



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

CZECH REPUBLIC





AUTHOR:

Raya Stanachkova

KU TU Ltd., Bulgaria

q2_liman@fastbg.net

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CZECH NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL

1. Introduction

The aim of the present report is to give information about the implementation of the European Language Label in the Czech Republic.

The present report aims at showing how the European Language Label is organized and managed in the Czech Republic, how are the national label campaigns organized, what priorities does the Label address, etc. The report also focuses on how the label is awarded in the Czech Republic and provides an assessment of the impact of the label on the awarded projects.

The development of the national report is based on the results of the case studies and best practices identified and developed in the Czech Republic in cooperation with project coordinators awarded with the European label and the Czech National Agency.

The document provides an identification of the national institution responsible for managing the European Language Label in the Czech Republic, its assigned responsibilities, European and national priorities in the area, selection and award criteria, initiatives awarded with the Label as well as the impact of the award on the selected projects.

2. The European Language Label in the Czech Republic

The European Language Label is an award that encourages new initiatives in the field of teaching and learning languages, rewarding new techniques in language teaching, spreading the knowledge of their existence and thereby promoting good practices. The Label is open to all aspects of education and training, regardless of age or methods used, with its main focus being to promote innovation in language teaching. By supporting innovative projects, at a local and national level, the Label seeks to raise the standards of language teaching across Europe.

Each year, the Label is awarded to the most innovative language learning projects in each country participating in the scheme. It is coordinated by the European Commission, but managed by the assigned National Agencies in each country. The general criteria for winning the Label award are agreed at European level, but individual countries can introduce their own requirements.

In the Czech Republic, the implementation of the European Language Label and the development of specific actions, in accordance with the EU general strategies, are delegated to the National Agency for European Educational Programmes (NAEP).

NAEP was established by the Czech Ministry of Education in 2007 as part of the Centre for International Services MoEYS. NAEP is a successor of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci National Agencies and it is responsible for implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme and other educational programmes in the Czech Republic.

NAEP provides promotion of educational programmes, assistance and consultancy services, management of funds and contracts for decentralized actions, monitoring, dissemination and valorisation, organisation of seminars and conferences.

In the Czech Republic, the European Language Label is awarded to successful and effective initiatives and projects in the field of language teaching and learning, regardless of the type of the educational organisations or the age of the language learners and beneficiaries. Accepted are initiatives aimed at developing and applying new models, approaches, creative and innovative practices. The awarded organizations have the right to use the European Language Label logo and they are included in the database of the European Commission.

The European Language Label support to new activities in the field of language education is to promote the educational community and inspire others to implement such activities in language teaching. The award may be granted to any innovative project or activity in the field of language education which is still in development but with already proven results, or to successfully completed projects (but not later than three years from completion). Awards are granted only to projects that meet all of the conditions of the call for tenders.

The European Language Label competition is open to all institutions and organizations, private and public, which are involved in language teaching and learning and are lawfully registered on the territory of the Czech Republic. The candidates are requested to motivate their decision for participation, to explain and back with arguments how their language initiative addresses the conditions for participation and to provide a short description covering each of the selection criteria.

The selection procedure of the European Language Label in the Czech Republic is addressed to institutions of all types which have developed innovative solutions for the promotion of language learning. They cover:

- local and regional organizations
- vocational training organizations and centres (including language private schools)
- research centres
- private companies and enterprises
- universities
- schools of any kind, public schools, private schools and officially recognized schools
- volunteer organizations, non-profit organizations
- other organizations active in the field of education and training
- individuals

The activities implemented by NAEP in regard to the European Language Label in the Czech Republic are directed towards:

- promotion, information and dissemination of the opportunities and experiences offered by the European Language Label
- organization and publication of the call for tender
- selection and awarding of candidates
- organization of the award ceremony
- follow-up activities on dissemination of the labeled initiatives and popularization of the good practices

3. The Label Campaigns

3.1. Promotion

Every year as part of the campaign for awarding the European Language Label, NAEP undertakes a series of promotional activities with the aim to disseminate the benefits offered by the award. Those activities are directed towards activities inviting and encouraging the participation in the European Language Label selection. The promotion is focused on increasing the popularity of the European Language Label in the Czech Republic. The promotional campaign also informs about the European policies and strategies in the field of language promotion and multilingualism as well as announces the objectives of the Label.

