8TH EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO SEMINAR

Graz – Austria, 29 September – 1 October 2009

Report by David Little, Seminar Co-ordinator and Rapporteur

European Language PORTFOLIO Européen des Langues

COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

8th European Language Portfolio Seminar (ELP)

Graz – Austria, 29 September (2pm) – 1 October (6pm) 2009

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Language Policy Division

Tuesday 29 September

Official opening – chair: Ursula Newby

Mr Anton Dobart, Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and the Arts (BMUKK)

Mr Dobart welcomed the seminar participants on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and the Arts (BMUKK). He said that as a multilingual society Austria is constantly challenged to ask what language education can do to help European education in an increasingly global world, so the Ministry was glad to support the seminar, which it considered to be an important event. He noted that as a result of globalization and the resulting migration flows, we are now living in multilingual and multicultural societies, and this is having an impact on Europe's education systems. The Council of Europe, like the European Union and UNESCO, has responded to these changes with a policy of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Since the 1980s Austria has been committed to the development and implementation of innovation in the area of language policy, and it attaches great importance to its long tradition of cooperation with the Council of Europe. One especially significant juncture in this cooperation occurred in 1994 with the establishment of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, which today serves to stimulate innovation in language education policy and its implementation across Europe. The presence of the ECML in Graz provides Austria with new opportunities and possibilities.

Another of the Council of Europe's important projects is the development of Language Education Policy Profiles. In the autumn of 2008 Ministers Schmied and Hahn signed the Austrian profile, which has stimulated a number of actions: diversification of the languages offered; promotion of early language learning; new developments in the teaching of German as a second language and of the home languages of children from migrant backgrounds; the professionalization of teacher education; the development of forms of bilingual education. These activities reflect Austria's commitment to a Europe that is brought closer together by the value it places on plurilingualism.

The European Language Portfolio supports individualization and differentiation in language learning, promotes learner autonomy, and contributes to the management of transition from one level of education to the next. But it also values all languages and cultures and contributes to mutual understanding and tolerance, so this three-day seminar is concerned not only with a language teaching instrument and language teaching approaches but with the value we place on the multilingualism of societies and the plurilingualism of individuals.

The European Language Portfolio has great relevance for the Austrian educational system. Austria's traditionally hierarchical and centralized society needs to be opened, and this explains the present movement towards personalized learning and the emphasis on developing learners' responsibility for managing their own learning. The portfolio concept, however, is important not just for language learning but for learning in general; thus EPOSTL, the ECML's portfolio for teachers, is also very significant. We do not diminish the importance of foreign language teaching and learning if we say that all teaching is language teaching, and this insight demands a new kind of professionalism in education.

The participants in this seminar bring with them a wealth of experience and knowledge, and the next few days will give them an opportunity to build networks that will encourage exchange, provide new experience and help to construct new knowledge. Because new perspectives involve new risks, our future is not clearly shaped. We need to launch an educational process that is marked by open-mindedness and allows people to become more flexible and more autonomous. Only thus can we harvest the fruit to be gathered in the field of language learning and teaching. This paradigm change will demand new forms of communication that it is the role of participants in this seminar to embody and mediate to others, thus helping us to shoulder our responsibilities.

Mr Dobart concluded by thanking the participants for coming to Graz and being ready to share their knowledge and experience. He wished them a successful seminar.

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Mr Joseph Sheils, Council of Europe, Head of the Language Policy Division

On behalf of the Council of Europe Mr Sheils welcomed participants to the eighth European seminar on the ELP. He expressed his thanks to Austria for its strong and loyal support of the Council of Europe's work in the field of language education and to BMUKK and Mr Dobart for offering to host the seminar. He also thanked the province of Styria and the City of Graz for their support and hospitality, not only on this occasion but in relation to the many other events that are held under the aegis of the European Centre for Modern Languages.

Mr Sheils noted that it was very appropriate for this seminar, organized by the Language Policy Division, to be hosted by the European Centre for Modern Languages, which has become the central reference point in Europe for innovation in language education and the central node in networks of language education professionals. The ECML plays a key role in disseminating and implementing the Council of Europe's language education tools, and links and synergies continue to develop between the Steering Committee for Education and the ELP Validation Committee in Strasbourg and the ECML Governing Board in Graz. The Language Policy Division and the ECML jointly prepared the European Day of Languages, celebrated last weekend, and it is appropriate to consider this seminar an extension of those celebrations.

The first European Day of Languages was celebrated in 2001, which was the year in which the European Language Portfolio was first launched. This seminar provides an opportunity to look back at almost a decade of success and forward to new developments. Since 2001 more than 100 ELPs have been accredited, and it is fitting to congratulate all members of the Validation Committee past and present for their hard work and their remarkable achievement not only in validating so many different models but also in identifying good practice and constantly refining our understanding of the principles that underlie the ELP. In particular it is appropriate to acknowledge the unique personal contribution of Rolf Schärer, Rapporteur General for the ELP project. He was centrally involved in the conception of the ELP at the Rüschlikon Symposium in 1991 and has worked tirelessly to promote the ELP and support ELP developers across Europe.

Rolf Schärer's reports and the recent impact study carried out by members of the Validation Committee provide ample evidence that the ELP has had a major impact on language learning and teaching in a variety of educational contexts. In many countries the CEFR and the ELP have influenced the content of textbooks, for example through the inclusion of self-assessment checklists, the idea of a dossier, and by more generally promoting the principles that underlie the ELP. It is also acknowledged that the CEFR and the ELP have had an impact on language curriculum development at national level, whether in the upgrading of existing curricula or the introduction of a new degree of correlation with the CEFR. Teachers who have been given training and support in the ELP approach have achieved very positive results. However, while many of the principles guiding language teaching and learning today stem from the CEFR and ELP approach, it has to be said that ELP models are not used as widely as might have been hoped initially. How can we explain their impact? Francis Goullier, vice chair of the EVC, has likened the ELP to *haute couture*: although not many people own the original fashion items, the designs filter down and influence fashion far and wide. So it is with the CEFR and the ELP: not all teachers may be aware that their learner-centred, action-oriented, communicative approach is based on these Council of Europe tools, which have nevertheless made their mark on European language education policy and practice. The European added value of the ELP initiative is clear.

The Council of Europe's mission in Strasbourg and Graz is to be a catalyst for innovation, which means that its work in the language education field is continually evolving. After so much success and impact, direct and indirect, it is time to launch a new phase in the ELP project as part of the next medium-term programme of the Steering Committee for Education (2010–2014). The new programme is concerned with language policies, social inclusion and the right to quality education, which is a pre-condition for the exercise of other

human rights and thus crucial for social inclusion. In keeping with its core values, the Council of Europe is particularly concerned with the rights and needs of vulnerable groups. Its programme in the area of language education is specifically concerned with a values-oriented and rights-based approach to plurilingual and intercultural education. This is a matter of helping learners to develop their unique and dynamic language repertoire, which includes their home language, the language of schooling (if it is different from their home language), and foreign languages. It also means acknowledging all the languages present in educational contexts and all the languages that contribute to education, whether they are used as the medium of instruction, taught as subjects, or just present informally in the school environment. The different languages of the curriculum are too often kept completely separate from one another: the Council of Europe is concerned to seek a more coherent and global approach that fosters integration between different languages.

This approach is not new. It has already been promoted in the *Guide to the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* and the Language Education Policy Profiles that the Language Policy Division has undertaken for a growing number of member states. What is new is the focus on the language of schooling. The right to quality education and full access to the school curriculum depends on the learner being competent in the language of schooling – German in Austria, Slovenian in Slovenia, and so on – as a subject in its own right and as the medium through which other subjects are taught. In particular it is vitally important that students master the varieties of academic language associated with the different curriculum subjects, which includes mastering different forms of discourse, genres and text types. We need to make this "hidden curriculum" explicit, together with the various language competences that students need to develop. The language of schooling can present a particular challenge to children and adolescents from migrant and/or socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The ELP has already played a role in helping migrants to learn the language of their host country, and this is something we may need to develop further in the future.

The right to plurilingual and intercultural education focuses on the development of the learner as an active, responsible, democratic, tolerant, open-minded citizen and social actor in societies that are increasingly characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity. Plurilingual and intercultural education views languages not only as tools to be mastered for purposes of communication. It also stresses the role of language as a transversal instrument for learning, personal development, creative expression, the development of culture and values, socialization and identity building. And it stresses the development of a critical capacity for autonomous learning and thinking and intercultural understanding, which links it clearly with the ELP and its defining principles.

The challenge that lies before us now is to examine how the portfolio concept, with its underlying principles and distinctive pedagogical approach, might relate to the languages of schooling and to take into account other languages – regional, minority and migrant languages – in an overarching vision of languages *in* and *for* education. In responding to the challenge we may expect to enrich the portfolio concept while applying portfolio principles more widely.

Two weeks from now the working group that coordinates the project on Plurilingual and Intercultural Education will meet in Strasbourg. The chair and vice chair of the ELP Validation Committee are members of the group and thus will contribute to the discussion of future developments. In the documents circulated in advance of this seminar you will have noticed that the Steering Committee for Education has accepted the Validation Committee's recommendation that a new approach should be adopted to supporting quality in the development of ELPs; and in the course of the seminar you will learn more about the measures proposed to replace the current system of validation and accreditation by a process of registration that makes use of generic portfolios and templates. It is important that existing portfolios continue to make their contribution to the promotion of plurilingual education and that the process of portfolio development continues to be encouraged and supported. The Language Policy Division intends to make it easier to prepare quality ELPs and to make local and national ELPs more visible and more easily accessible across borders.

The various developments in our project on Plurilingual and Intercultural Education will be presented at a major policy forum to be held in Switzerland in the first week of November 2010 at the kind invitation of the Swiss authorities. Bearing in mind the context outlined above, the purpose of the present seminar is to take stock of the achievements of the ELP project and to open a new chapter in the history of the ELP in light of the developments under way in relation to languages in and for education. This seminar provides an opportunity for ELP contact persons to contribute to the preparation of the next phase and to help prioritize future actions, to act as catalysts for new ideas and actions, and to disseminate developments at national level. Here in Graz this seminar will be followed immediately by an Austrian national event organized by the Österreichisches Sprachenkompetenzzentrum. The Council of Europe encourages all member states to organize similar events to help inform colleagues about ELP developments and to build up a community of practice. These are ambitious goals for the ELP, and if we are to achieve them we must reinforce the European cooperation on which our achievements to date have been based. In this the ECML will play a vital role.

Mr Sheils concluded by thanking the ECML for hosting the seminar, Ursula Newby and the Austrian Association for their efficient preparation of the seminar, Gunther Abuja and the Österreichisches Sprachenkompetenzzentrum for their support, and Christopher Reynolds for all his efforts as secretary to the ELP Validation Committee.

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Mr Ludwig Rader

On behalf of Steiermark and the city of Graz, which he said are proud and happy to host the European Centre for Modern Languages, Mr Rader welcomed the participants and wished them a successful seminar.

