# Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages 2 (TNP 2)

# Subproject 2: New (Language) Learning Environments

## Final Report

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## Executive Summary (by Ole Helmersen)

It is important to emphasise at the outset that the overall aim of TNP2 is to stimulate improvements and innovations in higher education programmes and learning modes in the area of languages. The main rationale behind TNP and its three subprojects has been for higher education institutions to look at themselves: what are we doing, what can we do better, where are we not good enough, what can be achieved with increased cooperation and what is required to improve performances. It is also of paramount importance to stress that higher education institutions cannot create improvements alone. Decisions, action and funding are necessary at institutional, national and European levels to make real change and development happen.

This report presents the results and recommendations of the TNP2 subproject on New Learning Environments (NLEs) in the area of languages. It is one of three subproject reports following from TNP2, the other two focusing on quality enhancement and curriculum development.

The report includes numerous examples of good practice to provide inspiration for further development of language teaching and learning in higher education at individual, national and European levels.

Language and intercultural competencies play an increasingly important role in furthering and strengthening multilingualism in Europe and are thus crucial to the successful implementation of the Bologna-Prague-Barcelona process. With the rapid expansion and development of new information and communication technologies, the possibilities for developing NLEs for language teaching and learning increase dramatically, and place NLEs at the centre of efforts to fulfil the Bologna-Prague process.

Using and further developing ICT-based NLEs present decision makers at institutional, national and European levels with an important challenge. The basis for a genuine breakthrough towards furthering multilingualism - be it for students in higher education or for life long learning – exists and is amply documented in this report. However, in order not to waste this golden opportunity there is a need for imminent action and for decisions at the three decision levels referred to.

At European level there is a specific need for continuous networking and for common, more standardised and flexible learning platforms to ensure easy access of resources and sharing of expertise. Funding of research into NLE-assisted language learning and staff development is also necessary.

At national level there is a particular need for the adoption of language policies throughout the education systems, not least in higher education, in order to ensure that multilingualism is supported and backed with funding.

At institutional level these policies at European and national levels must be implemented in the form of institutional policies and practices to ensure that all students get access to language teaching in foreign languages through the means of NLEs and thus acquire tools and skills to add on language skills throughout their studies at university as well as afterwards. Finally, the necessary changes of infrastructure at institutional level are the responsibility of higher education management.

The report distinguishes between ICT-enhanced and mobility-derived NLEs. It is important for decisions to confront and address both of these and to ensure that both of them are consciously approached and supported in future developments of language teaching and learning in higher education.

## 1. Introduction

Although there is general agreement that academic expertise in today's globalised world presupposes multiple and sophisticated language and communication skills and a versatile mastery of technology, it is very often implied, at least indirectly, that these skills develop on their own or as a by-product of learning the "real" content of expertise, i.e. the subject matter. Furthermore, language learning is still often mainly seen as learning about the language (i.e. learning the system and structure), rather than learning to use the language for personal and professional purposes. These views are reflected, for instance, in avoiding the use of the words "language" and even "communication" in discussing, say, the development of knowledge or professional qualifications, and opting for cognitive terms like "learning skills", "synthesising", "analysing" and "capacity to work in teams and to make decisions collaboratively". Yet, knowledge cannot be constructed unless there is access to some way of expressing it and sharing it with others, and teams cannot work together and make collaborative decisions without communicating with one another – be it in a face-to-face situation or through electronic means. As we encourage and increase student and staff mobility and as we move towards what is called dynamic and networked expertise, we also move towards heightened demands for spontaneous, reciprocal, interactive and co-operative communication and problem-solving in several languages in real and in virtual contexts of learning, teaching, and working. The skills involved in coping with these demands, as well as with information management in general, need to be addressed in higher education in particular, because they are at the heart of creating a true European education and research space and ensuring a competitive edge for our graduates.

The rapid expansion and development of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and increased mobility have already created both immense challenges and an immense potential for all education, and particularly for language and culture learning and teaching. From the latter point of view, they have created what has been defined in our TNP2 subproject as two new learning environments (NLE), namely, a technological learning environment, enabling network-based, electronic and mobile (i.e. via computer and the mobile telephone) learning, teaching and communication and a "natural" learning environment, enabling face-to-face multilingual and multicultural interaction and exposure. When integrated in the Higher Education (HE) curricula, these environments can play a key role in promoting the kinds of skills that are underlined or of concern in discussions around the Bologna-Prague process, in the Tuning project, as well as the other TNP projects, to give a few examples. Ways in which this integration might be possible have been investigated in the subproject on NLEs and in the workshops it has organised. Suffice it to say at this point that much work needs to be done both in terms of infrastructure and teacher and learner development for the full potential of new learning environments to become used in language learning and teaching, as well as in education in general.

The present report is based on the work of the TNP2 subproject 2 Scientific Committee over the years 2000-2003, as well as on other relevant documentation and research findings. The period is characterized by substantial changes and challenges in the European Higher Education area both in terms of degree structures and contents and in terms of orienting towards the permeation of technology and the resulting exponential growth of information and knowledge. In addition, mobility (physical and virtual) and networking continue to create new demands for the kinds of skills and approaches needed in the various academic, professional and policy endeavours of both individuals and institutions. Pursuit and maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity, as well as the new online intercultural communication skills are yet another set of challenges to be addressed in both education and workplaces. Successful coping with these changes will require mutual respect and joint efforts of all parties involved in order to enable the flexible and stepwise development of structures and contents that allow for and promote individual learning paths and continuous, informed updating of skills, knowledge and expertise, as well as their assessment. One key task for higher education is to ensure that graduates are able to develop the necessary tools and personal life-long learning approaches during their educational careers, in other words, that in addition to becoming experts in their fields they also know how to communicate their expertise, how to learn more and how to assess and direct their

learning – whether in a "new" or an "old" working and learning environment. The principal task of subproject 2 has been to consider in what ways technology-driven and mobility-derived new learning environments would best contribute to the implementation of language curricula and instruction aimed at both language and non-language students and to the development of multimedia literacy, intercultural communication competence and life-long learning skills – skills that are crucial for graduates to be successfully employed in the European labour market.

The main purpose of this report is to present information and evidence which can be used both by academic staff making decisions about their pedagogical approaches and instructional designs and by educational decision-making bodies involved in promoting and developing the diversity and quality of the European HE area either locally, nationally or at the European level. For this reason, the main part of the report, i.e. the part dealing with needs and recommendations for action, is divided into three sections, which deal with the individual level and the organizational levels, although actions at these levels are often intertwined in practice. For each recommendation presented, possible ways of implementing the recommended action are explained and examples of good practice to date are presented if they are available. Both the recommendations and the examples are the outcome of the work done collaboratively in the subproject both in the form of national status reports and through discussions and electronic communication.

Systematic and informed integrating of New Learning Environments into HE language learning and teaching is a complex process that involves great technological, pedagogical, psychological and policy-level challenges. It offers an immense potential, but there are also many obstacles which can only be overcome through systematic and joint efforts. One general obstacle is the variety of terminology used, in particular, with issues relating to ICT, the knowledge society, and the skills and learning outcomes to be pursued in education. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly discuss the premises established in the subproject as background considerations for identifying the core criteria and prerequisites, as well as actual recommendations and examples of good practice. The final chapter of the report outlines some European-level project proposals.

