Transcription Speaker 2

Mod: Thanks. OK, so the recording is on. Just to inform you that the questions will be, I want to have a discussion rather than just, you know, proper question and answer session. So, and I'm not looking into the knowledge, your knowledge, languages, that's not the purpose of this actually get to know your opinion, attitude. And number two bit more about your experiences, where we're using languages and so on. As I said, it shouldn't last longer than 30 minutes, because you were one of the participants in the focus group, so I have quite a lot of information, a very good input from you. So thank you very much. And thank you for agreeing to that. And all the data is going to be anonymized. So there's no worry about that. So if you don't trust me@, you have to trust my university because of a very strict. Okay, so maybe we'll start with a general question about your role in the Secretariat, could you describe me your role in the Secretariat in a little bit more details, please?

S2: Sure. So. So I started in the Secretariat last January, and I work as a policy coordinator for Southeast Europe, which in practical terms means that I'm working on climate, both climate energy policies and the Western Balkans. So the accession countries, mostly, last year, I also worked a bit in Turkey, but this year, we have, we have S9, so I left Turkey to S9, it's a bit easier. But I also have Ukraine in a way which doesn't really fit the Southeast Europe narrative, but because I work on this energy community Treaty, which is like one of the legal frameworks that we have in the region for like to bring the legislation region and it also now since since 2010, it also includes Ukraine, and Moldova. So that's why I work a bit on on Ukraine as well. So overall, I can say in the Secretariat (.) I'm basically the responsible person (.) er link to these countries and exactly, I'm dealing between the NGOs in the region, and and the EU, and also like EU institutions, and Brussels based NGOs. Also, because we don't have very many members in these countries. So we're just now starting slowly to have members. So that's why my, my position is, in a way a bit specific because I simply communicate with people who are like not the standard people we we talked to,

Mod: what do you mean, the standard?

S2: Well, the standard in terms of just as I said(.) they're not the network, neither the EU(.) institution. So they are, you know, somewhere, somewhere in between, but they're slowly getting getting also to the network. So we now have first members and about this up to the last GA and there are some more organizations interested. So they're also getting more and more into into EU policy, basically. And it's getting closer to that as well.

Mod: Now you are originally from Serbia, so I can understand how you cooperate over there. But I'm really interested in how your cooperation looks like with the Ukraine. Could you tell me more about (.)

3:22

S2: Yeah, well with Ukraine, it it is a bit complicated, especially since basically the same time I started here in CAN, the war broke over there. So it was really I mean, in terms of months like this, this gap was there to you know, it was simply like Ukraine was there for me to work on on one hand, but on the other hand, it's like, you know, you are, you're trying to just check if the people in Kiev are fine, and not if they can do something on on energy policy, or whatever, or advocate for climate action, while at the same time. I mean, there are blackouts there are like, you know, people moving from Eastern Ukraine, me to to Kiev, and other parts of Ukraine. So it's completely like, extraordinary situation. So that's why I haven't done much work in Ukraine, we are in touch, like, very regular touch, but not as close as with the groups in the Balkans, with, with NGOs in Ukraine. And we especially have one, one NGO that is particularly active. And this used to be also a coordinator of can Eastern Europe, because this can, there is can Europe and there is can like Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and this particular group was a coordinator of this network for a while. So that's why they are kind of the the natural first contact, and they often come to our general assemblies. So that's also that's also why they would be the first one, we try to also find our directors, and we did find somebody that was more, more regular, we try to just make some touch with them and to see if we can work together. But the main, the main area that we work together on is this energy community. And that's why it also in my work emerged as the only political body agenda and the process that we can work on in order to like include both the Balkans and Ukraine and that's how it all it's, it's kind of like yeah, both both ways. That's why you created on one hand in my portfolio, but that's also like why we focus so much on the energy community. So yeah, the work itself as I said, is very very slow especially this year and a half like we update we check up on them we have emergency response mechanism if something happens to the campaigners, because when the first Crimea crisis broke one campaigner, climate campaigner, went to Crimea, then she disappeared, and it was a young female so we were like, you know, what, how are we supposed to do now? So we we tried to intervene but it's of course I mean, as an as an NGO, you you can do much but you can alarm European Parliament, you institutions that this is going on as well. So So I try to do er (.) use the influence. But the other than that, I mean, there hasn't been an intense work in in Ukraine as such, from from our sides,

6:10

Mod: And in terms of languages, what languages would you use?