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Mr Gunther Abuja, Director of the Austrian Centre for Language Competence

Mr Abuja welcomed the participants in his double capacity as director of the Österreichisches Sprachenkompetenzzentrum and ELP contact person for Austria. He explained that the ÖSZ is responsible for implementing policies designed to stimulate innovation in language teaching and learning, so it was commissioned by BMUKK to develop, pilot and evaluate three ELPs, for learners in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. Three other ELPs have been developed in Austria and validated by the Council of Europe. This commitment to the ELP must be seen against a background of change in the Austrian system. Decentralization enables schools themselves to develop parts of the curriculum and to decide which subjects to emphasize. In this situation it is important that individual students should not be disadvantaged. The publication of the CEFR has been important for the development of language education in Austria because it supports quality control in language teaching; and as a pedagogical and methodological pathfinder the ELP has helped the CEFR to find its way into the minds if not the hearts of school teachers.

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Mr Waldemar Martyniuk, Council of Europe, Executive Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages

Mr Martyniuk welcomed the participants in the seminar to "their" European Centre for Modern Languages. He explained that the ECML was founded in 1994 as a Council of Europe partial agreement; originally eight member states were party to the agreement and now there are 34. Mr Martyniuk said that it was right to establish the ECML and right to establish it in Graz. The ECML's principal tasks are to assist member states in the implementation of innovative approaches in language education and to disseminate examples of good practice. The ECML organizes its work in four-year medium-term programmes – full details of the current programme (2008–2011) and the extensive results of the 2004-2007 programme are available on the ECML website (www.ecml.at). Mr Martyniuk urged participants to find time to visit the newly refurbished documentation and resource centre, which has a large collection of ELPs, other publications, and the John Trim Collection. The current medium-term programme, "Empowering Language Professionals", is

contributing to the development of a European network of language educators – teachers but also administrators. Mr Martyniuk concluded by wishing the participants a successful seminar and advising them not to overlook the attractions of the city of Graz.

Introduction to the seminar programme and working methods – David Little (chair of the ELP Validation Committee and rapporteur for the seminar)

David Little explained that the seminar had three focuses, the past, the present and the future. The focus on the past would begin with Rolf Schärer's retrospective on the ELP from 1998 to 2009, continue with the presentation of the impact study prepared by three members of the Validation Committee, and conclude with discussion of the ELP's impact in the working groups and plenary feedback. The focus on present practice would include presentations of the two ELP-related projects in the ECML's current medium-term programme, accounts of ELP implementation in France, The Netherlands and Switzerland, nine show-and-tell reports, and presentations of three Austrian ELP projects. The focus on the future would begin with a presentation of the Validation Committee's strategy and an introduction to some of the tools that the committee is working on to support the development of new ELPs, continue with a review of the ECML's support for ELP implementation and an exploration of the ELP's implications for assessment, and conclude with discussion in the working groups of (i) the issues that the new strategy raises at European, national and local levels and (ii) how the new strategy should be implemented. The seminar as a whole would conclude with the rapporteur's summing up and a final plenary discussion.

The European Language Portfolio from 1997 to 2008: a retrospective – Rolf Schärer (Rapporteur General for the ELP project)

Rolf Schärer began by explaining that the ELP had its origins in the mid 1980s, some years before the Rüschlikon Symposium (1991) and more than a decade before the Council of Europe invited member states to launch pilot projects (1997). During the 1970s the Organization's modern languages project had developed *Threshold Level*, *Un Niveau Seuil* and *Kontaktschwelle* together with innovative approaches to the analysis of learners' needs. At this time the project group hoped to develop a unit credit system that would gain acceptance across Europe, but this turned out not to be feasible. Thus the question arose: what could move things forward? The project group's answer was to look for ways of focusing its activity directly on the learner, and that was when the ideas underlying the ELP were first conceived.

As some of the documents used at the 1991 symposium remind us, the decision to develop the ELP was fuelled by the dream that the language teaching world would pool its experience and know-how to make language learning a truly rewarding experience for everyone. At the symposium two questions were raised: should the Council of Europe produce a framework, and should the framework have levels? As we all know, the CEFR and the ELP were developed through the 1990s, and what has been accomplished since then is truly phenomenal. The two really remarkable achievements were the sustained dialogue by which the CEFR and the ELP were mediated to member states and the widespread recognition, thanks to the ELP, that the learner is the one who learns.

The early 1990s were a time of great excitement as the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe joined the Council of Europe. They brought with them many new languages, histories and traditions, all of which greatly enriched our ongoing dialogue, while the ELP helped the Language Policy Division to move in a new direction. Immediately after the 1991 symposium a group of teachers in Switzerland began to produce the first ELPs – another cause of excitement because it gave rise to new forms of collaboration. Since then, of course, the same thing has happened in many other countries.

The pilot projects (1998–2001) set out to demonstrate that what the ELP claimed to do could actually be done. Rolf Schärer said that one of the high points in his long years of involvement with the ELP occurred when he visited a school in Hungary. One of the students said: "I like the portfolio because it allows me to

cheat", but another replied: "If we cheat, we cheat ourselves." This shows what can be achieved when we invite learners to take responsibility for their learning.

One reason why ELP implementation has not reached the levels originally hoped for is that change in large systems takes a long time. Rolf Schärer recalled that he initially estimated that full implementation would take 50 years, then reduced his estimate to 30 years. Switzerland has been working with the ELP concept for 20 years and things are now beginning to happen on a large scale. Another reason is that the ELP is a tool in competition with other tools. The need to set standards in educational systems has shifted attention away from learner-centredness, and increased mobility and migration have posed new challenges. A third reason is that political conflicts meant that languages began to have political meaning (though some authorities recognized that the ELP was a way of coming to terms with linguistic challenges). And a fourth reason is that anxiety about the outcomes of PISA studies took resources away from ELP. Nevertheless the ELP has stood the test in many different situations.

The ELP has developed into a unique personal learning and reporting tool. It has shown that language learning is not limited to the language classroom, the "can do" approach has turned out to be very motivating, there are many examples of learners being able to talk about what the ELP has done for them, and self-assessment and reflection have been transferred to other educational contexts. In particular the ELP has done a great deal for migrant groups through its insistence on the equal importance of all languages and the value of partial competences. In a few cases languages that were previously forbidden have found their way into ELPs. As René Richterich was one of the first to recognize, the ELP brings things together, so that different activities start to make sense outside their immediate environment. In one school, for example, students worked for a whole school year on the idea that the language biography starts with the learner's birth.

The overall results of the ELP project are truly impressive, but in many countries implementation has stalled. The breakthrough has happened only in a few situations. Information gathered from different national and regional projects is very rich, but it sometimes contains contradictory statements. For the ELP to be effective it mustn't conflict with official curricula, and it is surely not accidental that one of the most successful projects happened in a school where languages were not on the curriculum. The ELP was introduced, and at the end of the year the students made presentations in their target language (English or French) of books they had read. This kind of thing has happened over and over again.

Rolf Schärer wondered what will happen now. If a portfolio is developed for language across the curriculum the task of implementation will become much more difficult, and there is a danger that portfolios will become increasingly complex and bulky. He argued in favour of a minimalist approach, recalling the example of the French ELP for very young learners, and urged that if we want to learn from experience we should simplify the approach. We are very far from understanding reporting needs in the real world – when visiting companies he has never met a version of the ELP that uses the standard adult passport.

Rolf Schärer concluded his presentation by arguing that we must do the best we can with the resources available. The European ELP network has been very effective and has contributed a great deal, and the ECML has provided a platform on which quite a number of things have happened. But we must always be aware of the danger that we produce interesting projects with interesting outputs, and then nothing happens. Finally, Rolf Schärer said that for all of us it has been a privilege to be associated with the ELP, and he thanked the participants for allowing him to visit their projects.

The impact of the European Language Portfolio – Maria Stoicheva (ELP Validation Committee)

Maria Stoicheva introduced the impact study undertaken by herself, Gareth Hughes and Heike Speitz on behalf of the Validation Committee. She explained that the study was based on telephone interviews with 12 ELP contact persons and practitioners in 9 countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia,

Norway, Slovenia and the UK (England). Participants were selected in order to provide broad geographical coverage and information from a variety of different educational contexts.

As background to the study Ms Stoicheva displayed a series of maps showing the geographical distribution of ELPs designed for different educational sectors: primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, adult and higher education. She noted that the greatest number of ELPs had been developed for the primary and lower secondary sectors and the smallest number for higher education. Analysis of ELP validations since 2000 showed three peaks, in 2001, 2003 and 2007; it also confirmed that it takes at least two years to develop an ELP and have it validated.

The aim of the study was to find out about levels of impact, expected and unexpected, contexts of implementation, types of ELP projects, and the interaction between the ELP and national priorities in education. The telephone interviews concentrated on five key areas: the availability of ELPs and access to them; impact in the classroom; impact in teacher education and training; impact on textbooks and exams/tests; and impact on other projects in the educational system. The interviews explored the relation between the ELP and educational reform, its impact on the national curriculum, its relation to the broader European context (EU-funded programmes, Europass, research of various kinds), its role as an innovative product, its capacity to empower specific target groups, and its use as an instrument of cooperation.

The study shows that the ELP and the CEFR reinforce each other, so that their impact must be measured together. By becoming involved in ELP development and implementation, teachers, teacher educators and a wide range of language education stakeholders have achieved a better understanding of the principles that underlie the CEFR. The ELP has helped to bring learner autonomy, self-assessment and lifelong learning into sharper focus, though in some respects its potential has still to be fully realized, especially as regards the promotion of plurilingualism.

The impact study does not pretend to be exhaustive, and the Validation Committee would like it to be extended by additional case studies and surveys. In order to take things further we need a more comprehensive approach to implementing the ELP, as a product, a process and a way of thinking about learning. To support such an approach, additional data could be collected in a variety of ways, for example by launching an online impact survey, registering case studies, undertaking an investigation of the role of teacher education in ELP implementation, conducting online consultation on future development, carrying out desk research on the Language Education Policy Profiles, and surveying ELPs developed by EU-funded projects.

Ms Stoicheva concluded her presentation with the four questions to be addressed in the working groups:
- What are the most visible areas of impact that you would identify in your context?
- Which areas of impact do you consider the most important for the future?
- How should we take the study of impact further?
- What concrete help can you offer in this respect?

Wednesday 30 September

Round table feedback from Working Group session 1 and open discussion –chair: Maria Stoicheva

(There were five Working Groups. Three were English-speaking (chairs: Lid King, Nikolina Tsvetkova, Brigitte Forster Vosicki), one was French-speaking (chair: Gisella Langé), and one was German-speaking (chair: Margarete Nezbeda).

Question 1: What are the most visible areas of impact that you would identify in your context?

Gisella Langé reported that for her group the most important impact of the ELP has been on teachers, because it is a tool that enables them (as well as their students) to understand what is happening in the educational process and provides a basis for stronger communication between teachers and learners. The ELP has also had a major impact on approaches to assessment: self-assessment is at the centre of effective ELP use, and this has created a shift in emphasis, towards the involvement of learners in evaluation and assessment. In addition the ELP has had an impact on textbook publishers and school principals.

Lid King said that his group was more sceptical about the ELP's impact in the classroom so far. Several members of the group said that an initial enthusiasm had not always been maintained. So if the ELP is to have an impact there must be some reason for using it besides the pedagogical process itself. For example, it must be rooted in the curriculum, or closely related to modes of assessment. One issue that his group discussed a lot was: Can you have a portfolio without the CEFR?

Brigitte Forster Vosicki's group felt that the ELP promotes international transparency in language education. The group noted the impact of the ELP on textbooks, but concluded that this impact is misleading when textbooks themselves claim to be portfolios.

