



NATIONAL REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL

GERMANY



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1 Introduction

This report has been produced on the basis of information provided by the three bodies which administer the Europäisches Sprachensiegel (the European Language Label) in Germany. It takes account of the views of the coordinators of projects selected for case studies as part of the Nellip project. It describes the implementation of the awards in Germany and how they have been of influence in the development of language education.

2 The European Language Label in Germany

The Sprachensiegel have been awarded in Germany since 1999. In the period up to 2007 they were administered in alternate years by the „Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD) of the Kultusministerkonferenz“, which is a department of the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz), and by the „BIBB - Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung“, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training. With the start of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the Europäisches Sprachensiegel action was integrated in the overall EU programme.

The Lifelong Learning Programme is managed by three National Agencies in Germany due to the federal character of the educational system. It was therefore agreed by the German National Agencies to also share responsibility for organising the awards. Also, with the integration of the Sprachensiegel into the LLP, the three organising bodies agreed to make each year's competition even more accessible for all educational sectors. The management of the Sprachensiegel has thus been alternating between the two federal organisations, BIBB and DAAD, and the PAD that operates on behalf of the Länder. The DAAD first became involved in the organisation of the Sprachensiegel in 2010.

In 2011 it was the turn of the PAD, which is the sole public organisation in Germany working on behalf of the Federal States to promote international exchange and cooperation in the school sector. In 2010 it was run by the DAAD, and in 2012 it was organised by BIBB, the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training. The DAAD will manage the 2013 awards, which will be on the theme of "Successful learning in multilingual groups - innovative projects which promote plurilingualism in and out of school as the key to educational success, and as a way of developing intercultural competences in Europe."

3 The Label Campaigns

The overall theme for the awards changes each year, according to the priorities defined by the European Union. In 2007, it was on the qualification and training of language teachers and trainers; in 2008, the topic was "Intercultural dialogue in language learning"; in 2009, awards were given for projects related to multilingualism, described as "Europe's trump card in innovation and creativity"; the 2010 awards were for projects in foreign language training for professional life; in 2011 the theme was "Language learning in the community – using resources and building competences"; and in 2012 the theme of the year was "Digital media in language learning". The awards were last announced on 4th October 2012.

The institutions which have run outstanding language-related projects and have been awarded the European Language Label receive:

- A certificate attesting to the fact that the Europäisches Sprachensiegel has been awarded to them
- The right to use the award for the purposes of publicity
- An entry in the database of the European Language Label Awards
- Support for dissemination of their project
- Varying amounts of prize money.



The jury that selects the winning projects comprises experts who have experience in a range of different learning contexts (schools, higher education, adult and vocational education). In the judging of the 2012 awards they stressed how difficult it was to choose among 22 projects which all showed creativity and a commitment to the improvement of language learning. Five projects, however, showed outstanding qualities, especially in the manner in which they gave attention to fostering individualised learning, had already been tried and tested, and were transferable to other language and learning environments. Nevertheless, all the other projects, even if they had not been awarded the Language Label, were felt to contribute to the general aim of improving language learning and teaching, and in this way to develop plurilingualism among the citizens of Europe.

Who can apply for the awards?

In principle, all institutions in Germany from all sectors of education can apply. However, specific institutions or educational sectors can be targeted by the organising authority. In Label competitions run by BIBB or DAAD, even individuals can apply for an award, provided that they carry out projects which meet the criteria. Which languages are allowed?

In principle, all languages spoken in Europe can be the focus of projects submitted for award. However, the projects should have at least one of Europe's 23 official languages as a target language (or as a mediating language).

What kind of projects can receive the award?

The Language Label can only be awarded to projects which are well beyond the planning stage, but whose results are not yet part of the institutions routine operations. In the application there must be clear indications of how the project is implemented or will be implemented. A European Language Label can also be awarded to projects which have received - or are at the time of the application receiving - support from one of the Lifelong Learning programmes of the European Union, such as the Leonardo da Vinci or Grundvig programmes, or from other European, national or regional programmes.

What is the weighting of the different criteria?

All the criteria have an equal weighting. However all the winning projects must be related to the theme chosen as the national priority of the year. A project which does not focus on this national priority cannot be awarded the Language Label.

How important is it to provide evidence in support of an application?

As a rule, the simple description of a project is not sufficient for a successful application. The jury will take account all kinds of supporting material, which should document the conceptual background, its implementation, and where possible its impact. The application can include project products, reports, results of the evaluation processes, CDs, DVDs, photos etc. Links to websites can also be included.

The criteria

The criteria have been established at European Level. They are applied in all the participating countries, and are valid every year.

Initiatives should be comprehensive in their approach. Every element of the language project - from students to teachers, methods to materials - should ensure that the needs of the students are identified and met.

Initiatives should provide added value in their national context. This means a tangible improvement in the teaching or learning of languages, either in terms of quantity or quality. "Quantity" might refer to the project stimulating the learning of several languages, particularly those that are less widely used, whereas "quality" might refer to the introduction of an improved methodology.

Initiatives should motivate the students and teachers to improve their language skills.

Initiatives should be original and creative. They should introduce previously unknown approaches to language learning, but also make sure they are appropriate to the students concerned.

Initiatives should have a European emphasis. They should be adapted to Europe's linguistic diversity and make use of this advantage - for example, by liaising with contacts across national borders. The initiatives should actively improve understanding between cultures by promoting language skills.

Initiatives should be transferable. They might potentially be a source of inspiration for other language initiatives in different countries.

