



# **NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL**

**ESTONIA**



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## ESTONIAN NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL

### 1 Introduction

The present report provides information about the implementation of the European Language Label (ELL) initiative in Estonia in the period from 2002 to the end of 2012.

The report provides a brief coverage of the ELL history in Estonia from the moment of its introduction to the present time, it describes the procedure of the ELL campaign and presents some statistical data on the initiative.

The report is concluded with a brief evaluation of the ELL campaign in Estonia and some recommendations drawn by the NELLIP team on the basis of the analysis of the ELL awards.

### 2 The European Language Label in Estonia

The European Language Label was launched in 1998 as an initiative of the European Commission. The evaluation of the pilot phase, undertaken by the Commission showed that the Label had been very successful in identifying and disseminating innovative projects in the field of language teaching and learning. The challenge from 2001 onwards was to maintain the early success of the initiative among the participating countries and expand towards the candidate countries to the EU.

The European Label is intended to highlight and reward innovative initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning in any phase of education and training. It should function as a stimulus, to exploit and disseminate the results of initiatives in the field, and promote public interest in improving language skills. The award is granted to the projects presented by institutions and individuals in all sectors of education, the selection is done on the basis of the European and national priorities specified for the current year.

Participation in the European Label gives greater recognition to national efforts and makes the public authorities more aware of the importance of promoting foreign language skills in the country. The Label initiative provides a good opportunity to compare the national profile with other European countries' innovation profiles.

Estonia joined the European Language Label program in 2002. The implementing body from 2002 to 2007 was the Socrates National Agency under the umbrella of the Archimedes Foundation - <http://archimedes.ee/en/foundation/> - an independent body established by the Estonian government with the objective to coordinate and implement different international and national programmes and projects in the field of training, education and research.

The management of the Label initiative in the Socrates NA was a responsibility of a unit dealing with Socrates Lingua subprogram and also with the Comenius language oriented activities. The ready-made infrastructure and network of people and institutions already involved in various language activities created solid bases for the successful management of the Label initiative. From 2007 up to date the European Language Label has been the responsibility of the successor of the former body which today is called the Centre for Educational Programs - a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation.

The Label Jury was assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science. The first Jury was made up of six members: five local ones and one foreign member. The members represented educators and language teaching specialists from a range of institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Research, universities, publishers and other educational bodies. The foreign member to the jury came from the Finnish National Board of Education. The contribution of the foreign member to the work of the jury was extremely valuable especially in the starting phase. In the course of time several members of the jury have changed and the foreign member is not part of it any more.

The task of the National Jury was and still is to analyse and, on the basis of the specified European and national priorities, select the best language learning initiatives and take decisions about to whom award the European Certificate signed by the Commissioner of the European Commission and the Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia. The Jury also decides on the size of the monetary prize which accompanies the Label Certificate. The monetary prize is a contribution of the Ministry of Education and Research to the Label initiative.

All the winners of the European Certificate are included in the European Commission database. Because of the size of Estonia and small numbers of institutions there have never been restrictions on the type of institutions that could participate in the competition to the Label Certificate. The yearly Call for applications is always open to primary, secondary and vocational schools, to universities, publishers and organisations offering language learning courses for wider public.

The total number of application received during ten years is 177 and 56 European Certificates have been issued. In 2005 and in 2006 two more nominations - The Language Teacher of the Year and The Language Learner of the Year – were introduced and altogether six Language Learners of the Year and one Language Teacher of the Year received their respective awards. However the National Jury reconsidered the decision about the two new nominations and from 2007 on the focus was put on successful language deeds. The annual calls on The Language deed of the Year define separate categories according to the priorities and activities.

### **3 The Label Campaigns**

#### **3.1 Promotion**

From 2002 to 2007 the promotion of the European Language Label was the responsibility of the Socrates National Agency – the implementing body.

From 2007 up to date the main responsibility of promotion lies with the General Education Unit of the Centre for Educational Programs which is a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation. The ELL has been a partial job of one staff member of the GEU.

The aims of the selection but also the overall objectives of the ELL initiative and its compliance with the EU policy are available on the web-site of the Centre for Educational Programs, it is linked to the web site of the Archimedes Foundation as well as to that of the Ministry of Education and Research.

