



ЯЗЫКОЗНАНИЕ

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DUTCH, FRISIAN AND LOW GERMAN: THE STATE LANGUAGE OF THE NETHERLANDS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH TWO GERMANIC MINORITY LANGUAGES. PART 2

The primary involvement of the Fryske Akademy (Frisian Academy) lies in the domain of history, literature and culture related to the West-Frisian language. The users of its nearest relatives, the East- and North-Frisian languages in Germany, are less numerous and these languages are included into the list of most endangered languages of Europe. This report describes the present day position of the Frisian language as one of the minority and regional languages of Europe. Part 1 (Scandinavian Philology, vol. 14, issue 1) considers the relationship of Dutch with Frisian and the Low German dialects in the Netherlands (where it is called Low Saxon) and other parts of the world. Part 2 deals with question of education of Frisian and presents a survey of organizations which are involved in the documentation and safeguarding of Frisian and other regional and minority languages in Europe: the Fryske Akademy and the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. One of the subjects for study is the possible effect the new media have on the use of norms in the written language. This survey can be useful for the study and safeguarding of minority language situations elsewhere in the world.

Keywords: Frisian language, Low German, West-Germanic subgroup, minority languages, multilingualism, language policy, Frisian Academy.

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НИДЕРЛАНДСКИЙ, ФРИЗСКИЙ И НИЖНЕНЕМЕЦКИЙ: ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ЯЗЫК НИДЕРЛАНДОВ И ЕГО СООТНОШЕНИЕ С ДВУМЯ «МАЛЫМИ» ГЕРМАНСКИМИ ЯЗЫКАМИ. ЧАСТЬ 2

Главная задача, стоящая перед Фризской академией, заключается в изучении истории, литературы и культуры, связанных с западнофризским языком.

В Германии бытуют два близкородственных к западнофризскому языка: восточно- и севернофризский, однако носителей этих языков настолько мало, что они занесены в список языков Европы, находящихся под угрозой исчезновения. В данной статье описано сегодняшнее положение фризского языка как одного из языков меньшинств и региональных языков Европы. В части 1 (Скандинавская филология, том 14, вып. 1) рассмотрено родство фризского языка с нидерландским и нижненемецкими диалектами в Нидерландах (где они называются «нижнесаксонским языком») и в других странах мира. В части 2 описываются история преподавания фризского языка в школе и современное положение, а также дается обзор организаций, призванных сохранять фризский и другие региональные языки Европы (Фризская академия и Европейский исследовательский центр многоязычия и обучения языкам). Один из аспектов исследования — то влияние, которое новые средства информации могут оказать на нормы письменного языка. Данный обзор может быть полезен для изучения и сохранения языков меньшинств в любой точке мира.

Ключевые слова: фризский язык, нижненемецкий язык, западногерманские языки, малые языки, многоязычие, языковая политика, Фризская академия.

EDUCATION OF FRISIAN AND ITS ORGANISATION

The role of **Frisian in education** dates back to 1907 when the provincial government offered a grant to support Frisian lessons after regular school hours. Frisian was then taught as an extra-curricular subject. Legislative provisions for Frisian only began in 1937 with amendments to the Education Act of 1920. Although Frisian was not specifically mentioned, the changes to the act made it possible to teach Frisian as a regional language in higher grades during Dutch lessons [Riemersma, De Jong, 2007].

However, nothing was arranged for the use of Frisian as a medium of instruction. In 1950, nine primary schools began to experiment with bilingual education and in 1955 bilingual schools obtained a legal basis. Frisian became an optional subject throughout primary school and the use of Frisian as medium of instruction was allowed in the lower grades. By 1959 the number of bilingual schools had risen to 47. Starting from 1959, the Dutch state financed the *Pedagogysk Advysburo* of the *Fryske Akademy*, which merged into the organisation CEDIN for the Northern provinces.

