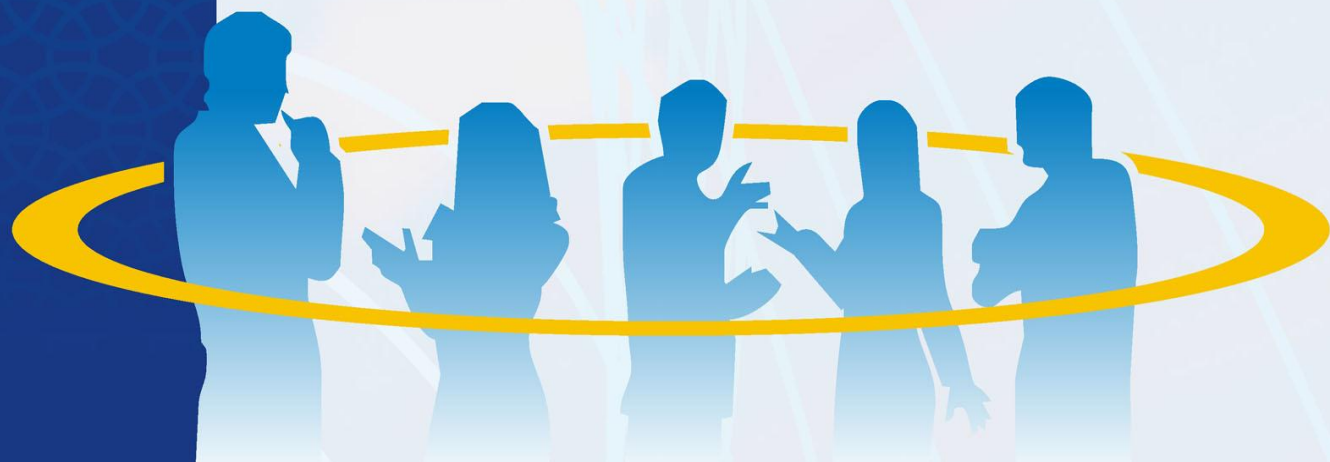




NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL

LITHUANIA



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LITHUANIAN 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 Lithuania in the period from 2002 to the end of 2012. The report has been prepared in the framework of the NELLIP project in close cooperation with the Education Exchange Support Foundation of the Republic of Lithuania.

The report falls into two parts.

Part I provides a brief coverage of the history of the ELL in Lithuania from the moment of its introduction to the present; it also describes the procedure of the ELL campaign and presents some statistical data on the national spread and scope of the initiative.

Part II presents the results of the research carried out within the NELLIP project programme. The research focuses on the selection and analysis of the best ELL projects from the perspectives of the project promoters and the awarding bodies. The research has led to the recommendations and conclusions presented at the end of the report.

2. The European Language Label in Lithuania

As elsewhere in Europe, the European Language Label in Lithuania is an award given to the innovative language learning and teaching initiatives as well as to the innovative language learning methods and the best practice exchange. 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.

Lithuania was invited to join the European Language Label campaign in 2002¹. In the period from 2002 to 2007 the initiative was implemented by two bodies: the Expert Commission assigned by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian National Agency (now Education Exchanges Support Foundation – www.smpf.lt). The Expert Commission was made up of educators and language teaching specialists from a range of language learning institutions: universities, schools, teacher training centres and other educational bodies. The function of the commission was to analyse and, on the basis of the specified European and national priorities, select the best language learning initiatives which were granted the European Certificate signed by the European Commission officer and the Minister of Education of the Republic of Lithuania. The Expert Commission also nominated other innovative projects that received the special prizes offered by the sponsors of the European Certificate campaign in Lithuania. All the winners of the European Certificate were included in the European Commission database.

¹ initially the initiative was called the European Certificate

From its onset the initiative was viewed not only as recognition of the project results but as a strong instrument to spread the innovations by involving a wide range of institutions and individuals. There were practically no restrictions on the type of institutions that could take part in the initiative. Among them were traditional (formal) educational establishments: universities, primary, secondary, high schools and gymnasiums, learning and professional training centres and colleges.

During the first five years of the European Certificate campaign in Lithuania, 21 best projects received the European Certificate. In 2005 and in 2006 two more nominations - The Language Teacher of the Year and The Language Learner of the Year – were introduced. During the first five years of the European Language Label initiative in Lithuania, three Language Teachers of the Year and two Language Learners of the Year received their respective awards.

