THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO: AN IMPACT STUDY

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1. Objectives and methodology of the study

This is a **good moment for engaging in this study**. The European Validation Committee (EVC) has to date validated and accredited more than 100 ELP models. A system for reporting on ELP impact has been functioning since the ELP project was launched, but the EVC feels the need for more information on impact issues. The EVC wishes to draw on the wealth of experience from ELP projects in order to identify success factors and risks in the implementation of ELP projects.

Impact studies are a key tool in designing better policies and they serve many purposes. At this moment this impact study is designed to facilitate better-informed decisions on strategic development and project implementation by the EVC, and enable it to communicate its decisions more effectively so that they provide incentives for better implementation of the ELP models. Not least, it is targeted towards the forthcoming European ELP seminar to be held in September 2009 in Graz, Austria

At its 17ᵗʰ meeting in Strasbourg, 3-4 June 2008 and in the context of its discussions on the future of the ELP, the European Language Portfolio Validation Committee (ED-EVC) decided to launch an impact study in order to gauge the impact of ELP use in the classroom, on other projects in the education system and on language policy in general in the CoE member states. This could help to meet the requirements to show the value of the work done by operational services in the Council of Europe as well as to focus on work for the future.

The focus of the study was to be on the qualitative impact of the ELP. What difference has the ELP made on the processes of language teaching and learning in the different contexts in which ELP projects have been conducted? Have the expectations of the ELP developers been met? What challenges, expected and unexpected, have been encountered, and have they been overcome? It is hoped that the study based on specific examples will lead to the collection of further reports on the concrete and practical impact the ELP is having.

It was decided that a survey should be conducted by telephone with a selection of ELP Contact Persons and ELP project members. The European Validation Committee established a team of three people to prepare a preliminary version of the Impact Study and propose it for discussion and further decision at the next ED-EVC meeting in November 2008. The members of the team were: Maria Stoicheva, Gareth Hughes and Heike Speitz. The members of the team covered the following countries:

- Austria
- Bulgaria
- Estonia
- Germany
- Italy
- Latvia
- Norway
- Slovenia
- UK (England)

The study also covered a wide range of educational sectors: schools (primary and secondary), higher education (e.g. for initial teacher training), vocational and adult education.

The key actors interviewed in partner countries belonged to the following categories:
- ELP contact persons
- Representatives of institutions (teacher training and pedagogical institutions) involved in ELP activities
- Teachers participating or organising ELP conferences, training seminars, etc

The ED-EVC drafted a total of 10 questions. The questionnaires were sent to the interviewees. They were asked to consider the impact of the implementation of the ELP in their contexts.

This draft report has been written based on 12 interviews with key actors in the different countries. The choice of countries and respondents is not to be taken as representative. They are cases with a broad scope of geographical location and educational context. The report summarises the main findings of the interviews and the data gathered. The responses where quoted have been largely anonymised. The intention of the authors is to provide an overall picture of what the different cases provided.

It became clear in the course of the interviews that it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between the impact of the ELP and that of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This is understandable insofar as the CEFR and the ELP were conceived at the same time. The ELP is the CEFR's "companion piece" (D. Little 2009[1]), and it can act as the implementation tool of many of the threads running through the CEFR, for example:
- transparency and coherence in setting goals and reporting proficiency
- learner autonomy
- plurilingual and pluricultural competence

The study reports how the interviewees interpreted the impact of the ELP, in many cases making little if no distinction between the CEFR and the ELP. In the conclusion to this study, the authors return to the relationship of the CEFR and the ELP in the light of what their interviewees reported.

2. The ELP and its objectives

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences. The European Language Portfolio was first conceived of together with the CEFR at the Council of Europe symposium held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, in 1991. The ELP was actually developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and learner autonomy.

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[1] D. Little, 2009: The European Language Portfolio: where pedagogy and assessment meet (documentation for the ELP Seminar, Graz, 2009)

The ELP is one of the Council of Europe projects designed to promote linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe through education and to contribute significantly to the dissemination of European goals, values, concepts and principles.

2.1 Objectives

The European Language Portfolio project has two main aims:

a) to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels (its pedagogic function);

b) to provide a record of the linguistic and intercultural skills they have acquired (to be consulted, for example, when they are moving to a higher learning level or seeking employment at home or abroad) (its reporting function).

The **pedagogic function** can be further described in the following terms:

- Enhance the motivation of the learners
  - to improve their ability to communicate in different languages
  - to learn additional languages and
  - to seek new intercultural experiences
- Incite and help learners
  - to reflect on their objectives, ways of learning and success in language learning,
  - to plan their learning and
  - to become more autonomous in their learning
- Encourage learners to enhance their plurilingual and intercultural experience

The **reporting function** can be summed up as follows:

- The European Language Portfolio aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way. The instruments contained in the ELP help learners to take stock of the levels of competence they have reached in their learning of one or several foreign languages in order to enable them to inform others in a detailed and internationally transparent manner.
- There are many occasions to present a European Language Portfolio which is up to date, for example a transfer to another school, change to a higher educational sector, the beginning of a language course, a meeting with a career advisor, or an application for a new post. In these cases the ELP is addressed to persons who have a role in decisions which are important for the owner of the Language Portfolio. A learner may also be interested in having such documentation for him-/herself.

