



The Implementation of the European Language Label, a Transnational Analysis Carried Out by the NELLIP Network

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1. Introduction

Since 1998, in all EU countries, a number of successful language learning initiatives have been awarded a quality label: the European Language Label. The European Language Label is assigned to the best initiatives promoting language teaching and learning. The European Language Label is co-ordinated by the European Commission, but managed by National Agencies appointed in each Member States. The general criteria for awarding the European Language Label are agreed at European level.

The European Language Label is awarded on the basis of a quality evaluation and assessment criteria that should be taken into account by all those who are involved in the planning and implementing of new language learning initiatives.

2. Research carried out by the NELLIP Network

NELLIP, Network of European Language Label Initiatives, is funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme – Key Activity 2 Languages. The project was funded for the period January 2012 – December 2014.

The NELLIP network carried out a research activity with the aim to identify the best practice developed in projects that received the European Language Label and, at the same time, to assess the impact of the European Language Label on the awarded projects.

The first part of the research activity identified, in cooperation with the National Agencies in charge of the European Language Label, Case Studies among the projects that were awarded the Label. The selection criteria was mainly based on the consistency of the awarded projects with the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning.

Each of the selected language learning initiative was analyzed through a direct contact with the coordinator of the initiative itself. Feedbacks were also provided, on each of the selected Case Study, by the relevant National Agency. 201 case studies have been uploaded on the Database on the NELLIP Network web site (http://nellip.pixel-online.org/CS_lista.php).

One of the purposes of the Case studies was to identify the key elements to take into account for the development of quality language learning initiatives.

Therefore, according to the 201 coordinators of the ELL awarded projects in order to plan and implement quality language project that can successfully apply for the European Language Label, the following elements should be taken into account:

- active involvement of target users,
- valorization of what already exists,
- innovation i.e. how the project will make a difference,
- clear description of the product or method,
- assessment of the deliverables and implementation of corrective actions.

The second part of the research activity consisted in the identification of best practices developed in the framework of initiatives having received the European Language Label. A



total of 18 National Reports of Best Practices were produced as well as a Transnational Best Practice Report. The selected initiatives can be used as examples and benchmarks to refer to in the planning and development of quality language learning projects and initiatives that may successfully apply for the European Language Label. The Best Practice National and Transnational Reports are available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/RP_best_practices.php.reports

On the basis of the information collected in the framework of the research work mentioned above, a total of eighteen National Reports on the Implementation of the European Language Label were created.

A Transnational Report on the Implementation of the European Language Label was also produced. The report presents a comparative transnational analysis of how the European Language Label is organized and managed throughout Europe. The transnational report provides quantitative and qualitative information on the projects that were awarded the European Language Label. The report also carries out a transnational assessment of the impact of the label on the awarded projects. Recommendations and best practices are also included.

All reports are available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/RP_intro.php

3. Transnational analysis of the implementation of the European Language Label

3.1 Introduction

The transnational research activity, that led to the production of the Transnational report mentioned above, was carried out to analyze the implementation, achievements and trends of the European Language Label in Europe.

The research was carried out in 18 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, and UK.

3.2 Criteria to award the European Language Label

Projects are selected according to criteria agreed at European level. Annual priorities are also identified both at European and national level.

According to the European criteria for the award of the ELL, initiatives should be comprehensive in their approach and should provide an added value in their national context. They should motivate students and teachers being original and creative. Initiatives should have a European emphasis and be transferable.

The European priorities in 2012-2013 focused on Language learning based on the new technologies and Multilingual classrooms.

National priorities may also be established in participating countries. National priorities have to be in line with the European ones. Some countries do not establish national priorities but just refer to the European ones.

3.3 Label Campaigns and awarding of projects

The European Commission co-finances the national Label campaigns through operational agreements, under the Lifelong Learning Programme, with the National Agencies.

Label Campaigns are organized by the National Agencies in the Member States.

Most countries campaigns every year. There are, however, a few countries organizing the Label campaign every two years.



In the framework of each label campaign, a public call for projects is announced at national level to seek applications for the European Language Label award from organizers of innovative projects and initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning.

Label Campaigns are organized at different moments of the year in each of the member states. Therefore deadlines for applications vary from country to country. In 2012, for example, in the United Kingdom the deadline for applying for the Label was 4 March 2012, in Ireland 30 March, in Slovakia 18 April, in the Czech Republic 5 May, in France 15 May, in Italy 1 June, in Sweden 20 August etc.

A significant action of promotion, information and dissemination of the opportunities offered by the European Language Label is carried out by the National Agencies. The main strategies used for this purpose include the publication of brochures, leaflets, newsletters, surveys and yearly reports. Some National Agencies also organize seminars, fairs, conferences and workshops.