Nikolina Tsvetkova's group had discussed the revision of language curricula and their new orientation to the CEFR, while also noting the ELP's impact on modes of evaluation and assessment. Some members of the group stressed that there are validated models that are relevant to language education in their country. It was noted that there are sustainable support systems for teachers in some countries; also that textbook developers must bear in mind that the ELP exists and take account of the principles on which it is founded, though this can overload teachers.

Margarete Nezbeda's group was drawn from Austria, Switzerland and Germany. It was characterized by linguistic unity but otherwise great diversity. The group's discussion had focused in particular on the ELP's impact on children with a migrant background: the ELP is a very important tool for making the linguistic and cultural diversity of today's classrooms visible and raising learners' awareness. The group had noted the ELP's impact on textbooks, visible in their focus on self-assessment, learning to learn, reflection, learning diaries and dossiers. However, textbooks fail to make the plurilingual aspect visible and tend to lose sight of the ELP's individual approach. The group noted that the ELP tends to trigger discussion in institutions, which is very important for the future; also that the ELP could play a more important role in the transition from one stage of education to the next.

Lid King said that his group had raised one very large question: What is an ELP? If you find a textbook that says "Now put something in your dossier", is that necessarily evidence of the ELP's impact? Perhaps the question now should be: What are the minimum requirements that an ELP must fulfil? We are all in favour of portfolios because we think they will help make things better.

Gisella Langé said that the sudden introduction of the ELP into Italy was responsible for a great diversity of models. The Ministry intended to introduce a generic portfolio (for all subjects and without a focus on self-assessment): this meant a lot of work for teachers, which helps to explain the resistance of some teachers to the ELP. Nevertheless, the ELP has had a very strong impact on textbooks. It is not necessarily a good idea to have portfolio elements in textbooks, but the introduction of self-assessment is a positive development.

Maria Stoicheva said that she had heard of a school in Italy where learners introduced their ELPs to Albanian students.

Question 2: Which areas of impact do you consider most important for the future?

Brigitte Forster Vosicki's group had identified teacher training as a key issue. The group thought it important to start early with the ELP and to make it central to the teaching approach; also to change teachers' mindset by helping them to understand the values that underlie the ELP.

Nikolina Tsvetkova's group had drawn up a long list of things that have to be done. Among them was raising public awareness outside the education system, e.g. in the labour market. To date the ELP has been used

by enthusiasts; now we need institutional change to allow the ELP to play a more central role in our educational systems. For example, curricula should be revised to bring them into line with the CEFR's action-oriented approach; teachers must be supported with user guides; and additional qualifications need to be provided. It is also important for teachers of different languages to cooperate with one another.

Margarete Nezbeda's group thought that the ELP may help to make competences visible that traditionally have not been much in focus. For example, the ELP can play an important role in the educational integration of children from migrant backgrounds, supporting the development of their L1 while helping them to master the language of schooling.

Lid King's group had identified teacher training as an area of primary importance. The group tended to think that the portfolio process is more important than possession of a portfolio, which prompted discussion of the question: How do we move from the general idea of portfolio learning to the use of portfolios to respond to the needs of specific groups – e.g. very young learners, children and adolescents from migrant backgrounds, train drivers?

Gisella Langé's group had discussed the role that the ELP can play in supporting mobility for purposes of study and employment. It had also noted the major impact of portfolio learning on schooling in general.

Noting the large number of ELPs for the primary sector, Gareth Hughes wondered whether a focus on very young learners is the key.

Maria Stoicheva stressed the importance of ensuring that there is an ELP for each level of the education system.

Brigitte Forster Vosicki recalled that the ELP is a tool to support and record *all* language learning, formal and informal, in a lifelong perspective; in other words, it is a tool to document the development of plurilingual repertoires. This seems to imply that ELPs should be general rather than specific. Against this, Lid King pointed out that people usually want a portfolio that is specific to their needs and context.

Peter Brown wondered whether it is possible to have a portfolio without the CEFR. He thought that in the specific areas mentioned by Lid King's group, the answer is probably "yes".

Silvia Karklina explained that the ELP she and her colleagues had developed for train drivers was designed to help them meet the linguistic challenges imposed by their professional need to cross borders. In other words, this model is concerned with the development of proficiency in several languages.

Maria Gomes thought it unlikely that the ELP will be accepted by employers unless it is supported by certification. In Portugal the ELP had an impact on immigration policy and law because it was recognized as a means of helping immigrants to show that they have achieved the required level of competence in Portuguese (A2); however, they also have to take an exam.

Gunther Abuja thought that for employers the ELP is a presentation tool that gives more insight into language learning than a certificate can possibly do.

Gisella Langé reminded participants that the idea of a portfolio first arose in the artistic domain. We need to develop this aspect more and not concentrate exclusively on the ELP's pedagogical function.

Questions 3 and 4: How should we take the study of impact further? What concrete help can you offer in this respect?

Maria Stoicheva noted that a number of studies have been carried out and may already have been forgotten. The impact study undertaken on behalf of the EVC is on a very small scale, so research should be broadened quantitatively and qualitatively, with a greater focus on teachers and learners as well as on institutions and the ways in which they have changed. It is also important to identify deficits that still exist and to consider how they should be addressed. It would probably be appropriate to move in the direction action research.

Various members of Nikolina Tsvetkova's group had said they could help to extend the scope of the impact study by collecting more case studies and examples of good practice, by encouraging research into the use of the ELP and using the results to convince key stakeholders, by helping people to meet and exchange ideas on a more regular basis, and by exploiting international links.

Gisella Langé argued that more attention should be paid to learners and their parents.

Lid King identified teacher training as a priority for the future; also test development and its relation to self-assessment and assessment for learning. We must find ways of doing more evidence-based research.

Brigitte Forster Vosicki said that her group had noted a general lack of research, especially as regards the identification of success factors.

Presentation of ELP projects conducted by ECML – chair: Maria Stoicheva

The ELP in whole-school use (ELP-WSU) – David Little

The members of the project team are: David Little (Ireland; coordinator), Francis Goullier (France), Rosi Oehler (Austria), Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti (Switzerland), and Marnie Beaudoin (associate member, Canada).

The project is concerned with the role of the ELP in whole-school development, embracing stakeholders at different levels (students, parents, teachers, head teachers). Its aims are to identify whole-school projects that already exist, support the implementation of new whole-school projects, study the impact of such projects on schools, teachers and learners, develop guidelines for the design, implementation and management of whole-school ELP projects, and communicate project outcomes to decision makers.

The expected results of the project are of two kinds, process and product. As regards process, participants in the project's central workshop are either already involved in a whole-school ELP project or in a position to design and implement such a project; and the process of ongoing whole-school project implementation is supported by online communication and reporting and by the network meeting planned for the third year of the project. As regards product, the project will publish a guide to the development, implementation and evaluation of whole-school ELP projects and a set of case and impact studies of whole-school ELP projects.

The project team met for the first time in May 2008 to discuss aims and working methods and to prepare the project workshop. At the workshop, held in October 2008, participants exchanged information on existing whole-school ELP projects, planned new projects, and discussed (i) criteria for the evaluation of whole-school ELP projects, (ii) the structure and content of case and impact studies, (iii) the structure and content of the guide to planning, implementing and evaluating whole-school ELP projects.

The project team will meet again in November 2009 to review interim reports from project participants and plan the work of the project in 2010. This will include a network meeting that will bring together those project participants who are either contributing to the guide or preparing case studies. Later in 2010 the project team will meet to approve final versions of the guide and case studies. In 2011 the project will conclude with a two-day dissemination workshop aimed at decision makers (ministry officials, school inspectors, school principals, parent representatives, etc.).

The following 23 countries were represented at the project workshop in October 2008: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK (Scotland).

Further information is available at the project website: elp-wsu.ecml.at.

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Training teachers to use the ELP: follow-up (ELP-TT2) – Margarete Nezbeda

The main objectives of ELP-TT2 (http://elp-tt2.ecml.at) are to disseminate training materials developed by ECML project ELP-TT (2004–2007) and to support ELP implementation by training multipliers at national events in eight ECML member states (Andorra, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) in 2008 and 2009.

The project platform, in particular the forum for ELP teachers and multipliers, aims to create an ELP network for teachers and teacher trainers participating in national events held in ECML member states between 2004 and 2009. The objective of the forum is to support ELP implementation in the working context of the countries involved. Visitors to the platform are invited to post messages, exchange information, share successful ELP experiences, discuss controversial issues related to ELP use, and (above all) upload their own materials, including materials in languages other than English and French. The project team hopes that the forum will develop into a lively ELP network for practitioners and multipliers and that cooperation with other ELP networks will follow.

Project-coordinator: Margarete Nezbeda (Austria); project team: Heike Speitz (Norway), Martine Tchang-George (Switzerland), Ülle Türk (Estonia)

ELP implementation: reports from three countries

France – Francis Goullier

Two facts permit a positive assessment of ELP implementation in France:
- a regular increase in the number of ELPs used at the various levels of school education, from 59,000 in 2001 to 76,000 in 2008;
- the revision of the two ELP models validated in 2001, for learners aged 15 and over and for primary school, which have been enriched by the reflexions of users in France and at European level.

These positive outcomes may nevertheless give a misleading impression.

The very great interest of teachers and some policy makers after the launch of the ELP in 2001 was associated with the enthusiasm generated by the CEFR, in particular its proficiency scales and the action-oriented approach. This enthusiasm was accompanied by a huge demand for explanation on the part of teachers, and the ELP served to introduce the logic of the CEFR. In many cases, indeed, the ELP was assumed to be synonymous with CEFR, which meant that assessment of the performance standards expected by the education system was confused with the self-assessment proposed in the ELP. At this stage the ELP achieved great notoriety, though a comparatively small number of teachers used it with their classes.

These confusions demanded a reaction from the educational system, and it came in 2005 in two complementary ways:
- official adoption of the CEFR as a mandatory reference in a high-level regulatory text for modern languages teaching and pupil assessment;
- confirmation of the ELP's status as an educational tool which, like any other educational tool in France, may or may not be used by schools (one reason for this optional status is that the ELP is published jointly by a private and a semi-public publisher and as such may not be promoted by the national educational authorities).

This clarification has impacted on the ELP in several ways:
a) self-assessment using descriptors drawn from the ELP proliferates in modern language textbooks concerned with the learning of specific languages;
b) the innovative value of the ELP is generally recognized although a small minority of teachers use it – most of the websites for language teachers make room for the ELP, it is usually referred to in texts that discuss teaching methodology, and it is promoted in initial language teacher education;
c) actual use of the ELP in schools is associated with three specific situations (success factors):

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- team work by a school's language teachers (setting objectives, determining teaching approaches and common assessment methods).
- organization of language courses to allow work focused on progress towards particular levels of proficiency in one or more language-specific activities – here the ELP is a means of defining progress and involving pupils in their own education, a mode of organization that has strong official backing but is not compulsory;
- the desire on the part of some teaching teams to create synergies between the different learning processes central to their teaching approach, especially with pupils who are learning two modern languages from the beginning of secondary education – in these circumstances use of the ELP is a valuable additional means of bringing home the meaning of plurilingual and intercultural education.