The European Union's **Europass** includes a Language Passport, which is a version of the Language Passport section of the ELP (see Annex 1).

2.2. ELP impact studies

Several studies that fall under the title 'impact studies' have been conducted so far. They mostly draw on the results of the piloting phase of the ELP launch around the European Year of Languages 2001.

- *European Language Portfolio in use*: nine examples, edited by David Little. The nine reports included in this Study were received in response to a general call sent by email towards the end of 2001 to all co-ordinators of ELP pilot projects and all participants in the first pan-European ELP seminar, held in Coimbra in June 2001. These reports, coming from seven Council of Europe member states, fall into two categories. On the one hand there are reports that describe and illustrate pilot projects. On the other hand, there are reports from individual teachers on how they use the ELP in their classrooms.

- *Studies on the pedagogical aspects of the ELP,* by V. Kohonen and G. Westhoff. This study mostly focuses on exploring the educational possibilities of the "Dossier", as well as studying the ELP as an instrument for documenting learning experiences and puts forward suggestions for developing the pedagogical function of the European Language Portfolio.

- *Interim report on the ELP project for the period 2001-2004*, and separate reports for 2005, 2006 and 2007, developed by the ELP General Rapporteur, Rolf Schärer, using information gathered through a standard questionnaire sent to the national ELP contact persons. The collection of statements and numbers from the contact persons illustrate the cumulative impact of the work with and on the ELP.

The current study includes a question about further impact studies of validated models: *Has this model been the subject of an empirical evaluation / impact study?* The interviewees' responses mention the following types of study:

- **Piloting** of ELP models. The procedure for applying for validation suggests and encourages piloting ELP models with the target group as part of the development process. Examples:

   a) a 3-year implementation project in Slovenia which aims to test the pedagogic role of the teachers, the combination of the ELP and the curriculum, and of the ELP and assessment. The result of the forthcoming evaluation will lead to a decision at national level about whether to include the ELP in the school system (e.g. as an instrument for assessment, alternative to traditional tests);

   b) an impact study conducted in Estonia in the course of development of the first Estonian ELP model.

Experiences and small scale impact studies from other countries are often included and used in these studies (e.g. experience from Austria will be drawn upon in the Slovenian project).

The interviewees report that there are also small-scale impact studies limited to the piloting phase at particular schools and with particular groups of pupils and students. In these impact studies, the main focus is often on the ELP as product, and not on the ELP's effect on learner reflection and motivation (the ELP as a pedagogical tool). Most of them seem to be out of date or with limited representation. Nevertheless, the impact studies on the process of piloting for newly or recently validated ELPs are of interest to consider under the current Impact Study.

- **Studies** carried out within teacher training institutions, following or as part of training courses, seminars and action research activities involving teachers and students (Example: an impact study carried out as part of a one-year teacher training course on the ELP in Bulgaria, Department of Information and Teacher Training, 2007-2008)

- **Research** impact studies at university level carried out by individual researchers as part of research and development plans and activities, doctoral theses, MA dissertations, course work assignments, etc. (Example: a doctoral thesis study on the potential of the ELP for learner motivation and learner autonomy).

2.3. Different types of ELP projects and national priorities

2.3.1 The types of ELP projects

It can be generally stated that the biggest number of ELP projects that led to the development and validation of ELP models for various age groups have been **initiated by Ministries of Education,** or supported by them, with a clear relation to the stated national priorities for education, language learning and teaching and the introduction of educational standards and innovation.

Most of the interviewees in this survey clearly acknowledge the period between 2001 and 2004 after the initial piloting phase launched by the Council of Europe as very favourable for ELP development.
- "Impact between 2002-2004 boomed."
- Piloting phases of individual ELPs also registered high impact results.

Some interviewees, though, report that after this initial Europe-wide initiation period or after the piloting of newly developed ELP models there was some:
- "decline of interest"
- "downturn in the activities"

Factors that seem to have contributed to a loss of momentum in the ELP project included the year's gap between the Europe-wide ELP seminars in 2008. This contributed, according to some interviewees, to the impression of a project coming to an end. In addition, most ELPs were developed on a one-off project basis by national authorities, training institutions and educators and researchers, while the implementation of the validated ELPs required different types of work organisation and the involvement on a regular basis of a number of stakeholders.

It is, however, unfair to the facts to focus only on these aspects of the situation, for at the same time there have been other important developments such as:
- the revision of ELP models validated in the early years of the validation process
- the tendency to move to electronic ELPs as a response to the current role and impact of ICT and new technologies
- the offer of validated ELP models for downloading from institutional websites;
- the demand for a re-launch with the active role of the Council of Europe (made by several of the interviewees)
- considerable impacts upon curriculum development with regard to the application of the CEFR , related to the enhancement of the skills of teaching staff and the development of modern teaching and learning materials.

Another type of project that led to the development and implementation of ELPs was initiated by **local institutions** – groups of schools, individual schools or other educational institutions to meet some clearly identified language learning and teaching need for specific target populations.

There is a need for further desk research to establish what percentage of the validated ELPs were actually initiated by individual actors, without the support of or with just formal approval from the national educational authorities. Examples of such ELP projects include trans-national ELPs such as the models from ALTE-EAQUALS, CercleS, ELC, etc.