## 2. Background to Subproject 2 Recommendations

### 2.1. Definitions: New Learning Environments & Independent Language Learning

The concept of New Learning Environment was defined by the scientific committee of the subgroup in the following way: NLE refers to two kinds of new learning contexts, each of which is extremely varied in its potential and in the approaches that it offers for language learning and teaching, namely

1. The learning **environment created by new information and communications technologies (ICT)**, enabling e(lectronic)-and m(mobile) learning and teaching, as well as virtual mobility; **hereafter: *ICT-enhanced environments***, and

2. The learning **environment created by new human resources available through** (real, physical) **mobility** i.e. use of the presence and experience of multilingual and multicultural staff and students for language and culture learning and teaching purposes; **hereafter**: ***mobility-derived environments***.

The latter environment does not appear to be used systematically in European Higher Education language teaching, but there are already some indications of related activities (e.g. Internationalisation at Home, non-language academic staff training for integrated language and content instruction; pre-mobility briefing and training in intercultural communication and particularly in LWULT - less widely used and less taught - languages ) in some countries.

As regards ICT-enhanced environments, then, there are two main **"models" according to which they are implemented in language education:**

1. The **ADD-ON** model, which tends to consider the new environment as additional to the existing structure and practice, i.e. no changes in the existing system are necessary; and

2. The **ADD-IN** model, where NLEs are integrated into the existing system thus causing changes in its structure and content and in professional development. This model also implies institutional and departmental policy decisions.

**The first model** is characterised by a more unsystematic use of ICT-enhanced environments in the sense that the use is typically based on individual initiative. Existing practice and materials are transferred to the NLE as such, often for economic reasons. There is no overall effort to adapt learning tasks in such a way that the potential of WWW, for instance, would be used in a relevant way, not to mention any efforts to improve or inform technologies rather than only invest in them and use them. The resulting materials, then, become confined to traditional transmission models of learning,focusing on drill and practice, as well as self-administered tests which only require low-level cognitive skills.

**The second model** is usually a collaborative effort based on institutional strategies and the outcome is often some pedagogical innovation. Users are aware of the added value of using ICT in each particular learning context, and make informed decisions about the kinds of tasks and activities that contribute to the aims and learning outcomes desired. There is a tendency for institutions to pass through the first model in their pursuit of the second, unless proper pedagogical preparation and training is available. Learning environments are only as good as their underpinning learning ethos, and many universities which emulate networked learning and the development of virtual campuses often end up trying to reproduce real university learning environments based on very traditional models of knowledge transmission. The same applies to language education. The changes in the attitudes, initiative, and approaches required from both learners and teachers in order to manage knowledge and skill construction together in a reciprocal partnership while using new technologies in a flexible way are substantial in nature and can only be implemented over a considerable time period.

At the individual level, the use of NLEs for language learning and teaching is closely linked with **learner and teacher autonomy and life-long learning (LLL) skills.** Development of these involves substantial psychological and pedagogical changes and new skills which have to do with changing teacher and learner roles and increased awareness of responsibilities. In other words, both teachers and students need to adopt new approaches to learning, teaching, and assessment, because learner autonomy or life-long learning skills cannot develop without learner-centred instructional designs or without teacher autonomy. Furthermore, a special skill requirement for the ICT-enhanced environment is **multiliteracy.** It refers to both technical competence as well as to information and multimedia literacy (i.e. ability to locate and critically evaluate online information, to produce and interpret complex documents comprising text, image and sound, as well as to use the information in an ethically acceptable way). In addition, multiliteracy includes competence in computer-mediated communication, which is an essential factor in building networked expertise and collaborating in education and research. Both teachers and learners need to develop skills to this effect.

For the mobility-derived environment to contribute to language and culture learning and to support the academic achievement pursuits of the mobile students, non-language academic staff also need to make changes in their pedagogical practice. Without a learner-centred approach or any support systems it is often unrealistic to expect mobile students to independently increase and diversify their linguistic and intercultural communication competence to any great degree or to benefit fully from their mobility experience of subject studies. Thus, **staff development** needed for the NLEs to be successfully used in Higher Education **concerns not only teachers involved in language education but all teachers**

**responsible for multicultural and multilingual student groups,** as well as the institutions as a whole. Aims, learning outcomes and instructional designs have to be clarified explicitly and proper support infrastructure established in the institution.

***Independent Language Learning (ILL)*** is the term that has been used in the subproject to refer to the life-long learning skills and learner autonomy required in NLE language learning. In addition to the psychological and instructional aspects addressed briefly above, one of its basic prerequisites – as in adult language learning in general – is the **criterion of social relevance** of the content to be learnt. Whereas "language" is seen as a discipline to be studied by linguists and a subject taught by teachers and adapted pedagogically to facilitate learning, it can also be seen from the perspective of how it is experienced by the users in their social realities. Adult learners tend to see language and the relevance of language learning from a functional point of view: if the content and method of learning do not appear relevant to them, the quality of the experience remains poor. Adults also usually have many experiences of language learning and therefore well-developed and fixed learning styles and strategies. For this reason, they can be very efficient language learners. However, their views and beliefs about how languages are learnt and what kinds of learners and communicators they themselves are, very often stem from school and from more traditional settings, in other words, from settings where they were not involved in any way with decisions about either content or approach and method. Therefore, the kind of involvement required in independent language learning in an ICT-enhanced or mobility-derived environment can be quite overwhelming and places considerable demands on their awareness level of the learning process and on teachers' professional expertise and instructional design. Learners must have proper tools for making informed decisions about the direction of their language learning, and teachers must learn to elicit learner information and tailor contents in order to make the whole learning environment relevant and motivating for adult students. It is particularly important in Higher Education to work in close dialogue with non-language subject teachers and departments and with the academic labour market. Fixed beliefs and misconceptions about the learning and teaching process are a further obstacle to learning, as are many affective factors that tend to influence adult learners' confidence in foreign language communication. Furthermore, **independent language learning means different things to different people and cultures**. For instance, in the national reports the term was defined either directly or indirectly as an approach involving one, several, or all of the following:

1. Management of one's own learning (also called autonomous/self-directed learning) (i.e. making decisions on aims, content and methods of own learning and assessing the learning process and its outcomes).
2. Learning independently outside the regular classroom with or without teacher guidance (e.g. in a self-access centre, abroad, at home).
3. Learning alone, with a partner, or with a support group (e.g. tandem or buddy learning, collaborative groups, etc.).
4. Using structured or unstructured (i.e. authentic, natural) materials.
5. Using NLEs for continuous, life-long language learning.

In other words, independent language learning was seen both as a skill that the student has or needs to develop, and as a format or method that the student follows in his/her learning. There was a tendency for countries where ILL was seen as a skill to have arranged learner training for the students, in other words, there were sessions to teach the students how to set aims, monitor one's learning process, do self-assessment, select input, and make any kinds of decisions necessary for autonomous language learning. Continuous guidance by language advisors or teachers was also available (e.g. U.K., France, Switzerland, Finland).

