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European Language Portfolio

**Council of Europe seminar sponsored by the
Ministry of Education, Spain**

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**Report by
David Little
Seminar Co-ordinator**

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Official opening

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science, **Maria Antonia Ozcariz**, General Director for Regional Cooperation and Higher Inspection, welcomed participants from other countries and from the different regions of Spain. She emphasized the importance of language learning as a means of promoting understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Having developed and implemented ELPs for learners of all ages, Spain was delighted to host the 2004 intergovernmental ELP seminar.

Spain had recently passed a new law in order to meet the challenges of the EU's language education policy, and the Ministry had a strong interest in promoting language learning and improving teaching methods. The new law provided that children should begin to learn their first foreign language between the ages of 3 and 6 and their second foreign language at the age of 12. Implementation of the law would vary from region to region, but everywhere it would have implications for teacher training as well as for teachers of subjects other than languages, who need to be able to participate in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) schemes. The Ministry hoped that these measures would lead to an increase in language learning and improvement in language teaching. The Common European Framework and the ELP were important tools to assist these processes; hence the Ministry's interest in this seminar.

On behalf of the Council of Europe, **Joseph Sheils**, head of the Language Policy Division, thanked Ms Ozcariz for her words of welcome. The Council of Europe was pleased to be in Madrid for a seminar that had the twin tasks of taking stock and planning for the future. He thanked the Spanish authorities for their invitation and for arranging such good weather. Spain was a faithful partner in the Council of Europe's work on education, participating actively in projects and seminars; it was also a country in which multilingualism played a vital role. Four Spanish ELPs had now been validated. Between them they supported language learning from the beginning to the end of schooling, and a good support system had been put in place for teachers. The Spanish ELP for learners aged between 3 and 7 was the first model to be validated for that age group.

Altogether there were now 64 validated ELPs, with 5 more pending validation; between them they reflected the richness and diversity of educational contexts across Europe. Rolf Schärer's report on the progress of the ELP from 2001 to 2004 raised important questions of quality regarding the design of ELPs and their implementation. The Standing Committee of Ministers of Education had signed a declaration to improve the quality of education, teaching and learning, develop tools for self-evaluation, and promote learner-centredness, interculturality and diversity. The ELP could do much to support this agenda, and it was therefore important to sell the ELP to ministries, and especially to show that it adds value to language learning. 2005 had been declared the year of education for democracy, and here too the ELP had a vital role to play.

The last meeting of the current Validation Committee would be held in November. It would focus on issues of quality and the dynamic processes of ELP development and implementation; it would also identify gaps to be filled, new elements to be developed, new methods of delivery to be explored, and outstanding policy issues to be addressed. This would help to set the agenda for the next phase of the European ELP project, from 2005 to 2007.

Joseph Sheils concluded by thanking the Spanish authorities for hosting the seminar, the local organizers for preparing the seminar, and the participants for hard work to come. He also thanked the members of the Validation Committee for their commitment over the past four years, and paid tribute to Johanna Panthier for her unfailing support of the ELP project.

Emilio García Prieto, Vice Director General for European Programmes, said that his sub-directorate was very glad to be involved in hosting and organizing the seminar. He was very pleased to note that all organizational challenges had been successfully met. The seminar was the result of a lot of work by a lot of people. In particular he thanked Ana Madroñero and Yolanda Zarate, whose efforts would ensure that everything would run smoothly. The seminar had come at just the right time for Spain: only three days ago a proposal had been launched for the reform of the Spanish educational system that would have big repercussions for the country. Languages had a leading role to play in the reform. Representatives of the autonomous communities responsible for educational policy were present at the seminar, together with other language professionals. Mr García thanked everyone who had contributed to the development and implementation of the Spanish ELPs, which were now in thousands of schools all over Spain. The importance of the ELP was underlined by the fact that it links directly to the European Union's Europass. Mr García concluded by wishing everyone a very constructive and enjoyable seminar.

Introduction to the seminar – David Little

At last year's seminar in Istanbul we had three main concerns: (i) the language passport summary for adults and passport templates for younger learners; (ii) descriptors; and (iii) learning how to learn and the intercultural dimension. The Istanbul seminar concluded that further work was needed on descriptors, language passport templates for younger learners, and first language(s) as the soil in which plurilingualism grows. It also recognized the need for a guide to assessment and self-assessment in relation to the CEF and the ELP.

Since Istanbul the bank of descriptors and the sample language biography pages on learning how to learn and the intercultural dimension have been put on the ELP website; the language passport summary has been formally adopted as a component of the European Union's Europass and further refined to serve its dual function; and an annotated version of the *Principles and Guidelines* has been approved by the Validation Committee and is on the ELP website. At meetings held in November 2003 and May 2004 the Validation Committee validated 15 more ELPs, and much effort has been devoted to preparing the consolidated report for the current phase of the ELP project, 2001–2004. However, no progress has been made either on language passports for younger learners or on L1(s) in relation to plurilingualism.

The Madrid seminar has three main themes: (i) the consolidated report for 2001–2004 and strategic development, including the need for research into the ELP's impact on language learning; (ii) plurilingualism in educational policy and language pedagogy; and (iii) movement towards a new assessment culture that embraces self-assessment based on the ELP and teacher assessment based on the CEF. In addition, the exhibition will illustrate the progress of ELP projects in many different countries and educational contexts, there will be a presentation of electronic ELPs, and the show-and-tell session on Thursday evening will provide an opportunity, among other things, to see

electronic ELPs in operation.

The working methods will be a mixture of plenary inputs and workshops guided by questions. Feedback from the workshops will take the form of posters and plenary panel discussions. For the first time participants will be invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire that focuses on the main themes of the seminar, the exhibition and show-and-tell session, and the organization of the seminar.

European Language Portfolio: from piloting to implementation 2001–04 – Rolf Schärer

The consolidated report for the four years from 2001 to 2004 seeks to illustrate the challenges posed by the implementation of a large-scale European project and to give examples of interesting practice. It aims to be at once concise and interwoven with reflective interpretation; it also aims to be objective, though inevitably it is subjective. Written for people involved in ELP projects, its basic message is that an enormous amount of progress has been made since last year.

The ELP was conceived in the years leading up to 1997, when the Common European Framework was being developed and the Principles and Guidelines were elaborated. The three years from 1998 to 2000 were devoted to piloting; the first ELP models were developed, and the mandate of the Validation Committee was approved. The four years from 2001 to 2004 have seen the first phase of implementation, and the next three years will be given over to consolidation. From 2008 onwards we hope to achieve widespread use and international recognition.

At this stage the questions that should concern us are: Does the ELP make a difference? What difference does it make? What difference does it make to whom? And what difference does it make in relation to what?

In the recent past we have made progress in one important respect: we are more coherent in reporting than we have been. But we are still a long way from collecting the information we need in order to meet our goals at the European level. In the next phase we need to enlarge our vision.

The consolidated report acknowledges the interests of many stakeholders – learners, parents, teachers, principals, administrators, ministries, employers, etc. But some groups are missing, e.g., participants in intergovernmental seminars and people in finance departments. The following fields of interest especially need to be taken into account: development, piloting, implementation, training of trainers, research, and language policy.

In the next phase of the ELP project we need to make sure that the ELP becomes part of the daily routine in language classrooms. The ELP's long-term success will depend on the development of an appropriate whole-school policy that includes curriculum, objectives, assessment culture, the ELP's status, and cooperation among all those involved in language teaching. Work with the ELP needs to take account of second and foreign languages (L2, L3, L4, etc.), the language(s) of instruction, learners' L1(s), and perhaps other school subjects. Factors that may give the ELP a boost include the PISA study, the importance of foreign language learning from the perspective of global development, the use we make of our L1 in this context, and our understanding of that use. In this last regard, there is some evidence that the CEF descriptors work for L1 as well as L2.

