

FOREWORD

When I accepted an invitation from Spomenka Štimec to attend a writers' workshop in Croatia for authors in Esperanto, I had no idea that it would be the beginning of an extensive and satisfying venture leading to the publication of a special issue of INDECS on the phenomenon of Esperanto. What happened? Following the meeting I enjoyed a few days of hospitality with Đivo Pulitika, at which time I met Josip Stepanić, and a few hours later the idea of compiling a special issue of INDECS devoted to the general topic of Esperanto was born. Josip has remained consistently supportive of preparation of this special issue, which you now hold in your hands.

Professor Humphrey Tonkin, President Emeritus and University Professor of the Humanities at the University of Hartford, USA, agreed to oversee the preparation and publication of the collection. Thanks to his reputation, enthusiasm and clear sense of direction, we now have this extensive and varied volume in English on the phenomenon of Esperanto.

The publication in itself fills a significant gap in the English-language literature on Esperanto – something which I, as the board member of TEJO (the World Esperanto Youth Organization) responsible for, among other things, scholarly activities and external relations, can fully appreciate. Indeed, the publication will not only be useful in academic circles but will also assist those engaged in external relations by providing them with high-quality material allowing them to present the phenomenon of Esperanto from various points of view, always with scientific rigour.

For the reasons mentioned by Humphrey Tonkin in his introductory essay, it is particularly difficult to explain Esperanto society to those who are not acquainted with it. For example, sometimes the question arises as to whether there is a society behind the language.

Working, as I am, together with over 100 volunteers in more than 35 countries to create Muzaiko, a world-wide internet radio entirely in Esperanto, now regularly listened to in over 100 countries, I am very much aware of this truly international, diverse Esperanto society. And now, thanks to the scholarly articles presented here, I will have not only my own experience but also facts from a wide range of disciplines to allow me to present Esperanto fairly and appropriately.

This publication could not have happened without being in the right place at the right time, nor without the initial ambitious ideas that were followed by the enthusiastic, high-quality cooperation of many people on several continents. It seems that the history of this special issue of INDECS on the phenomenon of Esperanto closely resembles the varied history of Esperanto itself; let us hope for a thoroughly fruitful future for both.