Dear Piotr and Charly,

First of all I have to apologize that it has taken us so long to
get back to you, but we had to postpone our meeting several times
until we had a chance to put your expert database initiative on
our agenda.

We discussed your initiative at our KSIC meeting on January 28,
and we would like to give you the following feed-back:
- As for its intended scope we can clearly see that it would be a
  useful instrument for the members of the CSC to keep track of
  'who-knows-about-what', and you could of course share this
  information with others.
- If, as you seem to suggest, your intention is to make it a
  CLARIN-wide facility we see a practical and a philosophical
  obstacle.

The practical obstacle is the maintenance of the database:
- Experts come and go. How to ensure that they register when they
  come and (even harder) that they inform the database owner when
  they move on? Obsolete database entries are as bad as dead
  links on web pages.
- Experts may shift interests, and acquire new skills. How to
  ensure that these changes will be recorded in the database?
- For a CLARIN-wide database, with a very broad target audience
  from different disciplines, and with different backgrounds and
  needs you need a systematic and consistent approach to the
  definition and the continuous maintenance of the right level(s)
  of granularity for a broad range of subject fields. How to
  ensure that?

We are not claiming that it would be impossible to set up and
maintain a database that overcomes these obstacles, but given the
limited resources available we don't think that it would be
realistically possible for KSIC or the CLARIN Office to adopt and
support a CLARIN-wide database of experts with all the details
necessary to make it useful and useable.

The philosophical obstacle is that the CLARIN infrastructure as a
whole builds on the commitment of institutions rather than on
networks of individuals. This should serve to make it more robust
and sustainable. As you know we are building a network of
K-centres to provide access to expertise, and it might be
confusing for our users if they would be confronted with two
different, and differently organised instruments to find the
expertise they need.

To summarize I would say that although we applaud the initiative
of the experts database as such we can not recommend to the
Board of Directors to take full or partial responsibility for the
activity.

We certainly don't want to stop you from doing what you are doing
in your own committee, but on the basis of our considerations
above we would suggest to keep it more manageable and useful for
yourselves by focusing on expertise related to standards.

On behalf of KSIC
Best regards

Steven

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