



# Closing doors: Universities restructuring their language training programs

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# Itä-Suomen yliopisto lopettaa saksan pääaineopetuksen

Karsintaa perustellaan hakijoiden vähentymisellä ja työnjaolla.



**TYÖ: Venäjän kielestä luopuminen heikentää monialaisuutta – yhteistyön sijaan yliopistot kannustettiin oppiainekauppoihin**  
(The Student Union of the University of Turku, 9.6.2019)

**CAMPUS** • UNIVERSITÉS

## Facs d'allemand cherchent étudiants désespérément

En trois ans, cinq universités ont fermé leur département d'allemand. Le nombre d'étudiants en civilisation germaniques a chuté de 25 %.

Par Soazig Le Nevé (envoyée spéciale à Rennes et à Strasbourg)  
Publié le 10 novembre 2019 à 05h00, modifié le 12 novembre 2019 à 13h53 - Lecture 4 min.

# Vaasan yliopisto aikoo luopua tutkintoon tähtäävistä kieliopinnoista ja siirtää ne Jyväskylään

Yliopistot aikovat esittää opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriölle, että Vaasan yliopiston tutkintoon johtava kielten opetus siirrettäisiin Jyväskylän yliopistoon ensi vuoden elokuussa.



# Uni wird sprachlos

Akademischer Senat schließt Sprach-Studiengänge und will Entgelt für die Nutzung des Fremdsprachenzentrums

19.2.2004 0:00 Uhr

# University to suspend music and language courses

3 days ago

Liam Barnes  
East Midlands



# Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam schrapt opleiding Nederlands

Inzicht in onze cultuur en geschiedenis verdwijnt  
Wout Patyn – 30/3/2019 – Leestijd 5 minuten

teilen  
Columns  
Forum  
Recensies  
Radio & TV

Save Modern Languages  
at Cardiff University

www.savecardifflanguages.org  
Home News About Resources Contact Us Wall of Support



## Ongoing project (2024-)

### Closing and opening doors: Universities restructuring their language training programs

- Language education (and science) policy within higher education in Europe
  - **Closures** of university language training programs / severe downsizing of their resources
  - **Openings: start of new** language training programs / allocation of major new resources for language training
- Online questionnaire
- Team:
  - Prof. **Leena Kolehmainen** (University of Helsinki), Prof. **Philipp Krämer** (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and Prof. **Ulrike Vogl** (Ghent University)
  - Research assistants: **Alicja Kiełpińska** (University of Helsinki) and **Zeki Bostan** (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

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# Why this matters

- Language making:
  - Universities as language makers
  - ~ as agents contributing to the creation, reconfirmation or redrawing of linguistic units, their borders and value in Europe



INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF  
THE SOCIOLOGY  
OF LANGUAGE

Volume 2022, Special Issue 274: **Language Making**. Issue editors: Philipp Krämer, Ulrike Vogl & Leena Kolehmainen

## Higher education in languages:

- language experts
  - teachers, translators, interpreters, researchers, language technology, language and translation policy, linguistic accessibility in the society
- a deep understanding of languages and cultures
- understanding of worldviews: how people perceive and structure the world
- language expertise for specialised work in other fields
- international cooperation
- cultural exchange
- economic sustainability (e.g. international trade)
- health security
- national and international security, peace work, and diplomacy

## The online survey

- Published in December 2024, still open
- Closed and open questions
  - closures of university language training programs and major reductions in programs
  - new openings of university language training
- From 2000 onwards (including planned changes in the future)
- European universities
- Distributed via *Linguist List*, social media (*Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, *Bluesky*), SLE newsletter, email lists, personal contacts
- So far 107 answers for universities in 14 European countries

Where?  
Which languages?  
Why?  
How?  
Consequences?



<https://elomake.helsinki.fi/lomakkeet/132773/lomake.html>

# Quantitative results



Languages mentioned for reductions or discontinuations of teaching offers on all levels:

39 individual languages or language clusters

Arabic	English	Japanese	Romanian
Armenian	Estonian	Korean	Russian
Azeri	Finnish	Kurdish	Sanskrit
Bosnian	French	Latin	Slavistics
Celtic	Frisian	Latvian	Slovak
Chinese	Georgian	Lithuanian	Slovenian
Classical languages	German	Macedonian	Sorbian
Croatian and Serbian	Greek	Norwegian	South Slavic
Czech	Hebrew	Picard	Spanish
Danish	Hindi	Polish	Swedish
Dutch	Italian	Portuguese	Urdu