The new Validation Committee will have three focuses of concern – ELP strategy, strengthening the common core, and validation – and this should be reflected in its mandate. The proliferation of ELP models is one of the key strategic issues to be addressed. ELPs specific to particular contexts are perhaps the most effective way of communicating key ideas. Yet we should not necessarily multiply ELP models *ad infinitum*, especially since the long-term success of the ELP in any environment is likely to be undermined by the proliferation of models. Already situations are beginning to develop in which learners could encounter different ELPs in different language classrooms. To counteract effects of this kind we need to refine and protect the common core.

Validation has now become an almost routine matter, to the extent that the process of pre-validation might be handed over to a small expert group. This would allow the Validation Committee to devote more time to consolidating and protecting the common core. We are also about to experience a shift from paper to electronic ELPs, which will raise new questions to do with data protection and privacy.

Compiling the report brought to light much interesting information and a number of significant innovations. But what is the process by which we make such information and innovations generally known? National contacts provide one way, though some member states have very varied practices in different regions, which may be difficult to capture in brief reports. It is clear that the ELP needs more support, both as regards reporting and in general; otherwise it will die in a very short time.

At a European level the ELP project has shown surprising development. If we have problems it has to do with the pace of growth and lack of time and resources – ELP project leaders and ELP developers all have full-time jobs. Nevertheless we can still hope to succeed.

Some examples of strategic development – Chair: Gareth Hughes

Germany – Eike Thürmann (German ELP contact person and member of the Validation Committee)

The situation of the ELP in Germany is very complex because of the complexity of German political structures: 16 autonomous Länder all have their own education system. The German ELP project is guided by the following basic strategies:

- It seeks to counteract proliferation of ELP models, while acknowledging the “Rolf Schärer paradox”: in order to know whether you need your own ELP you must first develop one.
- It also seeks to counteract a regional closed-shop mentality on the part of administrators in those Länder that have their own ELP models: schools should be allowed to choose which ELP model to use.
- It aims to broaden the implementation of existing models by involving those Länder with no or little practical ELP experience.
- It tries to identify specific needs and target groups for particular ELP models, to support new developments, to organize the evaluation of ELP classroom practice, and to document and discuss examples of good teacher/learner classroom practice. One problem it has encountered arises from the lack of easy-to-follow recipes for ELP implementation in the classroom.

- It tries to prepare the ground for a national platform, a modular system allowing for regional and functional flexibility.

The project has adopted three approaches to coordinated action:

- A national ELP working group reports to the Commission for Schools of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education.
- A national ELP documentation centre has been established and teacher training institutions are now involved.
- A federally funded joint pilot project, *Bridging gaps for continuous language learning* (these gaps exist at 10 and 15 years), involves eight or nine Länder and four modules.

It should be noted that the German ELP project has received little encouragement from employers.

Poland – Barbara Glowacka (Polish ELP contact person and coordinator of the Polish ELP project)

From the beginning the Polish ELP project has been supported by the Ministry of National Education and Sport. To date one ELP has been implemented in Poland, for learners aged 10–15. Two others, for younger and older learners, are under development; they will shortly be piloted in schools and should be generally available some time in 2005. The three teams of ELP developers have worked independently of one another.

A journal devoted to modern languages at school regularly publishes information on the progress of the project. In the past few years in-service seminars have been organized by regional centres, and in the past twelve months the developers of the Polish ELP for learners aged 10–15 have given eight seminars, on each occasion for more than 100 teachers. The level of interest in the ELP seems to be very high.

Now the first Polish ELP is taking on its own life and the question arises how best to support it in the schools. The answer to this question lies principally with three groups of partners – multipliers, users, and regional coordinators. Teachers will also play a vital role, not as instruments of the project but as full partners.

The Polish ELP project has mostly taken place outside the large cities, the aim being to put the ELP in the hands of teachers and learners who between them would reflect the full national range of educational conditions and linguistic and intercultural experience. Pre-piloting was done in 16 schools in Podlaska, a region in the east of Poland that is particularly rich from a cultural and linguistic point of view; while the pilot project proper involved schools in eastern, southern and northern frontier regions as well as in the centre. Only two of the 42 schools involved in pre-piloting and piloting were in Warsaw. The pilot phase lasted 22 months, during which time a number of actions were organized. The learners (10–15 years) were in the last three classes of primary school and the first three classes of secondary school (gymnasium). The languages involved were English, German, French, Russian, and three minority languages of Poland: Belarussian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian.

From the outset we wanted the Polish ELP to develop out of a permanent dialogue between teachers and their learners. Language teachers in Poland are familiar with the communicative approach, but the key concepts that underpin the ELP are not central

to the preoccupations of textbook authors – autonomy, self-assessment, partial competences, plurilingual and pluricultural competence. It therefore seemed essential to begin as soon as possible to reflect on learning strategies, assessment practices, open teaching and learning, and learner-centredness. Teachers in the pilot schools had between 50 and 60 hours of in-service training, not counting the piloting process itself. They were not all convinced of the value of the ELP at the beginning, but today most of them would want to continue with it.

The ELP's predominantly pedagogical function was never contested. Establishing checklists that corresponded to the needs of Polish learners was one of the most difficult parts of our work. We translated the self-assessment grid into Polish and identified those parts that needed to be made age-appropriate; we also translated the Swiss checklists, making two versions, one for adolescents and one for adults. In addition we took account of the checklists in validated ELPs designed for the same age group. In order to emphasize its plurilingual and pluricultural dimensions we translated every text in our ELP into five languages.

The majority of participants in the pilot project confirmed the positive influence of the ELP, while acknowledging a number of difficulties – for example, learner motivation, the status of the ELP (optional or obligatory), the lack of age-appropriate descriptors in the CEF, the lack of standard passports for this age group.

Now that the pilot phase is over the ELP must be supported in a number of ways. Information must continue to be disseminated and there must be in-service provision for teachers; arrangements must be made for participatory observation; the effect of the ELP must be researched; and the ELP must be promoted. In pursuing these various actions we shall inevitably face a number of challenges, which we shall do our best to overcome.

Switzerland (Hans-Ulrich Bosshard, Swiss ELP contact person and coordinator of the Swiss ELP project)

The Swiss ELP project began in 1998 with the adoption of a general plan for language teaching. The CDIP (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education) launched the Swiss ELP for adolescents and adults in 2001, and adopted a strategy and action programme for language teaching in 2004. The common objectives (to be achieved by 2010/2012) are to give priority support to the first foreign language, beginning at the latest in the third or fifth school years, and to have all pupils learn two foreign languages, of which one should be a national language. The national action programme will introduce common standards in 2007, ELPs for learners aged 11–15 in 2005 and for learners aged 7–11 in 2007, with regular national evaluation starting in 2005.

The Swiss ELP for adolescents and adults exists in four different language versions (French, German, Italian, and English). It was piloted in 1996 and again in 1999–2000, validated in 2000 (validation number 2000.1), and introduced on a voluntary basis in 2001. 45,000 copies had been distributed by the summer of 2004. Since 2001 there has been a training programme for multipliers and teachers, and there is also a national website (www.portfoliolangues.ch). Information sessions have been held for companies, since 2003 there has been a guide for users, and guidelines for teachers are due to be introduced in 2005.

A preliminary version of the Swiss ELP for learners aged 11–15 was trialled with 1,750 learners in 2003, and the pilot version has been used with 200 classes in 2004.

