Mod: So before we start the interview, I'd like you to know some things like, and I've actually looked at the transcript from focus groups as well. So that actually made me realize some things. First of all, it was no agenda, there was no gender balance. So at some point, I felt that you were quite quiet, maybe you didn't want to share things. But just so you know I am not looking at your knowledge, checking your knowledge, and I'm not judging you on your knowledge on languages or whatever we're going to talk about. I'm just looking for your opinion, and your attitude. And, and this is every, like, every single person that I speak to or have an interview, I always tell them this. I'm just looking at kind of your practices, your language user within the network, or how it all works here. So I'm looking for your experience as well, where you can tell me about this and your perceptions, and so on. So no knowledge included. And so you can say whatever you want to. And it's not my role to judge anyone. It's not my role. And my plan for the interviews and for focus group is to actually put everything together and see what other people think and then come up with things. So the interview shouldn't take long, I think around er 45 minutes. So you're more than welcome to talk more, if you like to. Or if you don't understand something, please do ask questions. I want the interview to look very natural. So I have a set of questions to ask, some of them will be very similar, or even the same for you in your case. Because you were very silent in er (.) about those questions during the focus group. So I want to know your opinion. On those questions, and also/

S4: /umm

Mod: Yeah, so I want us to sort of have a discussion. So I'll be asking additional questions or clarification and whatever. Some of the things may be very simple. So don't think that Oh, what is she asking? Why is she asking this? It's just basically I need to know, these things. If I have a chance. Now, this is the opportunity. Do you have any questions?

S4: No

Mod: no? Okay, so let's start. We'll start with very general questions. Can you describe me your role in CAN Europe Secretariat, please?

S4: my role is that of an assistant, which means that I am either supporting someone or representing someone/.

Mod: /So what does supporting mean?,

S4: and then representing (.) er supporting is internal, whenever something is needed, and someone doesn't have the time to do it, then I do it. Or they delegate work to me, for example. So things like sending emails, emails to minister sending emails to members, following up with members, keeping up to date, which country positions, things like that? And then representing is when I go somewhere, and I represent for CAN Europe or one specific person/,

Mod: /umm

S4: like policy officer, I did one one meeting were I represented er (.) when I went to Paris for the representing that in Europe. So it's not because it's something that I find very, or it's, I find it interesting. But it's not because I choose that it's because it's part of the role.

4:42

Mod: So when you go to those meetings, when you represent, can you or someone working for CAN Europe? What kind of meetings are they? I mean, is it with members? Or is it from outside of the /network?

S4: /Outside (.) mostly outside of the network? The ones that I can remember now is one with someone from permanent representation, someone with a (.) CAN Europe office, one, (.) er on the international climate finance day in Paris, a high level group meeting, so that would be like with politicians or industries or those type of people.

Mod: Okay. Right. Thank you. And can you tell me a little bit more about your experience in working with youth organizations, or in an NGO environment?

S4: in total?

Mod: Yes, but you don't have to be chronological. I would like you to sort of tell me a bit more about your experience in working for er, like, NGO environment?

S4: I've been working for for er in NGOs since my 16. So I've never really known any other environment. Okay. Since my 16, I had environmental NGOs, or a youth movement that was an NGO. Or that's, that's a kind of NGO, and I've been, I've been active in that NGO, since since my 16. From my 16, to my 26, I've been active in that

Mod: So you have got about 10 years of experience in working in that (.)

6:40

S4: Yeah, in youth, environmental NGO. And then now, I've almost been here a year. It's not the first professional job because I did some volunteer thing. Ii it was for my youth movement I've been in in the Board of Administration of like the Flemish umbrella organization of environmental NGOs. And then afterwards, I also did like two months of volunteer work for the more policy based organizations. So they were more national er nationals. And this is the first European level one level.

Mod: Okay. And language wisely. Would you say they differed a lot? And in terms of communication with, let's say, other NGOs or other youth organizations in the youth movement? Or,

S4: of course there’s difference, because, and and you have the same context in, in national or regional NGOs/,

Mod: /what do you mean context?