Since 2010 another nomination - the Language Ambassador of the Year – has been successfully used in Lithuania. In the year of its launch, the title was to be given to a well-known in Lithuania individual for his or her achievement in language learning and promotion; in 2011 the Language Ambassador title was to be given to a business company and its corporate policy in promoting language learning; in 2012 it was schools that competed for the honorable title of the Language Ambassador of the Year.

3. The Label Campaigns

3.1 Promotion

The European Language Label initially existed in Lithuania as the European Certificate. During the first five years after its launch, the initiative was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Agency, therefore it was promoted through the media channels of the both bodies; they included web- and paper-based publications, numerous seminars, conferences, workshops as well as other events (exhibitions, fairs etc).

Since 2008 the European Language Label programme has been implemented by the Education Exchanges Support Foundation , which has a staff member, specially appointed for the programme. At the end of the first five years of the European Certificate initiative in Lithuania a Summary report was prepared² . Besides, the Foundation includes the ELL information as separate chapters in its Activity Reports which are available on the Educational Exchange Support Foundation website.

The ELL activities are promoted via other events held for both professional audience and the general public. For example, the election of the first Language Ambassador of the Year took place on the news portal Delfi.lt, where over 800 readers cast their vote in favour of one of the five nominated candidates. The detailed ELL information was provided prior to the vote, to explain not only the aims of the selection but also the overall objectives of the ELL initiative and its compliance with the EU policy.

² available in Lithuanian on the Educational Exchange Support Foundation website

3.2 New nominations and selection process

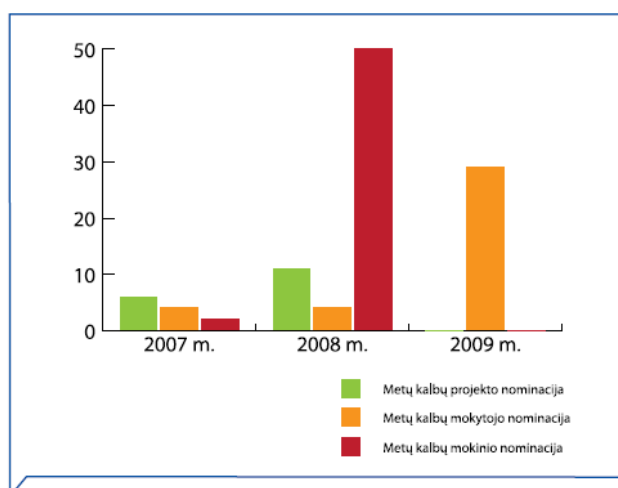
Since the launch of the initiative in 2002, the ELL in Lithuania has undergone a number of changes, both in terms of its name and of its procedural aspects

The Call for Application and the initiative's priorities are announced every year on the website of the Education Exchange Support Foundation; the contacts are given for further information and for any kind of support both for applicants and assessing process.

Since 2005 the title of the Language Teacher of the Year is awarded to language teachers for professional dedication and innovative approaches to teaching. Among the winners of the honourable title are teachers from various levels of education, whose professional dedication and enthusiasm go beyond classroom borders and whose professional achievements are duly appreciated by their pupils/students and colleagues. Although candidates are usually nominated by the administration of educational institutions with the support of their colleagues, every teacher can apply on his/her own initiative.

In 2006 the ELL initiative in Lithuania launched another nomination – the Language Learner of the Year. The aim of the first year campaign was to draw attention to the best achievements of foreigners in mastering Lithuanian – one of the most ancient languages of Europe. The long-going objective of nominating the Language Learner of the Year is to promote multilingualism and linguistic variety, especially in terms of learning less widely used and taught languages.

The new nominations within the ELL initiatives attracted attention of the both teaching and learning communities. The chart³ below shows the numbers of applications submitted for the three ELL nominations in 2007-2009: project (green), teacher (yellow), learner (red)



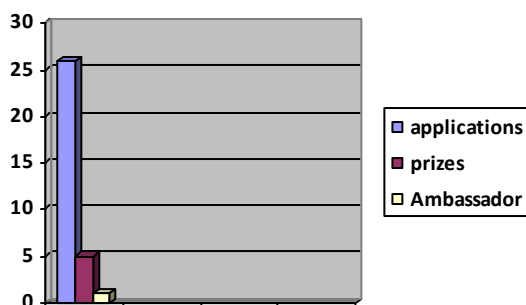
³ from

http://www.smpf.lt/lt/dokumentai/leidiniai_straipsniai/svietimo_mainu_paramos_fondo_2007_2011_m_veiklos_apzvalga

The chart shows the dynamics in the applications for different nominations which reflects the relevant year's campaign focus. In 2008 the ELL campaign focused on learners: during a specially held competition the participants were to translate the texts from two different European languages into Lithuanian.