The channels for promotion are diverse and include web-based publications, the newspaper Teachers Weekly, numerous seminars, conferences, workshops as well as other events (exhibitions, fairs etc.) organised for the potential target group.

#### **3.2 Call for Applications and Selection process**

The Call for Applications and the priorities are announced every year on the website of the implementing body and on that of the Ministry of Education and Research. The deadline is also disseminated through other channels mentioned under pp. 2.1. The application form is available online. Several years after the launch of

the initiative it was possible to apply on a paper version also but today although it is available nobody uses this option any more.

The first couple of years the calls were announced in autumn and the award ceremony took place in the end of the year or sometimes even in the beginning of the next year. The main reason was that the ELL was a considerably small program and the European Day of Languages was not nationally celebrated for several years after its first all-European launch in 2001.

Since 2005 the application period has been in spring from mid-May to the beginning of June. The Language Deed of the Year may be: a language project as well as a conference, a publication, a festival etc. organized by schools or other institutions; Individuals who personally have initiated and /or have been behind a successful implementation of any kind of language activity or event also have to right to be considered for the award.

In general the Jury meets twice a year: in early spring to discuss the Call and after the application deadline, to select the winners.

The Jury members fill in the assessment forms and compile a personal priority list prior to the selection meeting. The priority lists are being discussed and the decisions made according to the requirements and conditions stated in the Call.

### 3.3 Award ceremony

From 2002 up to 2005 organisation of award ceremonies was attached to the calendar of bigger national language oriented activities in order to get media attention and to promote the new activity. For instance, the award ceremonies were a part of the National Mother Tongue Day event in March or in 2004 the ELL ceremony was held together with the conference "Language Diversity: opportunities and needs." The participants of the conference were politicians, teacher trainers, teachers, publishers, language training providers, language teachers, pupils etc.

In 2005 the awards to the Learner of the Year were handed over in the final conference of the Adult Learner Week in October and the certificates and awards to projects were handed over in the SOCRATES EXPRO event in November.

Since 2006 the award ceremony takes place in September and is a part of the European Day of Languages celebration. The national celebration of the European Day of Languages" moves around" meaning that it takes place in different cities in Estonia: it has already been in Tartu, in Tallinn and in Narva.

The Ministry of Education and Research allocates funds for financial awards to accompany the Label Certificate. The size of the financial award depends on the number of winners and does not in general exceed 1000 €.

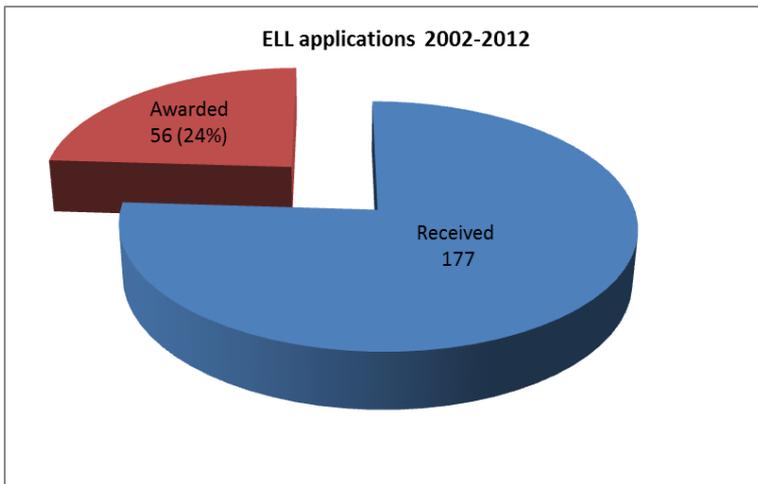
## 4 The EC and National Priorities

The European Commission taking into account different policy documents on education and training as well as specific documents on language teaching and learning ( Action Plans, Policy Recommendations, Communications on Multilingualism etc.) and the discussion with the Language Label working group defines annual Label priorities. It allows the Member States better to plan their Label campaigns and have a structured approach to the requirements in the policy documents.