In addition to the general criteria, the European Union fixes two priorities every two years, one of which is chosen each year as the priority for Germany. The practice of choosing two annual priorities was in fact at Germany's request as this made it easier to select a focus which corresponded to the different organising institutions. In the early years of the European Language Label in Germany, the PAD exclusively awarded projects related to the school sector. In the past four years, however, Label competitions have been open to projects of all sectors and awards have been made accordingly, regardless of the organising National Agency. The choice of priority is made following consultation among the three bodies and their respective higher authorities.

The award ceremonies

Each year the awards ceremony is held in either Berlin or Bonn. As PAD is active in promoting cooperation between the German-speaking National Agencies within the LLP, there was an impetus to host the Sprachensiegel awards ceremony jointly. So in 2009 the ceremony took place in Bonn and the German-speaking Community of Belgium participated, along with their Minister of Education and representatives of their award-winning projects. Two years later, the cooperation was extended, and Austria was included: the awards to the German, Austrian and Belgian (German-speaking Community) projects were presented in Vienna, Austria. The reason for this is to emphasise the European-wide nature of the awards, to enhance their visibility and the Label's transferability. The 2012 awards were announced in Bonn, and five projects were chosen – fewer than the nine in 2011. In 2008, exceptionally, one project was awarded a first prize, with a second prize going to the eight other awards.

The projects

The award attracts applications from a broad range of educational institutions in Germany, from primary schools, secondary schools, vocational training and adult education institutions and universities. Some of the projects are local, for example tandem learning in two primary schools on either side of the German-Polish border; others, such as a project bringing together chefs in vocational training, involve Europe-wide participation. Some projects have a relatively short life: in the research related to the choice of case studies, it was not possible to find much trace of certain projects whose websites were no longer supported. This does not reflect on the quality of the projects, but indicates rather that their results have been absorbed into normal routine operations over time. Other projects have had a much longer-lasting impact; these have

included projects with a strong theoretical and conceptual background, in relation to the importance of plurilingual approaches to the successful education of migrant children, for example. A number of projects have been or are the subjects of doctoral theses; one of these studying the impact of plurilingual approaches to primary reading skills will be completed in 2013.

4 Awarding the European Language Label

Number of awards

1999 – 6 ; 2000 – 9 ; 2001 – 6 ; 2002 – 7 ; 2003 – 15 ; 2004 – 10 ; 2005 – 12 ; 2006 – 8 ; 2007 – 8 ; 2008 – 9 ; 2009 – 4 ; 2010 – 5 ; 2011 – 9 ; 2012 – 5. In total: 113.

The following analysis, however, is based on the European database, which shows only 71 European Language Labels awarded in Germany since 1999:

Educational sectors included

3 projects were in the field of pre-school education; 13 in primary education: 22 related to secondary education: 10 to vocational training; 1 to higher education ; 7 to universities ; 12 to adult learning ; 7 to advanced professional education ; 17 to teacher education.

Target languages

Most projects were multilingual: 38 projects included English as a target language; 30 included French; 25 included German; 5 Spanish; 5 Polish; 2 Russian; 1 Danish etc.

Priority topics

17 projects related to CLIL (content & language integrated learning); 14 to intercultural awareness ; 13 to early language learning; 12 to educational exchanges; 11 to lifelong language learning ; 8 to the uses of technology in language education; 5 to questions of social exclusion; 4 to language diversification; 3 projects related to migrant education; 2 to minority or regional languages.

5 Evaluation carried out by the NELLIP German Team

The system of rotating the organisation of the awards in Germany has a number of advantages: a broad spectrum of different educational sectors is covered and there are projects of high quality at all levels from pre-school to university and adult education. The system reflects the way in which responsibility for education in Germany is shared between the German Länder and the federal authorities. The projects in general combine clear conceptual principles with forward-looking and innovative practical approaches. There is a strong presence of projects related to European priorities, especially those related to the integration of migrants and the development of interculturality in education. There is a good mix of projects with very broad applications as well as local projects with a large element of conviviality and involvement of local stakeholders, including parents.

There are also a number of issues which might be considered in the future development of the Sprachensiegel. In comparison with other countries of similar size, the number of awards is relatively modest – 113, compared with 178 for the United Kingdom, 162 for France and 81 for Denmark, for example. This is due perhaps to a greater selectivity, and related to the number of applications.

In discussion with the institutions responsible for the award, the view was expressed that the decision in 2007 to share the organisation among three authorities has made it more difficult to achieve continuity. However, this reflects the German federal system and its division of responsibilities in education. The three bodies organising the Language Label in Germany are in close contact with each other and support each other by distributing information on current competitions through their websites, newsletters etc.

A further issue relates to the languages of the European database. The three German agencies regretted the decision to place those projects which did not have an English translation at the end of the database in 2012. They consider that, as well as reducing the visibility of those projects, this decision does not give proper recognition to German as an official language of the Union, nor to its status as an international language.

6 Impact and Exploitation of the European Language Label as assessed by the NELLIP Team

In many ways the impact of the Label awards depends on the way in which the award winners exploit it. The project coordinators contacted all underlined following benefits:

- The motivating effect as a reward for all the hard work and initiative shown in planning and carrying out the different projects;
- The usefulness within their institutions as external evidence of the worth of the projects, and thus as a way of convincing the authorities to give continued or additional support;
- The award was a means of publicising the work of the institutions concerned at a local level or in the broader professional community;
- The awards helped the projects to form networks or to make contact with existing networks;
- The positive awareness-raising effect in relation to European issues, especially those related to intercultural and migrant education, among the public at large, through exposure in the media.

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