The third basic type of ELP project was initiated on a **project basis** through co-operation and collaboration of different actors, often from various sectors (related or seeking better co-ordination) and/or on an international basis (designing projects and applying for funding or grant provision from various international organisations, EU actions and programmes, local and other sources). For example:
- EU projects (for the development of new ELP models – with a focus on models for the vocational sector – Leonardo da Vinci, Lingua, KA2, etc.)
- research-oriented projects – university lecturers and researchers, ICT in pedagogy and education best practices, focus on some new tendencies in a learner-centred approach, empowering teacher-training institutions and further enriching teacher-training courses.

It is still to be established through case studies and further surveys which projects have proven to lead to the most sustainable type of ELP development and implementation. On the basis of those projects contacted in the present study the most sustainable projects

appear to be those that involved, either from the very beginning or later in their implementation, teacher training institutions which provided continuity through regular training and pedagogical research. There have been other projects, however, represented for example on the EVC, that attribute their success to the linking of the curriculum with the ELP through expressing curricular aims in terms of "can do" statements. In such cases, teachers recognise the ELP as a valuable instrument for mediating the curriculum to their learners.

2.3.2 National priorities

The ELP can be considered as a tool within the context of national educational priorities. While thematic priorities will naturally vary from country to country, some priorities recur. For example, the need to help education respond better to the needs of the labour market, the need to empower students to achieve better performance and the wish to promote participation at all levels seem to rank high in the priorities lists in all countries. On the other hand, many countries are experiencing the effects of the current financial and economic crisis. Within national contexts, there are variations in prioritising the topics. When setting priorities, it is always difficult to identify the most important issues and to focus on just a few. Hard decisions always have to be made.

Further examples:
- a new national curriculum and a challenge for the educational system that can be summarized as a shift of paradigm from teaching to learning (and to learner autonomy / ELP philosophy). In this context the ELP is considered an essential supporting tool.
- an optimisation of the educational system: this concerns around 100,000 teachers, since the task is to cut up to 10% of the current teachers (around 1m). This also means increasing the number of pupils in classes and reducing the number of periods/classes per week from 27 to 24.
- legislation related to the CEFR and the ELP defining language requirements for new citizens, for public employees, etc. This is seen as "a good advertisement of the CEFR and the ELP".
- in a country where "most of the official curricula for languages in general and vocational education are based on CEFR levels and portfolios (not only ELPs) are recommended, standardised national tests ("educational standards"), probably calibrated to the CEFR levels, will start from 2011 (or later) in vocational schools. The academic secondary schools are to introduce a centralised CEFR-calibrated school leaving exam for foreign languages in 2009 or 2010. In addition, all school tests and exams in class must be related to the curriculum (mostly based on CEFR) but not necessarily to the ELP"
- a distinction drawn within the lifelong learning sector, between 'accredited' courses that lead to recognised qualifications and 'non-accredited' courses. On 'non-accredited' courses, i.e. courses not leading to qualifications, there is a requirement to establish and document objectives and achievement. For these courses, the ELP is being promoted as a valuable instrument. Early feedback from pilot schemes that started in September 2008 has been positive.

2.3.3 External coherence and complementarity

The ELP is related to a large number of developments in the area of education and training. The external coherence and complementarity of the ELP is clear with the development of competence-based systems, the development of common curricular and academic standards, EU education and training programmes.

There are several developments with which the ELP is related. These can be divided into the following main types:
- making visible the competences of the individual
- intercultural dialogue
- human rights issues and societal multilingualism
- the move towards portfolio-based approaches to learning and assessment

In relation to the national initiatives mentioned, ELP models are both country-specific and age-specific, thus taking into account nationally identified needs and culture.

3. The impact of the ELP: analysis of the interviews

This study aims to investigate the impact of the ELP in a limited number of countries and contexts but at the same time over a broad geographical area including extremely diverse cultural, linguistic, economic and political realities from the UK to the Baltic countries. This sheer diversity should be borne in mind when reading the results of the study.

The impact analysis concentrates on the following key areas:
- the impact of the ELP use in the classroom
- the impact of the ELP on the textbook and other teaching materials
- the impact of the ELP on assessment
- the impact of the ELP on other projects in the educational system
- the impact of the ELP on language policy in general

The two main challenges facing those responsible for the wider and sustainable implementation of the ELP are the following:
- the logistical challenges involved in making the ELP widely available
- the question of resources

In general the study reflects an overall positive opinion in regard to the potential and realized impact of the ELP project. One of the most valuable and widely acknowledged effects of the ELP project as a whole is the sense of a real common European product – the ELP in its more than 100 individual validated models was achieved as a result of cooperation across the broad range of European countries, cultures and educational contexts.

No really negative opinions on the ELP were recorded during the undertaking of this study. But there were concerns about some teacher opposition due to the need to substantially change existing teaching practices with the application of the ELP, as well as about the lack of support at a national and institutional level. Respondents also reported on the need to re-launch support for the ELP project at a European level.

3.1. The overall impact of the ELP

It should be stated from the outset that an important finding in all the countries covered was the positive appraisal of the ELP by the contact persons and other stakeholders, such as university authorities, ministry employees, academics and teacher-training institutions.

