



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

Lifelong learning: horizontal policy issues and 2020 strategy  
**Multilingualism policy**

Brussels, 2/5/2013  
DG EAC A3.002/MP

**MINUTES**  
**OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL WORKING GROUP**  
**HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2013**

**PARTICIPANTS**

Commission: Kristina Cunningham (KC), Sonia Peressini (SP), Manola Peschieri (MP), Leonidas Stergiou (LS) and Luca Tomasi (LT).

33 representatives of the following countries: Austria, Belgium (FR, 2), Belgium (NL), Bulgaria, Croatia (2), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece (2), Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy (2), Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

KC welcomes the ELL Working Group in Brussels, underlines the good practice of having this yearly meeting and anticipates the agenda of the day. The morning session will be devoted to presentations by the EC: where we are with our policy and what our future plans are. The afternoon session will be entirely devoted to the ELL: state of the art of the database, follow-up to last year's event "European Language Label of the Labels award", how to improve the relations between the EC and the ELL Working Group.

KC presents herself, makes an overview of her career in the EC and DG EAC and introduces the new context in which we operate. Multilingualism policy is no longer a unit but a sector in a larger unit called **Skills and qualifications strategies; Multilingualism policy**. She is Head of Sector of the latter.

Languages are to be seen as important transversal skills in the broader context of education in the Europe 2020 strategy, where stronger emphasis is given to languages in all sectors of education. This is summed up in a DG EAC Communication of November 2012: "**Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes**". The Communication is accompanied by 7 Staff Working documents (all available [here](#)), particularly relevant for the ELL working group being "**Education and Training Monitor 2012**", "**Rethinking Education – Country analysis**" but especially "**Languages competences for employability, mobility and growth**", which LT will present later on.

At the end of her presentation of the Multilingualism policy in the context of Skills and Qualifications, KC asks the participants to present themselves. SP and MP also present themselves and MP welcomes in particular the newcomers to the ELL Working Group, with thanks to their predecessors for the good cooperation. The minutes of last year's meeting of the ELL Working Group (held in Brussels on 23/4/2012) are approved.

Before moving to the remaining items of the agenda, KC briefly informs the participants that a **formal cooperation agreement with the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe in Graz** has just been signed. The EC will co-fund

projects linked to our political priorities: a) ICT in language teaching and learning and b) assessment of language competences.

LT presents the Staff Working Document "**Languages competences for employability, mobility and growth**". Basically, in today's world language competences are essential for a number of qualified jobs, both at home and abroad. In 2011 a survey on languages competences was launched. It involved 13 Member States (Belgium included, which counted for three-language communities) plus Croatia and five languages were tested. The findings were disappointing because it turned out that the level is very low. It is therefore necessary to make sure that languages are learnt efficiently and in a fit-for-purpose way, by increasing the number of languages (no English-only), hours, years and exposure outside the school environment. It is also important to improve quality fostering innovative teaching methods (ICT, Content and Language Integrated Learning and Early Language Learning). The EC proposed two benchmarks that should be adopted during the Greek Presidency (1<sup>st</sup> semester 2014). The two objectives in lower secondary education to be achieved by 2020 are: a) at least 50% of pupils have a B1/B2 level (Independent user) in the first foreign language (currently 42%) and b) a second foreign language is learnt by at least 75% of pupils (currently 61%). For the moment, no comparable data are available for tertiary education – not to be excluded for the future. The complete presentation is available [here](#).

SP presents the **new seven-year programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport 2014-2020** according to the current state of play. The programme – whose name "Erasmus For All" (E4A) has not been officially approved yet – follows up on the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) due to end in 2013. The idea is, among other things, to have one single programme more in line with main policies, simplified procedures, indicators to measure achievement and synergies with other EU financing tools. There are two general objectives linked to Europe 2020 strategy: a) **reduce early school leaving** and b) **increase tertiary education**. In addition to the general objectives there are specific objectives, one of which relates to languages, namely to improve language teaching and learning and promote linguistic diversity. An important budget (whose amount is under negotiation) should be allocated for the new programme, which will significantly increase the current one. This underlines how important education is for the EC. There will be three main strands in the new programme: a) **Key Action 1 Learning mobility of individuals** (budget allocation **65%**); b) **Key Action 2 Cooperation for innovation and good practices** (budget allocation **26%**) and c) **Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform** (budget allocation **4%**). As far as languages are concerned, there are significant differences between LLP and E4A. In LLP Key Activity 2 was specifically devoted to Languages, while in E4A they is no specific activity on languages but languages are present in all three Key Actions of the new programme, in particular in mobility and strategic partnerships (Key action 2). Furthermore, in LLP there were no indicators meant to assess concrete results in terms of impact and achievements as in E4A. The final text should be adopted still within the Irish presidency, in the first semester of 2013. The complete presentation is available [here](#).

The participants show interest for the presentations but express some concern on the future of languages in the new programme in general as well as, more specifically, on the future of the ELL. As to the former, what worries is the lack of specific activities related to languages (such as KA2 in the LLP) and the fact that this lack of specific mention seems to drastically reduce the importance of languages, which are somewhat only implicit in the 3 Key Actions of the new programme. As to the latter, it is true that nothing fundamentally changes since also in the old programme there was no specific mention of the ELL, but the fact that there is no direct mention of languages may lead to drastic repercussions in the Member States, where the budget allocated for the ELL is already very limited, if any at all. SP highlights that the strategic partnerships within the new Key Action 2 will be managed essentially by National Agencies and that they will have to adapt their structure and working methods accordingly. Since the final text of the

new programme has not yet been adopted, the Commission is currently working on ways to ensure that languages are highlighted throughout the text. In this context, a specific mention of the ELL might be envisaged.

