4.

Promoting multilingualism and the diversity of languages in Europe

In order to develop inter-comprehension as a key UNITA tool for multilingualism, several approaches need to be developed: research on inter-comprehension, extensive inter-comprehension trainings, inter-comprehension-based in Romance language-learning programmes and micro-credentials for Romance language learning with inter-comprehension.

UNITA partners have been quite active during this first year promoting multilingualism and enhancing linguistic diversity with the implementation of courses and activities based on inter-comprehension (IC) between Romance languages in an English friendly environment. The starting point was UNITO expertise in IC. Based on this experience, a 9 ECTS course was offered in the first semester of 2020-2021 to the UNITA students participating to virtual mobility programs and a further 6 ECTS course took place in the second semester of 2020-2021.

IC research is being fostered and an IC PhD student is not only promoting it but also helping in the design of an online IC course specially designed for Erasmus students (the pilot took place on 21st July). This kind of courses will encourage exchanges between Universities of the Alliance, in their own languages. In the future, this course will be linked to a micro-credential for students participating in physical and virtual mobility. In doing so, the course will give students an introduction to the multilingual and multicultural dimension of the European University.

During this first year, the training for IC teachers was implemented. The associate partner APICAD offered a session on the MIRIADI

Picture 4.1: Inter-comprehension training courses

platform for those trainers who had taken part in the staff week on IC in February 2020. These participants concluded their training in July 2021 with a three-day workshop proving their skills in IC microteaching sessions. Additionally, UNITA and its associate partner University of Roma Tre implemented the first full course for trainers in IC (a 50-hour course issuing a digital badge), which started in May and ended in October 2021.

A positive fallout of these actions has been the creation of an active network of people that were especially trained in teaching IC and many of them have recently become IC teachers in their own institutions, thus starting courses in all the universities of the consortium. The innovative side of these courses is their European dimension, as part of the syllabus is shared and co-taught by the teachers who meet on an online platform and propose IC tasks to students from different universities gathered together.

Figure 4.1: Inter-comprehension for mobility students

Within the framework of informal learning in IC language cafés have been organized by UPPA and UVT and will be further developed in UNITO as well.

The first steps have been taken also regarding the training of non-linguistic teachers and non-teaching staff training.

USMB and UVT proposed some IC introductory workshops for staff and teachers in the first part of 2021 and UNIZAR is proposing micro-credentials on spanish IC based. During the coming months a course for teaching staff and for non-teaching staff in the other universities of the consortium will be developed. As for Romance language courses, all universities have been working to implement at least a course (issuing digital badges). A1-B1 levels are currently offered, but UNITA is planning to develop higher level courses as well. USMB organized a whole week focused on foreign language teaching and learning and is planning to replicate the format.

To summarize, UNITA is focusing on the promotion of multilingualism by:

- promoting a research line on inter-comprehension;
- developing extensive inter-comprehension training for all UNITA actors;
- proposing Romance language learning programs integrating some principles of inter-comprehension;
- establishing micro-credentials for inter-comprehension and courses in Romance languages.

Figure 4.2: Inter-comprehension for trainers