Some statements by interviewees reflect this positive opinion:

- "The impact boomed between 2002-2004"
- "Those teachers who began using the ELP totally reorganize their way of teaching"
- "very significant positive impact" (a common response when the multiple-choice responses on the questionnaire were used)
- "It has a positive impact so far on the national curriculum" – this opinion is given when there is relation between CEFR and the ELP and the national curriculum
- "very important instrument" – this opinion is most commonly voiced when assessing the ELP's impact as a pedagogical tool
- strong impact on "deciders" (heads of departments, teacher-trainers, etc.) as well as publishers - and examination boards with regard to the CEFR levels
- the Junior ELP "fits" very well into the current state of development of primary school language learning.

Supporting and inhibiting factors

Factors supporting wider ELP recognition and wider use:
- Europass (see 3.5.1 and Annex). for further findings and analysis)
- inclusion of the ELP in basic educational documents – strategies, action plans, curricula, training programmes

Factors with uncertain, ambiguous effect on the ELP wider use:
- some realisations of the 'portfolio' idea in textbooks
- other portfolio projects adopted by national educational authorities (e.g. the concept of 'student portfolio', which was not based on self-assessment, but broadly on teacher and parent assessment.)
- curriculum reforms that do not refer to CEFR and 'can-do' statements

Factors with an inhibiting effect on wider and deeper impact:
- the time required for the realisation of the fact that the ELP enhances a paradigmatic change, from teaching to learning (and learner autonomy)

- the attachment of traditional teaching to the textbook: the shift to more learner-orientation is the real challenge for teachers.

3.2. The impact of ELP use in the classroom

The impact of the ELP in the classroom is difficult to assess for two reasons: first, the questionnaire does not provide enough questions for drawing conclusions and, second, the type of people interviewed, contact persons or experts at a national level, are not necessarily best informed about classroom practice.

This gap in the impact study methodology and results could be filled by opening an online consultation and appealing for the collection of case studies from teachers and educators using three main sources:

- the contact persons
- the database of teachers that have attended ELP courses or training courses at the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz)
- teacher training institutions where it is known that ELP training seminars have been held.

Several questions in the questionnaire address classroom impact in an indirect fashion, questions for example about the availability of the ELP model linked to the scale of implementation, the relation of the ELP to the textbooks used in the concrete contexts and some statements in the question about impact measurement.

During the interviews a number of concrete examples of good and practical classroom impact achieved through the use of the ELP were mentioned:

- "Teachers are very positive so far, especially about plurilingualism (e.g. the use of the Dossier in primary education)"
- "I can" (positive thinking!)
- "the way the early portfolio shows how much students actually learn at this early stage of education"
- "very useful for teachers in secondary school to see what students have done before"
- "strong impact on a small number of teachers who have adopted the ELP. These teachers have understood the ELP approach, have applied it and report very positive results." National education systems can build on such impact.

3.3. The ELP and the textbook

In many countries the CEFR and the ELP have had a strong influence on the contents of textbooks. The CEFR has often been mediated through CEFR-motivated changes to the curriculum, but the ELP has been a direct influence on textbooks through the inclusion of checklists, the idea of the dossier and so on.

In the opinion of interviewees in countries where textbooks have been influenced the change has both disseminating effects but also 'negative' ones. On the positive side, an ELP-influenced textbook can support the ELP in its pedagogical function by introducing some of the underlying principles of the ELP, notably self-assessment on the basis of clear and action-

oriented objectives and reflection on learning and intercultural experience. We can see that the 'portfolio' idea has been spread and some aspects of it are entering mainstream practice. On the other hand, textbooks do not usually reflect other ELP principles such as goal-setting and the development of plurilingualism.

The following quotations give some idea of prevailing opinions from ELP practitioners:
- "Regional textbooks include elements of the ELP philosophy (reflection, learning to learn etc.)"
- "… publishers have all incorporated elements of the CEFR and the ELP into their new books for adult learners. All books are (nominally) linked to the CEFR. Some books come with ELP elements such as checklists, reflection sheets, etc. This has been done on a voluntary basis by the publishers."
- "The publishers are very important providers of workshops, etc. They have adopted a lot of the ELP "philosophy" but teachers then have troubles understanding the role of the ELP outside of the textbook. It looks as if it will take time for them a) to understand the "new" approach in the textbook and b) to then go beyond the textbook."

3.4. The ELP and tests and exams

The relation between self-assessment based on the ELP checklists and the tests and exams for learners to take seems rather complicated and ambiguous. On the one hand, there is the opinion expressed by interviewees that
- "Generally, if courses are preparing for examinations with clear specifications, it is not considered necessary to work with the ELP as well."
- "Some of the exams have their own checklists. When examination and tests are based on language courses or textbooks, they also have their test requirements, developed tests and checklists."
- "The ELP might be considered as an 'overload."
- "The ELP itself is not used as basis for tests or exams."
- "[The ELP] can be considered irrelevant in cases when national exam system especially for leaving high school is not based on 'can-do' statements."

On the other hand,
- "On "non-accredited" courses [in the lifelong learning sector], i.e. courses not leading to qualifications, there is a requirement to establish and document objectives and achievement and the use of the ELP could be and is considered of value."
- "The ELP is also being used in workplace training (not so many cases) to help define course programmes and record progress."

Most of the interviewees point to the fact that "there is no relation between national and school tests and exams and the checklists in the ELP", which in effect leads to the perception of the ELP as an optional or project-based activity.

