

New website for the European Language Portfolio (ELP)

26 September 2011 was the 10th anniversary of the European Day of Languages, which was first held during the European Year of Languages 2001. That year also saw the launch of two major instruments by the Language Policy Division: the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is now used throughout the world and has been translated into 37 languages, and the European Language Portfolio (ELP). It is therefore entirely appropriate that this triple anniversary should be the occasion for the ELP project to enter a new phase with the opening of a completely redesigned website.

What exactly is the European Language Portfolio?

The ELP was developed by the Language Policy Division as one of the Council of Europe projects designed to validate linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe through education and to disseminate European goals, values, concepts and principles. It 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. Its main aims are:

- to motivate learners by acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language skills at all levels
- to provide a record of the linguistic and cultural 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)
- to help learners give shape and coherence to their experience of learning and using languages other than their first language

The ELP is linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and conforms to a common set of Principles and Guidelines that have been approved in a Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Modern Languages (see Recommendation N° R (98) 6).

There is abundant evidence to show that the ELP has had a major impact, indirectly as well as directly, on language learning and teaching in a variety of educational contexts. Even in contexts where the ELP itself is not well known, ELP processes (e.g. self-assessment) are much more widespread than previously. By the time the validation process came to an end in December 2010 (see Education Newsletter No.29),

the development, analysis, revision, validation and accreditation of 118 ELP models had provided a firm foundation for the future of the ELP.



Why a new website?

The Council of Europe's Language Policy Division working together with the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria, wishes to promote the continuing implementation of the ELP in educational contexts across Europe. Ten years' experience of validation has made it possible to develop a set of templates and resources that facilitates the compilation of ELP models to meet the needs of a wide range of learners, and a number of projects have supported ELP use in varying education contexts.

The new ELP website enables visitors to find out more about developing and registering ELP models and their implementation. The development and registration section includes documents on the origins of and principles behind the ELP, reports on international seminars, lists of registered and accredited ELP models, and a guide to compiling an ELP model along with various templates and resources, including a new interactive Language Passport. The procedure for registering an ELP model, which has replaced validation and accreditation and is based on the principle of self-declaration, is contained in this part of the website.

The section on ELP use offers support for introducing an ELP into a school system, an educational sector, a school, or a class. It contains ideas and tools for teacher education, models and case studies of the ELP being used in different educational contexts and projects run by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz to support the use of the ELP.

Educational authorities, schools and teachers are encouraged to use the new site to explore the use of the ELP and observe

its impact on learning. It is also important for the continued success of the ELP project that experience gained in developing and implementing ELP models is shared. Registration is one way in which interested parties can find out what new models have been developed and where the ELP is being used.

We hope that language professionals and language learners alike will enjoy the website and exploit its various resources.

ELP website: www.coe.int/portfolio

Contact:

Christopher Reynolds
christopher.reynolds@coe.int





Editorial

The first decade of the 21st century has proved to be a time of great upheaval, a trend that has accelerated over the past two or three years. Technological progress aside, some developments, such as quests for democracy and increased social awareness and solidarity among people, have been for the better, whereas others which unfortunately spring all too easily to mind, such as bad debts, wild and arrogant financial markets and growing intolerance and selfishness, or terrorist attacks have been detrimental and damaging to say the least.

Like many other organisations, the Council of Europe has taken steps to respond to societal change by reviewing its role and seeking to improve the pertinence and effectiveness of its work in the defence and promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The structural reform required to accompany this reassertion of the Council's relevance and rationalise the Secretariat's work began on 1st October and will be completed by the end of the year.

Under this reform, the former Education and Youth Directorates have been brought together as Departments in a new Directorate for Democratic Citizenship and Participation, which is in turn part of a new Directorate General of Democracy (DG II). This is a logical move to improve co-operation, as both departments have focused extensively on citizenship and human rights education, in a non-formal setting in the youth sector and more on the formal primary and secondary classroom and higher education contexts in the education sector. There is perhaps a lot more in common between non-formal and formal education than one might think: non-formal methods have greatly inspired education over the last few years and joining forces should be beneficial to all involved and strengthen the impact of our work.

Another aspect of the reform is that from 2012 on, all activities will be conducted as part of a biennial programme. The activities of the Education and Youth Departments are covered by the programme on democratic citizenship through education, culture and youth policies, which aims to promote Council of Europe standards and values, focusing on citizenship and human rights education, the right to quality education and language policies. Our work will,



High-Level Forum on "Education systems in Europe in the 21st century", Kyiv, 22 and 23 September 2011. From l. to r.: Ólaf Ólafsdóttir, Mykola Azarov, Prime Minister of Ukraine, Dmytro Tabachnik, Minister of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Mady Delvaux-Stehres, Minister of National Education and Vocational Training of Luxembourg