The *Paedagogysk Advysburo* has been an institution that has offered educational advice and guidance to bilingual schools. Around 1970 these had risen to 84 schools, which was 25 per cent of all primary schools in the province. In 1974 the Primary Education Act was modified. Frisian

became an approved teaching medium in all grades and an obligatory school subject throughout primary education as of 1980. Preparations for the implementation of this new policy included the following extensive activities: the training of 3,000 teachers; special parents' evenings at all schools; the development of new learning material; the re-working of television and radio for schools and, finally, the introduction of Frisian as a subject at teacher training colleges.

Since 1980 Frisian has been taught in all primary schools, both public and private. In many of these schools, Frisian is also used to varying degrees as a teaching medium, alongside Dutch. There is no provision for primary education entirely through Frisian, although some preschool groups are conducted exclusively in Frisian. At secondary level it is also possible to use Frisian as a teaching medium for some subjects, but this is infrequently done. There is no secondary schooling entirely in Frisian, but in some schools Frisian can be used as language of instruction and Frisian can be taken as exam subject. In the early eighties the subject was offered by 25% of all secondary schools on an optional basis, and about 5% of all pupils availed themselves of this opportunity. Since 1993, Frisian has been an obligatory subject in the first three years of secondary education. The two teacher-training centers in Friesland are required to offer Frisian to their students. They have the policy which stipulates that all students must attend Frisian classes. This qualifies them to teach Frisian in primary schools. Secondary school teachers of Frisian are trained at the part-time higher vocational education college in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden and at the university of Groningen after having studied the language as a main subject at either the universities in Groningen or Amsterdam. In the University of Leiden, Frisian is a subsidiary subject. There is an extensive network of adult language courses in Frisian.

The current Primary Education Act (*Wet op het Primair Onderwijs — WPO, 1998*) lists a number of subjects that all primary schools have to teach without prescribing the number of hours or how schools should teach those subjects. In 1993, the Minister of Education defined attainment targets (*kerndoelen*) for these subjects. These targets were modified to some extent in 1998. Fully identical goals have been developed for both the Dutch and Frisian language, indicating which skills have to be attained in Dutch and Frisian by the end of primary education.

Together with other regions with lesser-used languages within the European Union, special projects have been initiated in the field of trilingual education. In a number of schools in Friesland three languages are used as medium of instruction: Frisian, Dutch and English. The Frisian Academy is involved in the co-ordination of these projects and the evaluation of their results [Cenoz, Gorter, 2005].

In the Netherlands it is the minister of education in The Hague who determines the attainment targets. The minister may be corrected by the national parliament, but not by the Frisian parliament. As a matter of policy, the Frisian parliament wishes to remain firm on the attainment targets for Frisian. The targets for Frisian should be equal to the targets for Dutch, requiring full literacy and proficiency in both languages. According to recent studies only 30 % of the primary schools in Friesland meet these targets for Frisian.

Afûk and the promotion of Frisian

The **Algemiene Fryske Ûnderrjocht Kommisje (Afûk)** is a cultural institution in Leeuwarden which aims to promote knowledge of Friesland and the use of Frisian via the use of traditional and new media. Its editing house produces numerous Frisian-medium books, with a particular focus on educational material, and children's books, and the Frisian monthly cultural journal **De Moanne**. Afûk also organizes language courses for both native speakers and learners of Frisian and houses a special translation service, **stipepunt Frysk** where texts are translated from and into Frisian. Alongside these traditional methods, Afûk exploits new technologies. Their Twitter account and Facebook page boast some 6,000 users apiece. The enthusiasm of the **Praat mar Frysk** campaign motivates many to tweet in Frisian, once a year or preferably more often. The access to new media has made this campaign much more alive than it would be without. A success story any minority language can learn from.

Afûk also provides an online learning facility **eduFrysk**. This is a good example of how new technology can open up a wide range of new possibilities in language learning and teaching. Since 2010, well over 4,500 persons have applied for an account. Students with different levels of proficiency are catered for and, through its careful selection of texts, music and songs, the programme combines language learning with learning about Frisian culture. The facility also incorporates podcasts

and games, which are especially appreciated by younger users. Other features include personalized profiles and virtual communities, which enable users to chat with each other and use the language in a friendly and informal way. Specialized learning packages are developed for particular target groups, such as people working in law or medicine. Students currently following Frisian language course and also those who have never taken a course before can all make use of eduFrysk. Emigration from Friesland to countries such as Canada and New Zealand has led to children finding that their grandparents are speaking a language they do not understand

Finally, Afûk provides an online dictionary, which translates words from Dutch into Frisian and vice versa. It is available on the different websites from Afûk. Afûk daily promotes a different Frisian word through **wurdboek** and various media. The use of New Media has made that Afûk has come very close to the Frisians and can approach them practically at any time.