This model will be sent for validation in 2005, when courses will be arranged for teacher trainers, and the model will be introduced on a voluntary basis in 2006, when training will be offered to teachers. The development of this model has led to the division of the first four common reference levels into two sub-levels each: A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, B1.2, B2.1, B2.2.

In the Swiss educational system, the ELP mediates between learning goals, learning process, and the evaluation of outcomes, and provides a link between the HarmoS and IEF projects, which are concerned respectively with standards and instruments of evaluation.

Working groups

The five working groups – three English-speaking (chairs: Viljo Kohonen, Maria Stoicheva, Barbara Simpson), one French-speaking (chair: Gilbert de Samblanc), and one German-speaking (chair: Gunther Abuja) – were invited to formulate answers to the following questions:

(i) Strategies for further dissemination and implementation

1. What objectives have you set in your country (region, INGO, institution), and what measures have you planned to substantially increase the dissemination and use of the ELP over the next project phase (2005–2007)?
2. How do you see the role of the ELP contact persons?
3. What specific guidance, if any, do you expect from the Council of Europe?
4. Does your country (region, INGO, institution) have any specific implementation know-how that it is willing to share with other partners (e.g., computer applications, research findings, etc.)? If yes, please give details.

(ii) Validating what has been achieved

1. What difference does the ELP make in your country (region, INGO, institution)?
2. How do you define the added value that the ELP brings to language learning and teaching? And how do you communicate it to others?
3. How will you monitor the long-term effects of the ELP on learners and learning systems?

Plenary feedback – chair: Gareth Hughes

The role of the ELP contact person

- The French-speaking group thought that the Council of Europe should define the role and the member states should identify an appropriate person.
- **Viljo Kohonen** reported the view of his group: that the contact person should be knowledgeable about the CEF and the ELP and should have a networking role in his/her country, disseminating ideas, initiating seminars, and so on. There should be two-way communication between ELP contact persons and the Council of Europe.
- **Joseph Sheils** said that the Language Policy Division would like to know what people are willing to do. He believed that the ELP contact person had

three functions: to provide a link between the Council of Europe and the member state in question; to check ELP models, especially as regards their conformity with the national curriculum, before they are submitted for validation; and to coordinate national strategy. As far as possible the national contact person should attend each year's intergovernmental seminar.

- It emerged that some groups had discussed the possibility of regional networking across frontiers. **Rolf Schärer** pointed out that problems can arise when a national contact person is required to go beyond his or her national frontiers. Problems can also arise with INGOs. He suggested that national contact persons should understand the issues of copyright attaching to ELP design and publication and should know how to obtain copyright clearance.
- **Barbara Simpson** reported the view of her group: that national contact persons cannot be effective unless they enjoy strong political support. The level of political support for the ELP seems to vary greatly from country to country.

Providing pre-validation advice on ELPs under development

- **Gareth Hughes** pointed out that lack of resources sometimes makes it difficult or impossible to provide pre-validation advice.
- **Johanna Panthier** added that at present pre-validation advice is provided by members of EVC and secretariat. Perhaps it would be a good idea to include the *Principles and Guidelines* on the programme of the next intergovernmental ELP seminar.
- **Barbara Simpson** supported this idea of and suggested that one possible workshop activity would be to examine a number of validated ELPs in the light of the *Principles and Guidelines*.

Stakeholders

- **Gareth Hughes** wondered how we can involve other stakeholders besides those already represented at the intergovernmental seminars? How, in particular, can we involve employers? Is this a national or regional issue, or is it something that could be dealt with at a European level?
- **Eike Thürmann** suggested that the Council of Europe might coordinate an international conference that would bring together people from the world of work. It is difficult to work exclusively within a national context unless we have precedents.
- **Viljo Kohonen** pointed out that there is already a great demand among employers for evidence of foreign language skills. But how do we persuade them to accept the expertise that lies behind the CEF and the ELP? Perhaps the Council of Europe's general web site should have a brief statement supporting the ELP.
- **Gaby Kunsch** informed participants that the next presidency of the European Union will include the launch of Europass. This will happen at a conference of 350 people responsible in one way or another for professional qualifications, including all social partners.
- **Rolf Schärer** noted that a declaration of education ministers in Switzerland concerning the widespread use of the ELP had also been addressed to employ-

ers and unions, but it had been very difficult to get them to come to a meeting. By contrast, the Bulgarian ELP project had been supported by employers, and at the final conference it was evident that they were very proud of having given their support. It is important to note that some of the Council of Europe's goals are not necessarily of concern to employers, e.g., plurilingualism (for employers the important thing tends to be proficiency in English). In Switzerland there is a project to introduce the ELP into the postal system: general managers make their managers keep an ELP. Also, the CEF is used to define language requirements in job advertisements. Nevertheless educationalists and employers speak different languages.

Electronic ELPs – chair: Johanna Panthier

Johanna Panthier introduced this part of the programme by reminding participants that the Consolidated Report 2001–2004 contains the version of the language passport that is to be included in Europass, which is itself an electronic document. This may come to replace the standard adult passport in a number of contexts, especially those having to do with the workplace. Electronic ELPs raise many new questions, e.g. of privacy and copyright, and it is thus timely to have an introduction to the models developed by the Dutch ELP project and by ALTE/EAQUALS.

The Dutch online ELP (Dick Meijer) – This electronic ELP has been available online since 1 September 2004. Besides the ELP itself, the website contains information about the ELP and the CEF for other stakeholders; it can be accessed by anyone anywhere in the world. In The Netherlands there are five ELP implementation projects that between them cover primary, secondary and vocational schools; a variety of ELP supports are being developed and delivered, including teaching and learning materials. The website also offers a self-assessment instrument and portfolio for language teachers. At present there are more than 1,500 accounts. The website is mostly used during school hours, and 86% of users are in The Netherlands, though there are also some users in Belgium. Already the first changes have been made on the basis of feedback from teachers and learners. One big issue is the desire of teachers to monitor their learners' ELPs. This is now possible provided individual learners give their permission. The electronic ELP has the potential to support lifelong learning – the website is a kind of educational provider. It also offers a number of evaluation possibilities: learners can upload the documents in their dossier, show unfinished products to their teacher, and use the website to track their language learning history. Each learner's language passport is generated automatically.

ALTE/EAQUALS (Peter Brown) – Essentially there are two approaches to electronic ELPs: online using a website and offline using your local PC. ALTE/EAQUALS has adopted the latter approach, and it will be possible for one PC to serve an individual learner, a class, a school, or a whole community. The ALTE/EAQUALS ELP is downloadable using a self-extracting program; it is also system-independent, so it can be used with Windows, Macintosh, Unix and Linux. It is individually protected and historically stable, and accommodates multi-media files. It focuses on adults, and is concerned with vertical and horizontal mobility. Its design aims to incorporate what has been learnt from implementing the ALTE/EAQUALS paper ELP, e.g., establishing links between the language passport and the language biography. The ALTE/EAQUALS eELP will enable the user to compile his or her private history of language learning. Objectives can be defined and priorities set, and users will be

able to record when they have achieved their learning targets. It will also be possible for users to output the results of their self-assessment to the language passport in Europass. Initially the ALTE/EQUALS eELP will be available in English and French.

Show and tell

The day's programme concluded with two parallel show-and-tell sessions. In one Dick Meijer and Peter Brown demonstrated respectively the Dutch and ALTE/EQUALS electronic ELPs; in the other Barbara Simpson reported on the development of an assessment framework for learners of English as a second language in Irish primary schools that is compatible with the CEF and the ELP.

