also extremely important for META-NORD since they own a lot of valuable language resources that can either be used directly or as training material for LT tools – monolingual texts, parallel texts, dictionary databases, etc. We will negotiate the possibilities of making some of these resources accessible through META-SHARE under some standard licenses.

3. Planned actions

This section describes the awareness raising and dissemination actions that are planned in Iceland in the near future. Most of these actions are directed towards one or more of the target groups described in the previous section, but some of them are also directed towards the general public.

3.1   META-NORD website

We have established a website at http://vefir.hi.is/metanord. This website contains information on both META-NORD and META-NET, as well as information on Icelandic resources and tools, the language whitepapers, licences and legal issues, dissemination, publications, LT terminology, etc. Articles that we write in newspapers and journals to propagate information on META-NORD will be accessible through the website, and the same goes for press releases and all other published material.

We will update the web regularly and report on the progress of the project, LT related events, etc. The website has an RSS feed which we will encourage our contacts to use. In the next couple of weeks, we will send out an e-mail to all our contacts in academia, society, government, business, and industry, letting them know about the website and encouraging them to subscribe to its RSS feed.

Furthermore, we have translated the most important META-NET web pages into Icelandic. We plan to translate the whole META-NET web and the META-SHARE web in the near future.

3.2   Making contacts with target groups

Our first dissemination action was to send e-mails to almost 90 persons – directors, CEOs, or representatives of commercial companies, public organisations, research funds, ministries, etc. The purpose of this e-mail was to tell the recipients about META-NORD and META-NET, encourage them to join META, and informing them about the importance of LT for the future of the Icelandic language. Attached to this e-mail was a flyer with Icelandic translation of a few of the META-NET web pages.

During the summer, we plan to expand our contact list and send another e-mail in the autumn. There we will advertise our web page, in addition to providing a link to the Language whitepaper for Icelandic, which will have been translated into Icelandic by then. Furthermore, we will provide the Icelandic translation of the META-NET flyer. In 2012, we plan on sending e-mails to our contacts every three months or so to inform them about the progress of META-NORD and to encourage them to engage in LT work.

We have already established personal contacts with several people on our contact list. In the autumn, we will start contacting more people from the list by e-mail or telephone and arranging personal meetings. We expect to continue such meetings throughout the META-NORD project period.

3.3   Publications – newsletters, articles, press releases

META-NORD has already been introduced in an article in *Hugrás*, the online journal of the School of Humanities at the University of Iceland (http://www.hugras.is/2011/05/margmala-evropskt-malt%C3%A6knisamstarf/). The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service recently broadcast a short program on Language Technology (http://podcast.ruv.is/malstofan/2010.11.02.mp3) and we hope to get the opportunity to make or contribute to more radio programs in the future.

We are also planning to write introductory articles on LT in the largest Icelandic newspapers and have started establishing contacts with journalists at a number of newspapers and radio stations. We hope these contact persons will contribute to the promotion of LT in their media, by writing articles, making radio programs and interviews, etc.

Furthermore, we will contact business and industry organisations such as the Federation of Icelandic Industries, the Icelandic Chamber of Commerce, Innovation Center Iceland, etc., and ask for permission to publish introductory articles on LT in their newsletters or on their websites.

3.4   Workshops, conferences, presentations

META-NORD and related activities have already been introduced at a workshop at the annual Humanities Conference arranged by the Institute of Humanities at the University of Iceland (http://stofnanir.hi.is/hugvisindastofnun/stefnumot_morkum_malfraedi_og_tolvutaekni). We expect that a similar workshop will be held at the Humanities Conference in 2012.

Since its establishment in 2005, the Icelandic Centre for Language Technology has held biennial conferences on Icelandic LT with the participation of both researchers and industry. The next conference is scheduled in 2012 and will serve the role of a national META-NORD workshop (deliverable D5.4). We will invite representatives from government, industry, and other target groups to the conference and try to make it a big event which captures the attention of the media.

We will also use every opportunity to present META-NORD and Icelandic LT at workshops and conferences, both nationally and internationally, and have already started. Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson gave a talk (with Koenraad de Smedt) at the Workshop on Visibility and Availability of Language Resources (http://nordisksprogkoordination.org/astin), held in connection with the NODALIDA conference in Riga in May and he also wrote a short overview of Icelandic LT in a recent issue (11-12) of the CLARIN Newsletter (http://www.clarin.eu/ newsletter/3431).

3.5   Other awareness raising and dissemination actions

Language Technology is a relatively unknown field in Iceland and Icelandic terms for LT concepts and applications either do not exist or sound unfamiliar to most people. There is also a strong resistance in Iceland against adopting international terms for new concepts. Instead, new words are coined from domestic material – roots, prefixes and suffixes. In order to raise awareness of language technology among the general public, it is thus of utmost importance to build coherent and consistent terminology for the field.

We have initiated such work, with support from the Icelandic Student Innovation Fund. A graduate student of linguistics is collecting Icelandic terms that have been coined in the past few years, and selecting terms that need to be translated and defined. The student works in close cooperation with the META-NORD team and this groundwork will be essential in the translation of the Language whitepaper into Icelandic. The Icelandic LT Terminology Collection will be made available through the Icelandic META-NORD website and the ICLT website, and hopefully also become a part of larger terminology collections such as the Icelandic Term Bank (http://www.ordabanki.hi.is).

4. Conclusion

As is evident from the description above, several types of dissemination and awareness raising actions are either ongoing or being planned in Iceland. It must be emphasised that we are only six months into the META-NORD project phase so it would not be realistic to expect a detailed plan for the whole project period and beyond at this point. However, the action plan will be updated and extended towards the end of the project (deliverable 5.1.2, due M24) and by then we will have a much more solid ground for our planned actions.