For the further establishment of the ELP in France, several lessons can be learned from this experience, and several questions must be answered:

- It is crucial to dispel any remaining ambiguity about the role and status of the ELP, which partly places the ELP's dual function in dispute. The presentational function of the ELP (particularly through the Language Passport) may obstruct this clarification, in which the instructional function is highlighted. The "portfolio" approach is not confined to the use of the ELP, but it is possible to envisage a continuum in practice, from using the ELP as such to scattering its components through the teaching material used or created by teachers. This prompts the question: Should one encourage first and foremost the cultivation of self-assessment, reflection on learning and the development of learner autonomy, or rather the instrumental use of the ELP as such?
- The concept of the learner's ownership of the ELP needs to be clarified. It does not mean that the ELP's use depends on the learner alone, and failure to understand this has resulted in some educational officials refusing to allow teachers to use the ELP.
- The plurilingual dimension is the most promising factor for establishing the ELP more firmly; it should become the main axis for developing and promoting the tool and for teacher training. All other functions of the ELP can be performed by other tools related to the learning/teaching of a specific language but the promotion of plurilingualism cannot.

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The Netherlands – Dick Meijer and Daniela Fasoglio

The Dutch electronic ELP was the first interactive web-based model to be validated, in 2007. It is designed to serve all educational sectors in Holland, from primary to university. By updating their educational profile on the website, language learners can keep track of their progress throughout their school career and plan learning activities to further improve their skills.

The ELP was conceived partly to enable language learners to organize their own plan for learning, their personalized language curriculum. Developing a new curriculum, however, is only the first step in curriculum innovation; it is necessary to proceed from development to implementation and achievement. Implementation was and remains the big challenge facing the Dutch ELP project. In the past two years the project has been seeking answers to two main questions:

- How can the ELP website be maintained in the absence of a government subsidy?
- How can the project achieve more widespread acceptance and ownership of the ELP as an educational tool?

Unlike a paper version of the ELP, an interactive website incurs structural costs for hosting, server space and maintenance. To cover those costs, the project has developed a business plan according to which not only the owners of the website concept (SLO), but also the website designers and three of the major educational publishers in Holland have committed themselves to providing financial support. This solution means that learners will still be able to use the website free of charge, which the project believes is a necessary pre-condition for the successful promotion of the web-based ELP. Placing publishers' logos on the home page

has a marketing effect, too: users see that educational publishers support the ELP and refer to it in their teaching materials. In this way publishers can have a positive impact on ELP implementation.

In 2005 the Dutch Ministry of Education asked SLO to relate the new globally described attainment targets for foreign languages in upper secondary education to the levels of the CEFR. This turned out to be a comprehensive top-down operation. The new CEFR-related attainment targets came into force for pre-vocational education examinations in 2009, and they will come into force for general and pre-university education in 2010 and 2011 respectively. SLO's task was to look for a match between the formulation of the existing attainment targets and the descriptors that define the CEFR levels, and then to assign CEFR target levels to the different abilities in all languages officially taught in Dutch secondary education.

One of the consequences of this operation has been a growing need on the part of language teachers for information, support and training on the use of the CEFR descriptors in language teaching and assessment, and for practical tools to help them in their teaching practice. The ELP is, of course, one such tool. Since 2007 the number of ELP users has increased slowly but steadily; by March 2009 there were about 43,000, of whom 3,000 were language teachers and 40,000 language learners (22,500 of them in secondary education).

When SLO started promoting the ELP in the Dutch education system, there was little knowledge of the CEFR and its role in planning and assessing language learning. This meant that there were large obstacles to the acceptance of both instruments. In the near future it is hoped to bring implementation of the CEFR and the ELP together in a single comprehensive implementation plan.

In 2008 experiences (successful and unsuccessful) in using the web-based ELP and practical tips were gathered in the publication *Vroege vogels* (*Early birds*), which has served as a useful source of information for language teachers: offering contributions from practitioners can be a very valuable way of answering teachers' questions.

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Switzerland – Sandra Hutterli

The ELP contributes to the coherent promotion of plurilingual education at all school levels and for all languages. Use of the portfolio in compulsory education is part of the language teaching strategy adopted by the CDIP (Conference of Directors of State Education) in 2004. The HarmoS agreement (Article 9) also prescribes the use of individual portfolios for languages and for other subject areas: "The cantons parties to the agreement shall ensure that pupils can give proof of their knowledge and proficiency by means of national or international portfolios recommended by the CDIP."

In Switzerland there are three versions of the ELP, published by *schulverlag blmv* of Berne. They were developed on the instructions of the CDIP and have been validated by the Council of Europe. The official launch of the first Swiss portfolio took place on 1 March 2001, in the framework of the European Year of Languages. The launch was accompanied by a declaration of the CDIP, co-signed by various partners in educational circles and the world of work.[1]

The three Swiss versions of the ELP follow the natural developmental process of a language: gaining awareness of the language itself → gaining awareness of the *learning* of the language → thinking about/in the language.

Use of the ELP throughout Switzerland is a central feature of the strategy for co-ordinating language teaching nationwide which the CDIP adopted on 25 March 2004. Its implementation is a task that is devolved to the 26 cantons. It therefore rests with them to establish, on the basis of the CDIP's strategy, a model sequence and schedule for introducing the ELP. Usually the introduction – true to the spirit of the ELP – covers all languages and all school levels. Educational science lecturers in the teachers' colleges and

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[1] See http://edudoc.ch/record/25638/files/Erkl_Portf_f.pdf?ln=deversion=1.

persons acting as multipliers at cantonal level regularly receive in-service training on the subject by attending national and regional colloquies organized for senior staff.

Solutions have had to be found, or remain to be found, to three major problems:

1. **Scale of insufficient accuracy**: It has become clear, in particular with regard to pupils in compulsory education who are starting to learn a foreign language, that the various levels have been described in overly general terms, particularly for pupils in the compulsory years who are beginners in the learning of a foreign language. That is why intermediate levels backed by descriptors have been devised and empirically validated under the IEF project (instruments for assessment of proficiencies in foreign languages, Lenz/Studer 2004): A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, B1.2. The descriptors appear in all the portfolios and have been made available to the Council of Europe in French, English, German and Italian.[2]

2. **Use of the descriptors**: The introduction of descriptors led to a paradigm shift in teaching and assessment, switching from an input-based to an outcome-based system. This radical change in educational practice could only be achieved by teachers using the supporting instrument represented by Lingualevel (a product of the IEF project; www.lingualevel.ch). In combination with the ELP, Lingualevel provides the requisite tools for assessing foreign language skills, with direct reference to the descriptors in the portfolios and an electronic grid for skill assessment.

3. **Lack of differentiation between the target groups for whom ELP III is intended**: Senior secondary schools are still partly opposed to the ELP, feeling that it does not suit their fundamental mission since it is too much in favour of general language skills. In order to ensure that in future the ELP for this level will be not only more flexible but also expandable according to needs, it has been decided to revise it and to prepare an electronic version to supplement the paper one.

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These presentations were followed by questions and discussion.

Invited by Peter Brown to comment on a 25% drop in French ELP distribution this year, and a 50% drop for younger learners, Francis Goullier explained that the model for primary learners is currently being revised and that the other figures may be misleading because they do not refer to a full year. Gisella Langé wondered whether the publishers make a profit on ELP sales. Francis Goullier said that they treat the ELP as a promotional tool that supports sales of their textbooks. In response to a question from Maria Gomes he confirmed that revised ELPs must be revalidated. He also noted that there is no consensus in France regarding the pedagogical implications of the ELP (learner autonomy, self-assessment, etc.).

Rolf Schärer pointed out that the Dutch electronic portfolio is very complex and has not been imitated in other countries. But there are other electronic portfolios, e.g. in Bremen, that are being widely used. This raises the question of what can be done in specific contexts, perhaps to support a slim (and paper?) core ELP. He observed that in Switzerland a sophisticated political process is matched by practical results and suggested that it would be worth looking more closely at what is happening there because it provides the most comprehensive example of ELP implementation at all levels, from theory to practice. It would be interesting to consider what questions we should now ask of whom in order to develop further.

"Show and tell" carousel

Using the ELP to record and assess progress in English primary schools – Nicola Chapman

From September 2009 children in England are to be taught a foreign language from the age of seven to eleven (Key Stage 2). The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages indicates the competences that pupils should acquire over four years and the strands of literacy, oralcy and intercultural understanding are

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[2] www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/lingualevel.html.

underpinned by knowledge about language and language learning strategies in order to ensure linguistic progression.

The ELP is suitable for a wide range of abilities as the basic "can do" statements are inclusive, acknowledge differentiation by outcome and cater for lower ability children as well as the more able. It appears to be an appropriate assessment tool for specialist and non-specialist teachers as it provides a useful summary of achievement that can be used when the children move from class to class and eventually, to secondary school. It should enable prior achievement to be acknowledged and built upon, and the enthusiasm for language learning to continue and develop.

In the primary school where I teach French, there is an electronic version of the Portfolio for each class so that we can build a collective profile of progression using photographs, scanned work, voice recordings or video clips. This evidence enables us to make a generalized assessment of overall progress, including understanding of grammar and syntax. Each child has a paper version of the portfolio that they colour in when they can show competence in the "can do" statements. We can then match the statements to the evidence.

Nevertheless, we have found that the current form of the ELP is not ideal, since it may appear to steer content and methodology; in particular, the section "Talking to someone".

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Implementing the ELP in Bulgaria: challenges and rewards – Nina Tsvetkova

Using a portfolio to measure one's success, keep a record of one's achievements and present either snapshots or the whole story of one's development to both oneself and other interested parties such as teachers, employers, advisers, etc. seems to be featuring widely across Europe these days. The ELP itself is now a well-established example of an officially recognized portfolio for learning and professional purposes.

However, the effort needed to motivate a young person to use the ELP and to convince school authorities that use of the ELP requires special training and special teaching hours is not often discussed. The need to plan a meaningful and motivating teacher training scheme to make sure the ELP establishes itself in the public education system is another important problem to investigate.

These and other issues arise from first-hand experience of designing and implementing a training programme for teachers of English willing to implement the ELP in their regular classroom work in Bulgaria. The presentation offered some observations and conclusions about applying the ELP in various teaching contexts and considered the potential of the ELP as a diagnostic tool.

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The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages – David Newby

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is a document intended for students undergoing their initial teacher education which encourages them to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps them to assess their own didactic competences and enables them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education. Building on insights from the CEFR and the ELP as well as the European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference, it seeks to help prepare students for their future profession in a variety of teaching contexts.

At the core of the EPOSTL's three-part structure, reminiscent of the European Language Portfolio, is the self-assessment section consisting of 196 "I can" descriptors relating to didactic competences language teachers may strive to acquire during the course of their teacher education and beyond. These descriptors are organized according to seven categories representing various aspects of language teaching: the context (of teaching), methodology, resources, planning a lesson, conducting a lesson, independent learning and

assessment. Both in its aims and in its competence approach to teaching it can be seen as complementing the ELP.

While the primary aim of the EPOSTL is to support a reflective mode of teacher education, it can further facilitate discussion of aims and curricula between teacher educators working within different national or European contexts. By making some of the main aims of teacher education transparent, it may also serve as a basis for assessing a student's performance in teaching practice.

