

**Report on an ELP conference organised in Sweden (Gothenburg)
on 15 and 16 September 2005 within the framework of
Project C6 – Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio
(Expert mission: David Little)**

The Swedish national context

Three ELP models have been developed in Sweden and validated by the Council of Europe, for (i) learners aged 6–11, (ii) learners aged 12–16, and (iii) learners in upper secondary and adult education (including vocational education). The 16+ model was developed by the In-service Training Department at Uppsala University and was validated in 2001. Since then, a large number of workshops have been held in different parts of Sweden to encourage the use of the ELP. The two models for younger learners (6-11 and 12-16) were developed by the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement and both models were validated in June 2004. All compulsory schools in Sweden (about 6,400) received a printed copy of the teacher guidelines and a CD-ROM containing both ELP models, in February 2005. At the same time all the material was also made available on the National Agency's homepage (www.skolutveckling.se/utvecklingteman/sprak), where it can be downloaded free of charge.

Sweden was represented by Cecilia Nihlén, one of the ELP developers of the 6-11 and 12-16 models, at the central workshop of project C6 (November 2004). The main purpose of this Swedish follow-up event was to support the implementation of the two new ELP models for younger learners by bringing together teachers who were interested in working with the ELP, teacher trainers and educational decision makers, but it was also an opportunity to present all three ELP models to a large number of teachers. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement, who sponsored the event, sent out invitations to teachers in primary, lower and upper secondary school all over Sweden, who in 2001 and 2003 had participated in a one-year-long in-service training of language teachers arranged by the Swedish National Agency for Education. Many of these teachers function as 'language pilots' in their communities and arrange in-service training for other teachers, and these 'pilots' helped to spread the information about the conference. Invitations were also sent out to all colleges and universities with teacher education programmes. The conference was attended by about 196 participants, most of them teachers (40% were 'pilots', 35% were regular teachers, and 15% teacher trainers/researchers/educational authorities), and the programme was designed to achieve a balance between local and Council of Europe concerns.

The conference programme: content and process

Thursday 15 September – The conference was opened by Eva Engdell from the Swedish National Agency for School Improvement, who explained the purpose of the

conference and gave the general background to the work of both the Council of Europe and ECML and the development of ELPs in Sweden. She emphasized the importance of building networks among the participants during the conference and for them to disseminate the information to teachers, head teachers and local decision makers in their communities.

David Little gave a plenary lecture in three parts:

1. An introduction to the ELP and its relation to the Council of Europe's language education policies in general and the Common European Framework in particular, and an explanation of the role of ECML in supporting the current implementation phase.
2. An account of the design and implementation of the Irish ELP for secondary learners of foreign languages. Although this model is not widely used, its implementation in a number of schools has been extensively researched. The model can be viewed at www.tcd.ie/clcs, together with extensive examples of students' work, and an evaluation report can be downloaded.
3. An account of the design and implementation of the Irish ELP for primary learners of English as a second language. This model was developed by Integrate Ireland Language and Training as the central pedagogical support in the teaching of English as a second language at primary levels. Some 5,000 copies are distributed each year (this ELP can be downloaded from www.iilt.ie).

The three Swedish ELPs were then introduced by the developers: Cecilia Nihlén, Kerstin Sundin, Roger Persson and Eric Kinrade. They compared the *Passport*, the *Language biography* and the *Dossier* in the three models and discussed both similarities and differences between the models, and they also explained the aims and functions of the ELPs designed for these different age groups. The session ended with the question: *How would you go about implementing the ELP in your language classroom, at your school, in your community?*

For the workshops of the conference the participants were divided into twelve groups with about fifteen participants per group. Teacher trainers had been assigned as group leaders before the conference, and they had also received special instructions about what material to use. The participants were intentionally mixed in their groups to ensure that primary, lower and upper secondary school teachers were represented in each group. A special English-speaking group was formed comprising researchers, teacher trainers and representatives from the two national agencies, and David Little joined this group.

The first day of the conference concluded with plenary feedback from the working groups. Posters were brought to the auditorium and put on display. Among the principal findings were the following:

- The participants emphasized how important it is to involve the whole school when working with the ELPs, and that local authorities and head teachers must receive information about how the ELP can be used as a valuable self-assessment tool for pupils.
- It would be best to start on a small scale and introduce parts of the ELP – not all of it at the same time.

