

## **The European Language Portfolio in Practice as a Tool for Learners' Development**

The European Language Portfolio was introduced by the Council of Europe (2001) as a means of helping language learners to keep track of their language learning as it happens – set learning targets, monitor their progress, and regularly assess the results of their learning and record their language learning achievements and their experience of using other languages and encountering other cultures. The ELP has three parts- a Language Passport, a Language Biography, a Dossier.

**“The European Portfolio in Practice”** is a three-year national project (2009-2012) intended to extend the use of the European Language Portfolio. Within its framework, the Czech Republic has developed four user-friendly on-line versions of the portfolio (ELP) in six languages designed according to age groups. The first ELP version is intended for pupils up to 11 years of age, the second one for 11 to 15 year-olds, the third version for 15 to 19 year-olds and the last version is designed for adult users (19+). The Czech, French, German and English versions are already available, Italian and Spanish versions shall be ready to be used in December 2012. Development of electronic application was based on the Dutch ELP version and the document Europass Language Passport for Adults.

The survey carried out in November 2010, which included 1,200 schools from all regions, showed that the original hardcopy editions of the ELP available in the CR since 2002 are not used in the classrooms as the teachers do not see any benefit to it. They think hardcopy editions are too expensive, the students need to pay for them themselves and the teachers are not able to use them in the teaching process.

The aim of the project “ELP in Practice” was therefore to develop an on-line application and methodological guide, motivate the teachers and students to use the ELP in the classrooms, expand the use of the ELP in line with the development of the curricula (ŠVP – School Educational Programmes) for basic, secondary and language schools.

The on-line version of the portfolio places emphasis on raising awareness of teaching and learning types and strategies corresponding to particular language competencies. The on-line version facilitates interaction and communication between teacher and student. The teacher can comment on student materials saved in the Dossier or on the student's self-evaluation in “What I Already Know” section, which forms a part of the Language Biography. The ELP electronic application includes also illustrative tasks intended to help students to monitor better their language skills' progress according to different levels of proficiency.

Completed self-evaluation and practical experience with one or two foreign languages acquired through the on-line European Language Portfolio is for the 15+ age group automatically generated and transferred to the Europass Language Passport, which is an integral part of the application.

A collection of good practice examples and a methodological guide, explaining possibilities of linking the ELP with conventional teaching of foreign languages and incorporating it in foreign languages teaching at individual educational levels, represent another outcomes of the project. The methodological guide for teachers and examples of use of the application in the classrooms are available on the ELP methodological web-site <http://metodicky-web-ejp.rvp.cz>.

Continuing education programmes for teachers and training programmes for ELP instructors and consultants that are available since December 2012 free of charge in all regions are also based on the developed methodology. Thus, a total of 3,120 foreign language teachers from primarily basic, but also secondary and language schools will be trained by the end of the project.

The pilot phase involved a total of 480 pupils and students from 20 basic and secondary schools. Results of the survey carried out in all pilot schools since February 2011 show that the use of the e-portfolio helps learners to develop communication, intercultural and social competencies as well as their learning and ICT skills. The incorporation of e-portfolio in teaching of foreign languages has a positive impact on the whole school environment. It might even inspire various qualitative changes in teaching and learning processes. Such a transformation of foreign languages teaching at schools may have significant long-term impact on schools' self-evaluation and overall quality of the education provided. On-line application is by the teachers regarded as more user-friendly and suitable for use in the classrooms. Along with the language competencies, it contributes to the development of learners' ICT skills.

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