Another success story is the introduction and the use of Wikipedia. The Frisian version of this multilingual encyclopaedia, which started in the beginning of this century now has more than 30,000 sites and a growing number of users. Therefore, the use of new technologies has made Frisian highly accessible to people both within and outside Friesland.

ORGANISATIONS RELATED TO FRISIAN AND OTHER MINORITY LANGUAGES IN EUROPE

The Fryske Akademy (Frisian Academy)

The main authoritative source on the Frisian language is the Fryske Akademy. It was founded in 1938 with the aim of maintaining an academic focus on Frisian, the Frisian people and the Frisian culture. Today, it houses departments of Linguistics, Social Sciences and History.

The **Department of Linguistics** conducts linguistic research on all periods of Frisian. Currently, special projects are being undertaken on the phonology and grammar of Frisian and on the linguistic characteristics of Frisian spoken in urban and rural environments. The Akademy makes extensive use of new technologies. For example, it has compiled several language corpora, such as the New Frisian language corpus (25 million words), which is a digital collection of Frisian books, scientific magazines and newspaper articles. The texts in this corpus

provide a tool for keeping scientific research on Frisian culture up-to-date.

The **Dictionary of the Frisian Language (Wurdboek fan de Fryske Taal (WFT))** is the product of one of the most important projects of the Fryske Akademy: the WFT-project, which collected the vocabulary of Modern Frisian (Frisian since 1800) and has been published in book form annually between 1984 and 2011. The collection was completed in 2011 and the online version (<http://gtb.inl.nl>) is freely accessible via the Internet from anywhere in the world.

Other results of the lexicographic work of the Fryske Akademy are a Frisian-English, a Frisian-Frisian dictionary and dictionaries with special terminology such as the one for legal matters. The internet has facilitated an intensified cooperation with other researchers of minority languages such as the exchange of research papers and comparison of results. The Linguistic Department has made a large contribution to the preservation of the Frisian language. Firstly, by developing the dictionaries and later on, by digitising them and developing new (online) digital applications.

Since 2011, the department has been developing the Frisian language *Taalweb*, consisting of a new online spell checker, a machine translation programme (*Oersetter*) and a dictionary portal. The whole idea behind *Taalweb* is to encourage people to use the Frisian language in everyday work contexts by offering user-friendly applications and including many practical examples in translations / spelling suggestions.

The Frisian Language Desk also forms part of the Linguistics Department. This service, which can also be consulted via email, is available to answer questions about spelling, phrasing or terminology and can give advice concerning the composition of Frisian texts. It also specializes in translating technical texts into Frisian such as notarial acts, and other official and technical documents. Information can be obtained about place names in Friesland and abroad, computer terminology, inland shipping and so forth.

The **Department of Social Science** studies the Frisian society. The central theme of multilingualism represents a point of departure for its many projects, which include:

Multilingualism and minority languages

- a) A regular survey of language use in Friesland
- b) The Frisian language abroad: the language of emigrants

- c) Technological developments in language learning
- d) The availability of online materials for language learning
- e) The cognitive effects of multilingualism on children
- f) Regional variation in spoken Frisian

The Department's work on multilingual education supports and evaluates education policy making, with a particular focus on the following areas:

- a) The evaluation of the provincial education policy 2007–2014
- b) Language acquisition and development in young children
- c) Trilingual schools
- d) Technological developments in education.

