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EUROPEAN PROJECTS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE NELLIP NETWORK

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1. Context

Since 1998, in all EU countries, a number of successful language learning initiatives have been awarded a quality label: the European Language Label (ELL). 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 State. 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.

The European Language Label system and the related quality criteria used to promote the development of quality based language learning initiatives, is still not sufficiently known and understood by those who are working in the field of language learning, and this is an obstacle in promoting a "quality oriented culture" among language learning providers.

2. Objectives and Target Groups

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 aim of the NELLIP Network is to promote quality in language learning through the application of the quality criteria used to award the European Language Label.

The NELLIP network has five main specific objectives:

- Reviewing projects that were awarded the European Language Label
- Identification of Case Studies
- Reporting Best Practice
- Networking of ELL language learning initiatives
- Production of Quality Guidelines

The target groups of NELLIP belong to the following sectors:

- Schools
- Higher Education Institutions
- Adult Education Institutions
- Vocational Education and Training Providers

3. Activities

The following main actions are carried out by the NELLIP Network:

3.1 Research

The research aims to identify and describe case studies and good practices in planning and implementing language learning initiatives that received the European Language Label.

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The first part of the research activity selected, in 18 European countries, relevant language learning initiatives having received the European Language Label that are consistent with the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning. The selection was carried out in close cooperation with the National Agencies in charge of the European Language Label in the 18 European countries involved.

474 projects among the over 1200 projects that were awarded the ELL since 1999 have been selected, reviewed and uploaded on the database available on the NELLIP Network Internet portal.

All of the 474 selected projects were identified as they are in line with the current European political priorities in the field of Language Learning. Therefore the selected projects focus on:

- The enhancement of quality of language learning.
- New approaches to language teaching and learning, TELL
- Language learning for specific purposes, VOLL
- Promotion of mobility
- Teachers training
- Promotion of multilingualism
- Promotion of less widely spoken languages

The database of project is available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/DB_database.php

The second part of the research activity consisted in the identification, again in cooperation with the relevant National Agencies, of Case Studies. Case Studies further analyzed some of the best initiatives having received the European Language Label. Each of the selected language learning initiatives was analyzed through a direct contact with the promoter of the initiative itself. A detailed analysis of the methodology adopted to develop the selected successful initiative was made and feedbacks were also provided, on each of the selected Case Study, by the National Agency who selected it. 200 case studies have been uploaded on the Database on the Nellip Network web site.

The main purpose of the Case studies was to identify the key elements to take into account for the development of quality language learning initiatives. These key elements have been identified by the coordinators of the 200 projects that were awarded the European Language Label.

Therefore, according to the 200 coordinators of the ELL awarded projects the key quality issues to be taken into account in the language project development are:

- the direct involvement of the target group
- the taking into account what exists already and concentrate on innovative aspects
- the taking into account criteria used to award the Label in the project planning
- the clear description of the product or method for the benefit of the end users.
- the testing of deliverables produced and the following implementation of corrective actions
- the involvement of organizations to support the project's sustainability.

The database of case studies is available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/CS_lista.php

The third 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 four best practices were identified in each of the 18 European countries involved. For each of the 18 countries involved a Report of Best Practices was produced. Also a Transnational Best Practice Report has been produced. The Report has identified a collection of best practices available throughout Europe – and selected among the National Best Practices. The Transnational Best Practice Report is organized according to the target sector the selected initiatives address: school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education. 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 Practices 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, a total of eighteen National Reports on the Implementation of the European Language Label in 18 different European countries were created. Each report presents how the European Language Label is organized and managed in the country in focus. A description of the national label campaigns and national priorities is provided. The reports also focus on how the label is awarded in each country and carries out an assessment of the impact of the label on the awarded projects. Recommendations and best practices are also included in each report.

The 18 National reports are available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/RP_national.php

The National Reports are currently being jointly analyzed by the project partnership so as to produce a Comparative Transnational Report on effective methodologies for the development of successful language learning initiatives according to the quality criteria adopted to award the European Language Label. The transnational Report will further analyze the information presented in the national reports according to a transnational comparative approach that will highlight points in common and main differences among the European Language Label projects/products created and assessed in Europe. The transnational report will therefore provide language learning providers with reference to best practice solutions in planning, creating, disseminating and exploiting European Language Label products.

3.2 Creation of the Guidelines

On the basis of the results of the research activity carried out, the project partnership will develop Guidelines addressed to language learning providers. The Guidelines will focus on how to plan, implement, manage, exploit and network quality initiatives for language learning. The Guidelines will exploit the best practices developed in the framework of European language label projects.

The Guidelines will take the form of easy to use, hypertext based collection of hints, suggestions, check lists and operative plans. Direct links to examples, documents and tools collected during the research work will be made available.

The Guidelines will be organized in three main sections:

- Exploitation and Networking of European Language Labelled Initiatives
- Quality Issues in planning of language learning initiatives
- Information on the European Language Label

3.3 Workshops

The aim of workshops that will be organized in 2014, is the testing of materials produced and the sharing of information about the most effective language learning initiatives having received the European Language Label in Europe.

180 language learning providers will be identified in the nine European countries involved in the project. They will represent the project's target groups: schools, higher education institutions, adult education institutions, vocational education and training providers.

Each NELLIP partner will organize workshops where the end users will have the opportunity to be presented with and test the educational and training materials developed in the framework of initiatives having received the European Language Label. The workshops will also give the participants the opportunity to test and exploit the Guidelines on how to plan, implement, manage, disseminate and exploit, quality initiatives and products for language learning that can successfully apply to obtain the European Language Label.

Information about the workshops will be available on the NELLIP Internet portal at: <http://projects.pixel-online.org/nellip>

3.4 Networking

The number of the NELLIP network members is currently expanding. So far, 67 organizations operating in the field of language learning have officially joined the network. The benefits for the NELLIP network members include the possibility of being involved in exchanging experience on quality issues in language learning and on the European Language Label. The network members also have the possibility of being in contact with other language experts and of identifying potential partners for international projects in the field of language learning.

The information about the NELLIP network's members is available at: http://nellip.pixel-online.org/MB_associate_partners.php

4. Main Results

The main expected results include:

- Database of language learning initiatives that were awarded the European Language Label that are consistent with the current political priorities in the field of language learning.
- Case studies on language learning initiatives that have received the European Language Label
- Best Practices developed by language learning initiatives that were awarded the European Language Label
- National and Transnational Reports analyzing the impact of the European Language Label on quality improvement in language learning
- Guidelines on how to plan, implement, manage, disseminate and exploit, quality initiatives for language learning with reference to the European Language Label
- Workshops to test the materials produced
- International networking activities

All of the project results will be available on the project internet portal at: <http://projects.pixel-online.org/nellip>

5. Project Organization

The NELLIP Network project, is funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme – Key Activity 2 Languages. NELLIP is coordinated by Pixel (www.pixel-online.net), an education and training organization specialized in European cooperation, based in Florence, Italy.

The project transnational partnership is composed by: KU TU Ltd. (Bulgaria); GexCall, University of Extremadura (Spain); Omnia, Joint Authority of Education in Espoo (Finland); Universal Learning Systems (Ireland); Connectis (Italy); Public Service Language Centre (Lithuania); EuroEd (Romania); PROSPER-ASE (Romania); Fågelskolan (Sweden); EAQUALS (United Kingdom).