Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio

Project C6 of the ECML 2nd medium-term programme (ELP_TT)

Principles underlying the ELP and key design features

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Principles

Principle 1
The promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism:
- Each ELP must take account of all the owner’s language and intercultural learning, wherever it takes place
- Thus it must provide space for recording
  (i) all experience of learning and using second/foreign languages and
  (ii) competence in a number of languages
- Note that an exception has been made for ELPs designed for use by migrants learning the language of their host community, though such models must still take account of other languages the learner uses

Principle 2
The ELP is the property of the learner:
- The individual learner owns his/her ELP in a literal and a metaphorical sense
- The individual learner is responsible for his/her ELP as a physical object
- The individual learner is also responsible for the regular self-assessment that is fundamental to effective ELP use
- Note that self-assessment generally requires guidance appropriate to the age of the learner
Principle 3

The ELP has two functions:

- A pedagogic function, to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning
- A reporting function, to record proficiency in second/foreign languages

These two functions are interdependent:
- If the ELP is not central to the experience of language learning there will be little worth reporting
- The effort to capture and record the process as well as the products of learning is what drives the pedagogical function forward

Principle 4

The ELP is based on the CEFR:

- It makes explicit use of the CEFR’s common reference levels
- These levels are summarized in the self-assessment grid (Table 2 of the CEFR) and this should be included in all models
- An exception to this general rule is made in the case of ELPs for very young learners, though the self-assessment grid must then be made available to teachers, parents and other stakeholders

Principle 5

The self-assessment grid is not enough:

- The self-assessment grid does not provide the detail learners (and teachers) need in order to set precise learning goals and assess the development of particular communicative skills
- For this reason ELPs must also include appropriately formulated and detailed checklists (“I can …”) to help learners (and teachers) to set learning targets and evaluate learning outcomes
Principle 6
The ELP records more than self-assessment
• Besides supporting learner self-assessment, the ELP encourages the recording of assessment by teachers, educational authorities and examination bodies
• But note that the principle of learner ownership means that the recording of teacher assessment should always be independent of the learner’s self-assessment: assessment by the teacher should not be used to correct the learner’s self-assessment

Key design features
The ELP has three parts:
• The language passport uses the levels of the CEFR provides an overview of the owner’s proficiency in different languages at a given point of time
• The language biography facilitates the learner’s involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his/her learning process and progress
• The dossier offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the language biography
Key design feature 2
The language passport
- must provide for learners from ethnic minorities and expatriate/migrant groups who have a more advanced proficiency in one or more languages than their peer group is likely to achieve in school
- must accommodate the recording of partial competences
- must allow the owner to record formal qualifications and significant language and intercultural learning experiences

Key design feature 3
The "standard adult passport"
- To facilitate pan-European recognition and mobility a standard adult passport is promoted by the Council of Europe
- The Council of Europe can provide an A5 four-colour design template (Quark Xpress) for validated ELPs that include the standard adult passport
- The Council of Europe can also provide the standard adult passport in A4 format (monochrome)

Key design feature 4
The language biography and recursive use:
- The language biography encourages the learner to include information on linguistic, cultural and learning experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts
- The principle of plurilingualism requires that some language biography pages focus specifically on the learner’s developing plurilingual identity
- All language biography pages should be designed with recursive use in mind
Key design feature 5

Terminology and general presentation:
- Every ELP must adhere to terminological conventions, standard headings and rubrics as specified by the Council of Europe, in at least one of the official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French) in addition to any other languages.
- Every ELP must include a standard text about the Council of Europe (downloadable from the ELP website: www.coe.int/portfolio).
- Every ELP must contain any necessary copyright attributions, state where its descriptors came from, and be clearly organized (all pages must be numbered).

Key design feature 6

Language(s) of presentation and language(s) of process:
- At an early stage of design ELP developers should decide on the language(s) of presentation and the language(s) of process.
- The Irish ELP for secondary learners has checklists in five languages.

Irish post-primary ELP: checklists for A1 LISTENING in Irish.
Niveau A1 (Junior Certificate)

Je peux comprendre des mots et des expressions élémentaires sur des sujets qui m'intéressent.

Je peux suivre les instructions de classe, les consignes et les remarques du professeur si elles sont simples.

Je peux comprendre le nom des objets ordinaires qui se trouvent dans la classe.

Je peux comprendre des questions sur moi-même si on parle lentement et distinctement.

Je peux comprendre des mots et des expressions élémentaires sur des sujets qui m'intéressent.

Je peux comprendre les nombres et les prix.

Je peux comprendre les jours de la semaine et les mois de l’année.

Je peux comprendre l’heure et la date.

Irish post-primary ELP: checklists for A1 LISTENING in French

Key design feature 6

Language(s) of presentation and language(s) of process:

- At an early stage of design ELP developers should decide on the language(s) of presentation and the language(s) of process.
- The Irish ELP for secondary learners has checklists in five languages.

Key design feature 6

Language(s) of presentation and process:

- At an early stage of design ELP developers should decide on (i) the language(s) of presentation and (ii) the language(s) of process.
- The Irish ELP for secondary learners has checklists in five languages.
- The Czech ELP uses Czech, English, German and French, and provides free space for another language.
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Support for ELP developers

- The annotated version of the *Principles and Guidelines* (2004)
- The guide for ELP developers by Günther Schneider and Peter Lenz
- The bank of descriptors compiled by Günther Schneider and Peter Lenz
- The templates for language biography pages on learning how to learn and intercultural learning, compiled by David Little and Barbara Simpson
- All the above are available at the Council of Europe’s ELP website (www.coe.int/portfolio)
Workshop task

- Draw up a design brief for an ELP aimed at the learner group you are concerned with.
- What will be your language(s) of (i) presentation and (ii) process?
- How will you organise your self-assessment checklists so that they facilitate planning and monitoring as well as self-assessment?
- How will you provide for recursive use in the language biography pages that deal with (i) learning how to learn and (ii) the intercultural dimension?