

14 TECHNOLOGY OF MODERN TIMES: (N 1) – (N 7)

Idioms reflecting aspects of the technological age, of modern industrialization and mechanization, are not frequent in general. Only seven widespread idioms from this domain have been observed so far. Their source frames do not make reference to the latest high technology but to technical achievements from early modern times. Two of them go back to motorized transport and railroad technology, (N 1, N 2), one to radio broadcast or telecommunication (N 3), three refer to steam engine technology, gears and engine mechanics (N 4 – N 6), while one WI refers to electricity (N 7). Compare also (K 3).

(N 1) TO GIVE SB. THE GREEN LIGHT

‘to encourage or allow sb. to proceed, to give sb. permission to do sth. that they were planning to do or have asked to do’

Cultural foundation: The idiom comes from the domain of traffic technology in modern urban communities. It evokes the image of a traffic light that switches to green authorizing the road users to go ahead. Symbolic knowledge about the color GREEN also contributes to the cultural foundation.

References: Spalding 1959ff: 1156; Brewer 2005: 614.

Indo-European Languages in Europe

Germanic Languages

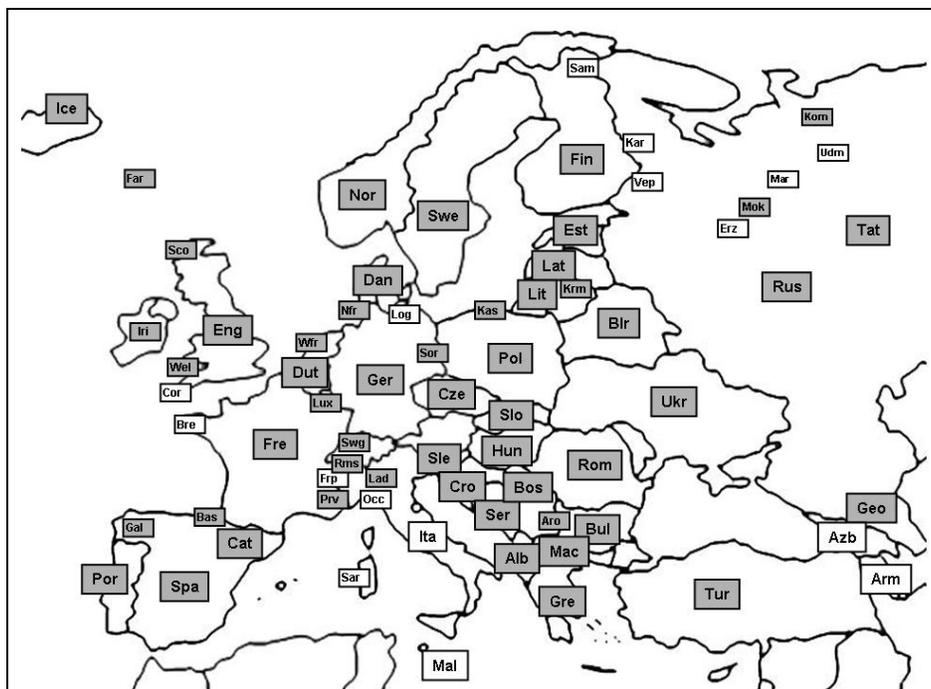
Icelandic	<i>að gefa e-rjum grænt ljós</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
Faroese	<i>at geva einum grønt ljós</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
Norwegian	(Bok.) <i>gi noen grønt lys</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
	(Nyn.) <i>gje nokon grønt lys/ljos</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
Swedish	<i>ge någon/något grönt ljus</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
Danish	<i>give ngn. grønt lys</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
English	<i>to give sb. the green light</i>	
Scots	<i>tae gie a body the green licht</i>	“to give at sb. the green light”
Dutch	<i>iem. het groene licht geven</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
	<i>het licht op groen zetten</i>	“to set the light at green”
North Fri.	(Sylt) <i>hoken green Leecht dô</i>	“to give sb. green light”
	(Wie) <i>hi/jü hji green ljaacht fingen</i>	“s/he has got green light”
West Fri.	<i>immen it griene ljocht jaan</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
German	<i>jmdm. grünes Licht geben</i>	“to give sb. green light”
Luxemb.	<i>engem d’gréng Luut/Luucht ginn</i>	“to give sb. the green light”
Swiss Ger.	<i>öpperem grüens Liecht gäh</i>	“to give sb. green light”