S2: It will be it will be English. Because I mean (.) it's simply I don't speak most of them speak Russian. I don't speak Russian. So it would (.) it would always come down to English with Russian. I don't think it's a good idea. They usually, like at least I knew Ukrainian people from before, and they wouldn't mind speaking in Russia. And they would actually, like communicate with others because I've been in some summer school programs where they would have a lot of people from former Soviet Union and they would speak to each other in Russian without a problem but now it’s different

Mod: Yeah, yeah. Okay, that's that's quite interesting to be in that context.

S2: And then you know, seeing things happening which are not the easiest actually deal with I think so. That's why your work needs to adapt to, to what was going on?

Mod: Yeah. And in terms of your experience in working in the NGO environment, could you tell us a bit more about that as well please?

S2: Yeah. So I pretty much Yeah, my entire career so far(.) even though it hasn't been too long, but it's been in the NGO sector. So I first worked in in Montenegro in an NGO that was more more of a mix between an engineer and a think tank and then I then I worked also in [unintelligible – name of an institution] in Belgrade, which is a regional office again off of green I mean, [name of an institution] is officially agreed political foundation but it's also it's a foundation that works a lot with the NGOs all across the region. So in Serbia Montenegro so all these countries that I I now work on that's how I got the experience and got to know all the countries so so I've been context

Mod: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

S2: And in terms of languages that it was mostly in in Serbian but they had this strange situation where you speaking Serbian, others speak integration you all understand each other but that's that's the legacy.

Mod: Are there any tensions between like him for instance, if you go and then speaks Serbian to them? Would they feel because of a situation I know Serbia was the dominant/ one

S2:/Oh,

Mod: like in Bosnia, Croatia? Macedonia?

S2: No, the only situation the only weird situation can that can happen is in Kosovo, where you can encounter basically Albanian people who live in Coursera and you're never sure whether they speak English or speak Serbian sorry or not. And there's also the situation where some of them speak perfect Serbian, they just don't want to do this. Ukraine Yeah, tradition, but you know, they understand like if I would go and speak with with another colleague in Serbian they would understand everything they just don't want to engage but sometimes it also it happens that they you know if it's really about you know, the their perception of of the problem I also know people from Croatia who speak Serbian and who speak to me in in Serbian without a problem it would be an interesting for them to practice it and things like that. But yeah, that's in relations with cost. So is the only situation where this occurs. I've never with anyone else from from division,

9:39

Mod: okay. And when you were applying for the job do you remember (.) did your job description have anything (.) er on languages?

S2: Yes. It's it there was a reference as far as I remember that knowledge of one of the languages from the region would be an asset. So I think it wasn't mandatory but it was desirable. Yeah.

Mod: Okay, thank you. And now let's move on to the communication you mentioned a little bit that you work obviously with the Balkans. So can you tell me what kind (.) er kinds of communication do you engage with in the network so if you contact other organizations from the network what kinds of communication (.) what would you use? What means would you use?

10:31

S2: It will only be an email but nowadays Yeah, more and more Skype (.) via phone calls every every technology that is available is absolutely available would would be used so yeah, we have Skype pretty pretty regularly but then with some people with whom I what I need to coordinate something urgently it would be also Viber or, or simple phone. So but yeah, emails are still to now something that's kind of on and on and on and never ending when it comes to just agreeing important things and setting up whatever meetings or conferences or agreeing on for instance, press releases or joint publication stuff like that. That's that's usually discussed in in Skype calls with at least five six people usually

Mod: okay and that would be in which one which/

S2: that depends on on on the participants so but it would in most cases be in English because we have people like from persons from BankWatch which is our partner organization we have people who work on the Balkans but are Romanian. So they they are not able to to understand any of the Serbian languages and there's also colleague for instance who is like Irish but he's working in Bosnia. So he can understand fully but he cannot speak so then we recently just use use English again as an (.) er we resort to it, if there is a call wherever you are from the region or speak Serbian whatever Croatian or any of the Serbo-Croatian languages, then then it will be in Serbian, but actually, and (1) so you can put all the members not from the region, then it's English. Yeah, it's not then.