The ELP can therefore be said to be having the most impact in situations where it plays a central role in shaping the curriculum, assessing learning and so on. In situations where there is, for example, formal assessment through an examination at the end of the course, the role of the ELP is not so clear:

- Generally, if courses are preparing for examinations … it is not considered necessary to work with the ELP as well. [The examinations] have their own checklists …, etc. The ELP might be considered as an 'overload'.

On the other hand, examinations that have been calibrated to the CEFR levels can serve a helpful role in familiarising teachers with those levels:

- "[We] have increasing numbers of candidates for Cambridge exams (EN) and TELC (DE). The teachers who haven't been trained as examiners or who have been to exam workshops tend to understand the levels better than colleagues who haven't. The other teachers have trouble understanding the levels: they confuse them with the contents of textbooks."

3.5. The impact of ELP on other educational projects

3.5.1 Europass

Some of the interviewees pointed out that the Europass with the recognition of the CEFR levels is an important implementation of the CEFR/ELP idea. Internet accessibility and the opportunity for downloading and online generation have proven to be an enabling factor for broader implementation. A number of comments were made about further developing and introducing similar channels for downloading or generating Language Passports. (See Annex 1)

3.5.2 National or regional projects

- "The ELP was an important input into the Language Work Placement Toolkit which supports students going on work placements, helps staff prepare students and review experience, provides a record of achievement, and provides a flexible tool to meet individual needs and different situations."
- "The ELP is being used in [a] project which is helping learners and teachers with the transition from primary to secondary school."

3.6. The ELP and teacher education or training

Increased awareness of the ELP is a key result sought by initiatives in member states since it is a prerequisite for an increase in ELP use. This was often highlighted in the interviews. Teacher educational institutions are key disseminators in this respect.

Special teacher training courses or seminars on the ELP are important activities

- "There are new demands concerning teachers – they have to know at least two foreign languages at C1 and B2 level"
- "The universities in the country responsible for initial teacher training are involved and they are well informed."

- "There is not enough information [about the] ELP/CEFR [on] courses in initial teacher training partly due to the fact that universities are autonomous, although teacher trainers in ELP seminars are usually from universities."

A number of universities and training institutions are involved in or have initiated ELP projects (mostly for development of new ELP models) and apply for European Union funding. Yet the relation to national programmes of ELP seminars or implementation is not correlated to these initiatives.

Most of the interviewees report that there have been seminars on the ELP with teachers in their countries within a period not longer than three months before the interview. Most of them emphasised that teachers want more practice-based in-service training with the ELP and are asking for more training events (including examples from other countries). They feel left on their own at schools and are looking for guidance.

In relation to this question one interviewee grouped teachers working in adult education with regard to awareness of the ELP into the following categories:
- teachers informed about the general description [of the CEFR and the ELP], but not further about the knowledge of language, language sub-skills, etc.
- teachers well-informed about the levels and CEFR/ELP (they are a small group, a minority)
- Not informed at all

Out of the 4,000 teachers in [the country] – around 25% are of the second type.

3.7. The impact of the ELP on language policy in general

The ELP and the official curriculum

In some countries, the biggest question seems to be how relevant the ELP is to the process of education reform. Here the connection of the ELP to the CEFR is of major importance. The ELP in this context is considered helpful in showing the advantages and implications of changes.

It is acknowledged that the ELP/CEFR has had an impact on curriculum development activities at a national level, whether this be in upgrading existing curricula or introducing a new degree of correlation to the CEFR.
- "The goals of the official curriculum are linked to the CEFR but are formulated in more general terms than in the checklists of the ELP"
- "the national curriculum was developed in 2002; the general objectives are linked to the CEFR, but they are only statements ("slogans"): reaching the B2 level of CEFR; there are no checklists in the national curriculum".

New national curricula are being developed at the moment in some countries. The general expectation is that they will be "more clearly linked to CEFR and there will be checklists expressed in 'can-do' statements"
- "The goals of the official curriculum are formulated as "can do" statements that can be linked easily and explicitly to the checklists in the ELP"

There are also national contexts in which ELP applications can be seen in sectors outside compulsory national curricula, e.g.:

- "the 16+ sector, which is informal - it doesn't have a fixed curriculum, but the approach is generally 'can-do'-oriented".

The general trend is towards the overall compatibility of national curricula with the ELP/CEFR, which creates favourable conditions for further exploration and application of the ELP[2]. A specific favourable factor is the opinion expressed by most of the interviewees that the official national curriculum objectives are often formulated in general terms and the use of the ELP can help in enhancing transparency, concretisation and transposition of national curriculum learning objectives into concrete and acceptable classroom learning and teaching objectives.

It can be recommended that a future impact study focus also on the proportion of curricula which are linked to the CEFR and are formulated in 'can-do' statements. First impressions are that it might be the case that this varies considerably from country to country. An exchange on this topic among the CoE countries might be of practical use for considering the advantages of using the ELP widely as pedagogical and reporting tool for all stakeholders in the educational system.