Among the promotional activities are:

- Information posted on the NAEP website (www.naep.cz)
- Promotional materials distributed during events, conferences, seminars, etc.
- Newsletters sent to relevant organizations and potential candidates
- Articles and advertisements published in newspapers and on websites concentrated on education (about 10 advertisements in media)
- Information provided during events, conferences, seminars, etc., organised by NAEP on national level or focused on language promotion
- Information shared through NAEP's informational channels and network of partners and associates
- Promotion through the labeled projects and initiatives from previous years

3.2 Call for tenders

Every year NAEP launches a call for tenders for the European Language Label with information about the objectives of the Label, the current European and national priorities, the procedure for the presentation of the candidatures, etc. Guidelines for submission of the application forms are also provided.

The call for tenders is published on NAEP's website and advertised through the dissemination channels described above.

In general, the European Language Label is directed towards identifying good practices in the field of language promotion. Important requirements for the award are the innovative character of the proposals and the potential for sustainability of the achieved results and developed products.

Every year, NAEP publishes the objectives of the Label campaign which are in correspondence with the European priorities and strategies in the field of language learning and promotion. Specific objectives are published each year channeling the potential proposals into separate sub-areas of the language promotion.

3.3 Selection of winning projects

The submitted proposals within the announced deadlines are being assessed by experts who evaluate the proposals firstly whether they are eligible for participation in the procedure, and then against a set of selection criteria which the application forms of all candidates have to address.

The selection criteria for the European Language Label 2012 cover:

- Innovation – The submitted initiatives have to be original and innovative. They have to present new approaches and methods which haven't been used so far in the field of language teaching and learning. In the same time they have to be applicable with the target groups they are intended for.
- Comprehensiveness – Each one of the project elements (learners, teachers, materials, methods, etc.) has to guarantee that the learners' needs are being identified and satisfied.
- Motivation – The initiatives have to motivate learners and teachers to improve their language skills and competencies.
- Transferability – The initiatives have to be transferable also in other contexts with potential improvements and better results. They could inspire other initiatives in the field of language learning in different countries.
- European dimension – The projects are expected to promote the advantages of the European linguistic diversity and multilingual character and to enhance the multicultural dialogue through the development of language skills.
- Added value – The initiatives have to ensure added value in their national context. This means the delivery of tangible improvements in the language teaching and learning with regard to the quantity or the quality. The "quantity" refers to projects focused on a few languages and especially on less widely used and taught European languages. The "quality" could refer to the introduction of new methodologies for language teaching.

NAEP prepares the ranking and announces the winners which are contacted personally by phone or email and enter into communication with NAEP regarding the award ceremony and follow-up activities.

3.4 Awarding Ceremony

An official ceremony for awarding the European Language Label to the winning candidate(s) is organised by NAEP with the aim to ensure larger dissemination, visibility and impact of the award. The winning organizations are provided with the opportunity to present the awarded initiatives, and where applicable, to demonstrate their products.

The event also represents a forum for exchange of experience and ideas in the field of language learning, discussion on the current European and national priorities in the area as well as recommendations for improvement of the national policies related to language education.

4. Priorities

Every year the European Commission comes out with specific priorities for the European Language Label award. The yearly priorities aim to identify experiences that, for their specificity and for the results achieved, are clearly referred to a political and strategic framework for improving and promoting language teaching and learning.