# Quantitative results

Languages most frequently mentioned for reductions or discontinuations of teaching offers on all levels:

number of cases reported

Language	Count
German	19
Italian	18
French	15
Spanish	11
Russian	9
Chinese	7
Dutch	7
English	6
Latin	6
Greek	6
Arabic	6
Portuguese	5

# Quantitative results

Reductions or discontinuations of language-related programmes  
number of cases reported

Type	Reductions	Discontinuations
<b>Bachelor</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Bachelor (minor)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Master</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Master (minor)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Language Course or other</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>135</b>

# Quantitative results

Discontinuations of language-related academic staff positions  
number of cases reported

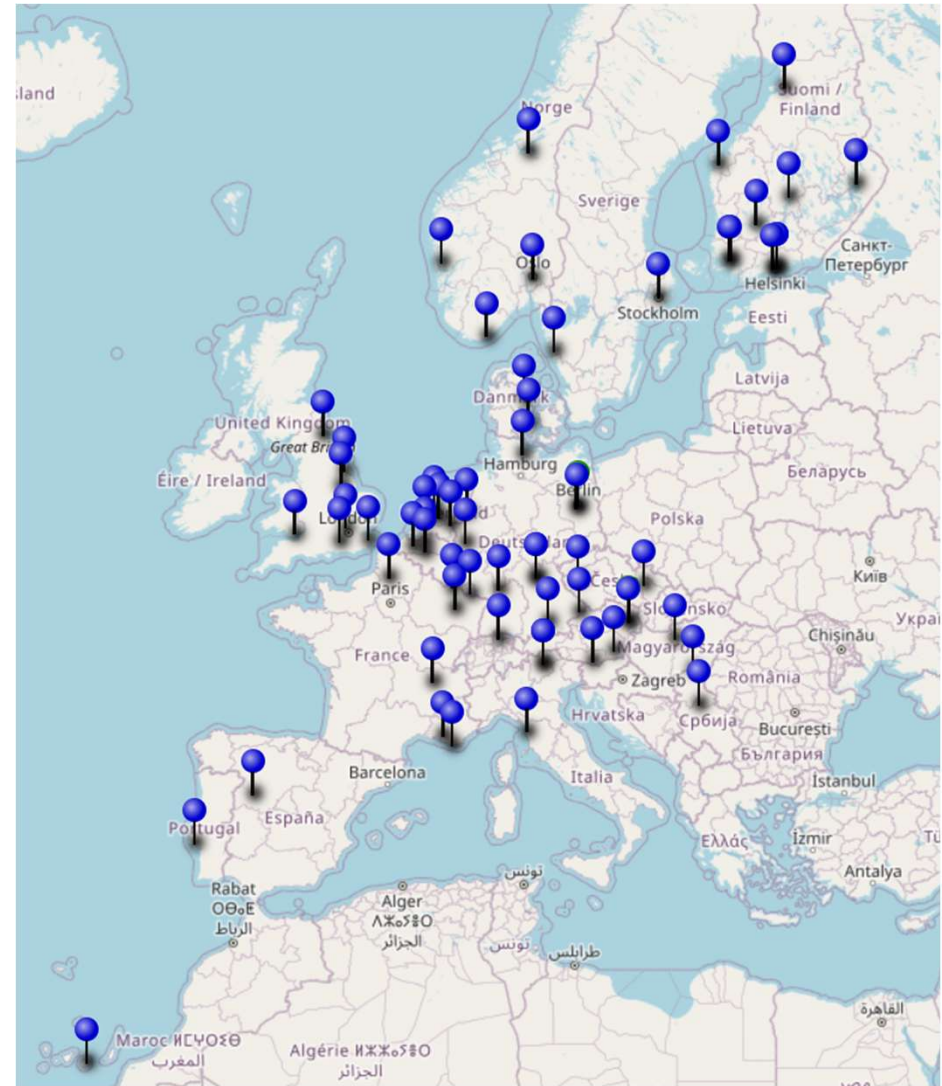
<i>Type of Position</i>	<i>Count</i>
Lecturer position (language instruction and/or academic work)	31
Professor position	16
Postdoctoral position	5
Postgraduate / PhD position	5
Other	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

# Quantitative results



Geographic spread of programme and/or staff reductions and discontinuations

1 pin = 1 university





## Opening doors

Albanian	Luxembourgish
Arabic	Portuguese
Chinese	Romanian
Dutch	Russian
English	Spanish
Estonian	Ukrainian