No equivalents reported for Low German and Yiddish

Celtic Languages

Irish	<i>olas glas a thabhairt do dhuine</i>	“light green to give to a person”
Welsh	<i>rhoi’r golau gwyrdd i rywun</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”

No equivalents reported for Cornish and Breton



Map 40: Equivalents of “to give sb. the green light” in European languages

Romance Languages

French	<i>donner le feu vert à qqn.</i>	“to give the green traffic lights to sb.”
Ladin	<i>ti dè lōm vērda</i>	“to give green light”
Romansh	<i>dar glisch verda ad insatgi</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”
Spanish	<i>dar a alguien luz verde</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”
Catalan	<i>donar llum verd a algú</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”
Galician	<i>dar luz verde a alguén</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”
Portuguese	<i>dar luz verde a alguém</i>	“to give the green light to sb.”
Romanian	<i>a da cuiva undă verde</i>	“to give sb. green light”
Aromanian	<i>lj-fatsi cali s-treacã</i>	“to give sb. the green light”

No equivalents reported for Occitan, Francoprovençal, Italian and Sardinian

Baltic Languages

Latvian	<i>dot zaļo gaismu kādam</i>	“to give (the) green light to sb.”
Lithuanian	<i>duoti kam žalią šviesą</i>	“to give (the) green light to sb.”

Slavonic Languages

Russian	<i>дать зелёный свет кому-л.</i>	“to give (the) green light to sb.”
Belorussian	<i>даць зялёнае святло</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Ukrainian	<i>дати комусь зелене світло</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Czech	<i>dát někomu zelenou</i>	“to give sb. green”
Slovak	<i>dat' niekomu zelenú</i>	“to give sb. green”

Polish	<i>dać komuś zielone światło</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Kashubian	<i>pòkazac kòmùs zelony wid</i>	“to show sb. (the) green light”
Sorbian	<i>zelenu swěcu dać někomu</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Slovene	<i>dati komu zeleno luč</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Croatian	<i>dati komu zeleno svjetlo</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Bosnian	<i>dati kome zeleno svjetlo</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Serbian	<i>dati kome zeleno svetlo</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Macedon.	<i>tu dava zeleno svetlo</i>	“to give sb. (the) green light”
Bulgarian	<i>давам зелена светанна</i> <i>давам зелена улица на няког</i>	“to give (the) green light” “to give green street to sb.”
<i>Albanian</i>	<i>jep dritën jeshile dikujt</i>	“to give green light to sb.”
<i>Greek</i>	<i>δίνω (το) πράσινο φως σε κν.</i>	“to give (the) green light to sb.”
<i>Armenian</i>	No equivalent	

Finno-Ugric Languages in Europe

Ugric Languages

Hungarian	<i>zöld utat ad</i>	“s/he gives sb. the green road”
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North-Finnic Languages

Finnish	<i>näyttää vihreää valoa jklle</i>	“to show green light to sb.”
Estonian	<i>kellelegi rohelist teed andma</i> <i>kellelegi rohelist tuld näitama</i>	“to give sb. the green road” “to show sb. the green light”

No equivalents reported for Karelian and Veps

Permic Languages

Komi-Zyr.	<i>турунвиж би сетны</i> [<i>turunvižh bi s'etny</i>]	“to give the green light”
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No equivalent reported for Udmurt

Volgaic Languages

Moksha M.	<i>киндиге сянгяря тол максомс мезевок тиэмс</i>	“to give the green traffic light to sb. to do sth.”
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No equivalents reported for Mari and Erzya Mordvin