For the 2012-2013 Campaign, the priorities defined by the European Commission are:

- language learning based on the new technologies

This priority is defined by the Commission as follows: *“technology influences many aspects of our lives, language learning included: computer and/or technology-assisted language learning and testing, blended language learning, virtual and distance learning have become very useful tools to teach and learn foreign languages efficiently. The creation and educational use of social networks also boosts the fostering of multilingual engagement and participation across boundaries, and represents a means to interact and to learn foreign languages.*

This innovative learning/teaching system should combine the inspiration and motivation of traditional classroom teaching and the flexibility of online or distance learning to create courses that are accessible and motivating for today’s students, who develop their autonomy, interact by way of a computer with teachers “on the other side of the screen” and have fun in learning a foreign language”.

- multilingual classrooms

The explanation behind this priority is that *“the phenomenon of multilingual classrooms has been constantly increasing. These classrooms are made up of students coming from different countries and not sharing a common mother tongue. Learners speak a variety of first languages, their behavior and cultures can be very different: this may create problems but can also be used as a focus of comparison and discussion. Herein lies the challenging task faced by teachers: they should adapt their teaching techniques in order to take this diversity into account and respect it, but focus on the main purpose, which is to provide learners with the best possible communication and grammar skills in the target language”.*

In the Czech Republic the national priorities for the 2012 European Language Label campaign are directed towards:

- Language learning in vocational education
- Language learning for disadvantaged people

5. Awarding the European Language Label

The granting of the European Language Label award in the Czech Republic began in late 2001, when the Czech Republic, along with other countries, was invited to participate in the programme. The first award was handed out in 2002.

In 2004, as part of activities related to the Action Plan of the European Commission to promote linguistic diversity and language learning, the European Language Label expanded towards an important activity in the field of language education, which represents the individual awards – European language teacher of the year. Based on the decision of the European Language Label jury in the Czech Republic the individual awards are granted only once every two years. So far individual awards in the Czech Republic have been granted in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012.

The aim of the individual awards for a European language teacher of the year is to reward teachers working in the field of language education, whose activities in the field of language learning are innovative or exceptional, inspirational, or who encourage further access to language training and creating a motivating environment for developing awareness of languages and linguistic diversity.

The award for the European language teacher of the year may be granted to any person working in the field of language education regardless of the type of organization / institution s/he represents.

In the Czech Republic the European Language Label so far (2012 including) has been granted to 71 projects. The major part of the awarded initiatives addresses the School Education sector, with the lead falling on secondary education (31), followed by primary education (25), and pre-primary education (8). The Vocational Education and Training sector has 19 labeled initiatives, while the Higher Education and Adult Education sectors are represented by 11 initiatives each. Some of the labeled good practices are directed towards 2 or more educational sectors.

In regard to the thematic areas covered by the labeled projects in the Czech Republic, most of them are in the area of raising intercultural awareness (33) and raising the quality of language teaching and learning (26). A high number of the initiatives are also focused on promotion of language learning through mobility, exchanges and informal learning.

In terms of languages, the highest number of awarded projects is focused on English (45), followed by German (33), Czech (18) and French (18). Other languages object to the labeled good practices in the Czech Republic include Spanish, Greek, Danish, Bulgarian and other less widely used and taught European languages. In some cases one and the same project was focused on more than one language.

The organisations which have received the Label award in the Czech Republic include language schools, universities, public bodies, private companies and organisations, etc.

In 2012, the project “Lanterna Futuri” was nominated to represent the Czech Republic at the Label of the Labels ceremony held in Cyprus on 26-28 September 2012. The project was selected for its significant multicultural dimension and ongoing positive impact on intercultural competencies.

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

The European Language Label represents an important tool to assess and award quality language learning initiatives at 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.

The European language policies aim to protect linguistic diversity and promote knowledge of languages. The most recent key documents on language learning are: *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). From those key documents, it is possible to understand the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning.