Languages mentioned for new teaching offers on all levels:  
12 individual languages

New creations of language-related offers in universities  
number of cases reported

Type	Openings
Bachelor	6
Bachelor (minor)	5
Master	10
Master (minor)	3
Language course	4
Other	4

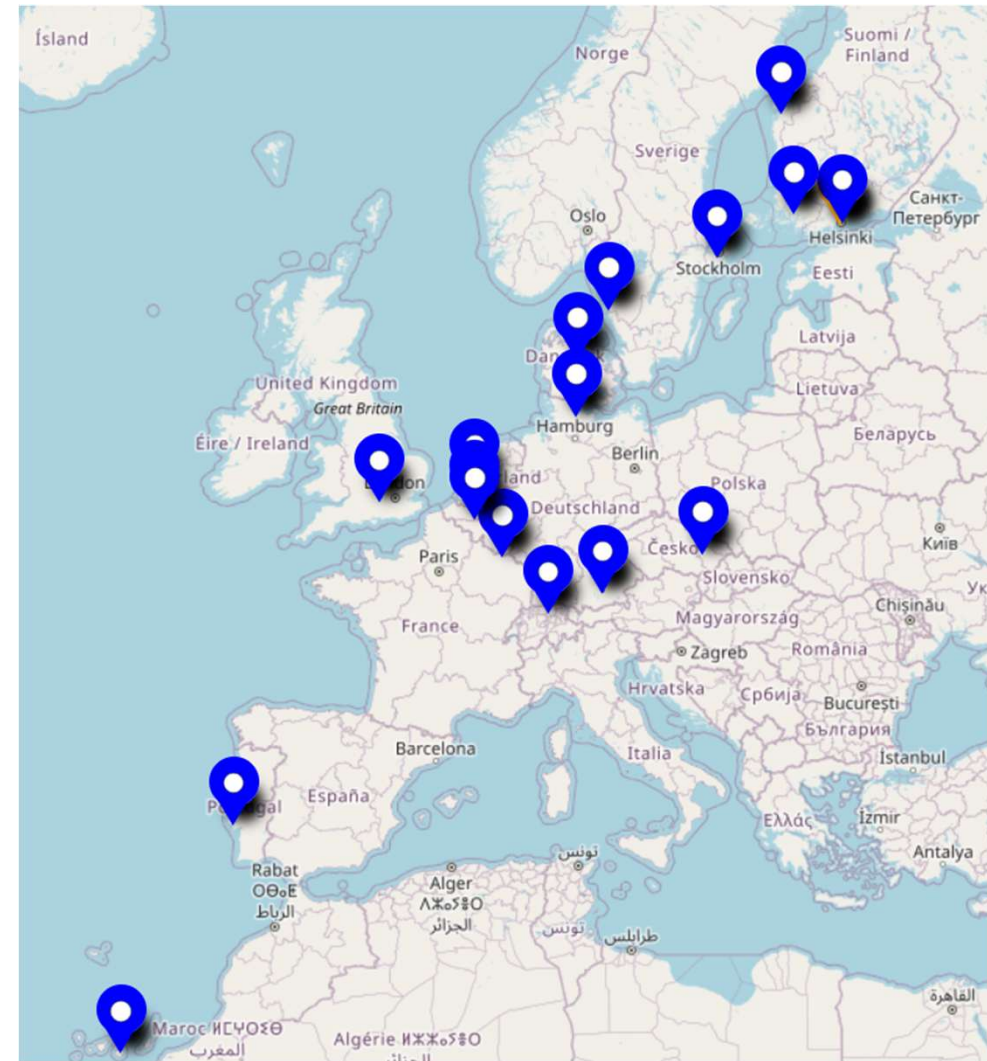
New creations of positions  
number of cases reported

Type of Position	Count
Professor	4
Postdoctoral	1
Postgraduate/PhD	2
Lecturer	5
Other	3

# Opening doors

Geographic spread of newly created teaching offers or positions

1 pin = 1 university



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## Questions and input

- New closings or openings?
- How biased are our data, what is missing? How to complete the picture? Input needed!
- Are other disciplines concerned by closures to the same extent? Only in humanities and social sciences or also in STEM?
- How to avoid that universities use these tendencies as an argument for further cuts, pointing at a “general trend” they are following?

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