To polarise roughly, there are two potential contexts for language learning: one with a structured content (i.e. a teaching-learning context) and one with an unstructured or natural content. Both can be "authentic", in other words, they can be composed of real and authentic language which is relevant for

whatever the learners are attempting to learn. The basic difference is that in the first context, the teacher or materials writer has structured the content (input) stepwise in such a way that learning is facilitated, whereas in the second context, the learner has to know how to notice and choose what content will improve his/her competence. Noticing (i.e. being alert to and analytic about the accuracy and appropriacy of language elements) is particularly crucial for becoming accurate in the language, as well as for being able to assess and monitor one's learning. **Lack of well-developed self-assessment skills often results in feelings of non-progress in communication competence, which is one of the greatest obstacles for independent and life-long language learning** and therefore requires special attention in Higher Education in particular. Whereas the ICT-enhanced environments include both structured and unstructured learning material, the mobility-derived environment as such does not do so unless particularly the teachers giving non-language subject instruction are trained to process their materials in this way. Naturally, both environments increase learner contact with the language.

### 2.2 Opportunities and obstacles in using NLEs for language teaching and learning

A summary of the potential offered by New Learning Environments to Higher Education language learning and teaching and the obstacles still preventing their full use is presented here in a table format. This is to avoid overlapping with the rationales given in the section on recommendations below. More detailed accounts of the present state of affairs and of the prerequisites with which these obstacles can be moved are also given in the Synthesis Report and other reports of the subproject, available at http://www.taalnet.ugent.be/tnp .

| **ICT-enhanced environments – Opportunities (+) and Obstacles (-)** | |
|---|---|
| **+ authentic or structured content (input)** | **- overload of information, requires informed decisions** |
| **+ wide access, equality** | **- technical requirements** |
| **+ opportunities to plan, assess and take control** | **- misplaced savings** |
| **+ efficient dissemination** | **- new skills, learning tasks** |
| **+ promote critical information management** | **- lack of accountability** |
| **+ promote LWULT languages** | **- plagiarism, unethical use of resources** |
| **+ networked expertise** | **- new forms of collaboration needed** |
| | **- copyright and ownership problems** |

| **Mobility-derived environments - Opportunities (+) and Obstacles (-)** | |
|---|---|
| **+ authentic/natural context** | **- unstructured input, requires noticing** |
| **+ immediate relevance** | **- restricted access** |
| **+ promote intercultural competence** | **- non-integration, clique formation** |
| **+ assessment in a "real" communication context** | **- superficial learning, non-comprehension** |
| **+ spontaneous, real-time language learning strategies** | **- non-participation, negative attitudes** |
| **+ pedagogical innovations** | **- new teacher skills** |

In 2002 a survey was carried out by the TNP2 project on what developments were seen as important by European Higher Institutions in terms of the three subprojects. The findings indicated that 85 % of the respondents regarded the use of New Learning Environments in higher education as a very important direction and 10 % as an important direction for their development in the near future. The survey items were formulated on the basis of what the subgroup 2 Scientific Committee had established as the **general prerequisites for a successful use of New Learning Environments and Independent Language Learning approaches in Higher Education**. Details of the survey findings are available at http://www.sprachlabor.fu-berlin.de/elc/en/tnp2.htm. The prerequisites for integrating NLEs include the following:

- Institutional policies and support;
- Appropriate and adequate technological infrastructure;
- Training of students and staff in flexible and appropriate use of NLEs;
- New pedagogical solutions, new learning approaches, new learning culture;
- New strategic management skills, mentality and attitude change at both individual and institutional levels;

- ❖ Critical thinking and evaluation skills needed to make informed decisions;
- ❖ Close co-operation and collaboration and sharing of information and experience.

It is clear that the most crucial criteria for dealing with the new technological and pedagogical challenges in higher education include ensuring an **adequate institutional infrastructure, continuous professional development and increased co-operation between all parties.**

### 2.3. Connection with other HE development efforts

In addition to close connections with the other two TNP2 projects – curriculum innovation and quality, the subproject on NLEs also relates to what is being pursued in the Bologna-Prague process and proposed by, for instance, the Tuning project. The most obvious connections have to do with learning outcomes, life-long learning, promotion of mobility, cultural and linguistic diversity, transparency of curricula and assessment, multimedia literacy (including critical information management) and European co-operation in HE research and development. For example, using NLEs for language and culture learning presupposes a learner-centred approach and the development of independent learning skills. These skills are referred to as **"generic competence", "core skills", or "transferable skills"** by the projects above. Their main implication, however, is the same for all learning: these are skills that enable life-long learning in that they are a prerequisite for being able to assess and direct one's learning according to new challenges of, say, mobility or an international workplace. Furthermore, if we accept what was argued in the introduction above, namely, that knowledge and information are incomprehensible and inaccessible if the language through which they are constructed and in which they are embedded is not available, then, e.g. in mobility programmes, the participants must have an adequate mastery of the language of instruction in order to pursue their desired learning achievements. **Becoming an academic expert is not only a knowledge acquisition process but also a socialisation process in that students also become socialised into the kind of language and communication that is typical and required in the respective scientific field and academic profession.** Thus, language and communication skills are also closely related to subject-specific competence and not only to generic competence, to use the terminology of the Tuning project. To achieve this e.g. in mobility programmes, then, students need to have a certain threshold level mastery of the language of instruction, to be polished during their studies. The key question in terms of the two-tier degree structure proposed in the Bologna process is, then, the question of what levels of communication competence should be set as the desired learning outcomes for the first and the second degree and how they could be monitored and assessed. Considering this question is particularly pertinent with regard to designing European Master's programmes through institutional co-operation, as well as for dual (or joint) degrees and vertical (?) mobility (i.e. completing the first degree in one country and the second degree in another) in general. Using NLEs to their full potential will continue to play a significant role in these developments.

As regards the **promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity**, then, NLEs provide an opportunity for offering pre-mobility language and intercultural programmes and assessment (the virtual mobility principle), and can play a significant role in maintaining particularly the less widely used and less taught languages (LWULT) at an academic level. Similarly, they offer **opportunities for becoming comfortable with technology and developing multiple expertise for international employability** (e.g. skills for project and information management, synthesising and analysing, collaborating in intercultural teams, etc.), if proper instructional designs and networking are used in Higher Education.

More specific connections with European efforts and proposals are mentioned in the rationales of the recommendations to follow.

### 2.4. Future scenario - when all obstacles have been removed …

To draw an ideal situation on the basis of Subgroup 2 work, then, institutions would have overt policies that contribute to and support the development of multiple expertise on a cross-curricular basis. Language and communication skills development would be seen as an integral part of this expertise and of any professional profile, and not as something separate. Language teaching for academic and professional purposes would be integrated with subject studies as far as possible to develop the abilities needed to communicate your expertise to others. Higher Education language teachers would be knowledgeable about adult language learning processes and about the instructional options available, and willing and able to involve learners in course design. They would also be experts in guiding and advising learner efforts. The concept of language would be seen as a balance between the system and its use in the same way as theories are applied in other disciplines. There would be a continuity and progression of language skills throughout the educational career. All ways in which technological skills, independent learning skills, communication confidence and intercultural competence can be promoted in education would be used. Thus, **investments made to enhance institutional infrastructures, pedagogical expertise and learner autonomy and involvement, as well as multiple forms of assessment, would also be investments in the quality of learning outcomes and employability**. Finally, extensive and focused co-operation would ensure diversity and comparability of competences, flexibility in contents and approaches, as well as informed decision-making based on collaborative research and development. Pursuing these goals certainly represents both a natural and a virtual "new learning environment" for all parties involved in higher education.