In 2009 the ELL campaign focused on language teachers; there were applications from all sectors and levels of education: primary, secondary school teachers, university and colleges teachers, teachers from adult and informal sectors of education. There were three Awards in three categories: teaching young learners, teaching mother tongue, teaching foreign languages.

In 2010 another initiative was introduced under the ELL programme – the Language Ambassador of the Year. In 2010 the award was given to individuals, the five short-listed candidates (a pop musician, a University professor, a guide, an opera singer and a journalist) achieved prominent results not only in learning languages but also in promoting language learning and culture. The selection of the candidates was conducted on the Lithuanian most popular news portal Delfi.lt. by the public voting; the first Language Ambassador of the Year was announced during the huge public event on the European Day of Languages in September 2010. In 2011 the Language Ambassador of the Year was selected among companies and businesses that devote human and financial resources to promoting learning languages and creating favourable conditions for personal and corporate development. The selection process and the awarding ceremony were supported by the British Council and the Language Rich Europe project. During the awarding ceremony, held in the Institute of the Lithuanian Language in Vilnius, the objectives and procedures of the ELL campaign were extensively explained to the representatives of the business and education sectors who took part in the event. The chart below shows the ration between all the applications from business companies, the companies awarded special prizes and the winner of the Language Ambassador title.



The title of the Language Ambassador of 2012 was given to one of the Vilnius schools for the widest choice of languages offered in the school curriculum. The Awarding ceremony was part of the Olimpiad on Multilingualism held for the pupils of high schools. Every participating school could compete for the Title of the Language Ambassador: they had to fill in the application form and then to achieve high scores in the contests of the Olimpiad (read more http://nellip.pixel-online.org/RP_best_practies.php)

4. Priorities

Every year the European Commission defines specific priorities that are taken into account while selecting candidates for the European Language Label award. These priorities are determined by and fully consistent with the current needs and policies of the European community in the field of promoting language learning and teaching.

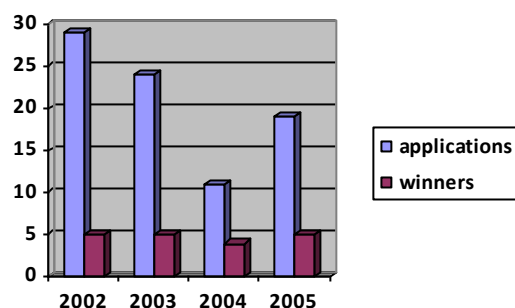
In the period from 2002 to 2012 the selection of the ELL winners in Lithuania was consistent with the EC priorities which in several years were supplemented by the following national priorities:

- creation of a friendly language learning environment;
- enhancement of the motivation to learn languages;
- adult language learning;
- teacher training and in-service training
- early language learning;
- Content and Language Integrated Learning
- bilingual education;
- diversification of the language on offer;
- inter – cultural dialogue;
- language learning in community;
- language skills as a preparation for work
- multilingual schools

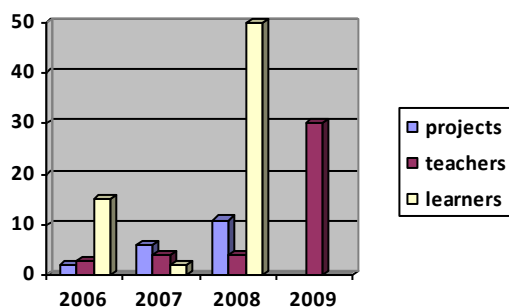
5. Awarding the European Language Label

The presented graphs and tables reflect the dynamics of the ELL initiative in Lithuania.

