SIG Report

Focus on Assessment

The focus in this SIG was on the following issues:

1. What do we assess?
   - Language
   - General / social skills (this should be applicable to all subjects)
   - ICT skills

2. How do we access?:
   - What are the tools (e.g. rubrics, check lists, portfolios, etc.)?
   - How can we develop and objective criteria?
   - The criteria have to relate to the task

3. How do we relate our assessment to the Common European Framework?

The participants of this special interest group quickly agreed on two main questions which have to be answered when it comes to assessing LanguageQuest activities:
What do you assess and how do you assess it?

As any other task-based approach LanguageQuests involve more than just language. At least three sets of skills, which are essential to be successful in a LanguageQuest, can be identified: language skills, social or general skills and ICT skills. Talking about language skills, these skills go far beyond the mere practice and use of discrete language items. A number of communicative situations have to be mastered by the students. Therefore, the assessment of a LanguageQuest cannot be limited to performance assessment (traditional assessement, standardized assessment, summative assessment), but forms of formative assessment (authentic assessment, holistic assessment, alternative assessment) have to be integrated into the Quest.

A number of instruments, which can be used for formative assessment, have already been used for some time in the task-based context: rubrics, portfolios, checklists or other real-life instruments. The challenge for the teacher is to find objective criteria for the assessment of the different skills and to decide, how the skills add to the overall performance. In this respect, a possible post-workshop activity could be to develop and propose a number of examples for such assessment criteria.

During the course of the discussion, another issue was raised by the participants and soon turned out to be the most urgent. Being a European project and keeping the idea of a clear and comparable, Europe-wide set of standards in mind, the question of how to relate LanguageQuests to the Common European Framework (CEF) is a major aspect. A connection to the CEF is essential for both students and teachers. Students must be able to estimate the level of difficulty and their own performance within the European context.

For teachers the reference to the CEF becomes necessary as soon as they want to use a LanguageQuest which has not been design by themselves. References to national curricula or standards do not provide a satisfactory point of reference for language teachers from different educational backgrounds. Therefore, the teacher page of a LanguageQuest should provide information about the language skills which are necessary to do the LanguageQuest and how expected results can be interpreted in terms of the CEF. Therefore, one post-workshop activity could be to develop a CEF-related template for the assessment of

LanguageQuests. Existing LanguageQuests could then be categorized according to the CEF-levels. The descriptors in the CEF might have to be adapted for that purpose.

Ideas for follow-up activities and workshops:
- Develop a kind of template for CEF-related assessment.
- Categorise Lquests according to the CEF- levels.