Friday 1 October

Plurilingualism – chair: Eike Thürmann

Taking account of plurilingualism in ELPs – Francis Goullier

We can be proud of the collective achievement of the ELPs validated so far. The ELP is undoubtedly making progress as regards both form and content, and we can now think in terms of bringing together all our experience. It is possible to identify three strengths in particular: the development of learner self-assessment, the emergence of new pedagogical approaches centred on learner autonomy, and the incorporation of the intercultural dimension of language learning and language use. These three aspects are commonly accepted, and the EVC would not validate a model that did not take account of them. They effectively belong to the ELP's common core. By contrast, the aspect of plurilingualism has been somewhat neglected. It is true that except in particular circumstances ELPs are not validated if they focus on a single language: they must allow users to record *all* the languages they have learnt. But to date ELPs have not focussed on plurilingualism as defined by the CEF: a single competence, not the sum of separate L2 competences. The language passport records proficiency in each language separately, rather than allowing users to record (say) their reading skills in all the languages they know in a single table. Similarly, language biography pages tend to focus on particular languages rather than on the owner's plurilingual competence. In this way the structure of ELPs tends to repeat the traditional division between languages, which is reflected in traditions of teacher training, curriculum organization, social expectation, and so on.

Of course, plurilingualism as defined in the CEF reflects "natural" behaviour rather than an educational target: it is impossible to teach plurilingualism as a school subject. At the same time, however, we can develop and use the ELP in ways that promote and validate the idea of plurilingualism. To begin with we should probably focus on the language biography rather than the language passport. In doing so, we can criticize language biographies developed to date – but positively. Many of the language biographies are excellent tools for learning and teaching languages, though it is tempting to ask whether they are becoming the equivalent of textbooks. In the Swiss ELP the language biography has different pages for different languages, which continues the traditional separation of languages. However, exceptions are to be found in the language biography pages collected and annotated by David Little and Barbara Simpson, and also in the Spanish ELPs.

How can we develop new approaches to plurilingualism? Essentially there are two possible models of language biography. One is developed on a language-by-language basis, perhaps with descriptors in the user's target language(s). The other approach, still to be fully worked out, would use the intercultural pages to promote learners' awareness of the languages in their environment. We might encourage learners of French to try to understand other Romance languages, or invite learners of any language to discover lexical parallels across languages and "false friends" between languages. We could also create pages that would allow learners to capture and reflect on their experience of speaking more than one language in particular situations or using one language to mediate between two or more other languages.

Of course, it is impossible to do everything with everybody. Different countries and different regions have different environments and different situations. But we have already overcome opposition to self-assessment and learner autonomy. The recent forum in Strasbourg opened up new vistas by talking about mother tongues and the languages of education. We need to develop new tools to take account of this. We cannot impose plurilingualism, but we should seek to identify the most realistic methods of incorporating plurilingualism in the ELP and provide developers with ideas similar to those that David Little and Barbara Simpson have collected together for learning how to learn and the intercultural dimension. If there is a will to make progress, it must be shared by all contact persons: progress cannot be imposed.

Working groups

The five working groups were invited to formulate answers to the following questions:

1. In your country (region, INGO, institution) is the ELP used explicitly to develop plurilingualism, understood as comprising the totality of the individual's competence in languages taught at school and languages learned and used outside the educational system (foreign/second languages, mother tongues/languages of instruction, etc.)?
2. In your opinion can the ELP play a decisive role in interesting teachers and learners in plurilingualism? If so, how?
3. Do you think ELPs should place greater emphasis on plurilingualism? If yes, how should this be done? (Two possibilities: (i) to provide information about plurilingualism, including concrete examples, and (ii) to attach certain demands to the validation of ELPs.)

Round table on plurilingualism – chair: Eike Thürmann

Carmen Perez expressed broad agreement with the position outlined by Francis Goullier. She thought that plurilingualism is not more obviously present in ELPs because of two taboos: the striving after native-like competence that is central to foreign language teaching traditions, even though most learners have always fallen a long way short of this target; and general discouragement of code-switching in language classrooms. We urgently need to discuss the question of ultimate attainment in language learning. There is something about the C2 level that causes a problem – it seems to be present in all ELPs regardless of their target audience. Francis Goullier proposed two types of activity, dealing respectively with language use ("When do I

code-switch?” – a sort of sociolinguistic enquiry addressed to the individual learner) and the individual learner’s language competence (e.g., a comparison of lexical items across languages). Carmen Perez drew attention to Jim Cummins’s work, which shows that transfer between languages depends on the achievement of a certain threshold of proficiency in at least one language.

Alan Dobson suggested that plurilingualism is of great importance, especially for English speakers: London is a city where 300 mother tongues are spoken. His personal view was generally the same as the Council of Europe’s: that we should seek to develop plurilingualism by adopting a holistic approach to language teaching and learning. If our approach becomes too narrow we shall not be able to answer some of the questions at the beginning of Chapter 4 of the CEF, having to do with language use and the language user. We need to maintain a lifelong perspective. We won’t necessarily need the same languages or the same range of skills at every stage of life, and plurilingualism will be simultaneous for some, consecutive for others, and a mixture of both for others again. Our needs as citizens change, and we must be willing to acquire new languages, to be sensitive to the language needs of others, and to learn how to learn. The title “European Language Portfolio” can be misleading: what is European is the portfolio, not the languages. Alan Dobson agreed with the implication of Francis Goullier’s discussion questions: that the ELP should place greater explicit emphasis on plurilingualism. He was, however, sceptical about the possibility of developing self-assessment scales for plurilingual competence.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- **Rolf Schärer** disagreed with Francis Goullier’s analysis. In his view there were numerous examples of plurilingualism being supported by ELPs as they stand.
- **Gunther Abuja**, reporting from the German-speaking group, noted that in some contexts plurilingualism can be supported without reference to the ELP. On the other hand, some members of the group took the view that the ELP is the principal means of promoting plurilingualism, and that ELP models should find new ways of doing this. The group favoured a stronger focus on plurilingualism in the future, but this should not be imposed.
- **Viljo Kohonen** said that his group had identified a new aim for language teaching: developing competent and confident plurilingual language users. This implied that the language teacher’s role should be to develop intercultural communication, which would depend on enhancing the teacher’s professional autonomy.
- **Barbara Simpson** reported that her group had concluded that we are all language users, so that raising awareness is an issue not just for language teachers but across the school. We need to develop a whole-school approach to language awareness, including awareness of plurilingualism. Validated ELPs already contain some interesting examples that could be drawn together for the benefit of developers. However, since this was the first occasion on which plurilingualism had been discussed at an intergovernmental ELP seminar, it was too early to make recommendations to the Validation Committee.
- **Gilbert de Samblanc** reported the French-speaking group’s view that all ELPs take account of plurilingualism, though more could be done. It would be

worth taking stock of what already exists and finding out how learners have reacted. A comparative table might show that there is a link between languages, but Carmen Perez's reference to Jim Cummins's work was worth emphasizing. There is no doubt that teacher guides could stress plurilingualism more, though plurilingualism should not be overemphasized in the language biography.