Part of these activities take place within the framework of the **Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning** which addresses the growing interest in multilingualism and the increasing need for linguistic communities to exchange experiences and to co-operate within a European context (see below). The Department of Social Sciences makes use of new technologies in almost all aspects of their work, using online questionnaires and social media such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

The **Department of History** studies the history, literature and toponymy of Friesland, focusing primarily on historical resources. New technologies have had a big impact on its work. Collections have been digitized and are freely accessible via the Internet. One example for this is provided by the website <http://www.hisgis.nl> of the project HISGIS, which stands for Historical Geographic Information System. This is a digital software package, which makes it possible to elaborate geographic and historical information: Initially, the oldest cadastral maps (dating from 1832) of Friesland have been digitized and they can be linked to later versions, texts and illustrations, which in various ways can be related to each other. On the website anyone can search through historical geography and ownership maps. The Fryske Akademy is gradually completing this website with maps from other regions in the Netherlands.

The Mercator European Research Centre

The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (<http://www.mercator-research.eu>), is an important

part of the Fryske Akademy, which addresses the growing interest in multilingualism and the increasing need of language communities to exchange experiences and to cooperate in a European context. It gathers and mobilises expertise in the field of language learning at school, at home and through cultural participation in favour of linguistic diversity of Europe.

The Mercator Centre aims to be an independent and recognised organisation for researchers, policymakers, and professionals in the field of education and language learning and it endeavours to favour linguistic diversity within Europe. The starting point lies in the field of regional and minority languages. Yet, immigrant languages and smaller state languages of Europe are also a topic of study.

In Europe there is a growing awareness of the value of linguistic diversity and the need to learn languages. The objective of the Council of Europe and the European Union is that all Europeans learn to speak at least two other languages in addition to their mother tongue. This not only refers to some of the major languages of Europe, such as English, French, German, or Spanish, but also to smaller state languages, immigrant languages, and regional and minority languages. All these languages together create the linguistic diversity of Europe. This characteristic diversity, however, needs to be protected and promoted at all levels. For example, the Province of Fryslân, the Dutch government, and the European commissioner for multilingualism all emphasise the relevance and importance of multilingualism. The Council of Europe stimulates language teaching and learning by means of conferences, projects and comparative studies, whereas the European Union has its own **Integrated Lifelong Learning Programme** that explicitly wants to promote language learning and supports linguistic diversity. This creates a clear need for up-to-date information and research. The Mercator Research Centre tries to meet this need by participating in and developing a multitude of activities ranging from carrying out research projects and making inventories of existing research, to conducting comparative studies and providing language dossiers, search engines and articles on regional and minority languages, immigrant and smaller state languages as well as sign languages.

Successful on-going activities of the Mercator Research Centre are: research, the series of Regional Dossiers, the Network of Schools and the organisation of international conferences and expert seminars.

The Mercator Research Centre develops its **research programme** in line with its experience and on the basis of the data collections available.

Scientific research is being conducted at the following three levels of aggregation:

- the way in which language and multi-lingualism takes place within individuals in a cognitive-psychological sense (intra-individual and individual; psycho-linguistics);
- the way in which language and multi-lingualism between individuals is realized, acquired (transfer, teaching, training, and testing) and experienced in mutual contact of the language itself and by the individuals who use the language (inter-individual and socio-linguistically. This implies the linguistic study of language contact, language mergers, creolization, code switching, language surveys, new teaching methods and the issue of inter-cultural and bi-lingual didactics;
- the way in which language and multi-lingualism are practiced in a society in terms of policy, institutes, legal structures and strategy (governance and organizational), language strategy and planning.

Recent research activities focussed on:

- Language learning and acquisition; various aspects of bilingual and trilingual education, such as interaction in multilingual classrooms, language proficiency in different languages, teachers' qualifications for the multilingual classroom, and the development of standards.
- Stimulating and improving multilingualism; the study of role models, language attitude, language vitality, immersion programmes, position of (new) media, relation between RML and immigrant languages (IML).
- Added value of multilingualism; international comparison of social status of languages, socio-economical value of languages.

