

## 8<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the European Language Portfolio

29 September – 1 October 2009, European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz, Austria

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### Zusammenfassung:

Nur 10 Tage nach dem CercleS Seminar zu CEFR und ESP fand das 8. internationale Seminar zum Europäischen Sprachportfolio des Europarats statt. Im nachfolgenden Artikel lesen Sie Einzelheiten zur Entwicklung des ESP und zu dessen Zukunft (zum Beispiel soll die Validierung 2010 abgeschlossen werden).

The Council of Europe's 8<sup>th</sup> International Seminar on the European Language Portfolio took place just 10 days after the CercleS seminar in Padua and the two combined provided much food for thought concerning future directions of the CercleS ELP project and the ELP in general. The two CercleS ELP co-ordinators, Mary Ruane and Fiona Dalziel, were invited to participate in the seminar, which was hosted by the ECML in Graz. This was a fitting venue for several reasons. Firstly, as Mr Anton Dobart (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) stressed, Austria is a multilingual society and is committed to innovation in language education. This task is facilitated by collaboration with the ECML, which, as its director Waldemar Martyniuk stated, aims "to help its member states implement effective language teaching policies by focusing on the practice of language education". The seminar consisted of presentations of ELP projects and studies, show-and-tell reports, working group discussions and feedback from these.

In his introduction to the seminar, David Little (chair of the ELP Validation Committee) outlined the programme and working methods of the seminar, stressing its focus on the past, present and future in relation to the role of the ELP in language education. This was followed by a presentation by Rolf Schärer (Rapporteur General for the ELP project) entitled "The European Language Portfolio from 1997 to 2009: a retrospective". He spoke of the enthusiasm of the early days of ELP piloting and of evidence that the ELP really can enable learners to take responsibility for their own language learning. To illustrate this point, he quoted an exchange between two Hungarian learners:

"I like the portfolio because it allows me to cheat" - "If we cheat, we cheat ourselves." However, Rolf Schärer admitted that the uptake of the ELP is proving slower than anticipated, and provided some possible explanations for this. He stressed that the ELP should not be in conflict with official curricula, and that the ELP approach should be simplified, avoiding overly complex portfolios. He also stressed a greater understanding of the need of companies as regards the reporting function of the ELP.

A report on the Impact of the European Language Portfolio followed, presenting the results of a study conducted by Maria Stoiicheva, Gareth Hughes and Heike Speitz for the ELP Validation Committee. The study investigated the implementation of the ELP in a variety of educational contexts in nine countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia and the UK. It emerged that the ELP cannot be separated from the CEFR in terms of impact, since it provides a way of enabling practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of the CEFR. One aspect of the ELP which may need further work is that of fostering plurilingualism. This consideration was to re-emerge in the course of the seminar.

At this point the five working groups were provided with four questions to discuss:

- 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?

Examples of impact that emerged from the groups concerned the revision of language curricula and approaches to assessment, and the changing relationship between teachers and learners brought about by the ELP. Some of the groups mentioned the impact of the ELP on textbooks, but there was also some caution about this point, with the fear of inappropriate ELP use being encouraged. It was strongly believed by the groups that teacher training is essential for the future, as is the lifelong perspective of the ELP, starting from primary learners. It was also stressed that the ELP can facilitate the integration of migrant children. As for the

### Résumé :

Seulement 10 jours après le séminaire de CercleS concernant le CEFR et le PEL a eu lieu le 8<sup>ème</sup> séminaire international sur le Portfolio Européen des Langues organisé par le Conseil de l'Europe. Dans l'article suivant, vous trouverez toutes les informations concernant l'évolution récente du PEL et son avenir (la validation, par exemple, doit être conclue en 2010).

future it was felt that more research must be carried out into ELP impact along with the collection of case studies and instances of good practice.

The focus then moved to the present, with reports on two ELP-related projects in the ECML's present medium-term programme. David Little presented the ELP in whole-school use, which aims to involve learners, parents, teachers and head teachers in project development. More information can be found at <http://elp-wsu.ecml.at/>. Margarete Nezbeda then described "Training teachers to use the ELP: follow-up" (<http://elp-t2.ecml.at/>), which supports ELP implementation by means of materials, activities and events. She presented a forum for teachers and trainers using the ELP, where they can discuss and share experiences and reflections. The seminar included country reports from Austria, France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Common themes in these were the increase in ELP use and the implications of this for teaching and assessment, the need for clarification of the relationship between the CEFR and the ELP, and the important role of the ELP in promoting plurilingual education and intercultural competence at all levels of schooling, given the cultural and linguistic diversity of classrooms in Europe. The show-and-tell sessions provided reports on a wide range of ELP experiences, such as the European Portfolio of Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), the European Language Portfolio for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Professional ELPs (including mention of the Latvian ELP for train drivers, which sparked some lively discussion!). Mary Ruane and Fiona Dalziel presented the CercleS ELP, reporting back on the recent Padua seminar.

Then it was time to start looking to the future, with David Little's presentation of the Strategy for the Future of the ELP. This was an important moment in the seminar as it was explained that the process of ELP validation was to come to an end at the end of 2010. This is to be replaced by one of registration based on self-declaration. In order to facilitate the work of ELP developers, the Validation Committee will produce guidelines for the design of both paper and electronic ELPs. Gareth Hughes and Barbara Glowacka introduced the proposed enhancements to the Standard Adult Passport and the Junior ELP, which will, amongst other things, attempt to facilitate the description of the owner's plurilingual competence. In the following working sessions on the future of the ELP, the previous presentation gave rise to animated discussion, with some participants welcoming the new strategy of the Validation Committee and others worried about the new direction. The latter were concerned about the validity of the ELP, stressing the need for a clear definition of what the ELP is, along with support in development and implementation, and stronger networks between practitioners. The groups praised the work of the ECML and hoped that its support would continue.

David Little also presented a text he had produced for a seminar entitled "The European Language Portfolio: where pedagogy and assessment meet" (available online). He argued that the CEFR and the ELP needed to be "exploited as a single package" and explored "the possibility of accommodating self-assessment alongside teacher assessment and external tests, each form of assessment being explicitly and systematically related to the levels and descriptors of the CEFR". In his summing up, David Little reaffirmed the value of the ELP as "an innovative product that, besides empowering specific target groups, has proved an unprecedented instrument of cooperation at European level". He stressed the need to continue promoting teacher education, to develop the plurilingual and intercultural dimensions of the ELP and to ensure effective networking at European and national levels, perhaps by means of a redefinition of the role of ELP contact persons. He concluded by stating: "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." ■

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# Bulletin 27



Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur  
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Was wichtig ist...