## 3. Needs and Recommendations for Development

In the following section the recommendations that were drawn up by the Scientific Committee and the Steering Committee of the Subgroup on New Learning Environments are brought together, and their rationales are explained. These recommendations are the result of the work that led to the National Reports and the Synthesis report. The recommendations were also discussed extensively during the Copenhagen Workshop of the subgroup held in June 2002 (see http://www.taalnet.ugent.be/tnp/fs_copenhagen.htm ) and the Workshop on New Learning Environments held during the ELC Conference in Aarhus in June 2003 (see http://www.sprog.asb.dk/elc2003/Workshop2.htm ). National reports, as well as the TNP1 reports (available at http://www.taalnet.ugent.be/tnp ), also include examples of good practice.

The recommendations have been grouped together according to whether they address issues that are mainly relevant to individual learners and teachers; institutional and national policy makers and the European policy making level. In most cases, however, action is needed at several levels.

The examples of good practice below have been selected to illustrate the kinds of developments and practices that are already being implemented in various European countries, often simultaneously and with slight differences in application. Very many other examples could be mentioned, and the ones selected do not necessarily relate to only one recommendation, nor do they cover the whole scope of the recommendation. The criteria for selecting these particular ones included a) variety of infrastructures and technological expertise involved; b) range of pedagogical expertise required; c) range of languages; d) range of countries; e) applicability as a framework or model for other languages and situations; and f) usability as a foundation for further development. (For an extensive, thematically arranged list of ICT in language learning and language teaching, see also http://www.icc-europe.com )

## 3a. Recommendations related (primarily) to the individual level – Students and Teachers

The individual level recommendations (REC) are divided here between students and teachers to indicate that students are not only "objects" of action, but also active participants in the process. Similarly teachers are also "learners" in the construction of knowledge and expertise and in the development of their roles. The recommendations presented can only be implemented through joint action and effort.

**REC 1: Students**
***Systematic learner training for independent language learning (ILL) and use of ICT-enhanced New Learning Environments (NLEs) and their support systems.***

**Teachers**
***Continuous pedagogical and technical training and support for teachers to guide and support the learning outcomes and core competences pursued for students.***

Supporting language learning with new technologies (ICT – Information and Communications Technology) can only lead to the creation of effective NLEs if some important requirements are met, i.e. if students and teachers are prepared to integrate new technologies in the learning/teaching process; if technical resources, infrastructure and support are explicit parts of a larger policy that guarantees easy access to students and teachers; and if students are stimulated and know how to take control of the learning process and to analyse their needs. In other words, the instructional design has to be learner-centred.

What emerged again and again during the activities of the subgroup is that the continuous training of teachers is crucial to the introduction of NLEs. Language teachers must become motivated in order to invest a considerable amount of time and effort in setting up innovation schemes that will lead to different types of learning environments. Resistance to change is still a major factor that hinders the widespread integrated use of technology and learner-centred designs, and often it is inspired by insecurity and/or lack of training and support. Furthermore, many teachers are worried about reductions in staff and face-to-face contact time that they feel will result from the introduction of ICT in the language teaching practice. This is based on the misconception of thinking that ICT, once introduced, would be used to deliver the whole course rather than using the added-value principle. In reality, however, teaching through NLEs is more labour intensive and also more complicated than traditional face-to-face teaching. In addition, new job profiles for teachers are being created as a result of the introduction of NLEs. These will therefore lead to a need for more teachers rather than fewer. To counter both the misconceptions and to cater for the need for more teachers continuous staff development is a prerequisite.

So far, however, most staff (and learner) training has concentrated more on technical computer skills than on how NLEs can be used to facilitate self-directed and independent language learning or how the learners' skills for this can be enhanced through appropriate learning tasks given by the new kind of "teacher". Partly because of this, **teachers are not adequately informed or confident in taking a more proactive role in the development of the kinds of learning platforms or materials that would inform technologies, rather than remain confined by what is available.**

Some of the skills that using ICT in language learning and teaching and **using Virtual Learning Environments** (VLEs) require of students and teachers are as follows.

**Core skills for students:**
Keyboarding and other (technical) ICT skills
Online communication and negotiation skills
Group work in an online conference, including collaborating and sharing
Searching on the Web and evaluating results
Networking and research skills
Online reading, note-taking & commenting

**Core skills for teachers:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Teaching/facilitating the students' core skills | Time and workload management |
| Designing materials, web pages and suitable learning tasks | |
| Using template text; sharing online activities with other teachers; FAQs; managing expectations about email; stimulating student self-help | Thinking through how to integrate face-to-face and virtual teaching |
| Writing and editing individually and collaboratively using multimedia methods | Presentational skills and learning community building in VLEs |
| Range of learning styles and ILL skills | Selecting suitable platforms |
| Assessment skills | Resisting unrealistic pressures and workloads |
| Critical thinking and other skills needed in life-long learning (LLL). | Avoiding unrealistic expectations |
| | Recognising the true value of ICT and selecting appropriate blended approaches to teaching. |

IN whetever way we apply ICT in the practice of our daily teaching, being learner-centred implies a general set of values – an emphasis on respect for the learners, for example, and a willingness to take account of the social and economic grain of their daily lives. Students face demands, and construct identities outside the classrooms or new learning environments. Being learner-centred means recognising this as a relevant factor for life-long learning, as well as the fact that people do not all learn in the same way – hence the emphasis on learning styles. Similarly, the approach taken should be learning-centred, i.e. teachers have to know more about online learning processes and how they can be supported in pedagogy.

Attempts to overcome problems of ineffective and inefficient use of the facilities have resulted in the emergence of various solutions. A particularly striking one is the **emergence of a new professional role**, the language learning adviser, which was initially positioned in the self-access centre and acted as a bridging figure between resources, new learning environments and the traditional academic structures (classrooms and lecture theatres). Subsequent development of the role has called for a need to integrate some of his/her skills in traditional teaching. There seems to be agreement that learner autonomy and ILL are best developed parallel to the pedagogical approaches of the teachers or advisers, in other words, the students need informed teachers in order to get guided practice and experience in learning in various NLEs before they can fully adopt the role of a self-directed and independent language learner.