MP presents the **European priorities for the 2014-2015 Label Campaigns**: a) **Languages for Social Inclusion** and b) **Languages and Sport**. The second one represents a sort of challenge and gives the ELL initiative a further opportunity to show its pioneering spirit. The ELL has indeed always been open to all aspects of education and training, regardless of age or methods used, with its main focus being to promote innovation in language teaching. By supporting innovative projects, at a local and national level, the ELL seeks to raise the standards of language teaching across Europe: linking this to sport, for the first time ever and when sport will be for the first time a relevant part of a EC seven-year programme (2014-2020), would underline once more the merit of this initiative which has proved so successful in the last 14 years in promoting multilingualism. Poland welcomes this priority and supports this with very positive feedback of the event "Be active – learn languages!" – the motto of last year's European Day of Languages in Warsaw. Austria and Hungary express the wish of extending it to further activities outside the formal education system. We welcome this interest and are confident that by leaving this priority as it is, i.e. focussed on sport, but coupled with national priorities that can touch the aspect of further extra-curricular activities, will serve the purpose of allowing for all-embracing projects to apply for the ELL.

The afternoon session has "**Communication**" as keyword: to know more about what is going on in the Member States, how communication can be improved and how IT tools can play a role. KC informs the participants that there is a **revamping** exercise going on in the EC that will affect how the **Languages website** will look like in roughly one year.

She leaves the floor to LS of the IT Unit, who has been involved in the new multilingual ELL database since August 2011. The new **multilingual ELL database** was released on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2013 as a result of a joint effort of the Multilingualism policy unit (in the person of MP) and the IT unit and with a view of bringing an overall improvement of the experience of using the site. The main reasons for the change were: a) to make the database available in **23 languages** (until then it was only available in 11, pre-2004 languages); b) to allow the insertion of project descriptions in all official EU languages, making it more useful and accessible for all citizens of the EU; c) to make the database more user friendly and attractive (for the public, National Agencies and the EC as well); d) to make the database more robust, by implementing full consistency checks; e) to make the database fully conform to the new EC visual identity and f) to improve quality at a technical level and maintainability, being the old system quite outdated after 10 years. Having introduced this new IT system for the ELL database just three months ago does by far not mean that there are no plans for the next future. We are already committed to continuously improving the system, resolving any bugs or problems that might arise during use and collecting feedback on possible improvements. Some participants suggest adding logos and videos/clips for projects. This possibility will be investigated. It is important not to make the system too heavy, in which case adding a link to videos/clips could represent a feasible alternative.

LS confirms that the new ELL database has seen the **number of visits increase**. It is important to be aware of the visits, an aspect that is expressly requested in the survey that is currently being carried out by the Communication unit in relation to the Languages website. Among the comments, Belgium (FR) underlines the limits in the project descriptions. These limits have been increased and currently correspond to 2 pages, which therefore allow for a thorough description. Other important elements (target group, target languages, contact and links to relevant websites) can be included in the database but in separate cases, thereby not influencing the length of the

description. Belgium (NL) asks about the ELL logo, which was the old logo for



Multilingualism.

This one can now be identified with ELL exclusively. What changes is the language, since the logo is available with "European Language Label" in the national language. As to how long labelled projects can use it – Belgium (NL) has a 2-year limit in mind - there are no limits because the year of the label award is mentioned and remains attached to the labelled project as it is.

With reference to the yearly NA report, it will be checked how data is currently collected because, according to Lithuania, only projects are mentioned, not individuals.

In relation to **ELL-related activities** meant as follow-up to last year's event, MP stresses that the European Language Label of the Labels was an event organised in 2012 for the first time to underline the importance of the Label initiative but also in the year that marked the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona objectives. In 2013 no similar event with nominated projects, award ceremony and prizes handed over by Commissioner Vassiliou will be organised. In the wake of the positive feedback received from last year's publication (8000 booklets were disseminated in the Member States and of the 9000 published in total only 200 are left), a budget has been earmarked for another **publication**. The Commission proposes to have a publication collecting projects of all countries which apply the European priorities for the 2012-2013 Label campaigns. Some useful and lively discussion follows, duly justified objections are raised (countries already nominated projects that fall within these 2 categories for last year's event; there are no projects representing these two categories because also national priorities are applied). The Commission will therefore come up with a revised proposal. This will also concern the format – there may be just a publication in electronic form, which can be reproduced on paper at request.

Suggestions are made, such as reports (currently being carried out by NELLIP, as mentioned with details by the President of the network) and statistics (already available and dynamically updated in the ELL database), which however cannot be considered as follow-up to last year's event – this follow-up as such is to be linked to activities carried out by the EC and the NAs hand in hand, as was the case last year. MP stresses the importance of keeping communication alive with the ELL Working Group and invites the participants to send input and feedback whenever appropriate, possibly very frequently, in order to keep this flow of information running all over the year. The yearly meeting is just the occasion to meet together in Brussels but is not to be seen as the only occasion to provide feedback and input.

KC and MP thank the participants for coming to Brussels and look forward to good cooperation and partnership for future activities.