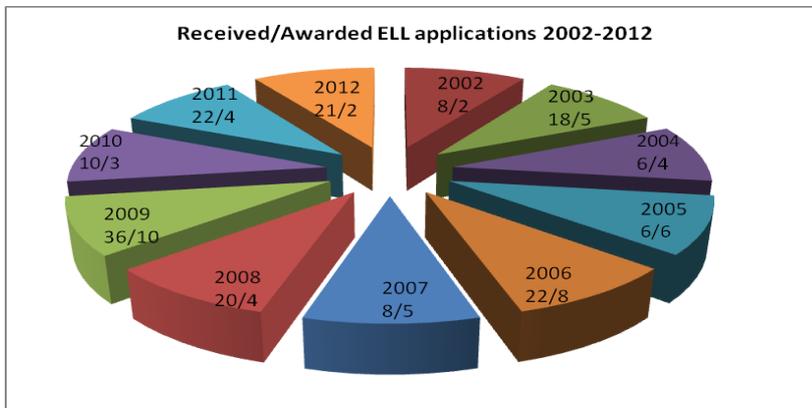
In the period from 2002 to 2012 the national calls and selection of the ELL winners in Estonia were in line with the EC priorities. Only once in 2005 a national priority was added: culture through a language.

## 5 Awarding the European Language Label

In the first ten years of the ELL campaign in Estonia 56 projects were awarded the European Language Label. It constitutes roughly one quarter of all the applications for the Award.



The pie-chart below shows the fluctuation in the popularity of the ELL award in its first ten years by the numbers of the submitted applications per year:



Applications and ELL winner projects in 2002 – 2012

The figures of the distribution of the awarded projects by sector of education show that more than half of all awarded projects target Secondary and Primary schools (21 and 11 projects respectively). The other sections of education are represented more or less equally with some higher percentage in the sectors of Adult education and Universities.

## 6 Evaluation carried out by the NELLIP Estonian Team

The European Language Label represents an important tool to assess and award quality language learning initiatives at the national level. The Label aims to contribute to the implementation of the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning.

European language policies aim to protect linguistic diversity and promote knowledge of languages. The current European language policies are reflected in the most recent key documents: The Council's Conclusions on Language Competences to Enhance Mobility (2011), Strategic framework for cooperation on education and training (2009), EU strategy for multilingualism (2008), Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment (2008), Inventory of EU actions in the field of multilingualism (2008), Online consultation on multilingualism (2007), New framework strategy for multilingualism (2005).

The main aspects the current policies on language learning focus on are:

- the enhancement of quality of language learning
- evaluation of performance of language teaching
- teachers training
- new approaches to language teaching and learning
- supporting mobility for language learning
- the promotion of multilingualism
- language learning for specific purposes
- tools for monitoring progresses in language learning
- recognition and validation of language skills acquired through non formal and informal learning
- implementation of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
- promotion of links between VET qualifications and CEFR
- promotion of less widely spoken languages

The analysis of the Estonian ELL initiatives has shown that the above mentioned aspects of the current language policies are reflected in the most successful projects. Thus, one third of the awarded projects claim to aim the raising of intercultural awareness, which is indispensable for promotion of multilingualism and less widely spoken languages; more than one quarter of the ELL initiatives suggest new approaches to informal language learning, over one fifth of the awarded projects deal with raising the quality of learning / teaching languages. Among the other represented thematic areas, there are projects on CLIL (10 projects),

Diversification of languages on offer (9 projects) and Languages for mobility (6 projects). Five ELL awarded projects deal with support of early language learning, which is still a much-disputed issue in the Baltic countries. The data is taken from the European Language Label database, which does not rule out including more than one theme (primary and secondary) in the project description.

As regards the linguistic aspect, English, Estonian, Russian and German are the most common target languages in the ELL projects: 14, 13, 12 and 10 projects indicated these languages as their either project or target languages. Not surprisingly, the Scandinavian languages (Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Icelandic) are also in the list of the target languages of the Estonian ELL projects.

There are practically no languages of other close neighbours in the descriptions of the awarded projects. It is not possible to conclude whether the languages of the other Baltic states ( Latvia, Poland, Lithuania) are less popular in project activities, or the quality/product of such projects is lower.

## **7 Impact and Exploitation of the European Language Label as assessed by the NELLIP Team**

### **7.1 Impact**

The impact of the ELL award has been evaluated on the basis of the data presented by the ELL Estonian coordinator as well as on the basis of the analysis of the Case studies questionnaires.