Saami No equivalent

Turkic Languages in Europe

Karaim	<i>ješil ot jandyрма</i>	“the green light to switch”
Turkish	<i>birine/birşeye yeşil ışık yakmak</i>	“to switch on the green light for sb.”
Tatar	<i>яшел ут бирю / yashel uram bireрге</i>	“to give a green street”

No equivalent reported for Azerbaijani

Georgian	<i>mtsvane shukis anteba</i>	“to give green light to sb.”
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Maltese No equivalent

Basque *argi berdea erakutsi* “to show sb. the green light”

Esperanto *doni verdan lumon* “to give the green light”

Non-European languages

Egy. Arabic	<i>iddii-lu l-achdar</i>	“to give sb. the green”
	<i>iddii-lu l-loon il-achdar</i>	“to give sb. the green color”
Tun. Arabic	<i>ja ʔī ddaḡ laxḡar</i>	“he gives the green light”
Farsi	<i>cheragh saby neshandadn</i>	“to show green light”
Mongolian	<i>ногоон гэрлээр хийх</i> [<i>nogoon gerleer hiih</i>]	“to do sth. with/at green light”
Chinese	<i>kāi lǜ dēng</i>	“to open green light”
Vietnamese	<i>bật đèn xanh cho ai</i>	“to switch on the green light for sb.”
Korean	<i>cheong-shinho ida</i>	“this is green/blue signal”
Japanese	<i>ao shingou wo dasu</i>	“to give green/blue signal”
Thai	<i>hai fai-kiew</i>	“to give light-green”

Comment

As our research shows, the idiom is remarkably widespread; it exists in at least 52 European languages and, moreover, in various standard languages spoken outside Europe. The majority of these languages uses also the nominal construction, “green light” ‘permission to do something’, or forms such as “to give green light to a project, plan, etc.”

The idiom is regarded as fairly modern, probably spread under the influence of English, although the statements are contradictory: According to Brewer (2005: 614), the English idiom dates from the 1970s. The French equivalent is frequent since 1955-1960 (Rey/Chantreau 1993: 357) and the German idiom is recorded from the 1960 (Spalding 1959ff: 1156).

A large group of idioms are almost identical to the English one, apart from the use of the article (definite article vs. no article). Other idioms reveal some lexical differences, cf. the verbs Kashubian *pòkazac*, Estonian *näitama*, Finnish *näyttää*, Basque *erakutsi* ‘to show’ as well as verbs meaning ‘to switch (on)’ in Karaim and Turkish. Especially worth mentioning are the variants among the nouns: Apart from French *feu* ‘traffic light’, Czech ‘(the) green’ or Romanian *undă* ‘wave’, several idioms show words for ‘road’ or ‘street’: Bulgarian *улица* ‘street’, Hungarian *utak* ‘road’, Estonian *teed* ‘roads’ and Tatar *uram* ‘street’. They probably cast doubt on a direct influence from English. The Bulgarian and Estonian variants with “green light” are much younger and are used only in journalism of very recent times, as stated by our informants. The same holds for an Italian expression *dare la luce verde* “to give the green light” which can be understood figuratively, but is not yet an idiom. A near equivalent idiom is *dare via libera*, literally “to give free way/street”. Because it contains no adjective for

English	<i>to see the light at the end of the tunnel</i>	
Scots	<i>tae see licht at the end o the tunnel</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Dutch	<i>het licht zien aan het einde van de tunnel</i>	
		“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
West Fri.	<i>der is ljocht oan it ein fan de tunnel</i>	“there is light at the end of the tunnel”
German	<i>Licht am Ende des Tunnels sehen</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Luxemb.	<i>et gesait een rem Luut um Enn vum Tunnel</i>	
		“one sees again the light at the end of the tunnel”
Swiss Ger.	<i>Liecht am Ändi vom Tunne gsch</i>	“to see light at the end of the tunnel”