The published inventory of **Trilingual Primary Education in Europe** [Bangma, van der Meer, Riemersma, 2011] presents a number of case studies (e.g. Fryslân, the Basque Country and Finland) as well as a number of small scale initiatives in trilingual education. The results of trilingual primary schooling in Fryslân are encouraging: pupils have mastered Dutch equally well as other pupils, but Frisian better, and

they speak English more easily [Ytsma, 2007]. The model of trilingual schooling will be expanded to other schools and extended to a trilingual stream in secondary education. Research on trilingual education will focus on the actual results in terms of language command, but also on the longitudinal approach, the use of both Frisian and English as a medium of instruction, and on the implications for teacher training.

Whenever possible, research will be carried out in a comparative European perspective. On behalf of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) of the Council of Europe, Mercator has carried out the study **The Development of Minimum Standards on Language Education in Regional and Minority Languages** [De Jager, Van der Meer, 2007]. With reference to the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages [European Charter, 1998] the present situation of ten languages in eight countries has been evaluated. The outcomes show a great variety in terms of time investment, teaching materials, teacher qualifications and the curriculum. This report will be used for the setting of minimum standards by the Council of Europe.

The series of **Regional Dossiers** meets the growing need for basic information on education in minority language settings. The dossiers present an up-to-date description of the position of a minority language at all levels in the educational system of a state. The Regional Dossiers are written by experts according to a fixed structure. Each dossier is updated once every five to eight years. In this way the dossiers can also be used for comparative research. So far, more than some 40 languages of EU member states have been covered. In the years to come the series will be extended with the coverage of other languages: smaller EU state languages, minority languages of CoE member states outside the EU and beyond. The whole series of regional dossiers is online available at the website of the Mercator Research Centre.

The **Network of Schools** consists of around 100 schools in 20 European regions where a regional or minority language is taught. The goal of the Network of Schools is to create a platform for bilingual and multilingual schools in minority regions in Europe in order to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences. The Network of Schools is intended for schools at the pre-primary, primary, and secondary level. These schools actively teach and use the minority or regional language, aside from the state language in the curriculum and they often teach English as a third language. Mercator started to create a European Net-

work of Teacher Training Institutes. Institutes which are training future teachers for bilingual and multilingual education. This Network will not only build a platform for the exchange of information and experiences, but also function as the instrument to further development of common projects in terms of language transmission, adequate levels of language command, didactics and testing.

The Mercator Research Centre organises **conferences and expert seminars** on a regular basis. Important themes for the conferences are: measurement and good practice, educational models, language vitality, development of minimum standards, teacher training, and the application of the Common European Framework of Reference. The main target groups for the Mercator Research Centre are professionals, researchers, and policymakers from all member states of the Council of Europe and beyond.

During the first years of its existence, Mercator Education has cooperated with two partners in a network structure: Mercator Media hosted at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth and Mercator Legislation hosted at the Ciemen Foundation in Barcelona. The Mercator Research Centre has expanded its network in close cooperation with a number of partner organisations working in the same field: the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Hungary and the Mälardalen University in Eskilstuna, Sweden.

The **Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres** connects multilingual communities across Europe, promoting knowledge sharing and facilitating structured exchange of best practice and cutting edge initiatives through its programme of activities. Focus lies on multilingual regions dealing with regional or minority languages, but also immigrant languages and smaller state languages, with emphasis on language needs arising from migration and globalisation.

This Network builds on the achievements of the former Mercator Network, which was founded in 1987. The specific topics chosen are: the use of media and information technology, legal provisions with respect to minority language learning, and developments in language teaching and learning. The Mercator Network aims to contribute to improving language vitality by analysing language visibility as well as cultural, economic and social opportunities for language use. The envisaged function of the Network is to be a platform for the exchange of research results, information, experience and good practice in the field of lan-

guage learning and linguistic diversity. Communication among policy-makers, language planning professionals and those involved in language transfer and teaching will take place in face-to-face meetings at annual conferences and workshops as well as through publications and in on-line activities. In addition, the Mercator Network aims to be a reference point for these target groups as well as for academics and students by providing accurate and reliable information, which can inform policy development at all levels of government and administration.

