

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

In 2002 the United Kingdom joined the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) which is based in Graz, Austria. '..... The ECML is at the forefront of developing and implementing practical new approaches to Modern Foreign Language teaching and learning'
Languages for All: Languages for Life



The European Centre for Modern Languages

After three years of existence, and an in-depth evaluation of its functioning and orientation (1997), the decision was taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to make the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) a permanent institution (1998). The ECML was equipped with a new mission focusing on the support for the implementation of language education policies and innovative approaches in the teaching and learning of languages.

In complementarity to the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe the ECML is intended to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas, development and training, a meeting place for language teachers, teacher trainers, and other experts involved in the shaping of language teaching and learning in its member states.

A medium-term cycle of programming was adopted, each cycle spanning 4 years, in order to optimise the functioning and impact of its activities and to facilitate the planning process.

First medium-term programme, 2000 to 2003

The current programme was established in the course of 1999 based upon a Call for Proposals and it began in November 1999

with a central workshop leading into the one of its major focuses "The organisation and set-up of language education". It addressed the various factors coming into play when looking at the process of initiating and promoting innovation in the field of language education and highlighted the importance of project management skills and competences.

Over 20 international projects were included in the current programme - each with a series of activities, workshops, regional events, network and expert meetings focusing on aspects as varied as:

- the exploration of new potential for increased language learning either in approaches (synergy between the learning of different languages, development of multiliteracy) or with regard to new contexts where language learning could take place (border regions, twin cities, etc).
- ways to integrate language awareness and the development of an intercultural communicative competence in the language learning; research into cultural mediation, into needs analysis and course design for the language needs of migrant workers

- exploration of the use of information and communication technologies for language learning, also including self-assessment
- development of learner strategies and autonomy, bilingual education and quality assurance in language teaching provisions
- exploration of the changing role, functions and status of language educators

The activities in 2002 and 2003 concentrate on the final stages of each project, finalising their research findings and preparing the results for wide dissemination in the form of books, CD ROMs and project web sites.

A large-scale conference in October 2003 will offer a showcase for the results of each project and serve to present and disseminate the results and thereby add to the visibility of the work of the ECML. The conference will also see the launch of the programme of activities for the years 2004 to 2007.

Looking ahead, 2004 - 2007

The framework and structure of the second medium-term programme will take into account a number of adjustments that have proved necessary in the light of setting-up and running the first medium-term programme.

Expert teams and participants alike have generally reacted very positively to the medium-term formula. Work becomes foreseeable and manageable, the project plans - both for smaller

and larger projects alike - render the activities and the expected results more tangible and act as an extra stimulus for the involvement of the experts.

However, experience has also shown that there is both a need for increased training and awareness raising activities for the expert community in our member states and for events that target a wider audience.

The three major types of projects that will be balanced in the new programme will be:

- a) research and development
- b) training
- c) awareness raising

The ECML is currently preparing the general orientation and framework of its second medium-term programme in an intensive process of consultation with its member states and the final decisions will be made early in 2003.

Language education for social cohesion in a multilingual and multicultural Europe.

The second programme will be placed under the umbrella theme "Language education for social cohesion in a multilingual and multicultural Europe" reflecting the major concern of its member states: Which role can or should language education play in our quest for better understanding, and

mutual respect between all citizens living in the same political context?

Josef Huber
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For further information about the ECML programme, including *Quality Management in Language Education*, Co-ordinating team Laura Muresan (Romania), Frank Heyworth (Switzerland) and Mary Rose (United Kingdom) please visit www.ecml.at



Research Study Visit to Châteauroux

As part of the Learning through Research: Languages and Literacy Project, teacher-researchers from the International Learning and Research Centre visited the Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres d'Orléans-Tours (IUFM) Châteauroux site and six French primary schools. This visit enabled an investigation into the teaching of writing by examining children's learning experiences in mother tongue (L1) and foreign language learning (L2).

The full report is available on www.ellnet.org.



As part of the continuing partnership with the IUFM, the International Learning and Research Centre and seven of the local primary schools welcomed trainee teachers from the university institutes in Blois, Chartres, Orléans and Tours. This teaching practice, during the month of November, contributed to the French teachers' final assessment.



Nicola Theobald, Headteacher, Jo Cole and Elizabeth Rogers, Senior Teacher Researchers, work with French colleagues and children.

In concluding the report the teachers wrote "... This research study visit has enabled us to reflect on our practice in the light of the classroom observations and discussions with our French colleagues. The visit has led us to probe processes in our teaching of writing; as a result aspects of our practice will be reshaped. We have an increased knowledge and understanding of children's ability to transfer learning in one language to another - this will have an impact on how we teach L1 and L2 in our schools"