No equivalents reported for Faroese, North Frisian, Yiddish and Low German

Celtic Languages

Irish	<i>solas ag deireadh an tolláin</i>	“light at the end of the tunnel”
Welsh	<i>(gweld) golau ar ddiwedd y twnel</i>	“(to see) the light at the end of the tunnel”
Breton	<i>(gweled) penn an tunnel</i>	“(to see) the end of the tunnel”

No equivalent reported for Cornish

Romance Languages

French	<i>voir le bout du tunnel</i>	“to see the end of the tunnel”
Provençal	<i>veire lou but dei tunnel</i>	“we see the end of the tunnel”
Italian	<i>vedere la luce in fondo al tunnel</i>	“to see the light in (the) depth/ground of the tunnel”
	<i>vedere la luce alla fine del tunnel</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Spanish	<i>ver luz al final del tunel</i>	“to see light at the end of the tunnel”
Catalan	<i>veure la llum al final del túnel</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
	<i>veure el final del túnel</i>	“to see the end of the tunnel”
Galician	<i>ver a luz ao final do túnel</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
	<i>ver o final do túnel</i>	“to see the end of the tunnel”
Portuguese	<i>ver a luz ao fundo do túnel</i>	“to see the light at the bottom of the tunnel”
Romanian	<i>a vedea luminița de la capătul tunelului</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”

No equivalents reported for Occitan, Ladin, Romansh, Francoprovençal, Sardinian and Aromanian

Baltic Languages

Latvian	<i>gaišma tuneļa galā</i>	“the light at the end of the tunnel”
Lithuanian	<i>matyti šviesą tunelio gale</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”

Slavonic Languages

Russian	<i>(у)ВИДЕТЬ СВЕТ В КОНЦЕ ТУННЕЛЯ</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Belorus.	<i>(у)БАЧЫЦЬ СВЯТЛА ў канцы тунэля</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Ukrainian	<i>СВІТЛО В КІНЦІ ТУНЕЛЮ</i>	“the light at the end of the tunnel”
Slovak	<i>vidieť svetlo na konci tunela</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Czech	<i>vidět světlo na konci tunelu</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Polish	<i>(widać) światło/światełko w tunelu</i>	“(one can see) light/little light in the tunnel”
Sorbian	<i>swěca/swětło w tunlu</i>	“the light in the tunnel”

Slovene	<i>videti luč na koncu predora</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Croatian	<i>vidjeti svjetlo na kraju tunela</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Bosnian	<i>vidjeti svjetlost na kraju tunela</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Serbian	<i>угледати светло на крају тунела</i>	“to see the light at the end of the tunnel”
Bulgarian	<i>виждам/вижда се светлина в (края на) тунела</i>	“sb. sees light in (the end of) the tunnel”

No equivalents reported for Kashubian and Macedonian

Albanian *te shohesh driten ne fund te tynelit* “to see the light at the end of the tunnel”

Greek *βλέπω φως στην άκρη του τούνελ* “to see light at the other side of the tunnel”

Finno-Ugric Languages in Europe

Ugric Languages

Hungarian *már látni az alagút végét* “the end of the tunnel already can be seen”

North-Finnic Languages

Finnish *nähdä valoa tunnelin päässä* “to see light at the end of the tunnel”

Estonian *tunneli lõpus valgust nägema* “at the end of the tunnel to see light”

No equivalents reported for Karelian and Veps

Permic Languages: No equivalents

Volgaic Languages

Moksha M. *туннельть омба пьяде ши вайда няемс*
“to see light of the day at the end of the tunnel”

Erzya M. *неемс тоа туннельнь пессэ* “to see light at the end of the tunnel”

No equivalents reported for Mari

Saami No equivalent

Turkic Languages in Europe

Turkish *tünelin sonunda ışık görüldü* “at the end of the tunnel light has been seen”

No equivalents reported for Karaim, Tatar and Azerbaijani

Georgian *gvirabis bolos sinatlis danakhva* “to see the light at the end of a tunnel”

Maltese and Basque: No equivalents

Esperanto *vidi lumon je la fino de la tunelo* “to see light at the end of a tunnel”