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

By matching the quality criteria used to award the European Language Label and the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning (i.e. those mentioned above), the Bulgarian team of the NELLIP Network selected relevant language learning initiatives among those that were awarded the European Language Label in the Czech Republic. Among all the awarded initiatives identified by the Bulgarian team of the NELLIP Network, relevant Case Studies were selected and developed. 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 mentioned current political priorities, the ones mostly referred to by the selected case studies focus on the promotion of: enhancement of quality of language teaching; promotion of new approaches to language teaching and learning; promotion of multilingualism; promotion of the development of teaching material for the learning of less widely spoken languages; supporting mobility for language learning. Those principles are also consistent with the annual priorities defined by the European Commission, with a specific reference to the ones for 2012.

In relation to the target group, the NELLIP team identified four different sectors of reference among the awarded projects:

- School Education,
- Higher Education,
- Adult Education
- Vocational Education and Training.

According to this further classification, the highest number of awarded projects concerns the School Education sector, followed by the Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education and Adult Education sectors.

7. Impact and Exploitation of the European Language Label

7.1 Impact

The identified case studies revealed the motivation of the different organizations to apply for the European Language Label. The performed interviews showed what were the goals and expectations of the promoters in respect to their initiatives and how winning the award helped them in further disseminating the projects and exploiting their results. The most frequently stated reasons for applying for the European Language Label can be summarized as follows:

- to ensure better visibility of the initiative
- to ensure greater sustainability of the results
- to ensure European quality recognition for the initiative and product
- to ensure further dissemination opportunities
- to create networking opportunities

With regard to the impact of the European Language Label on the awarded initiatives, the promoters pointed out that the Label contributed to the better visibility of their projects and created opportunities for sustainable dissemination. The most frequently pointed out benefits from the impact of the award on the initiatives according to the interviewed promoters could be summarized as follows:

- better visibility of the initiative
- opportunity for creating new collaborations
- sustainable dissemination of the project and better popularity
- official recognition of the quality of the project and its outcomes

7.2 Exploitation and Dissemination

With the purpose of spreading the information about the projects that were awarded the European language Label, the project promoters of the awarded projects put the Label logo on all the documents (brochures, publications, promotional leaflets) related to their project. Some of the project promoters also organized and participated in specific seminars and conferences with the purpose to inform about the project and the awarded Label.

8. Recommendations

The promoters of the Czech projects that were awarded the Label and that were object to the case studies were asked to provide recommendations to future applicants for the European Language Label. The promoters said that in order to develop a quality language project that can successfully apply for the European Language Label, it is necessary to identify precisely the needs of the target groups and during the project implementation involve them in the pursuit of the set objectives. Furthermore, it is recommended that the projects take into account the selection criteria for the European Language Label in the implementation phase, show innovation and proves for sustainable results.

The recommendations provided by project promoters refer mainly to:

- defining the target groups and their specific needs
- taking into account the award criteria during the project implementation
- providing a description of the innovation of the products developed and their applicability with the target groups
- explaining the transferability potential of the project in other context and different target groups
- providing a clear plan for continuation of the project beyond the contractual period and sustainability of the achieved results

Further recommendation regarding the European Language Label in the Czech Republic was directed towards carrying out a wider dissemination campaign in order to inform language learning providers about the idea of the European Language Label and the benefits of receiving it. In order to do so, the case studies developed by the NELLIP network could be used in order to present best practices as far as the benefits of the European Language Label are concerned.

Nevertheless, the Czech Republic has one of the highest numbers of applications compared to other European countries (with the same size). NAEP publishes articles, advertisements and presents the European Language Label at different conferences and events. A regular mailing campaign is also implemented.

