

**Report on the expert mission in the framework of project C.6  
“Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio”  
of the ECML’s medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007**

**Training sessions in Vilnius, Lithuania, 6-7 October 2005**

**An overview of the national context**

After the restoration of independence in Lithuania and the launch of educational reforms, language education policies and the methodology of foreign language teaching had to be dramatically changed. The learning of foreign languages needed to come closer to a natural exchange of information. The practical aims of foreign language education required the entire teaching process to be of a communicative nature. School children needed to develop the skills of autonomous learning, be able to apply their skills and knowledge in new situations, be able to use dictionaries, reference books and the latest information technologies.

New social conditions prompted education stakeholders to change the choice of foreign languages, giving priority to Western European languages and offering the possibility of studying two or three foreign languages. The present choice of languages in secondary education schools is shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1

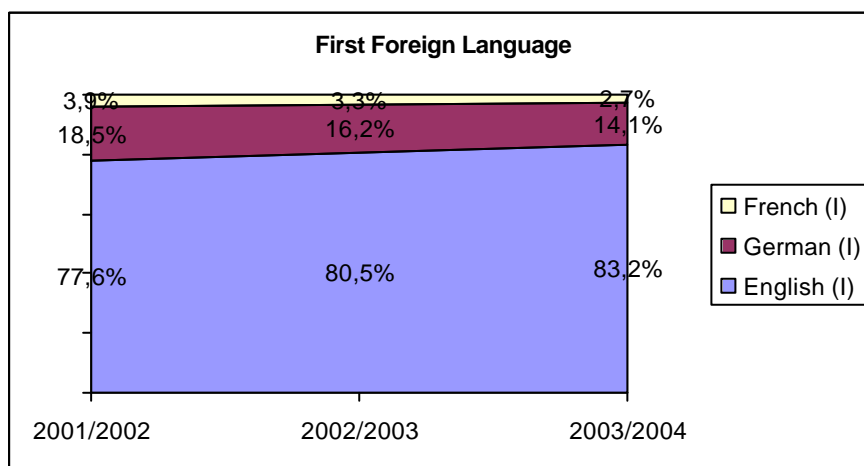


Table 2

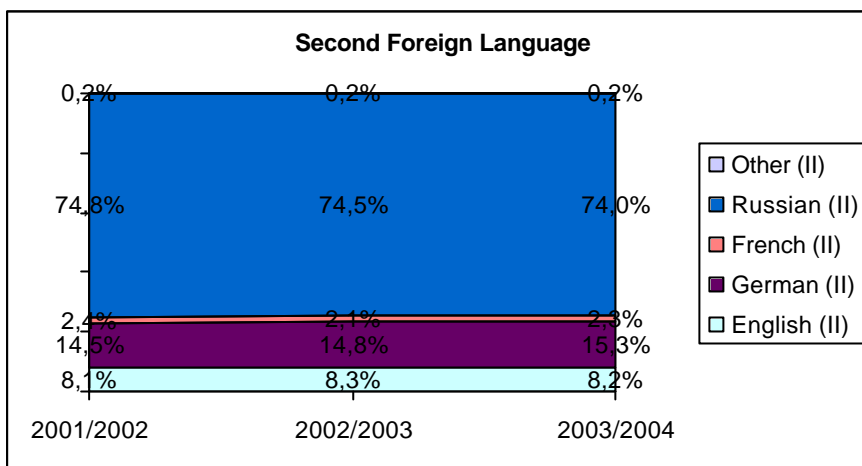
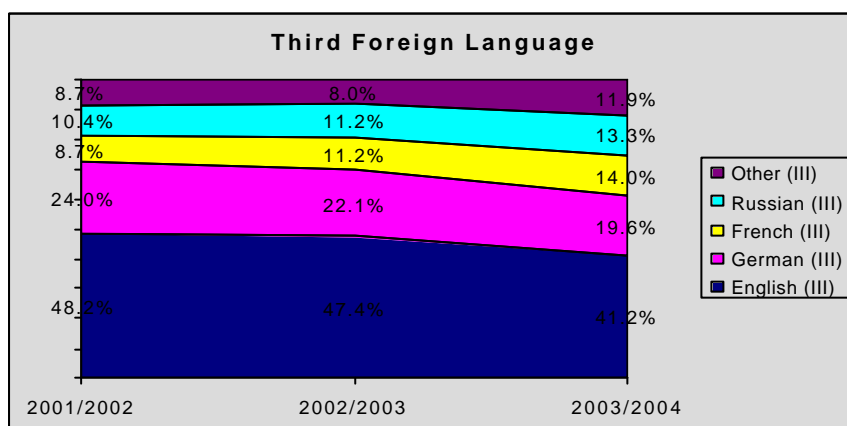


Table 3



The tables reflect the most widely learned foreign languages in Lithuania, which are English, German, French and Russian. Other languages are offered only by some schools as a second or third foreign language.