Mod: Okay

S2: And it's sometimes weird in in meetings, that could be interesting, because when you have physical meetings that are regional, and you will always have like, I think 80% of Serbian Croatian, speaking people and then just 10 or 12% of people who speak Albanian or, or some other language that is completely different than it's, it's a bit of a problem, because we tend to shift to, to Serbian, and then of course, it excludes automatically some people and then, you know, there are always people who, you know, remind them steer the conversation back to English, but it just happens. It's, you know, it's like when people start speaking to another in their language, and then someone else's hears and comes into and so

Mod: Would English be an option in that situation?

S2: Yeah, yeah. I mean, so there are (.) er forces (.) these regional meetings, they will always be officially in English. It's simply that people then. So yeah, tend to like when it's the official part and when work is discussed it will be in English. But you know, the first opportunity that someone gets, they would just switch into into Serbian and then the group just turning to to Serbian without losing.

Mod: Yeah, yeah. Groups like in the GA.

S2: Yeah, yeah.

13:44

Mod: Okay. So we've already agreed that English is the main language of the network. You use Serbian when you contact the Balkans. But does the fact that you work in English most of the time, now I'm referring to your work in English and whatever that would be, affect your work? And do you ever feel that you sort of (.) could have done it better? If it was your own language? Or you just don't feel any difference?

S2: Oh, that's a very good question. Because I'm also thinking about it sometimes. And I've actually started to get into a different situation where I find it easier to to write things in English, rather than in my own language. And I actually when I write an op-ed, for instance, I originally write it in English. And then I tried to do myself translation to Serbian. And I find it very difficult to to keep it in the spirit of Serbian language. And like my parents, for instance, my mother was looking at that and she'll say, like, this really looks as if, if, if it was written by someone who, who was originally speaking English. So that's, that's a bit weird, because still, I mean, here in this environment, you will still mostly speak English. I have phases what I have for instance, when I go back to Serbia, or if I spend a lot of time speaking Serbian, I think that it's (.) I would need a couple of days maybe to get back into English, but I still feel that since I'm spending a lot of time speaking English and writing in English and when I write pretty much everything in English, because it needs to be signed off by [person working in the office] so even if we eventually translated the originals it would be in English. Also, because I studied in English so all like terminology that I use is easier as well in English than in Serbian because for instance, there's only one word to say environment. And in Serbia is exactly (unintelligible first word) ‘Животна средина’ /Životna sredina/@@, you know, which is already three words and that it makes you know, their sentences are, are not as simple like you always need to address and I guess it's a different, even different structure of the language.

Mod: yhm

S2: Yeah, of course, the and that's the thing. That's why people see when something is translated like, especially with grammar, the structure is not the same. And then you have this weird situation. So yeah, switches are not easy. (.) to answer your question, I don't think it would be better for me to like my work would be better if it was in Serbian. But yeah, it's it's definitely a challenge sometimes to to switch to go back and forth. Especially when during the day you have this like one call in Serbian, one call in English, like or one email in Serbian, one email in English. And it is to someone in English and then you just see an email. Yeah. in Serbian, you send it to them.

Mod: Yes.

S2: So yeah, all these all these things have been so (.) and then you go to a grocery store, and everyone speaking French. So that's another third language to try to learn in the meantime. But yeah, switching is, is interesting. Yeah, I guess what they say it's good for your brains.

Mod: That's true.

S2: Hopefully, yes.

Mod: So you say you'd prefer to use English at work?

S2: Pretty much. Yeah. I mean, now with this work. Yeah. Yeah.

