

Survey of Language Engineering Organisations in Central and Eastern Europe

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2.11 Poland

Despite its strong intellectual tradition in areas such as logic and its application to the analysis of language, there has been a relative neglect in Poland of many areas central to language processing. The main exceptions to this rule have been in the domain of acoustics and speech processing, where a great deal of experience has been accumulated.

At present, the country is embarking on a precipitous path towards economic realignment with the economies of the West. This is bringing some opportunities for development, but also many problems in the funding of research activity. The rapid growth in the private sector of the economy is evidenced by the emergence of many small language engineering enterprises, but due to the weakness of the general economy, the position of these companies remains somewhat precarious.

Main Languages

Polish 99%, German less than 0.1%.

Organisational and Technical Infrastructure

It can be hoped that the recent establishment of university disciplines in computational linguistics and artificial intelligence (notably at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) will help to give the field of natural language processing a more solid base in Poland, although these new courses remain to be fully developed. Acoustic and speech engineering is generally better provided for in terms of the number of academic sites involved.

Although there is a strong desire for more collaboration between academic sites within the country, the number of internal collaborative projects is at present very small. This can be accounted for firstly by the low level of awareness of the activities of other groups and secondly by a lack of funds and the necessary computer hardware for such interaction. There are however a number of collaborative projects with groups and organisations in the West, which are mostly in the area of speech processing and acoustics.

Computational infrastructure is good by C&EE standards, although there are problems associated with lack of common hardware platforms. Most sites are connected by email but this can be unreliable. Other communication media are generally reliable.

Government Funding of Language Engineering Research

Funding for research in Poland comes from the State Committee for Scientific Research (SCSR). (The educational activity of universities and high schools is supported by annual endowments from the Ministry of National Education). Research is funded by the SCSR based on a 'merit' system. Research institutes are ranked each year into one of three categories. Institutes of rank C receive no funding, B institutes automatically receive 40%, and A institutes automatically receive 60% of needed funds. In order to obtain the remainder of its funding, a research institute is obliged to apply for grants. Grant applications are evaluated by peer review, then by the relevant section and group in the SCSR.

As there is no such official area as language engineering, applications in this field must be addressed to the Electronic, Telecommunications or Computer Sciences Sections of the SCSR. Normally, about 8–10 projects in NL and speech are funded each year, with the average award per project roughly \$20,000. This money may be used for labour, equipment, travel,

conference fees, marginal costs, etc. In 1994, the government's spending on research of all kinds was 0.5% of GNP.

Basic and applied research are both given a high priority in Poland, and industrial groups may apply for up to 50% of their costs in joint university/industry research projects. Successful applications of this sort are rather rare, however. There are currently no Polish initiatives in the area of standards for language engineering.

Salaries in research institutes vary. A postdoctoral researcher may earn between \$200 - \$1900 per annum. Salaries in industry also vary considerably, but are generally higher than those in research institutes.

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