S4: /they'll live in the same political situation, they all live in the same. They had, they know the same people, they know the same, they have the same same circumstances in which they have to work. Which is completely different to the European ones. Because if we contact numbers, then the one in the UK has a different different political circumstances, different context, they work in different policy. Things they do are different (.) important to certain policy things, than International. So you need to pay much more attention to to make it broad enough to make your message broad enough so that it can apply to everyone. But on the other hand, also, if you want to target one country, take in mind, what is the political context and ask yourself the question what this What does the person or context in that in that country wants or needs to be held as much as possible? to contact the government?

Mod: Okay. Okay. But in terms of language, would you say it's very different to what was previous er (.) in your previous experience, when you compare it with CAN, when you have to contact people?

S4: within our usual work, of course, it's different because you're all you- er (.) young people and not on the same professional level. So the way of communicating is a lot more informal.

Mod: Okay.

S4: Although we like to move into 26, you get kicked out.

Mod: Okay. So everything is done by people by their 26th birthday. Okay.

S4: So of course, also, there are staff members, but it's the people of 26, on the 26, that, that do everything, also with staff members and staff policy and all those things. So we're particular in the way that you get in an informal setting, you get a lot of possibilities to, to train yourself in different areas. Okay.

Mod: How about CAN then, do you say that this context is a lot more professional? Here, you can't say/

S4: /Well, you can't say er you're not going to make you need to pay more attention to your position until your, your role at CAN. Especially in the bigger and bigger meetings.

Mod: Yeah. Yeah. with other people. Yeah. I know, organizations,

11:11

S4:. So and CAN Europe you need to be more in terms of language, especially you need, er you can't say (.) you need to be more balanced how you say things than you would when you're 20 years old, or 21 years old, and you're in a meeting with friends.

Mod: Yeah, yeah. So there's the formality, issues. Well, okay. So now that we talked about contacting, communicating, we're actually being sort of in, in communication, staying in communication with certain people, you said that you contact when you support policy offices, or people at CAN office, you said you contact member organizations. So could you tell me a little bit more about the communication with members? What kinds of communication do you engage within the network?

S4: So I guess that would be member organizations? /Okay (.)

Mod: /I'd like you to sort of tell me a little bit more about the communication with the members that you do.

S4: Okay. Usually, Well, it depends on who I contact. There are certain people that I know by person. And those people are going to respond more quickly. And there are certain people that I don't know and that I've been contacting quite regularly with the the whole ETFs . So mainly, most of my communications by email, and whenever we want something from our members to do, we, we keep up and call them.

Mod: Okay, so if they don't reply. you contact them in a different way?

S4: Yeah, like using telephone. Yeah. Which usually helps a lot of getting an answer from them, or making sure that they understand the importance of what we're trying to ask them as well, because they get a lot of emails from us. So it's quite regularly. It's lost in the email.

Mod: Yeah, so mostly, it's via email, but when really get into something, it's by phone. Okay. Right. Thank you. And now, when you communicate the what language would you choose to communicate?

S4: usually in English, there is one person at ww f Germany that I, I know, that is French. Okay. So, for small questions, or for when I'm on the telephone, whether I switch between English and French. Or we tried, we tried to speaking French because it's easier, easier. Especially except for the technical words. Those I only know in English,

Mod: okay.

S4: And she as well. So it's, it's mainly mainly in that's the person that I've had my first my first

contact. Well, lovely, lovely conversations with. I went along with her. So it was one in French and two in German.

Mod: So does she just speak French?

S4: Yeah, she's native speaker of French.

Mod: Okay, and, okay. Fair enough.

S4: That's that. And then this, just the people in Flanders that I know, are the Dutch speaking people, the Dutch as well, I will start speaking that the rest is in English.

Mod: Yeah. And how often would you say let's say, a week to contact member organizations? or roughly(.) it doesn't have to be very different to see from week to week?

S4: Yeah, like, last week, I contacted the members. I still have to call them but I can email to 15. Members.

Mod: And that's for like, one specific area?

S4: Yeah, that's for one specific task. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But then. Now, it's possible that maybe to follow up on that one, but it's possible it's going to be a month or two months before I contact members again?

Mod: and What language did you choose for that? communication?

S4: It's always in English. If it's if it's a general email to everyone, then it's always in English. Because not everyone knows er (1). Well, otherwise, I would know have to know the all the specific country language.

Mod: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. I wanted to ask you a question that I would like you to think about: have you ever experienced problems communicating something across to members? Like you have that, let's say news, whatever. And then you need to communicate this to the members?