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The impact of the CEFR on foreign language teaching in Russian schools – Irina Khaleeva

The CEFR has helped to reshape the concept of the fundamental core content of foreign language teaching in general secondary education in Russia. A new generation of school programmes has been and continues to be developed, based on the key concepts of the CEFR, and steps are being taken to create new foreign language textbooks for primary and secondary schools within the framework of these new concepts. At the same time major changes have been made to the foreign language teaching process, which is becoming more transparent and easier to understand for students as well as teachers. Teachers are striving to take into account all the personal characteristics of each student as the subject of social activity – his/her cognitive, emotional and volitional resources. As L.S. Vygotsky remarked, man is "a dynamic system of meaning which includes motivational, volitional and emotional processes, the dynamics of action and the dynamics of thought". Significant importance is attached to students' developing a capacity for critical thinking and independent study. An environment is being created which strengthens students' personal responsibility for their academic results. The communicative focus of teaching is also being enhanced, and intercultural competence, no longer associated merely with linguistic and cultural knowledge, occupies a prominent position in the system of knowledge and skills. As teachers are beginning to realize the polyphonic unity of language and culture, they are transforming their classes into a mind-enriching experience for their students. On the basis of the CEFR Moscow State Linguistic University has developed three ELPs for different school ages and the "Philological ELP" for student teachers.

The following factors are taken to be prerequisites for teaching any subject: an action-based approach to defining the goals and content of education; focus on the development of general learning skills and general abilities for cognitive, communicative and creative activity; focus on the individual. The educational process must provide students with practical experience that will enable them to use outside school the knowledge they have acquired and the skills they have mastered at school. The following factors are also taken to be prerequisites for teaching any subject: an environment that allows students to acquire social and functional literacy and enhance their intellectual and cultural development; greater prominence of the liberal arts, which are directly responsible for students' successful socialization; a greater emphasis on professional training.

Modern approaches to language teaching envisage as their ultimate goal the formation in learners of intercultural communicative competence in a foreign language. The ultimate aim of learning a foreign language at secondary school should include acquisition of the following:
- Knowledge: The system and structure of the languages being learnt; the application principles and typical use of language phenomena in written and spoken communication; elements of the semiotic culture of the languages being learnt; conditions of communication and communicative situations; the national characteristics reflected in the interaction between communicative partners representing different cultures.
- Skills: To understand linguistic identity as a generalized, abstract image of a typical speaker of a certain language; to understand and generate texts typical of another world view; to recognize the values and mentality of a typical representative of another culture.

Intercultural communicative competence, the formation of which is viewed as the ultimate goal at every stage of secondary education as it allows the student to perform various kinds of communicative activity, comprises the system of linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge (including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, intercultural communication theory, cultural anthropology, etc.)

The theoretical content of a foreign language as an educational subject is characterized by the following features: its complex character and links with other subjects (determined by the variety of tasks and conditions and the content of intercultural communication); its multi-level structure (phonetic, lexical/phraseological, grammatical, stylistic); multilingualism and polyculturality (the ability to communicate in different languages within different cultures); partial acquisition of some competences (their asymmetry and the acquisition of various skills at different moments at time); multi-functionality (intercultural communicative competence acts simultaneously as the aim of education and the means of further developing intercultural communication in various spheres of life for learners and school leavers); educational potential (it forms the system of knowledge about other cultures, contributes to the development of awareness of our own culture and teaches tolerance and respect towards other cultures).

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ELPNet: an international ELP implementation project in the adult sector – Gareth Hughes

ELPNet is the name of a Grundtvig Learning Partnership that ran from 2007 till 2009. The subject of the partnership was the implementation of the ELP in adult education. The partners were institutions offering language education to adults, for example in evening classes. All the partners were working in countries with an accredited ELP model for adults, often developed by them. The central aim of ELPNet was to exchange ideas and experience about feasible ways of implementing the ELP, to share materials, and to develop guidelines, tools and materials to support implementation.

The partnership meetings dealt with the following themes: status of the implementation process, public and internal dissemination strategies, teacher training, and intercultural learning. The results are published on the project website: http://portfolio.network.grundtvig.googlepages.com.

The most concrete results to come out of the Partnership concerned teacher training. In particular, we produced a checklist for training teachers in adult education to introduce and use the ELP in their teaching. The partners agreed that the ELP can be used to guide and support learners and teachers through the steps of the learning cycle: (i) goal-setting, (ii) choosing contents, (iii) choosing the appropriate methods, (iv) ongoing formative evaluation of learning, (v) assessing proficiency (summative evaluation). For each of these steps the partners exchanged and developed materials for training purposes.

Ongoing collaboration between the original partners and any new institutions or individuals who are interested will be facilitated by the Austrian Volkshochschulverband's offer to allow the common use of their Moodle platform. More information can be obtained from Elisabeth Feigl-Bogenreiter (e.feigl-bogenreiter@vhs.or.at).

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Equal opportunities for the blind and visually impaired: a digital ELP for the Blind and Visually Impaired – Christel Schneider

The project to develop an ELP for the Blind and Visually Impaired was funded by the European Commission under the SOCRATES LINGUA II programme. The portfolio was developed in response to the specific needs of blind and visually impaired learners in order to establish equal opportunities to learn foreign languages. It allows educational establishments and employers to assess the language proficiency of the blind and visually impaired, whether they are registering for a course, applying for a job or wish to take part in an international event. The main beneficiaries of the portfolio will be blind and visually impaired adults from the age of 16 upwards.

The innovative feature of this ELP is its implementation of the CEFR in a specific context. The main elements are non-visual learning methods, the impact of reading/writing skills in braille, the approach to activating a variety of learning styles in order to establish language skills, specific perceptions and the use of collaborative media and specific formats in the learning and teaching material.

The English original has been translated into German, Bulgarian and Greek. It is written in a style accessible to the target group and along with the electronic version the Language Passport has also been produced in braille. It is possible to access the portfolio in different ways, via screen reading, conversion of text to speech, and print versions in braille.

The self assessment grid and the specific descriptors developed in this project provide a good basis for the development of further portfolios, tests and materials for specific groups of learners and can therefore be seen as a model for specific ELPs that can be used by other age groups, various occupational and expert groups, and in other fields of work.

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www.erk.nl: a CEFR implementation portal for Dutch education – Daniela Fasoglio

In 2008 a comprehensive CEFR implementation plan was launched in Holland. A crucial question was how to get the main stakeholders involved in this process. Among the stakeholders we include language teachers, school managers and learners, but also parents and employers. One of the major challenges facing curriculum improvement has to do with creating balance and consistency between the various curriculum components. Materials and resources constitute one of those components and include the ELP.

We decided to create a portal capable of giving stakeholders clear and useful information about the CEFR and providing language teachers and learners with practical, effective and adequate tools in order to enable them to use the CEFR scales in (self-)assessment situations. The presentation provided a rapid overview of the parts of the website that have been developed so far and showed how teachers can assess oral and written production in English, French, German and Spanish according to the CEFR levels and then compare their judgement with ours.

Once teachers are comfortable working with the CEFR, it will be much easier for them to take the next step and use the ELP.

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The development of ELPs for professional purposes and multimedia to activate their use –Silvija Karklina

Learner autonomy is of great importance for all learners, but especially for adults. By helping adult learners to become autonomous, teachers can satisfy their wish to participate actively in the learning process. Although adult learners are ready to take responsibility for their learning, it is important that the instruments for self-assessed and self-directed learning are professionally oriented and can be used in the learner's working environment. Professional ELPs motivate adult learners to learn the language of immediate need and give them an opportunity to apply what they have learned.

Despite the great numbers of ELPs produced and validated, implementation and more widespread use remain a problem. The ActivELP project promotes the use of the ELP via an interactive whiteboard, thus making ELP use public. This does not undermine learner autonomy but gives all learners an equal opportunity to become independent ELP users.

The presentation also discussed the experience of the Public Service Language Centre (Latvia) in designing several professional ELPs (for nurses and railway professionals) and implementing them via multimedia.

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The CercleS ELP in European higher education: current and future perspectives – Fiona Dalziel and Mary Ruane

Founded in 1991, CercleS (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education) represents hundreds of thousands of students in approximately 300 higher education institutions in 22 European countries. Its role and significance as an international network are growing. At an early stage CercleS

identified the ELP as a means of responding to key language learning needs in the higher education sector and commissioned the development of its own ELP, which was validated in 2002.

Since then CercleS has been engaged in ELP implementation in a variety of ways. It has established an electronic dissemination system across Europe, produced a large number of ELP translations, organized conferences and seminars dedicated to the ELP, and carried out a number of qualitative research projects. Significant progress has been made under many headings. However, it is also acknowledged that the ELP has still to make a major impact on the tertiary education sector, and the strategies for achieving this are not yet in place.

In the last two years CercleS has refocussed its policy on ELP implementation. In conjunction with its institutional members, it has chosen to embark on a range of new measures to promote the ELP. A key aspect of its new strategy is to build on the growing reputation of the CEFR in higher education as a way of highlighting the role and potential of the ELP. This aspect was elaborated in the presentation, with particular reference to the aims and outcomes of the second CercleS ELP seminar held at the University of Padua in September 2009 and entitled "The role of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in Higher Education".

Looking to the future – chair: Wolfgang Mackiewicz

The strategy for the future of the ELP – David Little

The Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Education has decided that after 31 December 2010 the process of validating ELPs will come to an end and the Validation Committee will cease to exist. This decision was taken for two reasons: the number of ELPs submitted for validation is beginning to dwindle, and changes in the linguistic fabric of European societies challenge us to find ways of extending the reach of the principles that underlie the ELP and the processes that shape its effective use.

The decision is not a rejection of the ELP. There is abundant evidence to show that the ELP has had a major impact, indirectly as well as directly, on language learning and teaching in a variety of educational contexts. Even in contexts where the ELP itself is not well known, ELP processes (e.g. self-assessment) are much more widespread than previously. There is no reason why validated ELPs should not continue to be used and new models produced. After all, the development, analysis, revision, validation and accreditation of around 100 models provide us with a firm foundation on which to build.

From an early stage the Council of Europe has created a variety of supports for ELP developers: the standard adult passport; passport templates for primary and lower secondary learners; a bank of "I can" descriptors; sample language biography pages − learning how to learn and the intercultural dimension of language learning and language use. By the end of 2010 further supports will be in place, including a revised version of the standard adult passport and guidelines for the pedagogical exploitation of the "junior" passports.

The majority of validated ELP models have not been freely available to language professionals in Council of Europe member states. The Validation Committee is exploring the possibility of compensating for this disadvantage by developing generic ELPs for a variety of target groups, e.g. language teachers in pre-service education, adult migrants learning the language of the host community, and children and adolescents from migration backgrounds for whom the language of schooling poses major challenges.

After 2010 all validated ELPs will retain their accreditation. Future development of the ELP and the principles and processes it embodies will take place with reference to the larger framework of the Languages in Education/Languages for Education (LE) project (appropriate structural arrangements have still to be worked out).

From 1 January 2011 the validation of new ELPs will be replaced by registration based on self-declaration. To support the introduction of this new procedure the Validation Committee will develop step-by-step

guidelines for the assembly of paper ELPs in conformity with the Principles and Guidelines, using components downloadable from the Council of Europe's website, and general guidelines for the design of electronic ELPs. The registration process will entail that everyone can gain online access to registered ELPs

Since 2004 ECML has provided significant support for the ELP. The second medium-term programme (2004-2007) included two ELP-related projects, the development of the impel website to support ELP implementation and a kit of teacher training materials that was used in training events in 16 ECML member states. The third medium-programme (2008−2011) again includes two ELP-related projects, ELP-WSU and ELP-TT2, both of which have been reported on at this seminar. A question for consideration is: Can the ECML's support for ELP implementation be extended?

