Languages for People with Special Educational Needs (LangSEN)

Project description	*Version 1.0*

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1. CONTEXT

Communication is as much a human need as a right. Consequently even people with physical, cognitive, sensory, speech-and-language and learning difficulties should be given the opportunity to learn languages to open up bridges between their internal 'world' and the wider community.

Language acquisition theories and practice have proved that the human capacity for learning languages is not limited. Thus it is possible for a second or a third language to be acquired even by people suffering from serious learning difficulties. So, children and young people with special educational needs should be exposed to a number of languages in a pedagogical climate that is both encouraging and enabling.

In some countries, education of such people is offered according to special curricula in specialised institutions, while in others, children with emotional, behavioural, physical, cognitive, sensory, speech-and-language and learning difficulties are given the same curricular content in integrated student communities. There are countries, regions or institutions where children with such difficulties are not given the chance to learn second or third languages, while in other contexts the opportunity of foreign language education is offered to everybody.

If we believe in democratic citizenship, social cohesion, mutual understanding and respect for everyone then we have to examine the issue of language learning for people with special educational needs

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

General aims
The project aims at raising awareness and disseminating examples of good practice on the issue of languages for people with special educational needs.

The project intends to find answers to the questions among many others:

- What are the concrete learning problems resulting from various physical, sensory and speech-and-language difficulties?
- What is common to all and what is particular to each difficulty?
- What have neuro-, psycho- and socio-linguistics revealed about the language acquisition and language learning of people with physical, sensory, speech-and-language and learning difficulties?
- When, where and in what social context can effective language learning for such people be promoted?
- What are the most effective resources, tools, approaches, methods and techniques?
- What professional competences do teachers need to conduct language learning in this context?

Specific objectives

The prime objectives of the project are to:

- investigate the situation regarding language education of people with special needs throughout Europe;
- collect and disseminate evidence of existing good practice
- raise awareness among the representatives of national, regional and local educational authorities; teacher educators and representatives of the educational media of the need for inclusive language education for people with special needs; encourage them to take small steps towards promoting the idea in their respective fields;
- make all these outcomes available in an electronic format.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Participants of the project will acquire

- a general understanding of the nature of learning difficulties resulting from various kinds of physical, sensory, speech-and-language difficulties;
- knowledge of the situation regarding language learning of people with special educational needs in their respective countries and in the other ECML member states;

They will gain

- access to case studies of existing good practice including teaching materials
- understanding of effective methodology of language teaching for people with special educational needs;
- an overview on teacher education related to the teaching of modern languages to people with special educational needs.

4. ACTION PLAN

2004

January - early April
o networking among project team members and with other fellow professionals involved in teaching languages to people with special educational needs;
o collection of related literature on related topics
o setting up a project web-page on ECML website

People involved:
o project team;

2-3 April
Meeting of the project team in order to
- agree on main foci and priorities;
- elaborate working methods;
- prepare for the initial workshop;
- discuss various issues on the research to be started at the initial workshop.

Mid April - early October
- *co-operative development of the input to be shared at initial workshop;*
- *collection and writing up of a few case studies to be demonstrated at initial workshop;*
- *fine-tuning workshop methodology*
- *updating and publicising the project web-page on ECML website*

7-9 October
3-day ECML **workshop** to
- identify the categories and the nature of difficulties to be overcome;
- discuss the findings of neuro-, psycho- and socio-linguistic research related to language acquisition and language learning by people with learning difficulties;
- present examples of existing good practice;
- start a research project to outline the situation of language teaching for people with special educational needs in ECML member states.

Participants' profile:
Participants are expected to be representatives of national educational authorities or experts, responsible for or involved in special needs education. They should
o have some knowledge of or experience in language learning and teaching in the field of special needs education in their respective countries;
o be able to contribute to the workshop by and sharing information and experience;
o be in the position to take an active part in a research project following the initial workshop by contributing with data and writing up case studies representing the situation in the respective countries.

Mid-October - end of April (2005)
o communication among project team and research network-team co-ordinators (3 to 5) and all the participants of initial workshop;
o research carried out by participants of initial workshop and their fellow-professionals in the respective countries;

o *writing up of research findings;*
o *exchanging research findings among people involved*

People involved at this stage of project development:
o *project team members; research network-team co-ordinators;*
o *participants of initial workshop; further contributors invited by workshop participants.*

2005

May
Meeting of the project team
- to sum up and evaluate the findings of the research project;
- to agree on further tasks to complement existing data;

June – October
o *complementary research to gain further data that need to be added to the existing findings;*
o *writing up of additional research findings;*
o *exchange research findings among people involved*

November
Meeting of project team
o to prepare results for publication;

November - June (2006)
o *editing the reports of research for final publication*

People involved at this stage of project development:
o *project team members; research network-team co-ordinators;*
o *authors of various reports on research;*

2006

June
Draft publication of results **on ECML website**

June – October
o *communication among parties involved to get feedback on the results published;*
o *online communication with outsiders visiting ECML website in order to get feedback.*

October
Meeting of project team to
- evaluate the feedback on the publication on website;
- outline the main content of a central workshop;
- agree on forms and methodology of delivery of content.

October – March (2007)
o *co-operative development of the input to be shared at central workshop;*
o *updating the project web-page on ECML website.*

2007

March

3-day **workshop**
- to promote the idea of inclusive language education (for people with special educational needs);
- to demonstrate ideas for good practice;
- to see what actions could be taken in the respective member states to promote language education for people with special educational needs.

Participants' profile:
Participants are expected to be representatives of national educational authorities responsible for language education;
o who have thorough overview and knowledge of the situation of language education and language teacher education in the respective countries;
o who are in the position to influence the shaping of language education in their respective countries for example by initiating action in the field of integrating language teaching and special needs education.

March – June
final editing and production of publication on CD-Rom

Final publication will contain:
o *multilingual glossary (or rather a 'concise dictionary' of SEN-related terminology in English and French and possibly in other languages);*
o *data from initial research;*
o *examples for good practice with various kinds of documentation (including syllabuses, lesson plans, teaching materials, descriptions of methodology, classroom videos, etc.);*

June

Publication of results of project in electronic format (**CD-Rom**).

5. LANGUAGES

The working languages of the project are English and French. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided for central events (ECML workshops).
Participants are expected to communicate in English or French.