17:10

Mod: Now, some people say er (1) because English also is part of my research here. Some people say that, for instance, English, because of the fact that it's a dominant language, it may be a threat to other languages that exists in different kinds of kinds of situation. It doesn't have to mean work situation can be education, whatever. Not through education, for instance, English will dominate the country. So people would prefer to learn English and then lose their own languages, and so on. Do you think there is a real threat for when you think about the work of CAN Europe in terms of like (.) er in terms of network, that English could pose a threat to the languages? What's your opinion?

18:00

S2: Well, it's difficult to say for our work because it's so reliant on English. That's, I mean, not not using English, I think would would pose a threat for for the network. Because I don't know what, like if we wouldn't use English within the network. I don't know, how would we get anything? anything done? I mean, especially in Europe, where you have so many languages, so it's not a variation of two or three, but 20? I mean, especially now with Serbia and Turkey, and all the other countries. So so that's why I mean, I know this dominance and I'm, in general, I'm not Yeah, I don't think it's the best thing to have this one language dominating everyone. But on the other hand, it's just it's just how it works, how it works. And basically, it's, it makes things happen. I mean, otherwise, like, I know, for myself, that I wouldn't be able probably to study like to do masters in any other language, which other than then English, and of course, my native language, but then, you know, it automatically narrows down some choices.

Mod: Yeah, yeah.

S2: But on the other hand, yeah, then it opens up, as you know, more and more schools, more and more countries use English in academic terms and work terms. I think that that also makes these these opportunities and, you know, easy access, I think we mentioned this last, time to to work and different in different countries. And that's why I don't mind it. I mean, it's nice to occasionally hear like people speaking French. And that's, that's really nice. But I just don't know if it's, if it's feasible to, to have command.

Mod: Yeah, yeah. And what do you think? What's your opinion of the English used in the network?.

S2: That's interesting. I haven't thought about really about this, this much, especially within the network. Also, again, in the work with the Balkans, when when people from the Balkans communicate in English, you can also Yeah, find this, like, literal translations, for instance of some phrases or proverbs that don't exist in English language, but we all know what that is, it's kind of fine. So you, you get used to it. And also, I mean, because I studied abroad, and I was already used to English and, and also, I went through through this, what you described for me, when I moved to to England, and also because I was in this international course, where people were from 30 people from 22 countries, so and a lot of native speakers, but native speakers from the US, from Canada, from Australia, and from India, and it's all different English and (.) So you really need to try to find your way to figure out what these people really mean. When they asked like, how are you that doesn't really mean How are you, but it's like a figure of speech and things like that, that that are unusual or for, for my culture. But that's why I think I wasn't surprised by anything in particular, within the network itself. Like, I know, there are different accents different levels of people speaking English, those who interact and who are engaged in the network, I think most of them have a pretty good level of English. So no problem of communicating, as these are people who I who I spoke to, I know that we have this problem with Italians, for instance, that they don't really speak the best English, but I think there are also ways I mean, there are always few people who, who can engage. And now with [a person from the Secretariat], I know there are some initiatives to do some translations and things like that. But otherwise, yeah, in my in my case, so far, it was, yeah, it was all kind of,

Mod: Okay, thank you. So we talked about that. And in terms of, in terms of the English language used in the network, you said, You have no problems with using these (unintelligible), to the variety of accents, the variety of ways in, you know, it's been used. Do you actually feel like, Is there anything that sort of strikes you about the language that's being used? Is there something different? Or what's in general, what's your attitude to that English? In CAN Europe network, obviously, I'm I know, one thing that's being said by one of the members who came for the GA, he told me we had a an informal chat. He, you know, he works well in, in in English. His English is er really good. But then what was striking for me was that he said, ‘I came here, I know English, but for me, it's like a lot of new words, new technical words that I just sit down and just note down and learn a lot of new vocabulary, because some things I just don't know what they're talking about’.