S4: Yeah, of course. But more with email than with telephone.

Mod: Okay.

S4: For instance, on for the the email last week, there was we contacted? Well, we sent an email to the WWE if person, Spanish, w. w, wF office, through the European WWE, okay. Because we don't have another member of ours, but they are member of [name of organization – unintelligible], and they are a member of us. So it's a bit complicated, but that way we did. And she after three emails, she didn't understand what she was asked to do

Mod: How do you know that she understand (.)

S4: because of the email thread, like I was included in the email conversation. So she got the task and it was, can you read this and do this for CAN Europe? The question was, there was a whole explanation. And then the question was, can you make sure that your contacts in this in the embassy in the ministry for Environment and Climate, know that it's about the high level group that's coming together like meetings of a high level group. Most of the people that represent the country's are people from the economics department. And it's about the ETFs reform,

Mod: okay.

S4: But economics departments have a diff- er completely different view on it, and energy and climate change department, because they have different priorities, but mostly high intensive industry that's against the same kind of reform that we want. So an economics department will more likely be against, or they were more likely to att- er, they will more likely to attend to the position of the high intensive industry, high [unintelligible] intensive industry than other organizations or other parts of the government. So we do this, “can you please ask your contacts, if they know that this person {a person delegated by CAN Europe to speak to the government department} is contacted? This person is representing you at those meetings? Please make sure that all your member organizations know it. And that they er they they say this the position of your government and not their department position?” And so she replied, “oh, I don't have time for that, to contact that person”. So our question was not, “can you contact that person?” Our question was, “can you make sure that the people { MEMBER GROUPS} know that that person is representing them? So it's only just an email or telephone call? Hey, this is this this is organized. And that person is is representing us on that topic? Do you know it? Are you aware of it?” She said “oh yeah, if you give us a letter that we will translate in a formal letter and we've translated and sent it to our department”. But that's not the question. The question is not to contact that person, question is just to let them know that that person is there.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: And then the contact at WWF reply to her in English and said “well, that's not the issue. It's we want to do this” and then she replied, “Well, but I've already seen them last week with sandbag and other organization” which is also completely next to the topic of what we want to do. But and then then why

22:49

the guy from WWF if you reply tonight, I agree with you right? That is it.

Mod: Okay, thanks.

S4: And it's okay. Just because she apparently didn't understand what the question was.

Mod: Do you think that was the issue with language or

S4: I probably think so. if she was Spanish or er (.) Spanish a lot of times they don't they can’t switch that good.

Mod: what do you mean by good in terms of good English? What according to you is good English. How would you describe it? Now that you mentioned this

S4: I think good English is when you can. (1) I think good English for me is the fact that you can you can have a conversation with people? (.) that's not very good.

Mod: Oh, yeah. umm

S4: Maybe good English is when you able to listen to an American Hollywood movie without subtitles?

Mod: Mm hmm. Okay, so like being able to understand/

S4: /well, yeah, because I think usually when you can understand you can also speak now in my case with [unintelligible], I can understand GM produce. I mean, it's it's a/

Mod: Okay, What is the first thing that /comes to mind?

S4: /When I say good English?

Mod: Is it pronunciation? Is it grammar? Is it correctness? Is it like American?

S4: Mm hmm. Maybe good. If you if you're if you really speak good English, maybe it's when you start thinking in English.

Mod: And that would include what?

S4: Like thinking in English what the so that you don't you don't translate literally, that you don't think in your own language first, before telling say saying something? That you construct your sentences in your head in English. Yeah. Maybe that's speaking good English.

Mod: So when we talk about good English, would you say? ?Which position/

S4: / I think if you if you can have conversation with people, and you can make yourself understood. Maybe you can have every type of can have every type of conversation. Maybe that's then then you speak it enough to automatically progress in your English. Yeah.

Mod: And when you think about your English, would you prefer to be more like native speaker? You don't really think about this, as long as you can communicate?

27:05

S4: I don't really think about it.

Mod: Is it important for you to be like native /speaker or?

S4: /I think that/ I, this one strange thing in my English I have noticed is that when I'm around, I sometimes pick up people's accents in English. Especially when I'm around one of my Swedish friend, you might as well. When I'm around him, I sometimes realize that I'm starting to speak like, some Scandinavian person in English. Like a bit more [unintelligible] and a bit more.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: The way that they speak. Yeah, just the tempo of pronunciation.