Lithuania became a member of the Council of Europe in 1993 and a member of the European Union in 2004. These steps were of great importance to language professionals and language learners as they received the possibility to participate in the most important programmes of both organisations. The Lithuanian language projects included early language learning, bilingual education, content and language integrated learning, assesment, etc.

Language education assessment reform started in 1996 but it covered only upper secondary education leaving examinations. Teacher continuous assessment remained undeveloped almost up till the present time.

### Development of the ELP for 16+ students

Bearing this in mind when developing a European Language Portfolio, we have chosen a slow process in order to involve teachers in the piloting process to acquaint them and their learners with self-assessment, learning to learn, planning and reflecting on their learning process.

The first working group to develop the ELP was formed in 2002. It consisted of 19 members: 8 practising teachers, 3 university teachers, 5 ministry language specialists, two researchers, 1 local inspector.

ELP development process 2002 – 2006		
Activities	Aims	Date
Preparing Language Biography checklists in the Lithuanian language		2002
Piloting	To know if students and teachers understand the descriptors and instructions	2003
Revising and editing the descriptors in the Lithuanian language according to the pilot results		2003
Preparing the descriptors in the most widely taught languages in Lithuania: English, German, French, Russian		2004
Printing 1200 ELPs	for the second piloting in 18 schools to find out if the students understand the descriptors in all languages, to get the preliminary opinions of teachers on the time devoted to ELP in the lesson, to examine the relation of the ELP to the existing curriculum. To get information for further teacher training.	2004
Revising the texts of descriptors in all languages		2004
Printing the ELP and sending it to the Validation Committee		2005
Organizing 7 regional teacher training workshops to prepare consultants on the use of the ELP in the learning process		2005
Printing 3000 copies of the validated ELP for upper secondary school students	To investigate the real demand for the ELP	2005

### Lessons learned

In the process of the ELP development we have come to the following conclusions:

1. Teacher training to use the ELP pedagogic function would have been more useful if we had started with the primary or lower secondary ELP.  
The pupils would have got used to using ELP from an early age.
2. The decision to translate the descriptors into 5 languages caused really hard translation problems as well as language equality problems because language

diversity is increasing and (though insignificant today) Italian, Spanish, Nordic and other languages are increasingly being offered to learners.

### **Expert training sessions**

The seminar called “*The European Language Portfolio: principles and practice*” was run by Radka Perclová in Vilnius, at the Teacher Professional Development Centre, on 6 – 7 October 2005. Altogether 34 ELP consultants, upper-secondary school teachers of English, German, French and Russian teaching students aged 16 + participated in it. It was an introductory seminar and a starting point to the series of regional workshops, which are to continue in October – December 2005.

The main aim of the seminar was to help the ELP consultants in their role by broadening their expert knowledge and professional skills. Two complex heading topics were discussed: a) “*The concept of the European Language Portfolio and European Language Portfolio pedagogy*” and b) *Ways of integrating the European Language Portfolio into common teaching and learning practice*”.

The particular issues that were examined on the first day were as follows:

- 1) What is the European Language Portfolio and what are its goals?
- 2) Lithuanian and Czech experience with using the European Language Portfolio
- 3) The Common Reference Framework levels, scales of language proficiency and their use and
- 4) Learner assessment.

On the second day the following issues were considered:

- 1) The European Language Portfolio and textbooks
- 2) Approaches to working with the European Language Portfolio
- 3) Intercultural competence and its development and
- 4) Suggestions for European Language Portfolio teacher training.

The focus of the seminar shifted from a wider perspective towards more specific matters. To achieve the aim of the training sessions, both input from the trainer and teachers’ pair work and group work were included. Teachers’ work was greatly helped by translations of all handouts made by the local coordinator Stase Skapiene and by consecutive interpretations provided by individual trainers, which involved them deeply in the sessions.

Teachers’ reflection was encouraged by various questions, e.g.:

- What is the European Language Portfolio? What are the goals of the ELP?
- What is your experience of working with the ELP? What have you learnt?
- What is your opinion on learner self-assessment? What have you tried out? How did it work?
- What are the key features of ELP pedagogy in a school context (consider teaching aims, content, methodology and assessment)?
- In which elements is the ELP compatible with existing curricula in your country and with your own teaching practice?
- Who will participate in your teacher training seminars? Why are the seminars needed? What are your objectives? What will be the content of the seminars? What practical issues concerning the seminars should be considered?

Teachers' reflection and sharing of their experience were extremely beneficial and the trainer's input and way of running the sessions were appreciated. The participants evaluated the seminar as very useful and innovative and expressed their wish for this good initiative to be continued.

Stase Skapiene, Chief Officer, Basic and Secondary Education  
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