Unknown Speaker 26:59

S2: it can be really technical, yeah, like, policy policy stuff. I mean, I think that's, that, that I think is a problem for for many, for many new members. I also know people who came from Serbia previously, for some workshops. And for Bosnia, there's also a lot in, in the policy world, also within the network. There are there's a lot of acronyms. And I think that's what confuses people the most. So anyone for the things that seem more most straightforward, people still like, you know, just maybe our brain, like a block this morning. And you wouldn't, you wouldn't realize what it is about. So, yeah, I think acronyms and definitely some technical stuff can be confusing. But that's, that's more, that's more to up to us that we need to really maybe make, make that a bit simpler, and whoever is presenting basically, and, you know, introducing new ideas need to be aware that not all the people are at the same level or involved in the same way. so maybe someone will know all about climate policy, but they anything about energy. And simply I mean, they won't know that whatever ETS stands for your energy sources, which, which when you are here, it's like automatic, and you don't even think about it, but for some people, it will be it will get things. So I think it's it's more than about terminology and about cutting out this technicalities and complexities as much as possible in communication with with the members, especially when it's a bigger audience when it's not like a small group of people who works on on the issue. So that's something for us to be aware of. Other than that, I don't know in terms of language, I think it's mostly for me, it's mostly fine. I don't have many, many like notes. Except that Yeah, sometimes it's actually for me, the native speakers who can be complicated to follow, like, especially if they're from other parts of the world. It's very accents, sorry, they speak very fast that that can be more of a problem. There, whatever, Italian or Greek with more French with their accents. So I think that's the thing, that's one of the universal things that you can say.

Mod: But then you mentioned different levels. And that's probably one of the last questions. I went through some of the documents like CAN Europe charter and also the information pack for prospective member organizations, which are available on the website either CAN International CAN Europe, and I noticed that there is no especially in so in the form of documents that set out the rules for rules of conduct for the network, there's no mention of language whatsoever. And the same thing is true for the document that you sent out to the prospective members who may be interested in joining CAN. Or do you think it's a good idea to actually include anything about sort of having the members the prospective members know that okay, the internal communication is all in English? Or do you think people just assume and it's just the way it works?

S2: I do think people assume and nowadays it became so standardized that English is the language that you will approach someone called you who you don't know or if you if you're definitely for approaching group of people from all different countries, that communication will go in English, but it's it could be useful for for some purposes, such as the the General Assembly, for people to be aware that yeah, basically, I mean, people who come from our members should have asked us like, sufficient level of English, I would say, because now I mean, maybe this this wasn't also an issue before but now with the with the Balkans members, I've seen that. Like, there were a couple of people who, who wouldn't feel free enough I think to express their opinions in English so yeah, maybe just there would be useful to to you know, for them to be aware, I mean, those people who came they knew it's going to all be in English, it's just that I don't know. I don't know if if if putting this into some documents and saying for instance, for people to come to the GA at their level of English should be whatever fluent or something like that. I don't know if it would really make the difference, but I know that it can be an issue.

Mod: Any the examples?

S2: well, examples are Yeah, there is the Serbian lady for whom I notice that like she said openly to me, like I can follow but I know that my English is a bit rusty. So she she will speak to me in Serbian and I know that she didn't interact too many too much with other people. Because she she didn't speak English for a while and yeah, then she she feels as if she needed a bit of time to just get there. And then there was another person who came for our unit Triple C workshop, I think earlier this year, she was from Albania and she was sent by by her boss basically she was more junior It was her first time as well out of Albania, which I didn't know complete. She just came and then said said some things. I mean, she wasn't she wasn't too bad, but it's just that Yeah, you can feel that it's it's difficult for her to follow and to really engage. So yeah, it's just about about the quality I mean, for for both sides are contributing and also being able to to actually take what is you know, what is being discussed? And so she can even report back I mean, because the aim eventually is that if this one person from Albania comes and didn't, you know, hears all this stuff, will see preparation (.) it, it will be good that she can understand it and transfer this to other people in her NGO and even to other NGOs in Albania ideally, but if she can’t really process the information that it's a problem and this is also I think partly and to a large extent actually into this technical terms and acronyms as as we discussed. So I think that's the (.) but these two are probably linked.

Mod: These cases?

S2: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Mod: Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add that we haven't really discussed but you think maybe is interesting?

33:38

S2: not really we discussed last time a lot. So now I don't have any. Any further inspiration. If something comes to mind. Oh, you'll be getting an e-mail. Thank you.

Mod: Thank you. Thank you very much.