- Some suggested that the ELP should be a compulsory part of the individual development plan that teachers are required to set up for every pupil.
- One way of informing other teachers would be by sharing examples of pupils' work in the ELP.
- The ELP must be integrated with regular activities in the classroom in order to be successfully implemented – and the focus should be on the pedagogic function.
- Parents must become involved in the process, and the pupils could present their ELPs during the personal development dialogues when each pupil and his/her parents meet with the home teacher once every term

After the conference the participants received a summary of the ideas written on the posters. At the end of the plenary, Per Blomqvist, an upper secondary school teacher and teacher trainer, talked about his experiences working with the ELP in his German classes and the ECML Cando project, in which he had participated.

The discussions continued in the evening when everybody had dinner together at the hotel where most participants were staying.

Friday 16 September – The second morning of the conference was devoted to two modules from the kit of teacher training materials that project C6 is developing, on learner autonomy and the intercultural dimension. David Little used the PowerPoint presentations to introduce the modules, and the working groups then spent two hours on the discussion questions and activities integral to the modules.

The participants used the language profile and checklists from the Swedish 12-16 ELP model instead of the Dutch lists in the kit when comparing their profiles in the workshop. Also, page 143 in the CEFR, connected with the learner autonomy activity, had been translated into Swedish. A comparison was made between the intercultural part of the three Swedish ELP models instead of using the suggested activity in the kit. According to the group leaders, the hands-on experience with the ELP material was much appreciated and provided an excellent opportunity for discussion among the participants. It seems that the first and the third activity worked best. After the conference the group leaders each wrote a summary of the discussions that had taken place in their group. These summaries contain both big issues that need further discussion, such as the language used in the ELPs, and very practical tips about how to work with learner autonomy and intercultural awareness raising in the language classroom.

The special group of researchers and teacher trainers did not follow the tasks presented in the other workshops but focussed instead on issues related to the implementation of the ELP in Sweden, e.g. how the levels A1-C2 relate to the goals in the syllabuses and to the national tests of foreign languages. Everybody agreed on the importance of introducing the CEFR and the ELP in teacher education and the teacher trainers decided to meet next spring to share experiences. The organisation of teacher education differs a lot between colleges and universities in Sweden and a dialogue between different departments is necessary in order for things to change. The possibility of involving student teachers in the implementation process by working with projects during their teaching practice was discussed, as well as how research

topics relating to the CEFR and the ELP could be encouraged in the university students' research paper at the end of their education.

After lunch, a panel discussion, chaired by Jörgen Tholin (University College of Borås), between David Little, Gudrun Erickson (project leader for the national tests of foreign languages at Göteborg University), Tommy Lagergren (Swedish National Agency for Education), and Eva Engdell (Swedish National Agency for School Improvement), drew together the main themes of the conference. Issues addressed included the relation between the common reference levels of the Common European Framework and the national system of examinations and the likely future of the ELP in Sweden and further afield. The panel also answered questions from the participants which had been discussed in the workshops and handed in to the moderator before lunch.

The conference concluded with brief presentations of five other ECML projects, by Lilian Nygren-Junkin – *Language Educator Awareness*

Jörgen Tholin – *Cohesion of Competences Coherence of Principles*

Gun Lundberg – *Early Language Learning*

Maria Allström – *Training Teacher Educators*

Carin Söderberg – *Intercultural Communication Training in Teacher Education*

The general atmosphere at the conference was very positive. The participants filled in evaluation questionnaires and they wrote down what they thought about the content and the form of the conference, what they thought was useful, what could have been better and, finally, how they will use the ELP and implement it. Most of the participants were very satisfied with the contents and the form and thought the plenary lectures by David Little were very interesting. They thought it was a good mix of lectures and workshops and appreciated the discussions with different colleagues. Some wanted to have more time for discussions and more concrete tips of how to work with the ELPs. Lots of good ideas were given in the questionnaires about how to implement and work with the ELP. The participants felt very inspired by the conference!

Note: The working hours of the conference were as follows: Thursday 15 September, 9.30–12.30 and 13.30–17.00; Friday 16 September, 8.30–12.30 and 13.30–15.30.