- **Maria Stoicheva** said that her group had started by answering the first of Francis Goullier's questions. Some participants felt that at present the ELP does not play a role in promoting plurilingualism, whereas others thought that it does, especially when used with young learners and migrants. The group spent some time discussing three concepts: plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and linguistic diversity. The issue of learner autonomy was also raised: some learners may not want an emphasis on plurilingualism. The group further considered who is responsible for the development of plurilingualism. Is it the responsibility of individual language teachers or of language teachers working together? And what changes are necessary in teacher training? If plurilingualism is to be given greater emphasis it must be included in the language passport. But how is it to be measured? Research is needed on this topic.
- **Eike Thürmann** thought it necessary to identify a common core for ELP work on plurilingualism, but not to overdo it. One possibility was to be more affirmative in requiring equal treatment of all L1s. The question of L1 in monolingual contexts also needs to be addressed. In addition we need to upgrade the role of mediation as a communicative skill, giving it an appropriate place in both the language passport and the language biography. It might also be possible in some contexts to include more "soft" pages in the language biography. The same should be done for plurilingualism as David Little and Barbara Simpson had done for learning how to learn and the intercultural dimension. As regards the common core, it is difficult to draw the line between intercultural learning and plurilingualism – the two are often one and the same. It would be possible to add a plurilingual perspective to the learning how to learn section of the language biography. Young learners might provide the first focus for this work, which could then move on to older learners.
- **Alan Dobson** pointed out that it is always possible to find good reasons for not using the ELP to support the Council of Europe's broader visions. But in the middle of England there is a multilingual school where the pupils were able to articulate sophisticated views because they had been encouraged to reflect on all the languages in their environment and available to them. Some very partial competences are definitely worth bothering with.
- **Carmen Perez** noted that the Spanish ELP for secondary learners is strongly plurilingual in its orientation, inviting the learner to record and reflect on "my languages", "my environmental languages", and "my foreign languages". Teachers were encouraged to use appropriate awareness-raising activities before getting learners to work on these pages. The "linguistic fan" is an effective way of capturing the individual's language profile.
- **Francis Goullier** agreed with most of what had been said. There could be no question of imposing plurilingualism, or a single approach to its achievement, and it would certainly be a good idea to see what has already been achieved.

Perhaps one of the functions of the ELP is precisely to educate everyone in *awareness* of plurilingualism.

Towards a new assessment culture: self-assessment based on the ELP and teacher assessment based on the CEF – chair: Gaby Kunsch

Some issues of general principle and a practical example – David Little

The CEF's primary orientation is behavioural. It describes communicative proficiency in terms of the activities learners can perform, and its "can do" statements imply a task-based approach to learning and teaching. This orientation is one of the CEF's most important innovations; for the same descriptions can be used (i) to define a curriculum, (ii) to plan a programme of teaching/learning, and (iii) to guide the assessment of learning outcomes. In other words, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment can be more closely related to one another than has traditionally been the case. What is more, curriculum and assessment should be as accessible to learners as to teachers and educational planners. In this regard it is worth recalling the second half of the CEF's title, which places learning before teaching and assessment.

The intended functions of the CEF in relation to assessment may be summarized as follows (cf. CEF, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.178): (i) to specify what is assessed – using the levels and descriptors to define test content; (ii) to interpret performance – using the levels and descriptors to state the criteria by which to determine whether or not a learning objective has been attained; and (iii) to compare different language tests – using the levels and descriptors to analyse test content.

One of the purposes of the ELP is to support the development of learner autonomy, which entails that learners are involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning. Planning, monitoring and evaluation that are not haphazard and random depend on accurate self-assessment, and self-assessment in the ELP is carried out against the levels and descriptors of the CEF. Essentially, the ELP requires two forms of self-assessment: summary and summative in the language passport, with reference to the self-assessment grid; and formative, using checklists to identify learning targets and assess progress in meeting those targets in the language biography, and selecting items to include in the dossier in order to demonstrate learning achievement

From the beginning self-assessment in the ELP has given rise to three concerns. First, it has been objected that learners do not know how to assess themselves. The answer to this is that self-assessment is a skill that must be learnt, and its development must be given classroom time. Secondly, there has been a worry that learners will over-estimate their proficiency. The answer to this is that they should always be required to justify their self-assessment by demonstrating that they can do what they claim to be able to do. Thirdly, some fear that learners will cheat by including in their ELPs materials they have not produced themselves. The answer to this is that dishonesty of this kind is difficult to get away with in a properly maintained ELP.

If the same levels and descriptors are used (i) to guide self-assessment during the learning process and (ii) to specify exam content and/or the criteria by which exam performance will be judged, it should be possible to accommodate self-assessment within the overall framework of assessment. Only when this happens will it be possible to claim that curricula are fully learner-centred. In this regard it is worth noting the growing interest in portfolio assessment, though we must also remind ourselves that the ELP is the property of the learner

In many educational cultures exams are traditionally written rather than oral. This may encourage the belief that written exams are the “real thing”, whereas oral exams are an “extra”; and this in turn may cause reading and writing to be given greater importance than listening and speaking. Also, we learn and use languages interactively, yet most exams focus exclusively on the individual learner. This certainly does not do justice to communicative reality.

In Ireland we have developed a primary curriculum for English as a second language, using the CEF, the primary curriculum and classroom observation to generate age-appropriate and domain-specific descriptors for A1, A2 and B1 in relation to thirteen recurrent curriculum themes (English Language Proficiency Benchmarks; downloadable from www.iilt.ie). We have also designed an ELP with a simplified self-assessment grid and checklists based on these Benchmarks. Currently we are using the Benchmarks to develop an assessment framework that will comprise (i) a manual of test content, (ii) an inventory of test tasks for listening, speaking, reading and writing, (iii) rating scales and scoring procedures, (iv) sample tests, and (v) the cumulative self-assessment contained in each pupil’s ELP.

The consequences of adopting this approach are as follows: each language skill is given appropriate emphasis and assessed in an appropriate way; the relation between curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment is clearly articulated; pupils, teachers, principals and school inspectors can share a common understanding of learning goals and outcomes; and assessment (including self-assessment) becomes a fully integrated part of the teaching/learning process.

The IEF Project: assessment instruments to support the ELP – Peter Lenz

When the Swiss ELP for adolescents and adults was launched in 2001, it was accompanied by an official recommendation that the CEF should be taken into account in curricula and in the recognition of diplomas, and that steps should be taken to facilitate the widespread use of the ELP and to help teachers to integrate it into their teaching. The goal of the IEF Project (which applies to the German-speaking part of Switzerland and Liechtenstein) is to promote the quality and effectiveness of school-based foreign-language teaching and learning by improving the quality, coherence and transparency of assessment. Taking the CEF as its basis, the project is refining the common reference levels by elaborating new descriptors, using the descriptors to develop assessment and self-assessment instruments, creating teacher training materials, and involving teachers in the dissemination of the instruments and their introduction into schools. The expected outcomes of the project are: a bank of target-group specific descriptors (A1.1–B2.1); (self-)assessment checklists; a bank of validated test tasks and assessment criteria; tests for formal assessment; commercially published tests; materials for teacher training; and benchmark performances of speaking and writing.

The bank of new descriptors was arrived at in three stages. First, descriptors were collected from written sources, including ELPs, and derived from textbooks and tests for young learners; then the descriptors were validated and added to in a series of teacher workshops; and lastly they were fine-tuned and a final selection of 330 was made. The bank of descriptors was then used to compile (self-)assessment checklists for inclusion in the ELP for learners aged 11–15, transforming “can do” into “I can” statements. Classes used the checklists for self-assessment and provided feedback. Pairs of learners sorted descriptors into three piles of equal size according to difficulty. Statis-

tical analysis yielded high correlations for spoken interaction and acceptable correlations for writing.

The bank of test tasks comprises (i) communicative tasks for speaking, writing, listening and reading, and (ii) C-tests (a special type of cloze test that is quick to administer and is said to provide reliable information on a learner's cognitive and linguistic resources). The test tasks have been field-tested and attributed, at least tentatively, to a level. Criteria for assessing speaking were collected from various sources, including the CEF and various examination schemes. Spoken performances were then assessed in workshops where teachers were asked to describe exact differences between learner performances, to adopt and apply descriptors from the existing collection, to agree on essential categories (e.g., vocabulary range), and to describe a scale for each category of criteria. It was then decided which categories should be retained and the proposed scales were revised and completed. The empirical validation involved 35 teachers applying approximately 70 criteria in five categories to 10 or 11 videotaped learners per language (French and English), who were performing three or four spoken tasks each. The five categories of criteria were listening comprehension in interaction, vocabulary range, grammar, fluency, and pronunciation/intonation. Statistical analysis has confirmed the quality of the descriptors for assessing learners from A1.1 to B2, though the exact link to the CEF has still to be established. Statistical analysis also indicates which of the videotaped learners are the most able, which raters (teachers) were severe or lenient, and which of them rated consistently or inconsistently. The assessment criteria for written performance are being developed in a closely similar way.

Beyond the IEF Project Switzerland will put in place a monitoring system for school-based language-learning that will define minimum expected standards in terms of the CEF and the ELP and will assess learners accordingly.

Working groups

The five working groups were invited to formulate answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent does your country (region, INGO, institution) already possess an assessment culture that is fully compatible with the CEF and the ELP?
2. What obstacles have you encountered, or do you expect to encounter, in (i) developing and (ii) gaining acceptance for an assessment culture that is fully compatible with the CEF and the ELP?
3. What strategies might prove, or have already proved, successful in (i) developing and (ii) gaining acceptance for an assessment culture that is fully compatible with the CEF and the ELP?
4. What kind of support could the Council of Europe provide?

Plenary feedback on assessment – chair: Gaby Kunsch

Barbara Simpson pointed out that in many contexts teacher assessment is controlled by ministry demands, and that teachers themselves are often more comfortable with traditional forms of assessment. Usually self-assessment does not contribute to assessment as such but is seen more as a pedagogical tool that plays a vital role in successful ELP implementation. Whereas self-assessment in the ELP is linked to the

CEF, assessment by teachers is not. This discontinuity constantly threatens to undermine self-assessment and with it the ELP. In developing teaching programmes and schemes of assessment we need more detailed specifications than the CEF provides: specifications that relate communicative proficiency to curriculum content. One example is provided by the English Language Proficiency Benchmarks that we have developed to guide the teaching of English as a second language in Irish primary schools.

Carmen Perez noted that in Spain the ELP has helped secondary learners to understand what their teachers are getting at. The piloting process provided feedback on the descriptors for self-assessment, causing them to be revised to make them as accessible to learners as possible. It has often been said that progress through the common reference levels can seem very slow to learners. The Spanish ELP developers have tried to solve this problem by using the same self-assessment procedures several times over. Self-assessment is always the last in a succession of activities and is usually accompanied by peer evaluation.

In the ensuing discussion it was reported that the working groups had raised the following questions:

- In changing our assessment culture, isn't it necessary to start with teachers before going on to address other stakeholders?
- What is meant by "full compatibility with CEF and ELP"?
- To what extent can traditional systems of grading be retained in the new assessment culture that has been proposed?
- How can assessment procedures take account of learner autonomy and intercultural skills?
- Does self-assessment have more to do with motivation than with assessment proper?
- Can self-assessment by learners affect assessment by teachers, e.g., by gradually improving the reliability of their judgements in relation to the CEF?

Barbara Simpson pointed out that it is not proposed that learners' ELPs should be assessed. But just as the ELP can provide a springboard to learning, so it can also provide a springboard to assessment. An assessment system that is "fully compatible" with the ELP is based on the CEF and complements the ELP's role in goal setting and self-assessment. As for retaining traditional marking schemes, work in progress in Ireland is developing tests for teachers that are compatible with the CEF but use rating scales that yield a traditional-looking mark.

Carmen Perez argued that self-assessment should be concerned not only with language proficiency but also with learner autonomy and pluriculturalism. There is room for descriptors that accommodate these latter dimensions more fully. A positive experience of self-assessment enhances motivation because it raises awareness and creates a sense of empowerment in learners. Essentially, using the ELP is about pedagogical innovation, and that is always stimulating for teachers.

Gaby Kunsch noted that teachers are sometimes frightened by pedagogical innovation. We need to provide them with training and support at the same time as we seek to influence the decision makers. In Luxembourg teachers meet every six weeks to discuss input from an expert. Perhaps teacher networks provide a way forward via

gradual progress. However, we should be careful not to make too great demands of teachers: they are vulnerable to pressures from students and their parents.

Saturday 2 October

The ELP in Spain – Ana Madroño

In March 2001 a National Committee was set up comprising four working groups supported by three units in the Spanish Ministry of Education. Two years later, in February 2003, three draft ELPs, for learners aged 3–7, 8–12 and 12–18, were presented to representatives of the educational authorities in the autonomous regions. In June 2003 revised drafts were approved for submission to the European Validation Committee, which validated them in November 2003. A fourth Spanish ELP, for adults, was validated in June 2004.

Between them the four Spanish ELPs target all age groups and thus support lifelong language learning. They explicitly include all the languages in the learner's environment: mother tongue(s), vehicular languages and foreign languages. They are supported by a nation-wide implementation plan in compulsory primary and secondary education, which will guarantee their widespread use.

The ELP for learners aged 3–7 was piloted in Castilla-Leon in 9 schools of different kinds (urban, rural, bilingual, etc.); the ELP for learners aged 8–12 was piloted in Madrid and Castilla-Leon by 19 teachers and some 340 learners; the ELP for learners aged 12–18 was piloted in Catalonia by 9 teachers working in 8 schools with some 350 learners; and the ELP for adults was piloted in Madrid, in official language schools and in institutions of adult, vocational and higher education. Also, for a period of 9 weeks all four models were pre-tested in the autonomous region of Galicia. In 2004–05 the Spanish Ministry of Education plans to distribute a total of approximately 34,000 ELPs.

To date the Spanish ELP project can claim three achievements. First, it has involved all the autonomous regions in a national and European project; secondly it has created a meeting point for reflection and debate on language teaching policies; and thirdly it has provided a basis for respecting and promoting language diversity in Spain. The project also faces a number of challenges: improved coordination between the autonomous regions and the Ministry of Education; the implementation of diverse language policies which are nevertheless compatible with a national curriculum and Council of Europe recommendations; the revision of national and regional language policies at all levels of education; the coordination of teacher training; the development of whole-school policies for integrated language learning; and ELP dissemination – informing all sectors of society and getting them involved.

The Spanish ELP for learners aged 3–7 (Carmen Alario) – From birth onwards children are aware of life: they know who they are, they become aware of their environment, they know how they are talked to, and so on. The designers of the Spanish ELP for this age group set out to make the most of the young child's capacities. In Spain children start pre-school at age 3. For the first time they go outside their family circle, and this helps them to recognize that people are different from one another. This ELP model encourages children to consider who they are and what languages they speak, and to reflect on the important people in their life. Although they are used to seeing the printed word, children of this age cannot yet read. As a result the lan-

guage passport posed a big challenge. The solution arrived at was to use only pictures and icons, to develop a general skills focus, and to support self-assessment by co-evaluation. The design team also developed guidelines for teachers on how to introduce the ELP with appropriate tasks.

The Spanish ELP for primary pupils aged 8-12 (Elisa Vázquez) – The challenge facing the designers of this ELP was to create a bridge between the pre-school and secondary models. It had to accommodate four mother tongues/official languages, the languages of the curriculum, and first languages other than official languages. It is presented as a kind of “treasure trove”. The descriptors were adapted to make them age-appropriate, and pages were designed to accommodate recursive use. The design also encourages children to reflect on their learning, moving on to more abstract concepts than those implied by the pre-school ELP.

The Spanish ELP for secondary learners (Carmen Pérez) – This ELP model is designed as a loose-leaf document, so that pages can be added and removed. It is accompanied by a very detailed guide to ELP use that is intended not only for teachers but for other adults who are guiding a teenager in his/her language learning. In accordance with the principle that the ELP is the property of the learner, this model attempts to establish continuity between school and the wider environment, between learning inside and outside school, where students encounter many opportunities to develop their plurilingual competence, not least via the internet. The use of this ELP in the classroom is guided by three key principles: (i) that there are different ways of organizing language learning, (ii) that filling out activities in the language passport and language biography is the *final* step, and (iii) that work with the ELP can take many hours.

The Spanish ELP for adults (Virginia Fernandez and Joaquín Moreno) – This model is designed to take account of the age of the user rather than a particular course of language learning. It gives a particularly prominent place to bilingualism and plurilingualism. An important question for the designers was the degree to which it could be personalized. They started with 16-year-old learners and then moved on to lifelong learning. The development of this model involved a great deal of slimming down.

The ELP from 2005 to 2007: some possible developments – Joseph Sheils

In the next three years of the ELP project the Council of Europe will seek to promote quality control for ELP models and quality in ELP implementation. The European Validation Committee will play a crucial role in these processes.

As regards the quality of ELPs, one priority is to strengthen the common core and thus reinforce the ELP’s European dimension. To this end, in 2005 we intend to develop age-appropriate self-assessment grids and descriptors as well as language passports for primary and lower secondary learners. Another priority is to develop three key areas of the language biography: reporting and reflecting on intercultural experience, learning how to learn, and reflecting on plurilingualism. We shall also add to the bank of descriptors. In addition we plan to provide new guidelines for teachers, updated guidance for ELP developers, and various support materials, including a guide to assessment and self-assessment for teachers and teacher trainers.

As regards quality of implementation, the ECML in Graz will shortly launch a project to support the training of teachers to use the ELP. Also, the Council of Europe will look to national authorities to ensure that there is continuity between the different

educational sectors, no unnecessary proliferation of ELP models, appropriate support for teachers, longitudinal research to investigate the impact of the ELP, dissemination of information, and the appointment of active ELP contact persons.

The new European Validation Committee will have a broader mandate than previously. It will be concerned with ELP validation, but also with ELP policy, strategic planning and monitoring, and with the further development of the ELP itself, including electronic versions. In order to ensure the overall coherence of the work of the Language Policy Division, the ELP project must be explicitly linked to work on the CEF, including the manual for test developers, and work on language policy.

The manual for relating language exams to the CEF (preliminary pilot version) – Neus Figueras

Objectives of the manual are to provide guidelines and suggest procedures to facilitate a common understanding of CEF levels. The manual is not a guide to test construction, and it does not prescribe a single approach to language testing. Linking exams to the CEF is a progressive process that moves from discussion to statistical analysis. In the pilot phase feedback is being sought on the manual itself, its different sections are being trialled, and case studies are being carried out. Sample materials calibrated to CEF levels are currently being developed and a reference supplement is being written, with information on statistical techniques and approaches to empirical validation, both quantitative and qualitative.

Coordinator's summing up – David Little

This seminar has given us an opportunity to inform ourselves of the progress of the ELP project at the European level. The exhibition contained contributions from 27 countries and one INGO: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the European Language Council. The show-and-tell session on Thursday evening gave us an opportunity to find out more about the electronic ELPs developed in The Netherlands and by ALTE/EAQUALS and the role played by the ELP in the development of an English language curriculum and assessment framework for migrant pupils in Irish primary schools. And this morning we have been very fully informed about the development and implementation of the Spanish family of ELPs. In a brief summing up it is impossible to do justice to the richness and variety of information and insights generated by the working groups. The best I can do is to note recurring themes and preoccupations.

Strategies for further dissemination and implementation – In the light of the Consolidated Report 2001–04, the working groups identified a number of strategic objectives. These included integrating languages in school curricula; making language learning more visible; promoting change in language classrooms; developing teacher, trainer and stakeholder networks; and raising political and public awareness. One group pointed out that there can be no single implementation strategy for all contexts. The following measures were all recommended: official endorsement of the ELP; using the CEF to calibrate textbooks; voluntary pilot implementation, designed to have a multiplier effect; dissemination of documentation; conferences and seminars; and the widespread adoption of Europass.

To a question about the role of ELP contact persons, one group answered: “What does the Council of Europe require or need from us?” Three functions in particular were identified: understanding and mediating the CEF and the ELP; liaising between the Council of Europe and national initiatives; and liaising with teacher associations. It was felt that the Council of Europe could help by setting up a discussion forum, creating a research group, collecting and disseminating examples of good practice, and promoting the ELP common core.

As regards know-how that could be shared with others, it was pointed out that the ELP can serve as a channel between theory (CEF) and pedagogical practice. Mention was made of the CEFTrain project (funded by the EU), which provides web-based familiarization with the CEF, the IEF (Switzerland), and the Languages Ladder (UK). A question still to be answered is: How do we involve parents and employers?

Validating what has been achieved – It was generally felt that the ELP triggers significant change in foreign language education, promoting communicative and intercultural language learning and emphasizing the teacher’s role as facilitator. It was also felt that the ELP makes language learning more visible, provides a roadmap for teacher training, and promotes lifelong learning. The ELP was thought to add value to language learning and teaching by helping to raise awareness of the CEF and promoting learner autonomy, self-assessment, learner responsibility, plurilingualism, European citizenship, and the self-esteem of migrant learners. The working groups suggested that the ELP’s long-term effects might be measured by feedback questionnaires, focus groups of learners, teachers and employers, and classroom research.

Plurilingualism – One group reported that in some contexts the ELP promotes plurilingualism, especially among young learners, whereas in other contexts other objectives are more important. Another group defined a new educational goal for foreign language teaching: the development of confident, competent, plurilingual and pluricultural language users. It was noted that a whole-school language policy greatly enhances the ELP’s capacity to promote plurilingualism. As regards interesting teachers and learners in plurilingualism, one group suggested that teacher guides could say more about plurilingualism, while another noted the importance of insisting on European language policy without impairing the usefulness of the ELP as a pedagogical tool. It was generally agreed, however, that we are still a long way from realizing the goals implied by the Council of Europe’s policy on plurilingualism. For this reason awareness-raising is very important. ELPs could place greater emphasis on plurilingualism by including L1(s), making more of the skill of mediation, and refining learning-to-learn strategies. At the same time, one group cautioned against adopting dogmatic positions.

Towards a new assessment culture – The working groups were asked to what extent the countries represented already had an assessment culture that was fully compatible with the CEF and the ELP. None of the groups responded positively to this question. It was noted that traditional assessment cultures are self-perpetuating, and that they often stand in a problematic relation to the self-assessment that is central to the ELP. In many contexts there is a clear gap between teaching that emphasizes communication and testing that emphasizes grammar. The relation between most public exams and the CEF remains obscure, and change will come slowly. Among the obstacles to change are lack of resources (money and materials), lack of know-how (there is a clear need for training in the design of communicative, CEF-compatible tests), lack of models, and negative attitudes and traditions. The working groups suggested a num-

ber of ways in which we might encourage progress towards an assessment culture that is fully compatible with the CEF and the ELP. These included complementary top-down and bottom-up approaches; starting at primary level and gradually working through the successive levels of the school system; relating exams to the common reference levels of the CEF; providing appropriate training for teachers and teacher trainers; defining intermediate proficiency levels (e.g., A2.1, A2.2); and developing standardization instruments and calibrated performance examples. It was felt that the Council of Europe could support such progress by disseminating examples, facilitating the exchange of expertise, and defining competences for mediation, transfer and interaction.

What happens next? – In the next phase of the ELP project (2005-07) we need to strengthen the ELP's common core by developing age-appropriate self-assessment grids and descriptors and language passports for primary and lower secondary learners. We also need to undertake further development in relation to reporting intercultural experience, learning how to learn, plurilingualism, the bank of descriptors, guides for teachers and developers, studies of the ELP in use, and other support materials. And the new European Validation Committee will need a wider mandate embracing validation, policy and strategic planning, and ELP development.

Finally, it is appropriate to thank all those whose efforts contributed to the seminar's success: the local organizers, all contributors to the programme, the chairs of the plenary sessions, the chairs of the working groups, the poster artists, and the Spanish participants, whose experience, interest and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated by us all.

Concluding forum – Chair: Francis Goullier

Francis Goullier opened the concluding forum by inviting participants to comment further on issues that had been discussed during the seminar or to raise any issues which in their view had been forgotten or neglected.

Viljo Kohonen thought it was a good idea to circulate the questions for discussion by working groups in advance of the seminar so that participants could prepare themselves. This had helped to provide continuity of discussion through the seminar, which had been reinforced by keeping the same working groups for the whole seminar. He recommended that these procedures should be repeated in future seminars.

Zsuzsa Darabos thought that the previous arrangement of developing questions in panels that were then addressed in working groups was more effective than the arrangement adopted for this seminar. She also thought that the language composition of the working groups was sometimes difficult to follow. It might not be a problem for the English or German-speaking groups, but there was a problem in the franco-phone group. It would be interesting to hear what is happening in the other groups and good to change the composition of the groups at some point in order to ensure a richer exchange of views.

Johanna Panthier responded to these comments by pointing out that the formation of groups depends on the language skills of the participants. In working groups it is easier to communicate directly than to work through interpreters, though in future it might be possible to have at least one bilingual group operating in this way.

Francis Goullier agreed that the issue of the working language is decisive in the formation of working groups. And if participants are in one working group, it follows that they cannot know in detail what is happening in other groups.

Catherine Clément observed that different countries were at different levels of dissemination and suggested that it would be interesting to have workshops that catered to these different levels. At the same time it was always useful to listen to participants who had already made a lot of progress.

Francis Goullier assured participants that these comments and suggestions would be given careful consideration in preparing the next intergovernmental seminar. He then asked participants how the Council of Europe could help to support the broad range of activities for which contact persons are responsible.

Johanna Panthier informed participants that the Council of Europe intends to put the role of contact persons on the agenda of the 2005 seminar, to be held in Moscow. Some are supported by their ministries and some are not. One way in which the Council of Europe could help would be through the national representatives on the Steering Committee for Education. Another idea for the Moscow seminar is to look closely at the *ELP Principles and Guidelines*. Other suggestions for the programme could be made via the evaluation questionnaire or communicated directly to the Language Policy Division.

Francis Goullier suggested that we need to have a more global approach as regards the different players involved in the educational system. The complex issues in language education cannot be dealt with via the ELP alone. It is important to develop a new assessment culture and take all existing work into consideration, including the calibration of exams against the common reference levels. Do we have enough access to information about this work? Participants should request information if they need it. What strategies do we need to pursue as a result of the discussions that have taken place in this seminar?

Joseph Sheils suggested that the Council of Europe does not have the best possible dissemination network; perhaps it concentrates too much on working from the bottom up, which creates problems when it comes to information filtering downwards. He undertook to send all participants the report that had been prepared for the Steering Committee for Education, which includes information about all the Language Policy Division's projects. He added that each country has a national correspondent to the Council of Europe, whose function is to act as a link person; also that the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz has national dissemination centres. The Council of Europe will continue to consider how information can best be disseminated. Meanwhile, a summary of the seminar's conclusions will also be sent to the Steering Committee for Education.

Francis Goullier reminded participants of the need to reflect together on the content of the seminar. Three important issues had been stressed – strategies for ELP implementation, plurilingualism, and the development of an assessment culture that is in line with the CEF. What other issues should be on the agenda of future seminars? Plurilingualism was mentioned during the concluding forum in Istanbul, and that led to its being discussed at length in this seminar.

Viljo Kohonen wondered what advances had been made on the pedagogical side in the different groups.

Eike Thürmann stressed the need for research into the medium and long-term impact of the CEF itself and or the CEF via the ELP. He also noted that the ELP has still made little impact on the world of work, employers, Chambers of Commerce, etc. This is an area that needs attention.

Francis Goullier reminded participants that the Council of Europe requires a report on all ELPs after they have been validated for three years. He wondered what they felt about this. Are there perhaps special needs to be taken care of? It is not clear that all ELPs validated in 2001 have been successfully implemented. We should have a number of evaluation reports to allow us to take stock of the situation.

Rolf Schärer asked what would be done with such reports. One fundamental problem is that as a group we have learnt a lot and models have moved on. What have we learnt? And how do we incorporate what we have learnt into a revised model, for example?

Gilbert de Samblanc pointed out that ELP contact persons have to do a lot of things and wondered whether it might be possible to limit the number of questionnaires and reports. We seem to be reporting the same information again and again.

Rolf Schärer again stressed the important role that contact persons have to play. But he pointed out that when a validated ELP is published it is often difficult for the relevant contact person to keep track of it. The persons who “own” ELP models have a clear obligation to report to their national contact person. This is a complicated issue because of range of people involved.

Concluding the forum, **Irina Khaleeva** announced that Moscow State Linguistic University will be glad to welcome participants to the 2005 intergovernmental ELP seminar.

Closing of the seminar

On behalf of the Council of Europe **Johanna Panthier** reminded participants that the manual for relating language exams to the CEF is available on the Council of Europe website and various additional supports are under development. She encouraged participants to ask their ministries to support the production of sample videos in their languages. She also reminded participants that the dates of Validation Committee meetings are announced on the Council of Europe’s ELP website, together with the deadlines for submission. She concluded by thanking the Spanish authorities for hosting the seminar, the local organizers for their unfailing efficiency, and all contributors to the seminar programme, including the participants, for making the past two and a half days so informative and stimulating.

On behalf of the Spanish authorities, **Emilio García Prieto** expressed his great satisfaction with the seminar and its outcomes. He was particularly pleased that the experts in charge of different areas in Spain had been able to make contact with colleagues from so many different countries and share their experience. This will give a new boost to the Spanish ELP project and help to integrate it in the educational system.

Appendix 1

The evaluation questionnaire

The evaluation questionnaire was completed and returned by 30 official ELP contact persons and 15 other participants. The following summary of responses indicates a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the seminar.

Participants were asked to rate the importance/relevance of the four main themes of the seminar for their own context on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *not at all important/relevant* and 5 = *very important/relevant*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
1. Strategic development	4.4	4.4
2. Impact of the ELP on language learning process and its outcomes	4.5	4.5
3. Role of the ELP in developing plurilingualism	4.2	3.9
4. Role of the ELP in developing new approaches to assessment	4.5	4.3

Participants were asked to rate the interest/helpfulness of the exhibition and the show-and-tell session on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *not at all interesting/helpful* and 5 = *very interesting/helpful*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
Exhibition	4.0	3.9
Show-and-tell session	4.3	4.4

Participants were asked to rate different aspects of the seminar on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *very unsatisfactory* and 5 = *very satisfactory*. Average ratings were as follows:

	Official ELP contact persons	Other participants
Preparation and organization of the seminar	4.9	4.7
The structure and process of the seminar	4.2	4.4
Seminar facilities	4.7	4.7
Accommodation	4.9	4.9
Social programme	4.4	4.5

In addition to rating different aspects of the seminar, participants were invited to offer comments and suggestions. These will be taken into account when planning the 2005 intergovernmental ELP seminar.

Appendix 2

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