3.8. Availability as a factor affecting impact

The drawbacks that respondents mentioned and the concerns they expressed are mostly linked with the availability of the ELP models. The issue of availability of the already validated ELPs and in particular those produced as paper versions and those validated more than 3-4 years ago is given as a major concern:

- "There is no free download from Internet of ELP models"
- "All the models were conceived as paper versions"
- "Lack of printed ELPs is considered a major factor for the limited impact" (Interested teachers cannot obtain copies of the ELP.)
- "Some of the ELP models are no longer available as printable copies"
- "ELPs are distributed free of charge by national authorities but only to teachers who have passed a ELP training course or to teachers who express interest"
- "teachers interested in working with the ELP get free copies from the Ministry"

The study identified several distribution systems of the ELP for wider use:

- Free of charge for students and schools in the national ELP project (3-year project) (financed by the Ministry)
- Distribution of free copies to libraries
- Distribution of free copies to teachers attending ELP courses and seminars
- Publishing houses take over the printing of ELP copies and sell them

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[2] Compatibility with the ELP/CEFR can take various forms. For the implementation of the ELP it is important that compatibilty be understood as being more than an alignment of goals with the broad levels of the Common European Framework.

Although free distribution under national authority supervision demonstrates commitment to the ELP projects, this channel is usually limited to the official pilot project period and it is realistic to expect that such type of direct involvement of national institutions will and should develop into other types of institutional support. Some of the interviewees say that "it is not clear what will happen after the project period (and evaluation of the project)". A similar situation has been observed with national projects which have already finished.

Solutions and visions for the future
The study revealed two main solutions to the question of availability:
1)   providing availability using new channels, e.g.:
  • pdf files of ELP paper models to be downloaded from institutional websites or from publishers. (This is also often mentioned as a need by teachers and students. They would like to have a digital/electronic version of the ELP, which could be more flexible than a booklet. "It is easier to pick out parts that are needed, parts to work on in a period of time and at a certain stage of learning")
  • the ELP on the web-site of the Ministry

2)   Revisiting the ELPs which were validated more than 3 or 4 years ago and updating them both in content and in format for distribution
  • "The hard-copy model [of the junior model] can be bought at cost price. It can also be downloaded in both pdf and Word format from the website." (The decision to make the Word version available was a response to the demand for an electronic version but without the resources available to develop a 'full' electronic version.)[3]
  • "Widening of the target group (in particular for adult and vocational ELPs following changes in government educational policy to offer this age group vocational education)"
  • "hard copy with [a minimum of] 'hard pages' supplemented by downloadable 'soft pages'"

The main message from the current study is that, depending on local circumstances, '*the problem of availability has to be solved*'.

3.9. Resources as a factor affecting impact

Many respondents reported on the lack of resources for the long-term implementation of the ELP. As stated above, many ELP models were developed within the context of one-off projects. After the successful completion of the project, the resources were not available for a follow-up for schools and teachers and the provision of ongoing support.

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[3] The EVC, while understanding the reasons for this provider's decision to make the ELP available as a Microsoft WORD document, would not accredit an ELP model in this format. The reason for this is that the integrity of the document cannot be guaranteed. In other words, it is possible for anybody to amend the content of the document in this format and therefore the EVC cannot be sure if all versions of the model in circulation conform to the Principles and Guidelines.

- "Feedback has been limited and it is difficult to implement it on a larger scale with the existing resources"
- "Resources are very important; not only and not primarily financial resources, but human resources – they are decisive for the impact in the future"
- "There was official funding for the revision of the model, some needs analysis about the download versions. Training providers have been asking for more, and for training, but there are no resources for this. Because the model is addressed to a target audience that straddles different sectors (school, vocational education, employment) it is a complex task to obtain resources."
- "There is a national working and funding to promote implementation [but only] till end 2009."

Solutions and vision for the future
- integrate the use of the ELP into course programmes: "On 'non-accredited' courses there is a requirement to establish and document objectives and achievement. [We are] actively promoting the ELP [for adult learners] as a valuable instrument [for this purpose]."
- familiarize new teachers with the ELP through its use on initial teacher-education programmes: "Student teachers are being familiarised with the ELP on their initial teacher training courses."
- the inclusion of the ELP in basic educational documents – strategies, action plans, curricula, training programmes, etc.
- making the ELP more flexible, for example introduce only parts of the ELP to the youngest pupils

4. Conclusions

The current study is not exhaustive. Conclusions have been drawn with regard to:
- direct impact (the active use of the ELP in educational programmes)
- indirect impact, i.e. using parts of the ELP or ideas and activities from the ELP for supporting, for example, autonomy, self-assessment, transparency of educational services, motivation for young learners, language and cultural awareness raising, intercultural and democratic citizenship, etc.

4.1. Further work

The following proposals can be made for further work on impact:
- the launch of an online impact survey (a revised form of the questionnaire on websites of institutions involved in ELP implementation)
- the registration of case studies (in order to compile a case studies booklet)
- a further study on the involvement of teacher training institutions in ELP implementation, research into the ELP and in the organisation of ELP seminars
- the launch of an online consultation on future development, implementation and impact
- desk research into the Country Educational Profiles

- a survey of how many ELP models were actually developed – with or without validation - under various international, regional and local projects (including EU funded projects)

Coordinated efforts are needed for these tasks between the ED-EVC, the ECML and selected contact persons from countries with recognised activities in the area. In particular, close collaboration with the current ELP-related projects at the ECML is needed. Further work on impact studies should be carried out as a follow-up to the European seminar due to be held in September 2009 in Graz.