5.1 Applications and ELL winner projects in 2002 – 2005



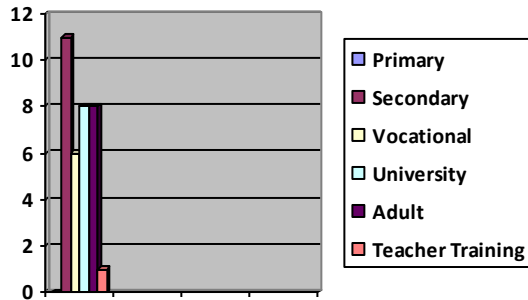
5.2 ELL Nomination Categories in 2006-2009



5.3 ELL winners by Target Languages

	Languages	Amount
1.	Lithuanian	20
2.	English	20
3.	German	12
4.	French	7
5.	Polish	7
6.	Spanish	6
7.	Russian	5
8.	Estonian	4
9.	Italian	4
10.	Turkish	3
11.	Finnish	3
12.	Portuguese	2
13.	Latvian	2
14.	Hungarian	2
15.	Maltese	2
16.	Swedish	2
17.	Greek	1
18.	Dutch	1
19.	Gaelic	1
20.	Letzeburgesch	1
21.	Icelandic	1
22.	Bulgarian	1
23.	Czech	1
24.	Slovenian	1
25.	Slovak	1
26.	Arabic	1

5.4 ELL winners by Education Sector



5.5 ELL winners by Themes

	Themes	Amount
1.	CLIL	14
2.	Intercultural awareness	13
3.	Informal language learning	8
4.	Raising the quality of teaching / learning	8
5.	Lifelong language learning	7
6.	Diversification of languages on offer	4
7.	Open and distant learning	3
8.	Exchanges	3
9.	Technology enhanced language learning	3
10.	Social exclusion – disadvantaged learners	2
11.	Cultural awareness of regional/minority languages	1
12.	Languages for mobility	1
13.	Multilingual comprehension	1
14.	Teaching of a second language	1
15.	Vocationally oriented language leaning	1
16.	Early language learning	1

6. Evaluation carried out by the NELLIP Team

The European Language Label represents an important tool to assess and award outstanding language learning initiatives on the national level. The whole idea and its practical implementation aim at contributing to the success of the European policy in the field of language learning. At the same time, the ELL initiative provides flexibility and allows adaptation to the needs and priorities of the individual member states.

The Lithuanian team of the NELLIP Network researched the available ELL databases and the archives of the Lithuanian National Agency (now Education Exchanges Support Foundation) in view of summarizing the 10-year-long ELL experience in Lithuania.

In the period from 2002 to 2012 twenty five initiatives received the European Language Label (24 projects, 1 individual).

The next step of the research was, in cooperation with the ELL team of the Education Exchanges Support Foundation, to choose case studies for conducting a thorough three - dimension study: the selected case studies were analysed and described from the perspective of the project promoter (project idea, methodology, impact etc), the NELLIP researcher (consistency with EU and national priorities) and the National Agency officer (selection criteria). The NELLIP Case Study questionnaires were sent to the respondents as an e-mail attachment together with the NELLIP project description (NELLIP poster) , in 9 out of 14 cases, the e-mail exchanges were followed by phone and/or face-to-face interviews with the project promoters.

The objectives and results of the selected Case studies are consistent with the current political priorities of the European commission in the field of language learning. Among the most frequently referred to selection criteria are the following: new/innovative ways of teaching/learning languages, raising cultural awareness and intercultural dialogue, promotion of less widely used languages and multilingualism, learning languages for specific purposes (vocational education). Those principles are consistent with the annual priorities defined by the European Commission

One of the principles followed in selecting the Case studies was to cover the main four sectors of education (school, university, adult and vocational).

The research has shown that, as regards the applicants/ project promoters, schools and universities cover the greatest numbers of applications, followed by colleges (vocational education) and adult training centres.

As for the distribution of the winner projects by target groups, the majority of the projects target adult learners, either in a formal or informal setting.

As regards the targeted languages, Lithuanian and English are the most common ones (over 80 %); the second language group is represented by other traditionally popular languages in Lithuania – German, French, Polish, Russian (about 12%). The language projects (6 out of 14 case studies) that target other, less common languages, reflect the growing integration between the European countries and its wider common socio-linguistic space.

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

7.1 Impact

As the Case study questionnaires and interviews show, most promoters applied for the European Language Label for one or more of the following reasons:

- to share the project achievements and best practice;
- to seek a greater visibility of the project results;
- to add to the institution's profile and share its achievements;

The impact of the award is positively assessed by all the promoters.

The most common factors they indicate are as follows (starting with the most frequent responses):

- motivation to get involved in and promote other projects;
- additional weight to the institution's profile;
- increased motivation and activity of the staff;
- increased networking, better cooperation between partners and colleagues;
- better understanding between teachers and pupils;
- attracting attention to adult and informal education;
- a greater visibility of the institution's activities.