***Example of good practice for teachers***

### *ONLINE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN ADVISING FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING*

**Brief summary of main features**

The Postgraduate Certificate in Advising for Language Learning offered by the Language Institute of the University of Hull, U.K., is aimed at graduates and professionals with an interest in language learning. They may be, or hope to be, employed as a language tutor, language adviser, material designer or manager of a language centre. They will have an active interest in promoting autonomous learning/ self-directed learning in their present or future capacity. The Language Institute also offers a Master's Programme in Language Learning and Technology.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
This Certificate is a unique programme which has been designed to answer the training needs resulting from the new demands put on language staff in Higher Education. It aims to:

- Provide a useful foundation of teaching and learning theories
- Prepare staff in the utilisation of new learning environments
- Prepare staff in evaluating and designing open and distance learning materials
- Develop new professional skills to perform an effective role regarding language learning support and the promotion of learner autonomy
- Develop the competencies of emerging roles such as e-tutors or developers
- Provide a recognised qualification for the new profession of Language Adviser.

To date over 40 people from a variety of countries and education sectors (secondary, further education, higher education and the private language sector) have attended this course to enhance their abilities to support learners in open and independent learning programmes or simply to integrate such new skills and knowledge in their teaching approach.

**Problems and Issues**
The programme is quite costly.

**Source of information**
**http://www.hull.ac.uk/langinst/ma/pg-cert.htm**

***See also*** **http://www.ict4lt.org/**

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The **misconceptions related to ILL** (e.g. learning alone, without guidance, without partners, without control, etc.), i.e. common attitudes that prevail both among students and teachers, contribute to the reluctance that some teachers feel about the use of these kinds of approaches and to the frustration of students who have attempted to engage in ILL without any preparation. Added to these are the technical skills – often better among students than among staff – and the critical evaluation skills required for selecting suitable input from e.g. the Internet. It is not surprising that implementing NLEs and ILL departmentally is often met with considerable resistance particularly in cases where there is evidence of economic reasons behind the proposal.

While it is probably true that students resist taking responsibility of their own learning in many countries, hence making the introduction of autonomy more difficult, it is equally true that participating in an online environment can be very daunting. Since you may not know about the abilities of your fellow-students you may be insecure about personal achievement. Successful use requires absolute clarity about assessment criteria from the very start, but above all creating a sense of community and the realisation that you have to achieve something as a group. In addition, a whole range of cognitive, social and technical skills are required which may have to developed as part of the course. Students' expectations about technology may be misguided completely, for instance when they expect technology-enhanced learning to lead to results more quickly and with minimal effort.

## *Examples of good practice for teachers and students*

### *1) VIRTUAL CLASSROOM NICENET* (http://www.nicenet.org).

**Brief summary of main features**
Nicenet, an Internet Classroom Assistant (ICA), is a successful ICT application founded in 1995 by Internet professionals as a tool for providing services for secondary and tertiary education. As the authors introduce it, "the system was designed not as a replacement for the classroom, but rather as a supplement allowing greater communication and sharing of information among students and between teachers and their students. However, Nicenet does not restrict the use of the ICA for any

purpose". KTU teachers find it very useful in updating language courses with the latest information as well.

**Analysis of the innovation and good practice exemplified**
The main advantages of the Nicenet classroom are that that it is very easy to apply, does not require any special skills or programmes, and is free of charge.
The menu of the classroom consists of several sections: Class members, Class schedule, Documents, Conferencing, Personal messages, Link sharing. Learners can familiarize themselves with the syllabus and the materials of the course, carry out required tasks and paste them in the "Documents" section, write messages to their peers and teachers, exchange ideas, etc. The networked learning environment resulted in increased collaboration among students and new positive changes in teacher-student relations. A students' survey confirms that active involvement and networking in language learning leads to higher motivation and satisfaction. It is also a great possibility for teachers to update course materials and make them accessible to the class in a simple way. Nicenet has been successfully implemented in both General Language Practice and ESP courses.

**Problems and Issues**
The Virtual Classroom has limited application of graphics, however, the "Link Sharing" section helps to introduce a variety of other websites.

**Source of information**
A.Daubariene, J.Zdanyte (2003) *Internet-Based Learning Activities. Sharing KTU Experience and Ideas* Teaching English with Technology, Vol 3, No 2, April 2003
**http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm**

### *2) CIEL LANGUAGE SUPPORT NETWORK – promoting independent language learning*

**Brief summary of main features**
CIEL was one of several national UK projects funded initially by HEFCE in 1997-2000. The main aim was to identify and disseminate best practice in the area of independent learning and its integration with the language curriculum through regional networks developed around Leeds Metropolitan University, South Bank University and the University of Southampton.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The project produced downloadable CIEL handbooks intended as practical guides to integrating independent language learning with the taught curriculum in an institutional contest. These handbooks deal with integration of ILL, managing ILL and its policy considerations, resources for ILL, assessment and supporting ILL, and making ILL accessible for learners. In addition, there are seminars and workshops for teachers, learning materials swapshops, and newsletters and other publications, as well as learner training and support.

**Source of Information**

**http://ciel.lang.soton.ac.uk/**

### *3) See also related examples for REC 4, 5 and 9.*

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**REC 2: Students Teachers**

***Systematic and structured use of NLEs for LLL and employability (tailored language programmes for professional and academic purposes).***

***Identifying communicative prerequisites implied by job descriptions in real life and designing socially relevant learning tasks, materials and programmes for them.***

Educated citizens of the 21st century will need to use languages not only for simple communication, but rather for the kinds of complex negotiation, collaboration, analysis, critique, and construction of knowledge required by an information economy and society. This is reflected more and more often in current job descriptions and requirements. Standard language-based syllabi - formed by lists of structures and functions to be mastered - will not be enough. We will need to practise principles of situated learning - in other words engaging learners in the kinds of authentic tasks and problem-solving activities that they will actually encounter in the future. Having students carry out complex project work involving negotiation, collaboration, goal-setting, meaningful communication, and the development of challenging 'products' will prepare them for the kinds of language usages which will be required at the workplace. With the World Wide Web becoming an essential medium of information exchange in economic, academic and civic affairs, the literacies of accessing and publishing web-based information must also become part of the language teaching curricula of all students. Students will need to develop a whole new range of foreign language literacies, which involve emerging forms of communication, reading, and writing using online technologies.

***Examples of good practice***

### *1)INTERNET-BASED ACTIVITIES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING/TEACHING*

**Brief summary of main features**

Work with the Internet is being successfully integrated into language learning at the Centre of Foreign Languages, Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), Lithuania. KTU students have been participating in SIMULAB (Internet-based intercultural learning project) activities and in Grundtvig-2 project eCOLE which offers on-line communication and learning activities together with students from five European countries.

**Analysis of the innovation and good practice exemplified**

The idea of SIMULAB is to involve foreign language learners into real-life situations, simulations that reach beyond national borders. These simulations are run on the Internet within Telsi environment. The SIMULAB concept and Telsi environment are results of international cooperation among European adult educators. The environment is user-friendly and it does not require any programming knowledge. Telsi platform contains Documents, Mail, Chat, Help folders. Within this project, KTU students have been communicating on-line and discussing different issues with students from Denmark and Norway.

A further development of the SIMULAB concept is implemented in the Grundtvig-2 eCOLE project (2001-2003), dedicated to collaborative learning in adult education. This project is also run within Telsi environment. It has two models: website story writing (WSS) and cross-curricular problem solving activities (ACROSS). Both in WSS and ACROSS learners by joint efforts have to produce either a fictional text or write a report.

KTU students have participated in the project together with learners from Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Germany and Denmark.