The revised version of the standard adult passport gives greater prominence to first languages and the user's plurilingual profile and linguistic and intercultural experience. The European Language Passport component of Europass will need to be brought into line with this revision if it is to continue to serve as the standard adult passport in electronic ELPs. Representatives of the Validation Committee will discuss this matter later in 2009 with Cedefop, the agency responsible for Europass

In order to secure the future we must find ways of sustaining the international ELP community, for example via online discussion groups, networks that are committed to the exchange and wider dissemination of ELP experience, and international projects. But it is essential that we recognize from the outset that the success of such initiatives will depend as much on the member states as on the Council of Europe. The Validation Committee looks to this seminar to come up with ideas and to help identify individuals who can contribute to international ELP work in the future.

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Standard Adult Passport enhancements – Gareth Hughes

The standard adult passport was originally drafted in Slovenia at one of the seminars during the project phase of the ELP. It was thought that a standard passport could provide the best visibility of the pan-European character of the portfolio. The design of the passport was mainly governed by the idea that it should be as far as possible non-verbal so that it could be read and understood throughout Europe regardless of the starting language of the holder. The model has been used in practically all models developed for the 16+ age group and in a significant number of models for lower secondary learners, i.e. for the age group that is moving towards the transition to the world of work or ongoing education.

The next stage in the development of the standard passport for adults was the invitation to the Council of Europe to participate in the development of Europass by Cedefop. The Council of Europe produced a simplified, electronic version of the language passport that is appended to the European cv.

The present proposal of the Validation Committee is to revise the standard adult passport in its printed form. It is felt that this version, or adaptations of it, are of interest to target groups that are still in formal education. For this group, the longer, more detailed version of the passport providing a fuller picture can be of interest. The Validation Committee recommends, however, that the Europass document should continue to be accepted as an alternative passport model. Once the changes have been made to the paper version, the committee will contact Cedefop to investigate the possibilities of revising Europass to take account of the latest changes.

The Validation Committee proposes three changes to the standard adult passport. The first affects the section about "mother-tongue(s)". When the standard adult passport was first produced there were already questions about the concept of "mother tongue". The compromise adopted at the time was the questionable use of the plural: mother tongues. Since then, there have been persistent concerns about how best to capture any individual's plurilingual competence. The new Council of Europe project on Languages in and for Education is addressing these issues. Meanwhile, we have the CEFR, which can be used for describing partial competences but was not designed to describe, for example, the language or languages that a child has grown up with, or the ones they have been educated through. While we still don't have a framework for

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describing this kind of proficiency, the proposed new standard adult passport devotes a page to the languages of the family, of the local environment and of schooling.

The second change affects the two pages where the holder is invited to summarize important linguistic and intercultural experiences. The original two pages were designed so that the holder did not have to write about these experiences; he or she only had to tick boxes. It was thought that this format would make the document easier to understand internationally. Some of the criticisms of these two pages are: that most people, including developers, do not notice that one page has categories that are measured in years and the other in months; that the distinction between "where the language is spoken" and "where it is not spoken" is not satisfactory; and that the space for comments is totally inadequate. The new proposal is to allow the holder more opportunity and more space to record experiences.

The third change is an attempt to record and recognize how the holder can operate in a multilingual world. What sort of tasks in what sort of situations can the holder perform? Have they had experience of mediating between different languages and cultures? The two pages proposed provide a way of allowing the learner to show this.

It is the intention of the Validation Committee to make the revised standard adult passport available along with the other templates in 2010. You are all invited to submit your comments and criticisms of this draft to the Committee. Please do this by October 31st in time for the Committee to finalize the revisions at its meeting in November.

Some of the questions that you may choose to address are: Are the proposed changes necessary, and if they are, do they achieve their goals? Should the guidance notes in the passport be addressed to the holder (the person putting their passport together) or to the reader of the passport (the person to whom it is submitted)? Does the paper version fulfil a different purpose from the electronic Europass passport? How closely related should they be? Please take the opportunity of this seminar to exchange your views with colleagues and with members of the Validation Committee. The committee looks forward to hearing from you.

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Junior ELP enhancements – Barbara Glowacka

The ELP aspires to more than the simple recording of biographical details. It aims to help pupils in childhood and early adolescence to acquire plurilingual and pluricultural competence, as well as seeking to offer them activities that enable them to discover and reflect on the linguistic and cultural wealth of the world around them. Some examples drawn from the validated models may illustrate the avenues chosen hitherto by their designers. An approach linking thought with action is the one that will allow pupils to pursue their own development in the way they perceive and experience languages and cultures, so that will also be the direction of some proposals for enriching the ELP. These are the basic premises:
- Since diversity is one of the distinctive features of the world in which we live, a child's awareness of it is acquired gently, at his or her own pace, in harmony with the stages of cognitive, social and psychological development.
- There is no overlooking or overestimating the potential influence on the child's world view exerted by family, children of the same age, school and social and media environment.
- It would be hard to ascertain with certainty what, in the child's surroundings, has already been perceived, understood, selected and found interesting, short of exchange, contact and sharing with the child.
- Plurilingual/pluricultural awareness belongs not so much to the realm of academic knowledge as to that of life skills, social skills and practical skills.

It is thus not a matter of turning the young users of the ELP into pluricultural and plurilingual beings in the span of 1–3 years' learning. Everything in its season. The proficiencies in question evolve over time, and work on them can only be guided by long-term goals.

The activities put forward as examples will thus be placed in contexts matching pupils' concerns in order to meet their need for personal observation and discovery. It will not be possible to conduct them in anything but the language of instruction (used with facility by all pupils and aiding the development of cognitive processes). If the other languages are used, it will be to illustrate, captivate and actuate. With greater age and exposure to the newly acquired languages, these activities will make more room for the metacognitive dimension of linguistic and intercultural training.

Thursday 1 October

Round table feedback from the Working Group session 2 and open discussion – chair: Wolfgang Mackiewicz

(There were five Working Groups. Three were English-speaking (chairs: Lid King, Nikolina Tsvetkova, Brigitte Forster Vosicki), one was French-speaking (chair: Gisella Langé), and one was German-speaking (chair: Sandra Hutterli).

Brigitte Forster Vosicki reported that in the opinion of her group the proposed changes to the standard adult passport are necessary in order to establish a clearer relation between the different parts of the ELP. More generally, the group felt that intercultural competence is still not sufficiently developed; perhaps it should be expanded to include interreligious dialogue. Additional support materials are also needed for learning to learn, the plurilingual dimension, and the selection and development of assessment tasks; and guidance is needed to help integrate the various reflective tasks embedded in the ELP. The group felt that associating the ELP with the Languages in and for Education project would encourage greater emphasis on the ELP's interdisciplinary dimension and its relevance to CLIL (content and language integrated learning).

Sandra Hutterli's group recognized that it will be necessary to revise the electronic passport. Wondering whether ELPs correspond to current needs, the group suggested that it would be beneficial to study examples of good practice. While recognizing the importance of associating the ELP with the Languages in and for Education project, the group thought it important to extend the ELP's target groups to include businesses and other out-of-school contexts. Members of the group expressed different views on the decision to end the validation process.

Lid King reported that many members of his group were concerned by the decision to abolish validation, feeling that it could undermine their efforts. One view that had been expressed very strongly was that even if there is no validation, we still need validity, which implies some kind of monitoring. In the period between now and the end of validation there needs to be a clearer definition of what an ELP is. The group recognized that there is a continuing need for support – peer support, online support, perhaps a helpline.

In Nikolina Tsvetkova's group there were also expressions of concern at the decision to abolish validation; some members of the group raised issue of face validity. There was a general feeling that there should be a body to look after the future of the ELP, partly by fostering international contacts and organizing meetings. At the same time it is necessary to invest effort at national level to ensure that ELP contact persons have visibility.

Gisella Langé's group believed that the Validation Committee should be replaced by a small task force of experts charged with promoting the ELP at European level. At the same time it is necessary to redefine the task of ELP contact persons and to reactivate them as a European network with close links to the Language Policy Division in Strasbourg and the ECML in Graz. Cross-border activities should be encouraged as a way of developing cooperation between countries.

Summing up the reports so far, Wolfgang Mackiewicz noted the expressions of concern about the future and the need to improve cooperation at European and national levels. There was clearly some tension between

the interest in diversification and meeting the needs of special target groups on the one hand and the general European validity of the ELP concept on the other.

Brigitte Forster Vosicki suggested that in order to bring the ELP project forward it will be necessary to make a lot of support material available in a single portal. Her group welcomed the various proposals regarding future support set out in David Little's presentation of future strategy.

Sandra Hutterli's group also welcomed the proposals. It had also spent a lot of time discussing in-service training for teachers and for teacher trainers. The group recognized that the themes of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism need to be given greater prominence and felt that the objectives of the ELP should be incorporated into general discussion of language teaching and learning. It is important to try to achieve more effective communication on these themes with the public at large – something that needs to be undertaken not just at national but at European level.

Lid King noted that his group included a teacher who was using the ELP. For her the issue was not what stamp the ELP bore but whether it was any use in the teaching situation. The same consideration perhaps applies to other uses of the ELP. When we move from a small group promoting something to wider dissemination, we have to involve other domains and stakeholders. This could involve validation by, for example, professional bodies. The reporting function of the ELP may be easier to manage via Europass, in which case implementation of the ELP should perhaps concentrate more on pedagogy.

Nikolina Tsvetkova's group felt that regulations governing the teaching and learning of languages in national education systems should be explicitly oriented to the CEFR and the ELP. The group also felt that it is essential to establish sustainable models of pre- and in-service teacher training and to ensure that the principles underlying the CEFR and the ELP are communicated to textbook authors and publishers.

Gisella Langé's group stressed the importance of establishing links between all ELP activities within member states and at European level, between policy makers and the training supports provided by ECML projects, and with universities and the various projects of the European Union.

Concluding the session, Wolfgang Mackiewicz said that there appeared to be two key issues: teacher education as a means of mainstreaming the ELP and the increased involvement of stakeholders (which need not generate a large number of new ELPs, even though it entails moving outside the educational arena).

The ECML and implementation of the ELP – Waldemar Martyniuk, Executive Director of ECML, and Susanna Slivensky, ECML Head of Programmes

Supporting the implementation of language education policies at the level of the practitioner is a key activity of the ECML. In concrete terms this means that the Centre promotes the ELP as a means of achieving positive changes in language education if it is implemented in a coherent and sustainable way.

With a focus on dialogue between language education practitioners and decision makers the ECML brings together key experts and national representatives through the projects of its medium-term programmes. Two ELP-related projects were included in the "Languages for Social Cohesion" programme (2004-2007): *Impel – ELP implementation support,* aimed at gathering and exchanging information on experience in order to provide support for the day-to-day operational management of ELP implementation projects, and *ELP TT – training teachers to use the ELP,* with the aim to provide teachers with arguments, materials and resources. This work resulted in two publications and a common reference platform (http://elp-implementation.ecml.at/) linked to the ELP website of the Language Policy Division. Two further ELP-related projects are under development within the current medium-term programme "Empowering Language Professionals" (2008-2011): *ELP-WSU – the ELP in whole-school use*, focusing on the role of the ELP in development processes targeting stakeholders at different levels (students, parents, teachers, head teachers), and *ELP-TT 2*, disseminating the ELP Teacher Training Kit developed under the previous project (an extension of this project for another two years as *ELP TT 3* has been recently approved by the ECML Governing Board).