4.2. The European added value

The European added value of the ELP initiative is clear. The nature of the ELP project addresses a European need and we have also seen that the ELP is tightly tied in to other Council of Europe projects. The European added value results from CoE support and a European-wide approach (a single basic framework document used for developers and for the process of validation), which – when successful - is more efficient than a proliferation of, say, similar bilateral or even multilateral activities undertaken at regional and national levels. Furthermore, without the European approach, there would be a serious risk of losing coherence and visibility.

4.3. Authors' conclusions

The authors of the survey would like to offer the following additional conclusions:

- There is an impression that in some cases the CEFR and the ELP are confused. When discussing the ELP interviewees often mention impact that would more appropriately be attached to the implementation of the CEFR. In some of their conclusions and general comments the authors of the study do not therefore clearly differentiate between the two. This is intentional, as we did not see the need to ask questions which clearly distinguished between these two basic Council of Europe tools. This is firstly, because their linking seems unavoidable and it is the reality experienced by those who implement them. Secondly, it is because the two instruments were initially conceived as closely interrelated in particular in relation to their possible impact. Therefore, when studying impact it is difficult and probably unnecessary to make a distinction between the CEFR and the ELP. They reinforce each other and their impact is to be measured in close interrelation.
- The ELP with its emphasis on learner autonomy, self-assessment and lifelong learning has reinforced some of the basic implications of the CEFR approach – those elements which constitute the underlying concerns behind its conception. By engaging in the ELP development process practitioners, teachers, educators and a wide range of FLL stakeholders have, we believe, achieved a better understanding of these underlying principles of the CEFR. At the same time, we feel that some other important aspects of the ELP with great potential for impact have not been properly exploited. Here we would refer particularly to plurilingualism in its multifaceted aspects – in the school system, in the daily lives of individual European citizens and in the environment around us.

- Since the study does not pretend to be exhaustive, we regard it also as an invitation for further contributions with case studies, surveys, opinions and papers that can further enrich it or draw the attention of the ELP community to areas of potential impact not yet studied or explored. The EVC has started receiving contributions from various parts and areas of the ELP implementation process on a regular basis. We feel that this process should be encouraged with the aim of compiling a new collection of grassroots opinion and experience for wider access and use.

Annex

1. Europass and the ELP

(excerpt from *First evaluation of Europass, A Final Report to the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission*, ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd, 28th January 2008)

The Europass is a set of documents which framework currently comprises five transparency tools. The accessibility is different for the different documents (the CV and Language Passport can be downloaded and filled in by individuals, whilst the other documents can be obtained only through the use of different and more complex channels).

For the year 2006, for example, and according to CEDEFOP figures and the First evaluation of Europass, A Final Report to the Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission around 3 million documents had been downloaded from it, including:
– Over 1 million CV Examples
– Around 150,000 European Language Passport Examples
– Around 1 million CV templates
– Around 90,000 European Language Passport templates
• Just under 1 million CVs had been generated online
• Just under 30,0000 European Language Passports had been generated online

Figure 3 illustrates in a graphic manner this constant increase in the use of the Europass CV and Language Passport over time.

Figure 3: Take-up of Europass CV and Language Passport

Figure 3: Take-up of Europass CV and Language Passport
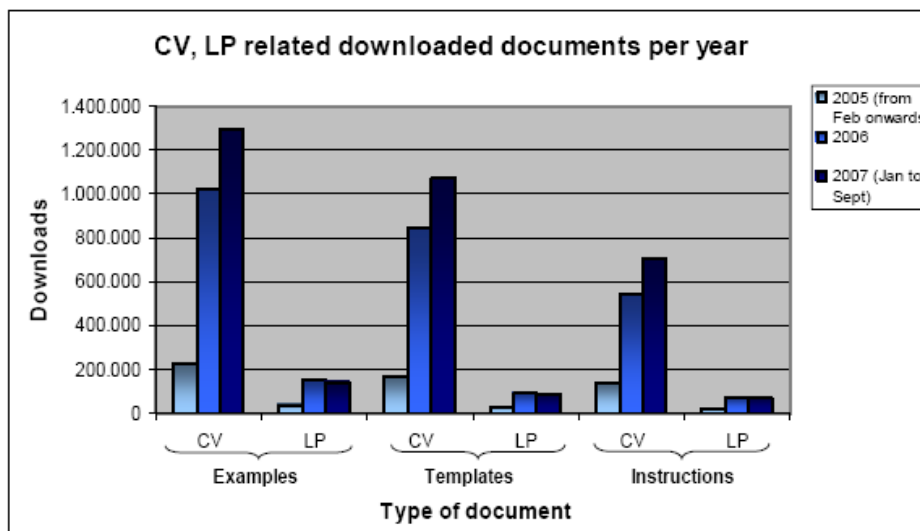
Source: CEDEFOP

Looking now in particular at key stakeholders for the Europass initiative (such as NECs, social partners, students' unions, etc.) the evaluation in-depth interviews showed that these are familiar at least with part of the documents in the Europass framework. This was particularly the case with the Europass CV –which was known by all stakeholders interviewed- and to a large extent with the Diploma Supplement (whose issuing is required from higher education institutions in a number of countries) and Language Passport.