The National agencies assess applications for the ELL award, checking their eligibility, appointing evaluation committees and organizing the assessment days. Some National Agencies also organize visits of the pre-selected projects by one member of the evaluation committee.

The awarding of selected projects is organized in the framework of the Label ceremony that is usually held between September and December throughout Europe.

The coordinators of the winning projects receive an official certificate and the right to display the logo of the European Language Label, with an indication of the relevant year, on the information materials related to the initiative (e.g. web site, brochures etc.).

In some countries, the award of the Label, besides providing the winners with the mentioned certificate, is combined with national prizes, these can be financial awards, trophies, travel grants, bonuses to buy educational materials etc.

3.4 Overview of European Language Label awards

According to the data available in December 2012, in the first 13 years of existence of the European Language Label (1999 - 2011), a total of 1770 projects have been awarded the Label¹.

A total of 1318 projects have been awarded the Label in the 18 countries that were analyzed by the NELLIP team.

An analysis of the awarded projects in the 18 countries involved in the NELLIP activities shows that the highest number of European Language Labels were made respectively by: Italy, United Kingdom, France, Ireland and Romania.

The majority of awarded projects (1016 initiatives) focus on compulsory education, i.e. primary (363 winning projects) and secondary schools (653 winning projects). The second highest number of projects that were awarded the European Language Label were those addressing the vocational education and training sector. A total of 301 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the field of both initial (156 awards) and continuous (105 awards) vocational education and training.

It is interesting to underline the consistency among the thematic areas of the projects that were awarded the European Language Label and the current European political priorities in

¹ Source: European Commission, Multilingualism. Project database of the European Label for innovative projects in language teaching and learning. <http://ec.europa.eu/education/language/label/index.cfm>. Data acquired in December 2012.



the field of language learning indicated by the analysis carried out by the NELLIP² team on the basis of the official documents³ published on the European Commission's web site. Below an analysis of the numbers of winning projects that are consistent with current – as in 2012 - political priorities for language learning.

- Political priority: the enhancement of quality in language learning.
290 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the area of *raising quality*.
- Political priority: language learning for specific purposes.
241 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the field of *VOLL, vocationally oriented language learning*.
- Political priority: new approaches to language teaching and learning.
230 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the field of *TELL, technology enhanced language learning*.
- Political Priority: recognition and validation of language skills acquired through non formal and informal learning
219 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the area of *informal language learning*.
- Political priority: supporting mobility for language learning.
191 projects were awarded the European Language Label in the field of language *exchanges* and 114 projects in the field of *languages for mobility*.

4. Impact of the European Language Label on the awarded projects

The analysis of the 201 case studies⁴ in 18 European countries yielded insights into the motivation of the institutions applying for the European Language Label as well as into the impact the Label had on the winning projects.

The main reason why language project coordinators apply for the label is related to the search for an official international recognition of the project's quality as well as to promote its visibility and sustainability. Other reasons are linked to the willingness to share a good practice creating new transnational partnerships. The need to increase motivation of staff involved in the development of language projects is another reason.

The European Language Label meets the applicants expectations related to the acquisition of an European recognition of the project's quality, to the promotion of its visibility and the enhancement of the motivation of those who were involved in the project's development.

The expectations related to enhancing the project sustainability, sharing a good practice and establishing transnational partnership thanks to the award of the label are, however, only partially met.

5. Conclusions

Strengths and weaknesses of the European Language Label emerged from the research carried out in the framework of the NELLIP Network. The research involved 201 coordinators of projects that were awarded the Label in 18 countries.

The strengths of the European Language Label include the following elements.

- It provides an official and European recognition of a project's quality.
- It ensures a greater visibility for the project and the institutions.

² Source: The NELLIP Portal at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/PP_index.php

³ Sources: European Commission, Multilingualism, at: http://ec.europa.eu/languages/library/key-documents_type_en.htm

⁴ Please see the NELLIP Network Portal at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/CS_lista.php



- It enhances the motivation of the project promoters and of the staff involved in the project.
- It partially enhances the sustainability of the projects.
- It offers some opportunities to the sharing of good practice.

The weaknesses of the European Language Label include the following elements.

- It is not sufficiently well known even among language learning providers and experts.
- It is not sufficiently clear what the benefits of receiving the European Language Label are
- It provides limited opportunities to create transnational partnerships.

A strategy for a further development of the European Language Label should focus on the following elements.

- Ensuring greater visibility of the European Language Label among, first of all, language learning providers and experts.
- The identification of strategies to make the acquisition of the European language Label more appealing.
- Raising awareness about the European Language Label's meaning and impact
- Offering coordinators of projects that were awarded the European Language Label opportunities for transnational networking, exchanges and the sharing of experiences.
- Raising awareness within the language learning industry about the quality attached to the European Language Label so as to encourage them to contribute to the further development of the labeled projects.