Most promoters stressed the favourable impact of the award on the profile of their institutions, both on the national and international levels, which leads to invitations to join projects as partners and facilitates building new partnerships as future project promoters. All the promoters of the case studies continued their project activities either as partners or coordinators.

All the promoters of the Case studies from the school sector pointed out the increased understanding between colleagues (different subject teachers) and pupils.

7.2 Exploitation and Dissemination

The project promoters use several channels to disseminate the ELL awards:

- web-based dissemination (institutional and project websites, e-newsletters, national news portals)
- paper-based dissemination (reports, brochures, conference publications, local and national newspapers)
- face-to-face dissemination (meetings, workshops, other events)

8. Best Practices

The NELLIP „best practice“ are the projects that can be used as examples to refer to in planning, development and implementation of high quality projects that will meet all the requirements to successfully apply for the European Language Label.

The selected five projects cover all the sectors of education; they meet the quality criteria of the ELL in all the following aspects: responding to the needs of the target groups, quality project results and outcomes, innovation and originality, transferability and sustainability.

9. Recommendations

The promoters of the selected Case studies were asked about the recommendation they could give to future ELL applicants.

There were two main ideas most frequently mentioned in their responses: reliable partners and an original project idea.

More than half of the respondents stressed the importance of good and reliable partners; many promoters underlined the challenges and benefits of working with partners from either different educational institutions or involving partners from other sectors (ICT, publishers, businesses). Such cross-sector cooperation opens new perspectives both in the pre-proposal period and while working together on the project. Experienced project promoters underline the importance of wider involvement of partners in all management and implementation phases, thus ensuring a better understanding and mutual commitment.

Most promoters also emphasized the importance of an original, innovative, project idea that makes the project relevant and attractive to all the participants.

Other recommendations are as follows:

- provide a detailed description of the project and its benefits/results;
- make the project results easily adaptable to a wider range of users;
- be persistent in pursuing your objectives;
- make the process of learning fun;
- rely on the assistance of the European Commission and the National Agency;
- look for innovative ways to solve problems;
- incorporate expertise of partners from other sectors.

10. Conclusions

In Lithuania, the implementation of the European Language Label initiative started in 2002, up to now 1 individual and 24 projects have won the award. In the first 5 years the ELL campaign was implemented by two bodies: The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania and the National Agency (now – Education Exchange Support Foundation).

Since 2008 the ELL initiative has been implemented by the specially assigned staff of the Education Exchange Support Foundation. The ELL officers carry out all the promotion and information activities, ensure the dissemination of significance and opportunities offered by the European Language Label. They do that via the Foundation website (Activity reports, briefings and newsreleases) and in other events (meetings, conferences, fairs etc). They are also responsible for providing information to the European Commission and its databases.

The Lithuanian Education Exchange Support Foundation does not have its own ELL database; many relevant documents (reports) exist only in the state language (Lithuanian).

During the ten years of its implementation in Lithuania, the European Language Label initiative has undergone several changes: new nominations – the Language Teacher of the Year and the Language Learner of the Year- were introduced in 2005 and 2006 respectively. They are used alongside the European Language Label projects and reflect the shifting focus of the initiative, which may highlight quality teacher training or raising motivation of language learners. Without undermining the essence of the European Language Label initiative, the nominations added variety to the process of ELL selection and made it more relevant to the needs of the main stakeholders of the learning/teaching process.

Another important development of the European Language Label initiative in Lithuania is the introduction of another nomination - the Language Ambassador of the Year. The annual nomination reflects the current European and national priorities: language learning in community, language skills as a preparation for work, multilingual classroom (in its national version – multilingual school).

The carried out analysis of the case studies and best practice has shown that the ELL impact is positively assessed by all the project promoters. They stress the importance of the award for raising the profile of the institution, increasing the visibility of the project outcomes, enhancing the motivation of staff and learners to initiate and take part in other projects, strengthening networking both on national and international levels. The ELL award facilitates creation of new partnerships; it gives credibility to new project ideas.

The research makes it possible to confirm the use of the European Language Label as a practical tool to promote quality language learning and teaching initiatives. The newly developed nominations (Teacher and Learner of the Year, the Language Ambassador of the Year) have added new dimensions to the European Language Label practice by bringing it closer to the needs of the community. They deserve further development and a wider coverage in the mass media.



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