

**Report on an ELP training event organized in Austria (ECML, Graz)
on 17 and 18 May 2006 within the framework of
Project C6 – Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio
(Expert mission: David Little)**

The Austrian national context

This ELP training event was a major contribution to the implementation of the ELP in Austria, with a particular focus on upper secondary and tertiary education. It was coordinated by Margarete Nezbeda, co-author of two of the national Austrian ELPs, who had participated in the Project C6 Central Workshop in November 2004. The organization of the event was supported by the ÖSZ (Anita Keiper, Elisabeth Jantscher) and Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz (Jennifer Schumm).

The training event: content and process

There were 30 participants (teachers of modern languages), drawn from the following domains: universities, Federal Colleges of Education, pedagogical institutes, colleges of higher education, upper secondary schools. The working hours were as follows: Wednesday 17 May, 9.00–18.00; Thursday 18 May, 9.00–16.00.

Wednesday 17 May – The seminar was opened by Adrian Butler, Executive Director of ECML, who provided an introduction to the Council of Europe’s language education policies and the role of ECML in policy implementation. Gunther Abuja of the Österreichisches Sprachen-Kompetenz-Zentrum then summarized the history of ELP development and implementation in Austria, and Margarete Nezbeda introduced the seminar programme.

In the first working session David Little gave a plenary lecture in three parts:

1. An introduction to the ELP and its relation to the Council of Europe’s language education policies in general and the Common European Framework in particular, and an explanation of the role of ECML in supporting the current implementation phase.
2. An account of the design and implementation of the Irish ELP for secondary learners of foreign languages. Although this model is not widely used, its implementation in a number of schools has been extensively researched. The model can be viewed at www.tcd.ie/clcs, together with many examples of students’ work, and an evaluation report can be downloaded.
3. An account of the design and implementation of the Irish ELP for primary learners of English as a second language. This model was developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training as the central pedagogical support in the teaching of English as a second language at primary level. Some 5,000

copies are distributed each year (this ELP can be downloaded from www.iilt.ie).

The second session was devoted to the module on learner autonomy from the kit of teacher training materials developed by Project C6. David Little worked through the PowerPoint presentation, concluding with questions concerning the use of the ELP to develop learner autonomy.

The first afternoon session comprised three parallel workshops by Austrian teachers and teacher trainers involved in ELP implementation:

1. “Is my B1 your B1? Arbeiten mit den Deskriptoren in der Praxis” (Belinda Steinhuber): In this workshop several illustrative scales from the Common European Framework of Reference were discussed and various ways of reading the scales to understand the levels were presented.
2. “Das ESP als Instrument, um Lernerautonomie zu fördern und Motivation zu erzeugen” (Claudia Zekl). This workshop explored ways of using the ELP (ESP 15+) to promote the development of learner autonomy.
3. “Vom Brauchen und Gebrauchtwerden des ESP: Was braucht der Sprachunterricht – was die LehrerInnen – was die SchülerInnen?” (Anita Keiper) In this workshop participants brainstormed what “ingredients” – from the point of view of pupils and teachers – are necessary for good language teaching and which of them can be linked with the ELP.

The workshops were followed by a plenary feedback session.

The final session of the first day focused on the role of the ELP in strengthening the intercultural dimension of language learning. David Little used the PowerPoint presentation from the kit of training materials to introduce key issues, which were then explored in three working groups. The results of the group work were summarized on posters.

Thursday 18 September– The first working session was concerned with integrating the ELP with language curricula and textbooks. David Little used a PowerPoint presentation to identify key issues. These were again explored in three working groups and the results summarized on posters.

The second working session comprised three parallel workshops:

4. “Schularbeiten und Reifeprüfung an der HAK (Englisch) im Lichte des GERS” (Eva Annau). This workshop was about relating general tests and tasks for upper secondary students at vocational schools to the CEFR.
5. An ad hoc discussion of pedagogical challenges posed by the ELP, with particular reference to learner autonomy (David Little)
6. “Der neue AHS-Oberstufenlehrplan und das Europäische Sprachenportfolio” (Margarete Nezbeda): This workshop focused on parallels between the new Austrian curriculum for upper secondary and the philosophy behind the ELP. It turned out that the ELP is an excellent tool for realizing major curriculum objectives.

Again the workshops were followed by plenary feedback.

The final working session was devoted to assessment, in particular the challenge of developing an assessment culture in which formal examinations are based on the same criteria as the self-assessment that is fundamental to effective ELP use. David Little's presentation was followed by a plenary discussion.

The seminar concluded with individual and group reflection on its implications for future action.

Participants' evaluation of the seminar

Feedback was generally very positive as regards both the content and the organization of the seminar. 10 out of 17 participants who returned the feedback questionnaire said that the content had been very important to them, especially that part of it focused on learner autonomy. Participants appreciated the combination of expert input and lively discussions with colleagues in workshops, which linked theory and practice, also the positive working atmosphere. Although some participants would have liked more concrete ideas on how to implement the ELP in their context, the general verdict was that the seminar had been a positive impulse for participants' future work.

David Little and Margarete Nezbeda
5 June 2006