Mod: How about when you're around, let's say, British people?

S4: Okay. I've never been in a long time with a British person. Like speaking a long time to British person? Yeah.

Mod: Yeah. Okay. Right. Thank you. And now this is the question that appeared in, in the focus group discussion. And I would like to know, how do you feel about because we obviously said, you've you've said yourself that English is, you know, the the main language for communicating, like for the general messages, and so on. So, and we've also had a discussion in the focus group, and there was that theme that sort of said, okay, English is the main language that we use here. So how do you feel about this fact that English is the dominant language in communication in the network?

S4: I don’t have that much of a problem, there is always going to be dominant language.

Mod: Why do you think so?

S4: Because it's easiest to communicate. If everyone would speak another language, then it's much more difficult to communicate, because everyone would know er have to know all the languages to be able to communicate on a proper way. There's always going to be a dominant language. If it's Spanish or French or English, it's always going to be one of the bigger languages in the world. So if it's French, or Spanish or English, I don't really care. But there's always going to be one.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: And At the moment It's English. Just because of politics.

Mod: Yeah.

Mod: Now that we you think about CAN Europe network itself. So the organization and its members, do you think English has a role? A particular role?

S4: I think no one, no one thinks about it. It just the fact. So people are just, well, you need to be able to speak English to communicate at a European level.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: And the French sometimes will try to speak in French and the Spanish will sometimes be tried to speak in Spanish because Yeah, probably culturally. But as well as being Belgian, we've been conquered that many times. So we're very used to switch languages and learn other languages.

Mod: Yeah. So would you say there's that trend in Belgium that many people, young people, especially from the Dutch part, learn English more than, say, pay attention to that? Because that's what I've heard as well, that they decided it's one of the languages that will have/

S4: /they especially speak more English and French, the level of French is going down in a, in a very, very fast way. In the speaking part, there are people of my age that don't speak French. Just don't, but they speak English. And they speak English very well. As well, because all the most of the TV series and things like that come from England, or English speaker spoken, and are not dubbed.

Mod: Okay. So er you on the TV hear a lot of English. And you have subtitles in that. Do you have subtitles in Dutch?

S4: Usually, yes. So from very young age, you hear English and you hear much less French the level of French is going down and English is so much better. But even then, I wouldn't say that. People The problem is that I don't know, the average people in Belgium aren't even in the Flemish part. Because I'm, I've always grown up in a more outer looking not multicultural, but a group of people that look outside look outside of their own living environment. And I don't necessarily think that that's the average person in Belgium.

Mod: Okay. So let's come back to CAN Europe and the fact that English is the dominant language, do you think this will have an impact on other languages? For instance, you may have some people you know, using their own languages within the network, but on very like, Okay, if they contact one another in like, for instance, informal way or in one specific case, and so on, do you think English by (.) er the fact that English is the dominant language? It is a threat to the position of other languages?

S4: I don't think so. Because when the most use of other languages is true, bilateral, bilateral, bilateral communication. So it's, it's always easier to communicate in your mother tongue. So whenever someone can communicate in their mother tongue they will do it. Even though some of the technical wording will be in English, just because you don't know the the translation.

Mod: And what is in your case?

S4: It is English for the main ones. And for like in (.) er any form, or if I or if I speak to someone in Holland or someone in France, and it is that I normally use that.

Mod: But you would still switch to English for the technical words.

34:23

S4: Yes.

Mod: Okay. That's very interesting. Okay, now we going back to the question that you were extremely silent. So there's that question, what in your opinion, is language’s role in organization or network? Like, I'm specifically interested in how you think about

S4: the principal thing that we do this language?

Mod: What do you mean by [unintelligible]

S4: we're constantly we're constantly trying to work on passing word on specific things to the outside world, and to the network, about things that we are going on. So we're trying to translate policy, policy things, and we're trying to, (.) and things that are happening in the network, to the other side, the policy to the network, and the network to policy. So we're constantly trying to work things. And as we're in the political environment, and an inter European environment, we need to be careful with what kind of words we can use to you can be more direct in English or German person than to a Polish person or a Romanian person. So you constantly have to think about who I'm talking to who I'm targeting, what kind of words Am I using? What can I be if you're upset? Can I be upset to that person or not? is er can I be mad? Do I still need to be what kind of politeness Do I have to put in it? And that's all words. That's the way you use words or the nuance and words.