These last two projects have already been presented at this seminar. It is worth noting that to date 1,400 multipliers and teacher trainers have been directly involved in the ECML's ELP-related activities; that new networks have been launched and existing networks supported; and that training events have been organized in 25 ECML member states.

This seminar provides an opportunity to discuss the ECML's future role and involvement in providing adequate and feasible support for the promotion and use of the ELP. Issues for discussion include:
- promotion of the underlying philosophy and the approach offered by the ELP;
- further elaboration of the ELP-website and development and servicing of other on-line tools;
- support for the development of new ELP versions;
- support for implementation and training;
- responding to specific national and regional needs and developments

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In the discussion following this presentation Rolf Schärer asked what plans ECML has to support non-member states. Waldemar Martyniuk explained that although the ECML is obliged to give priority to member states, all its events and activities may include participants from non-member states provided there is space (which there usually is).

Maria Gomes asked whether it is possible to make a new recommendation concerning the ELP and the CEFR: ministers change over time and are unaware of commitments that were made by their predecessors. Wolfgang Mackiewicz argued that there is no need to modify the 2008 Recommedation concerning the CEFR, but the Resolution will need to be revised because it refers explicitly to the Validation Committee.

Susanna Slivensky said that it is very important that ELP contact persons get in touch with national participants in ECML projects in order to ensure that there is follow-up at national level. Contact persons should also get in touch with their ECML Governing Board member and brief him or her about the importance of the CEFR and the ELP.

The European Language Portfolio: where pedagogy and assessment meet – David Little

(This presentation was based on a text with the same title that David Little prepared for the seminar.)

The CEFR's action-oriented approach to the description of language use and communicative proficiency brings curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into a closer relation than has usually been the case: the same "can do" descriptor can be used (i) to define a curriculum goal/learning target, (ii) to guide the selection of learning activities and the development of learning materials, and (iii) to serve as the starting point for the development of assessment criteria. This feature challenges us to rethink each of these dimensions – curriculum, pedagogy, assessment – in terms of the other two.

The CEFR is learner-centred: its "can do" descriptors refer to autonomous language learner-users. The same learner-centredness shaped the design of the ELP, one of whose functions is to foster learner autonomy. The reflective processes that characterize effective ELP use (and are central to the development and exercise of learner autonomy) are driven by self-assessment using checklists of "I can" descriptors. Such self-assessment is best thought of as a habit of mind that embraces planning and monitoring as well as evaluating learning.

The CEFR and the ELP have had a significant impact. Most language testing agencies in Europe relate their tests to the CEFR proficiency levels; there is a growing tendency for curricula and textbooks to refer to the levels; and the ELP has brought the action-oriented approach into classrooms. But the CEFR and ELP have mostly not been exploited as a single package and their impact has accordingly been less than it might have been.

From the beginning of the pilot projects self-assessment has been one of the ELP's most challenging features. There was one general concern: learners do not have the knowledge necessary to assess themselves. This concern may have been influenced by the fact that L2 exams have traditionally judged learning outcomes according to standards of linguistic correctness, but it misses the point that in the ELP self-assessment is referenced to *behavioural* criteria: even very small children know what they can do. There were also three specific concerns: learners do not know how to assess themselves; there is a danger that they may overestimate their proficiency; and they may be tempted to cheat by including in their ELPs material that is not their own. We can respond to these concerns by pointing out that self-assessment is a skill that must be taught; also that when the ELP is central to teaching and learning there is no reason why self-assessment should not be accurate, reliable and honest.

The ELP is a special instance of a more general educational phenomenon, "portfolio learning". Portfolios are a means of bringing learning and assessment into positive interaction: assessment *of* learning can also be assessment *for* learning. Assessment *for* learning depends on: effective feedback; active involvement of learners in their own learning; using the results of assessment to adjust teaching; recognizing the impact of assessment on motivation and self-esteem; recognizing the need for learners to be able to assess themselves. Arguments in favour of assessment *for* learning imply forms of classroom discourse that are exploratory ("dialogic") as well as presentational. For proponents of "dialogic learning" exploratory talk is the means by which learners come to understand and internalize learning content. L2 teaching that is shaped by this theoretical perspective uses the target language as the principal medium of teaching and learning. Exploratory talk in the target language necessarily includes the metacognitive and metalinguistic dimensions of language use.

These considerations have three implications for ELP design. First, the "I can" checklists must be thoroughly and explicitly embedded in the curriculum; secondly, they should be made available to learners in their target language(s); and thirdly, they should be presented in such a way that they can be used to plan and monitor learning as well as to assess learning outcomes.

As we move up the CEFR levels, checklist descriptors refer to increasingly complex communicative activities:

> A1 – *I can introduce somebody and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions*
>
> A2 – *I can make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks*
>
> B1 – *I can start, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest*
>
> B2 – *I can initiate, maintain and end discourse naturally with effective turn-taking*
>
> C1 – *I can use the language fluently, accurately and effectively on a wide range of general, professional or academic topics*
>
> C2 – *I can take part effortlessly in all conversations and discussions with native speakers*

At A1 and A2 descriptors mostly refer to discrete communicative tasks, whereas from B1 upwards they become increasingly general and thus increasingly difficult to adopt as short-term learning goals. Instead, we should use them to frame the reflective processes of goal setting, planning and implementing learning, and assessing learning outcomes.

The functions of the CEFR in relation to assessment are (CEFR, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.178): to specify what is assessed; to interpret performance; and to compare different language tests. The CEFR challenges us to implement all three functions in interaction with one another: to define curriculum goals in "can do" terms, adopt a task-based approach to language teaching, and develop communicative tests; and the ELP challenges us to find ways of allowing self-assessment to stand alongside assessment by teachers and external tests and exams.

Introduction to Group Work session 3 – Gareth Hughes

Gareth Hughes reminded participants that the purpose of Group Work session 3 was to give participants the opportunity to make practical proposals concerning the implementation of future ELP strategy.

Round table feedback from Working Group session 3 and open discussion – chair: Gareth Hughes

Nikolina Tsvetkova's group began by considering what participants could do when they go home from the seminar. The group recognized the importance of defining an ELP strategy appropriate to the particular national educational context; it also noted that in many cases there are financial and bureaucratic obstacles to be overcome. One possibility might be to support ELP implementation by developing a national online training course, perhaps with international support. Such a course could include video recordings of good practice and methodological guidelines, and the international component might be hosted by ECML. The group felt that these ideas should be communicated to the Governing Board of the ECML.

Gisella Langé reported that her group focused on the possibility of activating in each country a number of strong networks comprising all those who participate in ECML activities. Such networks should maintain close contact with the country's representative on the Steering Committee for Education. The group welcomed the ECML's ongoing support for ELP implementation and believed that a redeveloped ELP website would play an important role in future developments. Such a website should bring together documentation in as many languages as possible. The group noted, however, that networks are effective only if they are supported by teachers' associations, parents, etc.

Sandra Hutterli's group discussed the possible structure of a new ELP website, which it thought might be organized according to keywords. The site should be easy to navigate, should include links between the various projects, and should provide summaries of projects/documents in "major" languages. The group thought it important to include accounts of failure as well as descriptions of good practice.

Lid King's group discussed the levers that might make things work in national contexts. One of these is teacher training, which varies greatly from country to country. It is important to get programmes of teacher training to refer to the ELP and to the teaching/learning processes that it implies, though this will not be easy to achieve, especially as some countries have a very unstable language teaching cohort. International bodies involved in teacher education might be persuaded to include modules that focus on the ELP. Where curriculum development is in progress, it may be possible to include more than cursory mention of the CEFR and the ELP. Assessment has to make sense in national contexts, but it must also find ways of taking account of the CEFR and the ELP. Finally, the group warned against falling into the trap of thinking that we have reached a point where all we need to do is focus on implementation. The CEFR and the ELP themselves need to be re-examined, perhaps with a view to compiling checklists for national, regional and local use.

Brigitte Forster Vosicki's group expressed concern at the decision to move from validation to registration. The group wondered whether the ECML's 4th Medium-term Programme could include a project to support further ELP development. It identified various other possibilities for future action, including structured collaboration with teachers' associations, dissemination of information using virtual tools like Facebook, and a project for multipliers. The group wondered whether those who attend ECML seminars are really the people who can move things forward at national level. The group also thought that teacher education should have a reflective component, and that there is a need for research on different aspects of ELP implementation.

Presentation of the Austrian ELP project – chair: Ursula Newby

Gunther Abuja presented the three ELP models developed by the Ősterreichisches Sprachenkompetenzzentrum, for learners aged 6–10, 10–15, and 15–19+. All three models were designed to stimulate and support modern, functional language teaching with a focus on language and intercultural awareness, learning and research techniques, introspection and self-awareness, and the plurilingualism of the individual learner in the context of multilingual school communities.

Each ELP was piloted by 40 teachers and 800–1,000 learners and revised following systematic evaluation by both target groups. The evaluation focused on the general acceptability of the ELP, its layout and usability, users' preferences regarding its different components, work with the ELP in the classroom, its influence on teaching and learning behaviour, changes in teaching methods/styles, teacher–student interaction, cooperation between teachers, the conditions for dissemination of the ELP to a wider public, and the conditions necessary for teachers to (learn to) introduce the ELP into their classrooms.

As regards strategies for dissemination and implementation, pilot teachers became multipliers/teacher trainers; in-service teacher training was provided; teacher education courses were designed; ELPs were offered free of charge to interested schools; the ELP was linked to innovations with which the public was already familiar (for example, the recently introduced educational standards); the CROMO project, which involved participants from Austria, Italy and Slovenia, developed an intercultural supplement; the ELP was advertised on educational electronic platforms; and the "SMELANG" project made it possible to create an awareness of the ELP in European teacher education. The ŐSZ also published materials designed as "help for self-help". These have special focuses (e.g., checklists for slower learners, CROMO as a way of promoting intercultural learning) and include practical teaching examples, materials for multipliers, and step-by-step guides for the practical use of ELP in the classroom.

On the positive side, it is clear that the ELP meets the needs of motivated teachers and helps them to make their "pedagogical dreams" come true; also, as a "European" instrument it accommodates the cultural and linguistic diversity of classrooms. On the negative side, ELP implementation has often been a matter of preaching to the converted: teachers who are not already convinced by the ELP feel no need to engage with it. What is more, the ELP is still not widely known, it represents an additional cost, it poses new challenges to teachers and learners, and there has been little interest on the side of school inspection or parents.

The ELP's impact on language teaching and learning is very difficult to estimate. But it has stimulated a great deal of discussion about pedagogical/methodological issues such as learner autonomy and self-directed learning, assessment and (self-)evaluation, and the CEFR; it has aroused the interest of some publishers; and it has put plurilingualism on the agenda.

For the future, the ŐSZ plans to embed the ELP in current school development initiatives (e.g. "Neue Mittelschule"). It will also consider encouraging flexibility of implementation, which may entail reducing the complexity of existing models, establishing links between the ELP and school textbooks, exploring the possibility of developing electronic ELPs, and moving towards whole-school implementation.