Based on the performed research and extracted information from awarded projects the following recommendations could be directed towards the Czech National Agency and the European Commission in order to improve the quality and significance of the European Language Label award:

- to organise wider dissemination campaigns for the European Language Label
- to raise awareness of the benefits from receiving the Label to language learning providers and other interested organizations and individuals
- to organise more events focusing on the exchange of information and experience among promoters of successful projects and good practices
- to encourage more active cooperation between the labeled initiatives and the National Agency in order to spread the results of the successful projects more widely
- to increase the attractiveness of the award

9. Best Practices

Among all the awarded projects from the Czech Republic, some have been selected under the NELLIP network as Best Practices. The selected initiatives can be used as examples and benchmarks to refer to in the planning and development of quality future language learning projects and initiatives that have the necessary characteristics to successfully apply for the European Language Label.

The identified best practices have been selected based on the extent to which they address the quality criteria for the European Language Label, and in particular if they are successfully addressing the needs of the specific target groups, the quality of the developed products and achieved results, the innovation in the used methods and approaches, transferability of the project and the potential for sustaining its results in the long term.

10. Conclusions

In the Czech Republic, the implementation of the European Language Label is delegated to the National Agency for European Educational Programmes (NAEP). The Agency is also responsible for the management of the actions launched for achievement of the European priorities and strategies on national level. NAEP initiates the European Language Label campaigns in the Czech Republic, publishes the European and national priorities in the field of language learning, announces selection criteria for the Label, organizes and manages the call for tenders and the selection procedure and implements the award ceremonies.

Among the activities of NAEP is to carry out a promotional campaign for informing of and disseminating the opportunities offered by the European Language Label. In order to do so they publish information on their website and other public online sources accessible by language learning providers, organize seminars, fairs and conferences so as to promote the information about the Label.

A call for tenders for the European Language Label is published every year. The selection and awarding of the winning projects is carried out by NAEP in cooperation with experts involved for the purposes of assessment of the proposals. A ceremony for awarding the winning initiatives is organized every year.

For the first time the European Language Label in the Czech Republic was awarded in 2002 and there have been 71 winning initiatives since (until 2012). The statistical data shows that English is the main language which the labeled initiatives in the Czech Republic have focused on, followed by German, Czech, French and a number of other languages, mainly less widely used and taught. During the first 10 years of European Language Label in the Czech Republic, a major part of labeled initiatives fell on projects focused on developing language products and methodologies for school education, followed by vocational education and training, higher education and adult education.

In regard to quality criteria used for identifying the case studies from the Czech Republic, the Bulgarian team of the NELLIP network has selected case studies whose objectives are consistent with the current political priorities of the European Commission in the field of language learning. The analysis of the case studies allowed to understand the motivations behind the applications for the European Language Label. Most of the project promoter decided to submit their application for the European Language Label in order to ensure better visibility of the initiative, to ensure greater sustainability of the results, to ensure European quality recognition for the initiative and product, to ensure further dissemination opportunities and create networking opportunities.

The promoters of the labeled initiatives evaluate the impact of the European Language Label award on their projects rather positively, although some state that a wider awareness-raising campaign about the benefits from the Label is needed. Most of the promoters state that the Label contributed to the better visibility of their projects, sustainable dissemination and opportunities for creating synergies with other organizations active in the same field of activities. In addition, the official recognition acquired was often used by the project promoters as a quality label to demonstrate the value of the initiatives.

The main weakness of the European Language Label in the Czech Republic is represented by the fact that it is not well known among organizations which are developing language good practices and which are potential beneficiaries of the award. It would be important that the information about the European Language Label also includes a clear description of the benefits related to its awarding. In order to do so, the case studies developed by the NELLIP network could be used in order to present best practices as far as the benefits of the European Language Label are concerned.

Finally, in order to improve the implementation of the European Language Label in the Czech Republic it would be necessary: to organise wider dissemination campaigns for the European Language Label; to raise awareness of the benefits from receiving the Label to language learning providers and other interested organizations and individuals; to organise more events focusing on the exchange of information and experience among promoters of successful projects and good practices; to encourage more active cooperation between the labeled initiatives and the National Agency in order to spread the results of the successful projects more widely; to increase the attractiveness of the award.