Table 18: Percentage and number (**) of people reporting Europass tool as very useful (*)

	CV	Diploma Supplement	Certificate Supplement	Europass Mobility	Europass L.P.
People at school	67 (30)	36 (14)	46 (13)	56 (16)	58 (19)
Trainee or apprentice	76 (41)	40 (10)	31 (13)	42 (12)	64 (22)
Student at college/ University	73 (266)	49 (82)	43 (83)	36 (87)	57 (140)
In employment (less than 5 years)	74 (212)	34 (73)	35 (69)	38 (72)	47 (108)
In employment (more than 5 years)	72 (314)	48 (122)	47 (129)	50 (115)	60 (181)
Unemployed	68 (180)	40 (62)	40 (63)	36 (64)	50 (102)
Other	65 (46)	36 (22)	43 (23)	43 (21)	53 (32)

Source: ECOTEC Research and Consulting Ltd. (*) Figures refer to valid percent, taking out those respondents who did not know/ did not answer. (**) Number in brackets refers to total number of respondents from that type to this question –taking out those who reported who did not know / did not answer.

Although the breakdown of data offered below should be read with caution given differences in the margins of error for the percentages reported for different sub-groups in Table 18, we see that according to the evaluation survey of beneficiaries, students at college/ university and those in employment for more than five year are those who find the Europass tools more useful in presenting their qualifications and skills in a clear way. The results by tool mirror those already reported above, with the Europass CV being the most -46- widely supported tool. Yet, the Europass Language Passport also received strong support, in particular from trainees and apprentices and those with more than five years of working experience. It is also worth noting that the unemployed reported that most tools were also useful to them, highlighting the importance that these may have in helping them in their future integration into the labour market.

2. The study questionnaire

Country / INGO / Organization / Educational establishment:
Represented by:
Contact address:
Telephone:
Fax:
E-mail:

ELP model
Validation number:
Main target group:
Language(s) of administration within the model:

Availability
How is this model disseminated? Please tick one box:

☐ Distributed free of charge by ministry, implementation project, etc.

☐ Free download from the internet

☐ Commercially available from publisher

☐ Other (please explain):

Additional information or comments:

What is the relation between this ELP and the official curriculum?
Please tick one of the following:

☐ The goals of the official curriculum are formulated as "can do" statements that can be linked easily and explicitly to the checklists in the ELP

☐ The goals of the official curriculum are linked to the CEFR but are formulated in more general terms than in the checklists of the ELP

☐ There is no explicit link between the goals of the official curriculum and the CEFR / the checklists in the ELP

☐ Other (please explain):

Additional information or comments:

What is the relation between self-assessment based on the checklists and the tests and exams that users of the model have to take?

Please tick one of the following:

☐ National and school tests and exams are based on "can do" statements in the official curriculum that are explicitly linked to the checklists in the ELP

☐ Tests and exams in school are explicitly linked to the checklists in the ELP but national tests are not

☐ There is no relation between national and school tests and exams and the checklists in the ELP

☐ Other (please explain):

Additional information or comments:

What is the relation between the philosophy of the ELP and teacher education or training?

Please tick one of the following:

☐ National/regional teacher training institutions include the ELP as a topic in their curriculum

☐ There are special teacher training courses or seminars on the ELP where teachers can share their experience with the ELP

☐ There is no relation between national/regional teacher training activities and the ELP implementation

☐ Other (please explain):

Additional information or comments:

What is the relation between the ELP and the textbook in your context?

☐ The ELP is used as a tool in the process of choosing, assessing and adjusting the course textbooks to be used

☐ The ELP helps teachers select the competences to be developed and adjust textbook contents to the learning objectives

☐ The ELP helps in designing tasks appropriate for the level and skills to be developed and affectively complements textbooks

☐ The ELP has not been applied in relation to textbook selection and use

Additional information or comments:

Scale of implementation

Please estimate the scale of implementation by underlining the appropriate figures in the scales below. If for any of the scales you are not confident that you can make a reasonably accurate estimate, please leave blank

Number of ELPs in circulation:

| < 1,000 | 1,001–5,000 | 5,001–10,000 | > 10,000 |

Percentage of learners in target group who are using this model:

| < 10% | 11–25% | 26–50% | 51–75% | 76–100% |

Number of schools / institutions using this model:

| <10 | 11–50 | 51–100 | 101–500 | > 500 |

Percentage of schools / institutions in target group that are using this model:

| < 10% | 11–25% | 26–50% | 51–75% | 76–100% |

Additional information or comments:

Support for implementation

Is support provided for the implementation of this model?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, is the support

☐ Official?

☐ Informal?

Please say which agency / agencies is / are providing the support and briefly describe its nature:

Impact

Has this model been the subject of an empirical evaluation / impact study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please give details of the evaluation / study:

Please estimate the impact of this model by underlining the appropriate number

> 1 = no impact
> 2 = slight positive impact
> 3 = significant positive impact
> 4 = very significant positive impact

Impact on learners' motivation	1	2	3	4
Impact on learning success	1	2	3	4
Impact on teachers' attitudes	1	2	3	4
Impact on teaching approach	1	2	3	4
Impact on textbooks and other learning materials	1	2	3	4
Impact on plurilingual awareness	1	2	3	4
Impact on school language teaching policy	1	2	3	4
Impact on assessment systems	1	2	3	4
Impact on curricula	1	2	3	4
Impact on pre-service teacher education	1	2	3	4
Impact on in-service teacher education	1	2	3	4
Impact on the status of languages in the curriculum	1	2	3	4

Additional information or comments:

Future prospects and challenges

Please summarize what you consider to be the future prospects of this model and the challenges that it faces: