

## **MAIN POINTS DISCUSSED IN THE WORKING GROUP LANGUAGES**

**MADRID, 22<sup>ND</sup> JANUARY 2014**

Following the recommendations of the 1995 White Paper on Teaching and Learning (Objective 4: Innovative ways to learn languages), the European Commission (EC) launched in 1998 a pilot project called "European Label". Its initial aims were to identify and disseminate innovative projects in language teaching and learning at a European level. Nearly 150 projects were awarded the Label in the very first year of the competition (1999), in 15 so-called "pioneer countries" – including Spain. This bears witness to the great potential of this initiative, which led to the entirely appropriate decision, in 2001, to transform the European Label in a Europe-wide initiative in its own right called "European Language Label" (ELL).

The following year (2002) marked an important milestone in the field of Multilingualism: in the conclusions of the European Council held in Barcelona, the ambitious objective of "Mother Tongue + 2" was proclaimed: all citizens should have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in two foreign languages, in addition to their mother tongue. Since 2002, the ELL has contributed enormously to Multilingualism, with around 1900 projects awarded in the countries that have joined the initiative, which now number 33: 28 EU countries (Belgium involving three language communities: Dutch, French and German) + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

In the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004 - 2006 (COM/2003/0449 final)<sup>1</sup> it is mentioned that "The successful European Language Label will be re-focused [...] by using targeted annual European priorities to focus on good practice". The aim of defining European priorities is to highlight the European dimension of the initiative. As mentioned above in the Selection criteria, national priorities can also be added, provided they are in line both with the European priorities and the general European criteria.

The Action Plan proposed furthermore that the Label initiative be extended by "introducing in each country or region an annual prize for the individual having made the most progress in foreign language learning, and the best language teacher". The aim of these two new activities (which were launched in about one third of the participating countries, Spain included) was to acknowledge and publicise success stories related to language learning or teaching.

Over the years the aims of the ELL have become more and more ambitious: the ELL now concerns every level of education and training, aims to highlight and reward innovative initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning in any phase of education and training, functions as a stimulus to exploit and disseminate results of initiatives in the field, and promote public interest in improving language skills as well.

There is a significant amount of work, engagement, commitment and enthusiasm behind the success of the European Language Label. Although implemented at national level, the European dimension of the projects has been fostered. It was therefore entirely natural, in 2012 – the year marking the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona objective – to highlight this dimension by creating the "European Language Label of the Labels" award, a competition organized at European level in which each country nominated one project

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<sup>1</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52003DC0449:EN:HTML>

among those awarded the label in the last decade that was considered the most appropriate to represent excellence and best practice. This award also meant EU recognition for all nominees by acknowledging the work done at national level to promote Multilingualism. The European Award Ceremony of the European Language Label took place during the conference "Multilingualism in Europe", a high-level event organised by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture around the European Day of Languages (26-28 September 2012) during the Cypriot Presidency in Limassol. This award also meant added value for the prestige and visibility of the ELL initiative.

In 2014, a multilingual database<sup>2</sup> was introduced. It contains information and the description of all projects and individuals that have been awarded the European Language Label. These data are introduced by the NA of the participating countries once the ELL competition has taken place. There are currently 2118 individuals and projects in the database (not complete). Spain has had a fair contribution to the ELL since 1999, with a total of 82 entries, more specifically: 77 projects and 5 individuals. The latter are quite recent: 1 in 2008, 1 in 2009, 2 in 2011 and 1 in 2012. As to projects: 1999 (5), 2000 (5), 2001 (4), 2002 (3), 2003 (5), 2004 (6), 2005 (7), 2006 (6), 2007 (6), 2008 (6), 2009 (6), 2010 (6), 2011 (6), 2012 (6). To find out more about these projects, you can consult the ELL database, which since January 2013 is available in 23 EU languages (Croatian not available yet). You can also find dynamic statistics per year and country, projects and individuals, target languages, as well as a "Label of the Day" section on each EU language page. This new multilingual database is the outcome of a two-year combined effort with the IT unit, underlining even more the importance of the ELL and the need to enhance its visibility.

2013 marks the end of the 7-year Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP). What next?

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 the new 7-year programme called Erasmus+ was introduced. This programme aims to provide its citizens with the education, skills and creativity that they need in a knowledge society. Since the world is changing fast, education systems must adapt to new ways of teaching and learning. Education, training and non-formal youth learning are key to creating jobs and improving Europe's competitiveness, which is why great expectations are linked to E+, as the programme that will make a key contribution to addressing these challenges. Another important aspect of E+ is that it replaces 7 programmes with 1, which should facilitate access.

As compared with the LLP programme, the first difference to be noticed is that there will be no dedicated programme for language projects and networks as was the case with Key Activity 2 Languages. Languages will be mainstreamed throughout all Key Actions of Erasmus+.

An important amount will be earmarked in the work programme for 2014 for "Linguistic support for mobility" (Key Action 1). A call for tender was launched in December 2013 and it is for the provision of a centralised online service to assess, monitor and support linguistic competences of individuals participating in mobility actions financed by the new Programme for education, training, youth and sport (Erasmus+), which will start in January 2014. The call for tender will aim to select 1 or 2 provider(s) to supply and manage two services: online assessment of language competences (lot 1) and online language courses (lot 2). In other words, assessment is compulsory before and after mobility, while on-line language courses are voluntary and currently available in the five main languages of instruction or work (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish).

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/education/language/label/label\\_public/index.cfm?lang=EN](http://ec.europa.eu/education/language/label/label_public/index.cfm?lang=EN)

Language funding within Erasmus+ will come from Key Actions 2 ("Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices" – Strategic Partnerships) and 3 ("Support for policy reform"). NAs may continue to award the European Language Label in order to increase the visibility of innovative projects in the field of language teaching and learning. To increase visibility of the ELL, participating NAs can also flag ELL awarded projects (not individuals) that are funded under the Erasmus+ Programme in the Erasmus+ Dissemination Platform. For that purpose, a dedicated ELL flag will be established in the Erasmus+ Dissemination Platform.