Mod: And that would be what language

S4: normal mostly in English, which is difficult for people that don't natively speak English, because sometimes they don't have the nuance.

36:56

Okay, so you'd say that you sort of translate your whole work, translate in inverted commas, your whole work, and then sort of into, in this case, English, and then pass it on to either policy side or members? To

S4: Yeah,

Mod: Mm hmm. So it's, it's important to have language or languages?

S4: Well, yeah, of course.

Mod: Okay. So what is the what is your opinion on the language sort of practice in Europe?

The fact that you use English, the fact that you use other languages, would you er could you tell me about er more about how you feel about this? Or would you change anything in the whole practice? Or? I don't know, for instance, I spoke to [person working at CAN Europe Secretariat] I looked through all the policy, not the policy, the the documents available online, for instance, then, CAN Europe charter? CAN Europe -‘about us’? CAN Europe - information for members in the welcome pack and everything. And there's no one mention of the language being used any language being used in the network, except the fact that ,they’re all, these documents, plus the website, and everything is in English? So then then then that person said “Yeah, that's a very good observation. And maybe we should mention something in those documents that our main language is English”. What is your opinion on that? Because there's no written language policy in CAN Europe, you don't state “we use English for our internal or external communication with members”. On a general level?

S4: I think it's an assumption that it's clear for everyone that at the European level, it's in English.

Mod: umm so do you say it's among everyone?

S4: I think it's an assumption that's true for everyone. I'm quite sure that some of the organizations that might be interested in working within Europe are not member because of the language. Even now, sometimes we have problems with people that don't really understand English, English. And they will be somewhere. Geographically, well, the the things that I the examples that I have, in my mind are Southeastern Europe. Because people have not been, but it's also NGOs have not been very old there. And, and especially not looking at European level, because it's something new to them. Like the Croatian ones, or the Serbian ones, and some have very good English skills. But then they've worked in an environment where you use /English.

Mod:/Okay.

S4: I think in Western Europe, most people are used to have some extent of English around in their work or anything. Yeah, I think in in Eastern Europe, it's still less the percentage of population that speaks English.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: Yeah. Or that that has, has been in an English speaking environment.

Mod: So do you think that would put this fact would put them into a disadvantaged position?

S4: Yeah, of course.

Mod: And how can you er do you do anything to address it?

S4: That's difficult.I don't know if we can address it. In the current situation.

Mod: Why not?

S4: Because you would need someone that speaks er someone from with all the languages in your office, that is being spoken in Europe. [Person working in CAN Europe Secretariat] said once I asked the person once, for a job.” What would you do if you would get 1 million now for a year? Just on the spot?” And the person said, “I would want to have people in all the countries in Europe, like in Turkey, one person in every country in Europe”.

Mod: Okay. You asked 1 million not for [the person], but for the organization?

S4: Yeah.

Mod: Okay. Okay.

S4: So the person would probably the person would send someone in each of the countries that are a member of CAN, one person working there, which would resolve a lot of the problems, those problems are some would be

Mod: what native speaker of those languages?

S4: Well, they don't have to be native speakers. But someone that speaks language, which would mean that they know the political situation, they know the context, and they will be somewhat easier to translate things. And also to come for comments or for tasks or to send letters to, to minister to ministers to have our own contact at the national level.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: And yeah, that would probably solve that problem.

Mod: Wow, I think, how about translations you said, if you had an option to translate? Do you think that would be a good practice?

S4: I don't know if the translating a letter that we'd write in English, which we normally ask our members, would (1) I don't know if it would lead to more participation from our members nor I don't know if it would lead to other members, or new members, because they would feel more comfortable. Because still the rest of the congregation will be in English. I think within the current situation, the current context, it's just not feasible to have different kind of communication or a way of working, different languages, to use constantly different languages to communicate. Because it would take too much time.

Mod: Yeah, yeah.

S4: So English in that size is more practical.

Mod: Yeah.

S4: Because it's just the one that's being spoken most.

Mod: Mm hmm. Okay. So, is there anything else that you'd like to add? You'd like to say that hasn't been covered that we didn't really talk about in terms of languages?

S4: No.

Mod: Okay. Right. So thank you very much.