Non-European languages

Vietnamese *(nhìn) thấy ánh sáng cuối đường hầm* “to see light at the end of the tunnel”

Korean *tunnel-ui kkeut-i boin-da* “to see the end of the tunnel”

Mongolian	<i>ХОНГИЛИЙН ҮЗҮҮРТ ГЭРЭЛ ХАРАХ</i> [<i>hongiliin uzurt gerel baral</i>]	“to see light at the end of the tunnel”
Aklanon	<i>kasiga sa punta it tanel</i>	“light at the end of the tunnel”

Comment

According to our informants, equivalents of the idiom exist in 44 European and some non-European languages with a quite consistent syntactic and lexical structure.¹ Most languages have also the shorter nominal form (e.g. Albanian *drite ne fund te tunelit* or Estonian *valgus tunneli lõpus* ‘light at the end of the tunnel’, figuratively ‘hope for the future, after a long and difficult period’, while a few languages prefer this version (cf. Latvian). Other shortened variants are Dutch *het einde van de tunnel zien* ‘to see the end of the tunnel’ (without ‘light’, cf. also the French idiom) and Greek *βλέπω φως στο τούνελ* ‘to see light in the tunnel’ (without ‘end’).

(N 3) TO BE ON THE SAME WAVELENGTH AS SOMEONE

‘to have similar ideas, interests, and opinions (to another person’s); to understand each other very well’

Cultural foundation: The source concept is ‘radio transmission’ where the broadcasting transmitter and the receiver must be on the same frequency. A radio program cannot be heard unless the radio is tuned to the correct wavelength.

Indo-European Languages in Europe

Germanic Languages

Icelandic	<i>að vera á sömu bylgjulengd (og e-hver)</i>	“to be on the same wavelength (as sb.)”
Faroese	<i>at vera á bylgjulongd (við einum)</i>	“to be on the wavelength (with sb.)”
Norwegian	<i>være på (samme) bølgelengde (med noen)</i>	“to be on the (same) wavelength (with sb.)”
Swedish	<i>vara på samma våglängd (med ngn)</i>	“to be on the same wavelength (with sb.)”
Danish	<i>være på bølgelængde (med ngn)</i>	“to be on the wavelength (with sb.)”
English	<i>to be on the same wavelength as sb.</i>	
Dutch	<i>op dezelfde golflengte zitten (met iem.)</i>	“to sit on the same wavelength (with sb.)”
	<i>op gelijke golflengte zijn</i>	“to be on similar wavelength”
North Fri.	<i>ûp di salev Welenlengdi wiis</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”
West Fri.	<i>op deselde golflingte sitte</i>	“to sit on the same wavelength”
German	<i>(mit jmdm.) auf der gleichen Wellenlänge liegen</i>	“to lie on the same wavelength (with sb.)”
Swiss Ger.	<i>uf dr gliiche Wällelengi sii</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”

No equivalents reported for Scots, Luxembourgish, Yiddish and Low German

¹ The Celtic idioms are recent calques: in Breton from French and in Irish and Welsh from English. The Irish idiom is sometimes seen as *sólás ag deireadh an tolláin* ‘solace at the end of the tunnel’, a word-play on the English translation.

Slavonic Languages

Russian	<i>быть с кем-л. на одной волне</i>	“to be with sb. on one wave”
Belorussian	<i>быць на адной хвалі</i>	“to be on one wave”
Ukrainian	<i>бути на одній хвилі</i>	“to be on one wave”
Czech	<i>být na stejné frekvenci (s někým)</i>	“to be on the same frequency (with sb.)”
Polish	<i>działać/myśleć/... na tej samej fali</i>	“to act/think/... on the same wave”
Slovene	<i>biti na isti valovni dolžini</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”
Croatian	<i>biti na istoj valnoj dužini/duljini</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”
Bosnian	<i>biti na istoj talasnoj dužini</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”
Serbian	<i>biti na istoj talasnoj dužini</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”
Macedon.	<i>na ista branova dolžina e so</i>	“to be on the same wavelength”

No equivalents reported for Slovak, Kashubian, Sorbian and Bulgarian

Albanian No equivalent

Greek *είμαι/εκπέμπω στο ίδιο μήκος κύματος (με κάποιον)*
 “to be/radiate on the same wavelength
 (with sb)”

Finno-Ugric Languages in Europe*Ugric Languages*

Hungarian *egy/azonos hullámhosszon van vkivel* “sb. is on the same/on one wavelength with sb.”