The main reasons why institutions/organizations or individuals have applied are:

- the importance of teaching and learning of foreign languages on all levels as stressed in the Estonian Foreign Language Strategy 2009-2015;
- the need for languages caused by the rapidly increasing participation in mobility as well as in international project work and opportunities for work in Europe;
- search for new methods and teaching materials;
- search for recognition on national level as well as on European level;
- better Europe-wide dissemination opportunities ;

One of the motivating factors is also the monetary prize which is given together with the Label Certificate. As the award in Estonia usually goes together with the monetary prize

The Label award has remarkable impact on the profile of schools and institutions which as a rule encourages other institutions to be more active in using the opportunities.

## 7.2 Exploitation and promotion channels

The exploitation of the ELL achievements in Estonia is based on diverse and multi-channel dissemination of the project results and products.

The promotion channels include web-based publications, the newspaper Teachers Weekly, numerous seminars, conferences, workshops as well as other events (exhibitions, fairs etc.) organised for the potential target group. The channels available through the Jury members have also been included in the list.

The e-newsletter of the Centre for Educational Programs is one of the most effective channels to inform public about the ELL activities. The e-newsletter is published since 2009 and it has more than 5000 subscribers. The news portal Delfi.ee has also been used for dissemination purposes.

The printed publications such as posters, leaflets have proved to be very costly and have not been successful in Estonia, thus instead other promotional tools have been used: T-shirts, aprons, thermo coffee – cups, CD-holders, key holders with a torch etc.

## 8 Best Practices

The Best practices selected by the NELLIP team in cooperation with the Estonian ELL coordinator cover three educational sectors: school education, Adult education and Vocational education. They all demonstrate innovative approaches to learning languages: creation of learning materials based on memory training and interaction (Mnemo25Method), web language courses and non-traditional language-learning activities that incorporate culture and history studies, creation of a language simulator for professional language training of border guards ( Language Robot). At the conference in Limassol in September 2012, Language Robot project was one of the top 30 projects awarded the European Commission' commemorative plate as "The Best Estonian Project".

## 9 Recommendations

According to the responses from the contacted project promoters, the ELL adds to institutions' profiles, it is viewed as a quality trademark and encourages individuals and institutions to initiate other projects. Otherwise, winners do not benefit a lot from the award, which may be due to relatively small scope of projects.

The introduction of the monetary prize is definitely viewed as a positive step towards raising motivation to participate in the ELL campaign.

## 10 Conclusions

Estonia joined the European Language Label program in 2002. The implementing body from 2002 to 2007 was the Socrates National Agency under the umbrella of the Archimedes Foundation, since 2007 the European Language Label has been the responsibility of the successor of the former body which today is called the Centre for Educational Programs - a structural unit of the Archimedes Foundation.

The ELL Jury is assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science. The members represented educators and language teaching specialists from a range of institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Research, universities, publishers and other educational bodies. Initially the Jury had one foreign representative, at present the Jury is made up of only Estonian members.

The Jury selects the best language initiatives and decides on the size of the monetary prize which accompanies the Label Certificate. The monetary prize is a contribution of the Ministry of Education and Research to the Label initiative. The size of the financial award depends on the number of winners and does not in general exceed 1000 €.

In the first ten years of the ELL initiative in Estonia, 56 European Certificates were issued. Due to Estonia's small size, there are no restrictions on the number of applicants. The yearly Call for applications is always open to primary, secondary and vocational schools, to universities, publishers and other language providers.

In the period from 2002 to 2012 the national calls and selection of the ELL winners in Estonia were in line with the EC priorities. Only once in 2005 a national priority was added: culture through a language.

During its ten years, the ELL nomination has undergone some changes; the most significant was the introduction of the Language Deed of the Year nomination in 2007. The Award is given to any successful language-related initiative: a project, a conference, a publication etc.

The ELL award ceremonies are usually attached to the calendar of other national language-related events; since 2006 the ELL ceremony has been part of the European Day of Languages celebrations that are held in various towns of the country.

The promotion of the ELL initiatives is implemented mainly through web-based media and during promotional events such as conferences, workshops, exhibitions.