

**Report on ELP events organised in Norway (Oslo) within the framework of
Project C6 – Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio**

(Expert mission: David Little)

The Norwegian national context

Until recently, foreign language education in Norway was developing very positively. The latest report to the Storting (White Paper) recommended that a second foreign language should be made obligatory in lower-secondary education, a recommendation which was approved by a majority in Parliament in June 2004.¹ On the basis of this decision, new national curricula were developed, along with national programmes for in-service training of language teachers and a national strategy for strengthening foreign languages (“Languages open doors”).²

In September 2005, immediately after the ELP event reported here, a general election in Norway resulted in a change of government. One of the goals of the new government is *not* to introduce an obligatory second foreign language. Since this was announced, on 13 October 2005, the new Minister of Education and Research has been strongly criticized and there have been protests from all stakeholders in education – schools, pupils, teachers (including the largest teachers’ union), teacher trainers and researchers. Norway is at the moment engaged in a wide-ranging and intense public debate on foreign language learning. Important questions are being asked about the national strategy for strengthening foreign languages and the new national curriculum for foreign languages.

ELP development

In 2003, the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education (Utdannings- direktoratet) launched a project to develop two ELP models in Norway, one for adult immigrants and one for foreign languages in secondary education. To begin with the project was coordinated by Telemark Educational Research, but from 2004 it was divided into two projects and Arendal Adult Learning Centre (Arendal Voksenopplærings-senter) assumed coordination of the project to develop an ELP for adult immigrants.

Both ELPs were developed in close cooperation with users (schools and pupils/adult learners) and piloted in 2004–05. Both will be submitted to the Council of Europe for validation in spring 2006. It has been considered especially important that the ELP for secondary education be made available for the school reform (including two obligatory foreign languages) due to be implemented in autumn 2006. At the moment, the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education is discussing an implementation phase with both project co-ordinators.

¹ St.meld. nr. 30 (2003-2004) “Kultur for læring”

² “Språk åpner dører”. Strategi for styrking av fremmedspråk i grunnopplæringen 2005-2009.

In light of this context, ECML approved a request from the Norwegian authorities that there should be two events rather than one: an information day for decision makers on 8 September and a seminar for teachers who had already worked with the ELP on 9 September 2005.

Information day for decision makers, 8 September 2005

This event was chaired by Eva Først, Director, Analysis and Assessment, Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education, and attended by representatives from: the Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Education and Research, Telemark Educational Research, Arendal Voksenopplæringscenter, Oslo University College (NAFO), the University of Oslo, Folkeuniversitetet Adult Education and Research, Nasjonalt senter for fremmedspråk i opplæring, VOX, the German Embassy, the Goethe Institute, the Centre culturel français. Altogether there were 25 participants; the working hours were 9.00–12.00 and 13.00–15.00.

The Norwegian authorities asked that the day should inform them about (i) the ELP in relation to Council of Europe policy, (ii) the ELP in light of recent language policy developments in Norway, and (iii) successful ELP projects in which the visiting expert had been involved. Accordingly the programme was divided into three sections:

1. David Little introduced the ELP, explaining its relation to the Common European Framework in particular and the Council of Europe's language education policies in general, and describing the role of ECML in supporting the current implementation phase.
2. Heike Speitz (Telemark Educational Research) gave an overview of recent changes in language education policy in Norway and summarized the development and piloting of the Norwegian ELP for learners aged 13–18.
Marie Tveiten, Arendal Adult Learning Centre, described the use that her institution is making of the ELP in teaching Norwegian to adult immigrants.
3. David Little gave an illustrated account of three Irish ELP projects:
 - a. Primary learners of English as a second language. Integrate Ireland Language and Training is funded by the Irish government to support the teaching of English as a second language in primary schools. Its principal tools are English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (based on CEF levels A1–B1) and a version of the ELP, which together promote a communicative, action-oriented approach to the teaching of English. Some 5,000 copies of this ELP are distributed each year (it can be downloaded from www.iilt.ie).
 - b. Secondary learners of foreign languages. The Centre for Language and Communication Studies designed an ELP to serve as the principal dissemination instrument of a four-year research-and-development project on learner autonomy in the language classroom. This model is much less widely used than the model for primary ESL learners, but its implementation in a number of classrooms has been the focus of extensive empirical research. The model can be viewed at www.tcd.ie/clcs, together with extensive examples of students' work.

- c. Adult refugees learning English as a second language. Integrate Ireland Language and Training developed the Milestone ELP (downloadable from www.eu-milestone.de) in collaboration with partner institutions in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In its school for adult refugees, the Milestone ELP is used as the chief support for teaching and learning, replacing textbooks. It has proved a very effective means of promoting collaboration among teachers.

To judge by the very positive feedback we received from the participants, the aims of the day were achieved.

Seminar for teachers working with the ELP, 9 September 2005

This event was held in the Goethe Institute, Oslo, and coordinated by Heike Speitz. The participants were some 35 teachers and teacher trainers (English, German, French) who had been involved in the development and piloting of the Norwegian ELP for learners aged 13-18, and teachers of Norwegian to adult migrants who were also using an ELP with their learners. The working hours were 10.00–12.00 and 13.00–16.30.

The purpose of the seminar was to give the participants an opportunity to discuss key issues in ELP design and implementation and reflect critically on their own ELP experience. To this end the local organizers chose three modules from the teacher training kit that is being developed by project C6, on learner autonomy, language in the ELP (languages of presentation, languages of process, plurilingualism), and the intercultural dimension. Each module was dealt with in the same way: David Little used the PowerPoint presentation from the kit to introduce the theme and topics for discussion/workshop activities (30 minutes); the participants worked in groups (30 minutes); the groups shared their conclusions in a plenary session managed by Heike Speitz (30 minutes).

The main issues raised by the participants were as follows:

Learner autonomy:

- Changes in the roles of teacher and learner
- How to cope with different rates of progress?
- Bringing the ELP into the centre of classroom activities, making it an integrated part of learning, and not an extra
- Discovering language by using it, by reflecting on one's own experience
- Presenting the "essence" of levels A1 – B2
- Connecting descriptors ("I can" statements) to contexts outside formal education
- Raising learners' awareness: learning strategies and reflection
- Making working with the ELP a whole-school approach

Language in the ELP:

- The Norwegian ELP for lower and upper secondary education has chosen a multilingual approach, in order to ensure use of the target language and awareness raising from the very beginning, the ELP for adult immigrants is in Norwegian only, which is the only language shared by all learners and of course the target language.
- Especially important for the second foreign language to ensure target language use in the classroom

- Creating a plurilingual environment
- Developing a whole-school approach to language learning

The intercultural dimension:

- What is “our” culture / “the other” culture / “hybrid” / pluriculturalism?
- Developing an awareness of one’s own culture
- For migrants: awareness of their cultural status, ELP as an “anti-assimilation tool”
- Using the language biography of the ELP to create an imaginary identity for a shorter or longer period of time
- Combining global simulation and TANDEM learning

An important question to be answered in this phase of project C6 is: How easy is it to use the PowerPoint presentations on which the kit is founded when you are not yourself their author. David Little had written only one of the three presentations used in the seminar but found no difficulty in using the other two. When the kit was piloted in the central workshop, the structure of plenary input followed by group work followed by plenary feedback worked very well. This was again the case at the Oslo seminar. As with the information day for decision makers, feedback from participants was very positive, which suggests that the seminar achieved its objective.

David Little
Heike Speitz
12 November 2005