**Problems and Issues**

The projects have a limited range of topics. However, they can be developed further upon mutual agreement of the international team of educators/coordinators.

**Source of information**
A.Daubariene, J.Zdanyte (2003) *Internet-Based Learning Activities. Sharing KTU Experience and Ideas* Teaching English with Technology, Vol 3, No 2, April 2003
http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm

### *2) ON-LINE GENERATION OF TEACHER-DEVELOPED PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT TESTS USING A TEACHER-FRIENDLY INTERFACE*

**Brief summary of main features**
The ELT Division at the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science (FMI), University of Plovdiv, Bulgaria has developed its own online test-generation facility allowing teachers of English (and potentially of other languages, as well) to bridge the ICT gap through tools allowing both teachers and learners to develop web-based test materials as part of the learning process. The project has so far been supported locally in terms of sub-domain name, hosting, MySQL and PHP facilities, etc.

The ADMINISTRATION mode allows adding/deleting an administrator. The TESTING mode allows creating/editing/deleting/browsing tests, as well as setting time/password, etc. options. The RESULTS mode allows review of the scores of past tests by student name, date of administration of the test, etc.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The major points of strengths are:
1) the intuitive interface enabling teachers and learners who create tests for the web without any knowledge of web programming;
2) the secure transfer & storage of data;
3) the data format suitable for processing using statistical methods.

**Problems and Issues**
A limitation is the side effect of the security policy: in case of power failure the part of the test that has already been done is not recorded, but the test session is cancelled.

**Source of information**
http://www.esp.pu.acad.bg/testing **(**password to access this part of the site is required)

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In the last few years, language learning theory has been marked by a shift towards a socio-constructivist interpretation of learning whereby language is a tool for individual and societal development and for constructing knowledge Such socio-constructivist approach focuses on the learning process rather than on the knowledge acquired, emphasises meaningful interaction through collaborative learning and problem solving, encourages the development of language learning strategies and autonomous learning, and highlights the creation of online learning communities as a significant component of communication and learning. In addition, it is often argued that because the amount of information is increasing so rapidly, it will not be possible to manage it alone, but rather, networking and collaborating are a necessity.

## *Examples of good practice*

### *1) LINC - An Interactive Approach to Language and Culture*

**Brief summary of main features**

LINC is an interactive software programme that has been specially developed for everyone who wants to learn a language in a stimulating way. The method consists of: active watching, focused listening, reading authentic texts, doing stimulating exercises, solving tasks, systematically practising pronunciation, and communicating from a distance with native speakers

LINC is available for 18 languages, most of them LWULT (less widely used, learnt and taught) languages.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
Each topic consists of a video extract from a current affairs programme which can be watched and listened to as often as necessary. The transcript of the video extract is also provided and can be read at the click of a button. Socio-cultural footnotes give extra explanations or background information. Each video extract is the starting point of a series of listening and language exercises.
LINC 1: On this beginners level, you will build up an everyday vocabulary and basic grammar within authentic contexts.
LINC 2: This intermediate level has been developed for people with an elementary knowledge of the language (minimum 1,000 words).
LINC 3: The advanced level is for learners who have a basic knowledge of the language (3,000 words).
If you want to learn in a gradual manner, then you go through the topics from 1 to 10. In each new topic the exercises become increasingly more difficult. If you only want to revise and test your knowledge of the language then you can start with whichever topic you like.

**Source of information**
**http://www.uia.ac.be/linc/**

## *2) Digitalenklas and Ellips – using virtual learning environments*

**Brief summary of main features**
Digitalenklas ("Digital Language Classroom") is a two-year project funded by four Dutch universities (Utrecht, Leiden, Groningen, Tilburg) and the Dutch HE organization for network services and ICT, SURF. The project aims to further the use of computers in the learning of languages in higher education in the Netherlands. The focus is on the use of VLEs such as Blackboard and WebCT in conjunction with specifically designed software for language learning. The languages involved include English, Spanish, Dutch and Arabic.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
One of the key elements of the project is the fact that the universities involved have decided to work together in determining how to employ technology effectively for language learning. The collaboration during the first phase of the project, which set out to design and implement language learning materials for the generic VLE's Blackboard and WebCT, generated many ideas for innovative language teaching methods, several of which (such as the use of webquests) have been implemented in the course of the project. In addition, we have dealt with many practical issues to do with the use of technology, which we feel would have been less successfully dealt with by the universities on their own.

Collaboration is also a distinguishing feature of the web-based language learning program Ellips, which was developed as part of the project. Given the relatively high cost of developing on-line learning materials, we wanted teachers in the universities involved to be able to exchange and re-use materials already available. In the future, we want to involve more teachers in using the materials, as well as students, who should be able to make their own selections of relevant materials.

This calls for a uniform descriptive mechanism, which is transparent to both teachers and students. We turned to the Common European Framework for Language Learning (CEF) for developing the descriptors needed. For this we were able to use the system described above, which was designed by the Language Centre of Ghent University. The use of this system is particularly relevant for our

purposes, since Dutch universities have agreed to use the CEF as the basis for describing language proficiency at tertiary level. It is too early to report on the use of this system in actual teaching situations, but we hope that the use of this system and a number of other features of the program will set the stage for larger scale cooperation between universities to develop innovative, technology-enhanced language learning materials.

**Source of information**
More information about the project can be found at:
**http://www.let.uu.nl/digitalenklas** (in Dutch)

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It is essential to ensure that graduates are properly equipped for the future. This focuses on the development of language graduates whose ability to communicate and interact in a foreign language is matched with the ability to do so in a variety of environments and through the intelligent use of a wide range of tools (e.g. authoring tools, computer-aided translation systems, computer and videoconferencing systems, electronic forums, online multilingual management systems, and other communications systems). Non-language graduates must also be equipped so that they have the necessary communication skills for internationalised workplaces. Being competent in English might not be any specific skill in the future, because the more competent graduates there are in this language the less it will be seen as a competitive edge for employment. Thus, ensuring continuity in multiple foreign language learning and the social relevance of the learning contents – which are also important themes for TNP3 – are crucial issues in terms of both employability and the development of life-long learning skills. Multiple options and diversity of languages are also the direction proposed by European student associations. Graduates should learn how to assess their existing skills and future needs realistically so that they will be able to continue and direct their language and other studies on a life-long basis in line with what their professional and social life requires. NLEs offer a viable and effective means of pursuing these aims particularly if their use is developed through co-operation and dialogue between language specialists and subject specialists.

## *Example of good practice*

### *JOBLINE LMU – a blended learning environment for teaching job application skills in English*

**Brief summary of main features**
Jobline LMU offers job application training in English and aims to encourage university students to work abroad. The main focus of the environment is to equip students with the necessary research techniques and language skills for a successful job hunt, written applications and job interviews, as well as to raise awareness of intercultural differences. The programme has run successfully for two years at Munich University and other tertiary level institutions and involved a high number of students and teachers.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The website of Jobline LMU provides versatile information and practice for job application procedures. The programme makes extensive use of the Internet and online learning for researching information, learning language skills and comparing and analysing authentic application documents. It can be used for independent study, incorporated as a self-access component to courses and used as a resource and framework for both language and non-language instruction relating to employability and international traineeships.