North-Finnic Languages

Finnish *olla samalla aaltopituudella (jkn. kanssa)*
 “to be on the same wavelength (with sb.)”

Estonian *ühel lainel olema (kellegagi)*
 “to be on the same wave (with sb.)”

No equivalents reported for Karelian and Veps

Permian, Volgaic and Saamic Languages: No equivalents

Turkic Languages in Europe

Turkish *birisiyle aynı frekansta olmak* “to be on the same frequency with sb.”

No equivalents reported for Karaim, Tatar and Azerbaijani

Georgian *ert talgaze kopna* “to be on the same wave”

Maltese and Basque: No equivalents

Esperanto *esti je la sama ondolongo* “to be on the same wavelength”

Comment

Our informants report that equivalents of the idiom occur in 36 European languages.² The idiom has also been reported for Korean (*ju-pa-su-ga matt-da* “sb.

² We leave out the Catalan expressions *estar en la mateixa longitud d'ona* “to be in the same wavelength” and *estar a la mateixa ona* “to be on the same wave” because they are used mainly in non-figurative sense.

has the same wavelength as sb.”). We can see from the map that many of the lesser used languages do not possess the idiom.

No particular emphasis should be laid on the morphosyntactic structures: Types such as “to be/lie/sit on the same wavelength (with sb.)” and “to have the same wavelength (as sb.)” or “the two have the same wavelength” are used side by side in many languages. Some lexical variants should be noticed as well. The word used for “same” can be omitted (as in Faroese and Danish), just as the element meaning “length” (e.g. Spanish, Latvian, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Georgian). Similar to “wavelength” is “frequency” (cf. Turkish *frekans* or Portuguese *sintonia*).

Whereas all the idioms listed above have the same figurative meaning, the seemingly similar Bulgarian idiom *на същата вълна съм* “I am on the same wave” reveals a different semantic structure: It turns out to be a “false friend” in view of its figurative meaning ‘I busy myself with the same problems or with similar ideas (as sb.)’.³

(N 4) AT FULL STEAM

‘at full speed; with very great effort; with a lot of energy’

Cultural foundation: Technical achievements of the early modern age, especially from the time of steam navigation, constitute the cultural framework of this idiom. *Full steam* means full mechanical power. The originally nautical command *full steam ahead* was transferred to other areas of life (railway, machines, people) to describe the greatest power attainable

Ice	Nor	Swe	Fin	Est	Lat
Eng	Dut	Dan	Lit	Blr	Rus
Fre	Ger	Pol	Cze	Slo	Ukr
Sle	Cro	Hun	Rom	Geo	Azb
Cat	Ita	Bos	Ser	Mac	Bul
Por	Spa	Mal	Alb	Gre	Tur

Reference: Röhrich 1995: 1683

Comment: The idiom does not fail the criteria for a WI, even though it is not as widespread as the previous ones. It has been reported for only 23 of the European standard languages (see grid) and some of the smaller languages (e.g. West Frisian *mei stoom gean* “to go with steam”, Provençal *à touto vapour*, Sorbian *z polnej parū*). Two main versions can be found, to be translated as “with full steam” and “at full steam”.