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Kristina Hergeth described her work with the ELP developed by the Vienna School Board for use in the Central European Region. She explained that she teaches at a Hauptschule in Vienna, in a district with a multilingual population. She began to use the ELP with a grade 5 class (pupils aged 10 and 11) with sixteen home languages, including German, English, Turkish, French, Italian, Serbian, Croatian, Albanian, Polish and Arabic. When she began to teach at the school she was told to use the ELP, so she decided to base her MA dissertation on it. She found that her pupils covered the A1 checklists in one school year at four levels of proficiency. Most of them estimated that they could perform more than 80% of the A1 tasks "very well". After more than two years the class still enjoys working with the ELP. Kristina Hergeth identified three problems that need to be addressed: the dominance of English, the fact that teachers of different languages do not collaborate sufficiently, and the fact that so far the ELP is used by a minority of teachers.

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Elisabeth Feigl-Bogenreiter described the ELP project coordinated by the Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen). There are 273 such centres in Austria, organized in nine regional associations under a single national umbrella organization, the Verband Österreichischer Volkshochschulen (Association of Austrian Adult Education Centres). Structures are thus complex and not always easy to cope with. In 2004 a national working group was established with six members to develop an ELP for adult learners, with a special focus on the intercultural dimension and learning how to learn. Instead of elaborating descriptors and checklists for intercultural competence, the developers decided to adopt a reflective approach. Many adult language learners in Austria are migrants, but because between them they have more than 60 home languages, translation of the ELP was not possible. Nevertheless the ELP allows students to get a made-to-measure suit at same price as ready-made.

The first draft of the ELP was piloted by six regional associations, the piloting process was evaluated, and the ELP was revised and sent to Strasbourg for validation. 3,000 copies were printed and distributed free of charge within the terms of an ESF project. Implementation was supported by in-service teacher training at national and regional levels; advertisements in VHS programmes and magazines; a survey of 3,000 VHS language teachers, most of them freelance and part-time (the results of the survey were generally positive); the installation of a Moodle platform (http://moodle.vhs.or.at) ; participation in the Grundtvig-LP ELPNet (see Gareth Hughes's contribution to the "Show and Tell" carousel); and national and international networking. 7,000 further copies of the ELP were printed by the regional associations, and the ELP was included in the new curriculum for teacher training (teachers are expected to maintain their own ELP).

Implementation is a long-term process that requires a lot of stamina and regular stock-taking. It is important to take account of regional and local differences without overestimating them, and to define and redefine short-term aims at national, regional, local and individual course level. Teachers are the link between the institution's goals and the learners, so if the ELP is to succeed it must have consequences for them. Teacher networks and platforms have been established in order to provide ongoing training and support. Different learners have different expectations, priorities and criteria for success, and they learn within different time frames, according to different rhythms, following different learning methods with varying degrees of learner autonomy. One possible consequence of using the ELP is that it allows teachers and institutions to respond to these multiple differences with greater differentiation.

There is no simple recipe for introducing the ELP, but teachers are advised to start in the second week/third lesson of their course, focussing on the language passport, the dossier and learning how to learn. It is impossible to work with all parts of the ELP in one semester, but teachers can build on learners' familiarity with ELP components and processes in their textbooks. The ELP is also used as the basis for advising learners on an individual basis.

Rapporteur's summing up – David Little

The seminar had three focuses: looking back, current practice and future prospects.

Looking back, Rolf Schärer reminded us that the ELP was first conceived as early as 1985, inspired by the dream that the language teaching world would pool its experience and know-how to make language learning a truly rewarding experience for everyone. He also recalled the sense of excitement at the Rüschlikon Symposium in 1991, when recent political events had created the need to redefine Europe, and he suggested that what has been accomplished since then is truly phenomenal in terms of international dialogue and cooperation and the achievement of individual projects. As we move forward we shall need to bear in mind his concluding advice: that we must avoid the danger of responding to larger challenges by making portfolios more and more complex. The ELP impact study undertaken by Maria Stoicheva, Gareth Hughes and Heike Speitz confirmed that the ELP is an innovative product that, besides empowering specific target groups, has proved an unprecedented instrument of cooperation at European level. The study also emphasized the need for a more comprehensive approach to ELP implementation, which the working groups confirmed. It is encouraging that many participants in the seminar have offered to broaden the scope of the impact study by providing data from their own contexts.

The seminar has provided a comprehensive overview of the current situation: ELP implementation in three countries with interestingly different approaches; the richly varied ELP projects in Austria; "Show and Tell" reports that dealt with developments in four countries, described three international ELP-related projects, summarized the work of a European higher education association strongly committed to the ELP and the CEFR, and introduced the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages; and the ELP-related projects that are part of the ECML's 3rd Medium Term Programme. The working groups rightly spent much of their time identifying problems of ELP implementation and discussing possible solutions. But however great the obstacles to more effective and widespread use of the ELP may seem to be, we must not forget just how much good work continues to be done.

Turning to the future, the working groups expressed their concern at the decision to replace validation by registration at the beginning of 2011. But they also welcomed the new supports for ELP developers that the Validation Committee intends to put in place: a revised version of the Standard Adult Passport; new suggestions for using the ELP with younger learners; step-by-step guidelines for the assembly of paper ELPs in conformity with the Principles and Guidelines, using components downloadable from the Council of Europe's website (and interacting with the registration process); general guidelines for the design of electronic ELPs. The Validation Committee has taken note of the suggestions from the working groups. More work is certainly needed on learning how to learn and the plurilingual and intercultural dimensions; the importance of establishing the right kind of relation between the ELP and the Languages in and for Education project cannot be overstated; and post-validation there will still be a need for validity, which implies some kind of monitoring. There is also a need for more effective communication and networking at European and national levels, and it may be time to redefine the role of ELP contact persons. The Validation Committee recognizes that teacher education has a key role to play in successful ELP implementation, that we must find ways of involving stakeholders outside educational systems, that an expert group will be needed to support further ELP development, and that the ECML's continuing support is vital for the ELP's future. In confronting all these challenges we shall do our best to follow Rolf Schärer's advice, that we should make every effort to learn from past achievements.

David Little concluded his summing up by thanking everyone who contributed to the seminar programme, the chairs of the working groups, the staff of the ECML, Ursula Newby for impeccable organization, the members of the EVC for their indispensable contribution to the planning of the seminar and their involvement in the seminar itself, Christopher Reynolds for administrative support, and the interpreters for finding immediate solutions to so many unpredictable linguistic problems.

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Plenary questions and discussion

Francis Goullier thanked David Little for his summing up and invited participants to respond to the summing up or any other part of the seminar, whether in a personal or an official capacity.

- Rolf Schärer offered his congratulations for the work that has been done.
- Maria Gomes said that three days spent working with old and new acquaintances had been really inspiring and had helped her to redefine her role in the institution in which she works. Many participants in the seminar had asked after Gloria Fischer (the former Portuguese ELP contact person), and Maria Gomes looked forward to giving Gloria the best wishes of her many ELP friends.
- Oksana Karpiuk said that at the end of the seminar she was aware of how much work remains to be done in Ukraine. The experience of the seminar will be of great value to her and she thanked the organizers and participants for sharing their expertise and experience with her.
- Silvija Karklina also thanked the organizers of the seminar, which in her view had been an outstanding event with outstanding content.
- Nadir Engin Uzun said that he had been very happy to take part in the seminar and thanked all the contributors.

Close of the seminar

On behalf of the Austrian authorities **Ursula Newby** said that she hoped the seminar had made clear how much importance Austria attaches to the ELP. Graz was an appropriate venue because it hosts the Ősterreichisches Sprachenkompetenzzentrum as well as the ECML. She expressed the hope that the seminar had been a stimulating and fruitful experience for all participants and would help to move the ELP into its next phase of development. She thanked Christopher Reynolds for his cooperation and her colleagues for all their hard work, and offered the participants her best wishes for the future.

On behalf of the ECML **Waldemar Martyniuk** said that the seminar confirmed that the ELP has potential for the future, seeing that so many committed people are so fully engaged. He thanked the participants for insights and feedback that will help to plan for the future and his colleagues for their work in preparing and running the seminar. Inviting the participants to think of the ECML as *their* ECML, to which they can turn for advice, expertise or cooperation, he said that he hoped to attend more ELP seminars in the future.

On behalf of the Language Policy Division **Christopher Reynolds** thanked the participants for their involvement in what had been an intensive and memorable event that had yielded much of value for the future of the ELP. He thanked Ursula Newby and her colleagues, the ECML, the interpreters, and members of the Validation Committee past and present. He said that the Council of Europe will continue to depend on the contributions of ELP experts in all its member states within whatever structures are put in place for the future. At this point it is a matter of allowing the ELP to leave school and go out into the world, and the seminar confirms that we can enter this new phase with confidence.

Appendix
Evaluation questionnaire

The evaluation questionnaire was completed and returned by 19 official ELP contact persons and 6 other participants.

Participants were asked to rate the importance/relevance of the main discussion themes of the seminar for their own context on a scale from *1* to *5*, where *1 = not at all important/relevant* and *5 = very important/relevant*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
Discussion theme 1: ELP Impact Study	4.3	5.0
Discussion theme 2: Development and implementation of future strategy	4.5	5.0

Invited to list ways in which they personally were prepared to contribute to the future of the ELP, participants gave the following responses:

- To share the experience of ELP implementation in our country.
- When the economic crisis is behind us, to organize some kind of ELP seminar in our country.
- To secure validation for an ELP that has been in the piloting phase for the past two years.
- To try to secure organizational and institutional conditions favourable to dissemination of the CEFR and ELP.
- To establish partnerships with regional educational authorities, language teachers' associations and other stakeholders with a view to proceeding with ELP implementation in a more coherent way.
- To organize support for teachers via training events and experience exchange.
- To develop a whole-school approach to ELP implementation.
- To redefine the role and mission of ELP contact persons.
- To develop materials to link the ELP to the national curriculum.
- To prepare materials to involve parents.
- To encourage school principals and school inspectors to support the implementation of the ELP.
- To pursue developments at national level.
- To provide evaluation studies of ELP piloting for a meta-analysis of ELP implementation.
- To contribute to international ELP seminars and workshops.
- To develop new strategies for ELP implementation.
- To develop a national strategy for ELP implementation based on international experience.
- To forge closer links with other ELP contact persons.
- To report the issues raised in this seminar to the ministry with a view to securing support for ELP implementation.
- To establish a team at national level to design an action plan for further activities.
- To contact people who are involved in the Languages in/for Education project.
- To inform my country's ECML Governing Board member about the importance of in-service teacher training to support ELP implementation.
- To establish a working group to explore the pluricultural dimension of the ELP.
- To provide a case study of ELP implementation.
- To establish a national ELP teacher network.
- To initiate the development of practical guidelines for teachers on how to use the ELP in the classroom.
- To develop a specific ELP structure for professionals of various kinds.
- To establish a national ELP network.

Participants were asked to rate the interest/helpfulness of the exhibition and the show-and-tell sessions on a scale from *1* to *5*, where *1 = not at all interesting/helpful* and *5 = very interesting/helpful*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
Exhibition	3.9	4.8
Show-and-tell sessions	4.1	5.0

Participants were asked to rate different aspects of the seminar on a scale from *1* to *5*, where *1 = very unsatisfactory* and *5 = very satisfactory*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
Preparation and organization of the seminar	4.9	5.0
Structure and process of the seminar	4.6	5.0
Seminar facilities	4.9	5.0
Accommodation	4.9	5.0
Social programme	4.3	5.0

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