**Problems and Issues**
Jobline LMU is aimed at developing the English job application skills of German students and full access is restricted to registered students at German universities. The website, however, gives a

good idea of the potential of the design and could be used as a basis for tailoring other similar programmes in other languages.

**Source of Information**
http://www.jobline.lmu.de

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The first two recommendations are very closely related to the transversal issues (life-long learning, employability, and the European dimension) between the three TNP 2 subprojects (namely, Curriculum Innovation, New Learning Environments – the European learning space, and Quality Enhancement in Language Studies), as well as to other projects and developments in Europe (e.g. the Tuning project; TNP1). Learner training and development of independent language learning skills, as well as tailored and learner-centred language instruction promote learning skills that are referred to as "enabling skills", "generic competence", "core skills", or "transferable skills", as was stated above in Chapter 2. Multiliteracy and communication skills belong in the same category in that they prepare students to cope with information, with information exchange, and with networking. Higher education has a crucial role in all of these as the last stage of the students' educational careers before employment.

**REC 3: Teachers and Students**
***Systematic debriefing and support of both mobile students and staff and promotion of internationalisation at home (IaH).***

Student (and staff) mobility has given rise to the need and desire to study other languages and cultures which were not particularly accessible in the past. It has also produced a perfect space for learning a) through the increased presence of representatives of these languages and cultures in HE institutions, b) with the help of the Internet ('study buddies', tandem learning, discussion groups) and satellite TV programmes, and with c) CD-ROMS and other ICT materials designed for language or culture learning. Although both the real and the virtual NLE potentially broaden the learner's exposure to target cultures and languages, it has been pointed out that working solely in a multimedia centre may present a reduced or biased view when compared with real contact with the culture - traditionally in the form of the teacher - native speaker or not. This risk no longer exists where the programmes include contact hours with teachers and/or other native speakers. Many HE institutions in Europe include such 'contact' time, thus allowing for cultural awareness and understanding to develop in a more structured way.

In the documents written by the IaH group of the European Association of International Education , ICT-enhanced approaches are seen as a major factor promoting internationalisation at home in education. This is because ICT is by definition an internationalised tool and its users out of necessity become involved in some internationally defined environment. But again, it is crucial that the users know how to use it for learning and teaching purposes. Thus, the kinds of "blended" approaches described above can be used to complement virtual mobility programmes and to inform the desired internationalisation efforts.

Because of the fact that even in the best of situations, (physical) mobility programmes will affect only a minority of the total student body, the presence of foreign students and staff should be used as an NLE in its own right to foster internationalisation and multilingualism. Furthermore, the experience of students and teachers involved in various exchange programmes abroad has to be used as a feedback device to aid in this process e.g. in terms of acculturation programmes at the home university. Using mobility in a constructive way in education and making efforts towards the social inclusion of the international student body also contribute to promoting, including and acknowledging LWULT languages and cultures in student and staff expertise.

## *Examples of good practice*

### *1) EUROMOBIL - A multimedia language learning programme on CD-ROM promoting student mobility*

**Brief summary of main features**
EUROMOBIL is a Sokrates/Lingua D supported programme aiming at preparing exchange students for study in Germany, U.K., Hungary and Finland. The CD-ROM includes communicative skills training, information and links on exchange universities, countries and cultures, as well as programme designs based on a needs analysis in the target countries. Participating institutions are the Institute fur Interkulturelle Kommunikation e.V, the Department of German at the University of Bristol, the Department of LSP at the University of Pécs, and the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä (coordinator). The 3.5 year project was completed in June 2003 and the CD-ROM will be available in the near future.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The package for each country includes both language practice and assessment (based on the Common European Framework) and versatile information about lifestyle, history, culture and institutions, as well as links that exchange students can use to learn more about how to cope with their study or stay abroad.

**Problems and Issues**
The price of the CD-ROM is not yet quoted on the project website.

**Source of information**
http://www.euro-mobil.org

### *2) MARCTICA - Virtual Student Exchange for Internationalisation at Home*

**Brief summary of main features**
MARCTICA is a teaching and learning project that has been running for more than 5 years and at present involves students from Gent and Brussels (Belgium), Houston and New Jersey (USA), Buenos Aires (Argentine), Paris and Le Havre (France), Edinburgh (Scotland), and Gijon (Spain). It follows a blended approach (i.e. contact classes + use of new technologies) and aims at increasing ICT skills, communication and negotiation skills, and content knowledge, engaging students to work in international teams and solve real-life problems. The teams then write a paper collaboratively to present findings and to show what they have learned. The MARCTICA project task can be included in many content courses (e.g. global marketing, management of IT, language courses, etc.). Blackboard is used as a class management instrument and electronic learning environment. The project is also flexible in that most work is done asynchronously, which means that students at different localities can work according to their own schedules and semesters. In MARCTICA English is used as the common language, but there is also a Spanish counterpart called GiGa.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The project offers opportunities to become accustomed to authentic online communication in an international team within their regular curriculum. This introduces them to different cultures and working habit and develops their intercultural communication competence. The teachers involved can develop their own project tasks and work on an interdisciplinary basis to analyse and solve problems. Independent learning skills and communication skills can be developed in an authentic situation that has social relevance for both academic and employability purposes.

**Problems and Issues**

The project task should be complemented with a specific language learning task (e.g. language used in intercultural negotiations, in academic report writing, etc.) to facilitate students' learning and to provide further criteria for assessment. Other electronic platforms can also be used.

**Source of information**
http://etna.hogent.be/marctica/
Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol.7, No 1, Spring 2003

### *3) Welcome and I4LL – Preparing for study abroad*

**Brief summary of main features**
Welcome is the result of a one-year Lingua 2 project that was carried out in 2002, partly as a result of the work done in TNPII. It aimed at the development of five linguistic and cultural preparation courses (EE, ES, FI, NL, PT) for exchange students in higher education. These courses were developed as on-line courses within the electronic learning environment I4LL. The participating institutes were Ghent University (Belgium), Tartu Ülikool (Tartu, Estonia, Universidad Politecnica de Valencia (Valencia, Spain), Helsingin yliopisto (Helsinki, Finland) and Universidado do Porto (Porto, Portugal). The online courses consist of fully interactive learning materials that can be accessed from anywhere at anytime via the Internet. In addition to this, there are modules covering a wide range of cultural topics directly related to the 5 countries. Students communicate with each other through the communication platform provided within the system.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The language courses were developed according to a language-independent format, which was defined in accordance with the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages proposed by the Council of Europe. This makes it relatively easy to develop additional courses for languages not covered in the project. The units making up the interactive materials were produced with the I4LL Authoring Tool designed by the Language Centre at Ghent.

The development of a complete (and generic) electronic learning environment as well as various learner support tools (a communication forum with workspaces at various levels, hyper-dictionaries and generic hyper-reference tools (e.g. a grammar for each of the languages)) formed an integral part of the project and the overall language independent learning environment.

**Problems and Issues**
The limited duration of the project made it impossible to reach all of the rather ambitious goals of the project. The distribution of the whole environment to the servers of the various partner turned out to be a problematic because of the time constraints. A lot of technological problems had to be solved. This meant that the content had to be adjusted a number of times, leading to delays..