Examples: “with full steam”: Dutch *met volle stoom*, German *mit Volldampf*, Slovene *s polno paro*, Bulgarian *с пълна пара*, Hungarian *teljes gőzzel*, Finnish *täydellä höyryllä*, Estonian *täie tambiga/auruga*, cf. also Esperanto *meti la tutan vaporon*; “at full steam”: French *à toute vapeur*, Italian *a tutto vapore*, Portuguese *a todo o vapor*, Slovak *na plný plyn*, peľna/caľa para “with full/all steam”, and in the plural: Russian *на полных парах* “with full steams”. The idiom is also used in structures like (*to go*) *full steam ahead* (*with sth.*) meaning ‘(to do sth.) with a lot of energy’.

³ The antonymous idiom is just as frequent: Bulgarian *на друга вълна съм* “I am on the other wave”, meaning ‘I occupy myself with different problems, I am thinking about something very different’.

The gaps in the distribution are caused by quasi-synonymous idioms which do not belong to the frame STEAM ENGINE but contain other concepts, e.g. “with/at full speed” (Swedish *med full fart*, Cornish *toth men*, Breton *divar dizh*, Latvian *ar pilnu tvaiku*), “at full power” (Icelandic *að fullum krafti*), “at all gas” (Galician *a todo gas*, Catalan *a tot gas*) or “at full fuse” (Spanish *a toda mecha*).

(N 5) *THE/A DEAD SPOT/POINT

(German *der tote Punkt/ein toter Punkt*, cf. English *the dead center*)

‘a stage when no progress can be made; a state of greatest exhaustion or stagnancy’

Cultural foundation: The idiom originates from (steam) engine technology. It refers to the moment (technically two moments) in the cycle of an engine when the connecting rod and the crankshaft form one straight line. At this point, the connecting rod moves neither forward nor backward but reverses its direction, and there is temporarily no turning force.

Comment: The idiom occurs also in verbal constructions such as “to surmount the dead spot” (e.g. German *den toten Punkt überwinden* ‘to recover from fatigue; to overcome the point of exhaustion or stagnation’) or “to reach the dead spot” (e.g. Estonian *surnud punkti jõudma* ‘to become completely exhausted, tired or to reach the point that sth. cannot move on’). All of our informants recorded the noun phrase in the first place (varying only in the use of the article).

Examples: Norwegian *et dødpunkt*, Swedish *en död punkt*, Danish *et dødt punkt*, West Frisian *it deade punt*, Dutch *het dode punt*, French *le point mort*, Italian *un punto morto*, Spanish *el/un punto muerto*, Portuguese *um ponto morto*, Romanian *punctul mort*, Russian *мёртвая точка*, Belorussian *мёртвае нукам*, Czech *mrtvý bod*, Slovak *mŕtvý bod*, Polish *martwy punkt*, Slovene *mrtva točka*, Croatian *mrtva točka*, Bosnian *mrtva tačka*, Serbian *мртва тачка*, Bulgarian *мъртва точка*, Albanian *pike e vdekur*, Greek *vezó oŋueío* and Finnish *kuollut piste*. The Hungarian compound *holtpont* ‘dead-point’ is a full equivalent. Both Baltic languages use a different syntactic structure, ‘the point of the death’: Lithuanian *mirties taškas* and Latvian *nāves punkts*. A semantic shift can be observed in Icelandic. Expressions such as *sjaldan/aldrei dauður punktur í e-u* ‘rarely/never a dead point in sth.’ can be used figuratively in the sense of ‘there is always something going on, that’s where the action is’.

(N 6) TO BE ONLY A COG IN THE MACHINE/WHEEL/WORKS

‘to be only one of many entities in a large business, organization, system (in a subordinate position, function, without personal responsibility)’

Cultural foundation: The image is that of a machine consisting of many small interlocking gearwheels, where an individual gearwheel, or cog, only transmits a motion but has no power or control itself.

Comment: Although nowadays the idiom will most probably be associated with “modern” engines, we cannot rule out the possibility that the original cultural concept underlying the idiom is different, since cogwheel gears are much older (cf. e.g. construction of watermills or clockwork mechanism in bygone days). The idiom occurs with a quite consistent syntactic and lexical structure across

the languages, varying just between the words for “wheel/cog” and “machine, machinery”.