The Mercator Network is member of the **European Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism**. The platform was created as an initiative of the European Commission in 2009. Almost 30 different networks working in the field of multilingualism are member of this platform. Out of this platform a project called **Poliglotti4.eu** was initiated. This is a project promoting multilingualism in Europe. Its website reports on best practice in language policy and language learning, and provides policy-makers, 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 funded through the European Commission's **Lifelong Learning Programme**.

For all Mercator projects, Friesland is used as a living example of a bilingual laboratory. Within the Fryske Akademy, the Mercator Research Centre also takes the lead in researching the **influence of new media on the use of minority languages**. This has also been described above in the section about Afûk and recently Mercator started research on this topic. The research focuses on the influence of social media on language use. Firstly, the research analyses the language use of Frisian adolescents on social media. A study of 6,000 tweets of fifty persons in this age group has just been finished. On a regular day, 13% of the tweets are in Frisian compared to 65% in Dutch. When tweets are directed to one or more addressees (starting with @) the share of Frisian messages doubles to a quarter. In this research group (twenty-four males against twenty-six females), Frisian males tweet more in Frisian than their female counterparts. At April 18th 2013, the campaign to promote the use of the Frisian language (**Praat Mar Frysk**) organised a **Frisian Twitterday**. On this day, the Frisian language is used much more by the research group. 53% of the messages are then in Frisian, compared to 29% in Dutch. To validate these results and to get insight into language use in different contexts, demographic background data and other vari-

ables, the research will be continued with a large scale online questionnaire. The questionnaire will be both spread through social media and through secondary education.

The collected Frisian tweets are also being analysed linguistically. The input of this analysis will, among others, be used to further optimise the new spell checker that is being worked on by the Fryske Akademy. An example that can already be named now is the phonetic spelling that has been found in the analysis of the Frisian tweets. This phonetic (often wrong) spelling will be included in the new spell checker. In this way, a large range of suggestions based on the current day spelt words can be added to the spelling checker; this will make the spelling checker even more practical. Another outcome of the analysis is the regular use of code-switching: Dutch and Frisian words and characters are often mixed within one message.

As a critical note many researchers are questioning the value of social media and are concerned about the quality of the language used through these media. Social media often put limits to the physical possibilities of the user, e.g. text messaging on small mobile phones and tiny screens, or by the limits of the software, e.g. 140 characters with Twitter. For that reason the young generation feels the need to develop some kind of 'turbo' language where words are often replaced by symbols or shortened to one or two characters. In the future this development will certainly influence the use of the written languages and its possible norms.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Within Europe, awareness is growing of the value of linguistic diversity, the need to speak different languages and the importance of safeguarding endangered languages. The case of Frisian shows a variety of aspects related to this diversity, in particular the use of spoken and written language varieties and the possibility to establish norms in the written language. It shows that new technologies can play an increasingly important role in the latter area. The advantage of social media is that they can strengthen the informal written use of minority languages such as Frisian amongst the young people and reinforce the sense of belonging to a minority language group. Only time will tell whether these new technologies will help save the Frisian language and other minority languages. So far, the signs are positive.

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REFERENCES TO RELATED WEBSITES

Further information can be found in the following websites about Frisian and other minority languages. Part of this report is based on texts from these websites.

www.fa.knaw.nl

Website of the Frisian Academy

www.eurolang.net/languages/frisian.htm

Minority Languages Archive

www.berneboek.nl

On the first interactive book for children

www.mercator-research.eu

Homepage of the Mercator Research Centre. The site contains the series of regional dossiers, the network of schools, a database with organisations and bibliography and many rated links to minority languages

www.mercator-network.eu/

The Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres and portal for the partners of the network

www.networkofschools.org

Website of the Network of Schools, a network of around 100 schools in Europe dealing with regional or minority languages in the curriculum. This network is maintained by the Mercator Research Centre

www.aber.ac.uk/~merc/

Homepage of Mercator-Media. It provides information on media and minority languages in the EU.

www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator

Homepage of Mercator-Legislation. It provides information on minority languages and legislation in the EU.

www.eurydice.org

Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html

At the website of the European Union an explanation is given of its support for regional or minority languages.

conventions.coe.int/

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) European Treaty Series/Série des traités européens ETS 148 and 157, Strasbourg.

www.ogmios.org

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