Examples: Icelandic *vera tannhjól í gangverki e-s* “to be (a) cogwheel in sb.’s gears”, Swedish *vara en kugge i maskineriet* “to be a cog in the machine”, German *nur ein Rädchen im Getriebe sein* “to be only a little wheel in the gears”, French *n’être qu’un rouage (parmi d’autres rouages)* “to be only a wheel (among other wheels)”, Italian *non essere che la rotella di un ingranaggio* “to be only the little wheel of a gears”, Lithuanian *mažas (didelio mechanizmo) sraigtelis* “a little wheel in the big gears”, Russian *быть только колесиком в механизме* “to be only a small wheel in the gears”, Czech *být jen kolečkem v mašině* “to be a little wheel in the machinery”, Polish *być tylko trybikiem w maszynie* “to be only a cog in the machine”, Hungarian *vki csak egy gépezet fogaskereke* “sb. is only a small cog in a machine”, Finnish *olla vain pieni ratas koneistossa* “to be only a small cog in the gears” or *olla yksi koneiston pyöristä* “to be one wheel in the gears”, Estonian *vaid väike mutrike/rattake suures masinavärgis olema* “to be only a little wheel/cog in the big gear”. Deviating lexical forms can be found in Dutch *een klein radertje in het geheel zijn* “to be a small wheel in the whole” or in idioms with “screw”, e.g. Serbian *biti citan igrاف (у механизму)* “to be a screw in the mechanism” (a Russian variant is *быть только винтиком в механизме*; in Latvian it is the only form: *tikai skrūvīte ritenī* “only a little screw in the wheel”) and “bolt” (Bulgarian *винтче в машината* “a little bolt in the machine”).

(N 7) TO RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

‘to have a long rest or a holiday so that you feel better’

Cultural foundation: The idiom is based on a comparison of a person’s physical shape with the state of an electric motor (or an engine that needs electricity to start). If the battery of the electric device is too low, the battery needs recharging before work can continue.

Comment: The idiom is quite young and not registered in all dictionaries. Several informants found evidence for the existence of the idiom in the Internet, e.g. in tourism advertising. As the grid shows, the idiom exists in the majority of the European standard languages. Lexical variants can be set aside. The variants with “battery/batteries” clearly dominate over such ones with “accumulator”.

Ice	Nor	Swe	Fin	Est	Lat
Eng	Dut	Dan	Lit	Blr	Rus
Fre	Ger	Pol	Cze	Slo	Ukr
Sle	Cro	Hun	Rom	Geo	Azb
Cat	Ita	Bos	Ser	Mac	Bul
Por	Spa	Mal	Alb	Gre	Tur

Examples: with “battery/batteries”: Icelandic *bláða batterín*, Norwegian *lade batteriene*, Swedish *ladda batterierna*, Danish *at lade batterierne op*, Swiss German *sini Batterie wider uflade*, French *recharger ses batteries*, Italian *ricaricare le batterie*, Spanish *(re)cargar (las) baterías/pilas*, Catalan *carregar les piles*, Portuguese *recarregar as baterias*, Romanian *a-și (re)încărca bateriile*, Latvian *uzlādēt savas baterijas*, Czech *dobít si baterky*, Slovak *nabíť si znovu batérie*, Slovene *napolniti baterije*, Croatian *napuniti baterije*, Bosnian *napuniti baterije*, Serbian *napuniti baterije*, Bulgarian *запълвам си батериите*, Albanian *i mbush bateritë*, Greek *γεμίζω τις μπαταρίες μου*, Estonian *pataréisid laadima*, Maltese *tiċċarġja l-batterija*; with “accumulator”: Dutch *de akku opladen*, Finnish *ladata akkunsä*. Some languages use both variants side by side: West Frisian *de batterijen/de akku oplade*, German *seine Batterie/seinen Akku wieder aufladen*, Polish *natadować baterie/akumulatory*. Expressions without such a word, however, as Russian *запрудиться энергией* “to charge oneself with energy” or Hungarian *feltöltődik* “to charge oneself”, must be excluded”.