**Source of information**
More information can be found at:
Welcome project: **http://www.taalnet.ugent.be/Description_of_Welcome.pdf**

I4LL online learning environment and authoring tool:
**http://www.taalnet.ugent.be/on_line_model.pdf**

The WelcomeWeb Course site can be accessed at:
**http://talenc29.UGent.be/welcomeweb/**

To log in use *Welcome* as the username and *Project* as the password.

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**REC 4: Teachers and Students**

***Adoption of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and other relevant joint European frameworks of reference and assessment to guarantee transparency and reciprocal recognition.***

Within a European learning space in the field of languages, co-operation among higher education institutions needs a common basis, and coherent, recognised standards for all those involved in the processes of learning, teaching and assessment, and management of languages.

At present, in many institutions of higher education, it is difficult to ascertain students' real language levels, since these are often ill-defined in vague terms with no accurate description of the level, objectives, and content of the courses followed or levels, content and evaluation criteria of examinations passed or of other language achievements gained in different learning contexts. All of this precludes comparison and hinders, if not prevents, academic and professional recognition from one country to another or even one institution to another.

The Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages provides a global reference system applicable to all languages, which can introduce greater transparency and coherence between different institutions and sectors of education and has great potential for encouraging a new approach to teaching and learning. It promotes standards comparable all over Europe which give a common language to all the persons active in the field of languages in order to help them to reflect on their current practice; provides a language- and institution-independent description of six reference levels for describing learners' proficiency related to language in use in that they describe what a learner can do at a given level; fosters a pedagogical approach that bases language teaching and learning on the learner's needs, motivations, characteristics, and resources; on the analysis of the learning situation; and on the definition of realistic and explicit learning objectives from the perspectives of language in use and the development of plurilingualism, learner autonomy, and life-long language learning.

When higher education institutions describe their programmes, teaching material, attestations, examinations, and other qualifications according to the Council of Europe's common reference levels and descriptions -thus clearly stating objectives, contents, procedures, and criteria - competences become not only transferable from one system to another, but also clear and understandable for all learners, teachers, institutions, and employers. The ECTS system is another way of ensuring this.

In this context, the European Language Portfolio, a practical application of the CEF, plays an important role by, ideally, acquainting every single language learner in Europe with the ideas and standards of the CEF. Similarly, for instance DIALANG could be used as a pre-mobility tool to assess language proficiency levels in the language of instruction or to familiarise students and staff with the language and culture of the host country.

The integration of NLEs and ILL into the educational programmes of non-language students seems in most cases to be more needs-driven than policy-driven, in other words, there is much pressure from the outside world to develop the skills that the students need for mobility and good employability, although the actual curriculum or degree structure in the discipline has not changed. Institutional or departmental policies are most often lacking, as is formal recognition of these specific language studies. However, the introduction of the Common European Reference Framework and/or the European Portfolio, which was mentioned as a clear aim in several National reports, will serve as a good starting-point for creating strategies and policies for incorporating both IT skills and language skills as an integral part of all professional higher education degrees according to the goals of the European Commission's White Paper on education and training (1995).

## *Examples of good practice*

### *1) EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO (ELP) FOR HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE COUNCIL (ELC/CEL)*

**Brief summary of main features**

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) of the ELC is part of the huge ELP-project of the Council of Europe (CoE). Its goals are to:

- promote pluri/multilingualism and dialogue between cultures
- facilitate mobility in Europe
- strengthen and preserve cultural diversity
- foster autonomous learning
- encourage lifelong language learning.

The ELP of the ELC is specifically designed for the higher education sector. It conforms to the common Principles and Guidelines for ELP of the Council of Europe, as do all the ELP versions that have been developed for a variety of target groups and contexts in various countries and languages It therefore consists of three parts: the Language Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier. It is at the same time an information tool and a companion to language learning. It enables all language proficiency (acquired within or outside formal educational settings), and intercultural experience to be presented in a comprehensible, complete, and internationally comparable way. It also contains guidelines for reflecting on one's own language learning and for planning and monitoring further learning.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) for the Higher Education sector of ELC/CEL was validated in November 2002 by the Council of Europe's Validation Committee (accredited model No. 35.2002).

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**

The ELP can be used for all languages and in any institutional environment. It enables learners to record their language skills and to give prominence to their intercultural experiences - and this applies to all foreign languages learnt.

Thanks to the use of a set of common skill-specific descriptors developed for the Common European Framework of Reference, the ELP provides transparent and internationally comparable information about a learner's proficiency in any number of languages. The CEL/ELC's ELP contains a number of additional descriptors specifically developed for higher education, which can provide guidance for the development of innovative language curricula and other types of language provision.

The Portfolio can play an important role in the creation of a European lifelong learning area in general and of a European higher education area as envisaged in the Bologna Declaration in particular. Moreover, it can facilitate the development and implementation of coherent institutional language policies in the higher education sector.

**Problems and Issues**

In order to play its role, the ESP should be extensively implemented across Europe. Even though the idea of the Portfolio is beginning to be widely known, implementation is still in its initial stages; in many cases, for implementation to succeed, a change of mentality is necessary; this process is very slow and requires substantial previous teacher training.

**Source of information**

http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/portfolio/index.html
http://culture.coe.int/portfolio

## *2) ELP FOR ADULT AND VOCATIONAL LEARNERS*

**Brief summary of main features**

This is a pilot project to introduce the European Language Portfolio in the language instruction of the engineering students of the University of Southampton. The aim is to provide students with a portable qualification that documents their language learning beyond that of learning at university. The ELP will be compiled in electronic format, supported by the resources of a specifically designed Blackboard website and the use of ICT resources in a weekly learning and teaching session that takes place in a dedicated CALL environment known as the SMART classroom. This interactive teaching room enables students to work with multimedia resources. The tutor acts as a designer of activities and a guide to the students in the process of compiling the portfolio.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The language course follows a blended approach with three contact sessions and one SMART session. Ten tasks in 5 skills areas are assessed for documentation in the ELP. The language learning tasks include basic text work, audio and video clips and voice recordings, role plays, grammar tasks and a discussion forum. Students also design materials in small groups for the whole group to use. The electronic portfolio is compiled on a CD. The pilot project is being evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively.

**Source of information:**
Paper presented by Kirsten Söntgens (**K.Sontgens@soton.ac.uk**) at the EUROCALL 2003 conference. The project is in its initial stages and the information is not yet available on the website of the School of Modern Languages at the University of Southampton (**www.lang.soton.ac.uk** )

## *3) EUROPEAN COMPUTER DRIVING LICENCE (ECDL)*

**Brief summary of main features**
ECDL stands for "European Computer Driving Licence". ECDL is an internationally recognised qualification that enables people to certify their competence in essential computer skills & knowledge. It certifies to a set standard the IT skills people already have or the skills they attain through training.

The aim of this project is to raise the level of knowledge about Information Technology (IT) and increase the level of competence in using personal computers and common computer applications for all the citizens of the world. The project does this by disseminating, promoting and evolving ECDL as a globally accepted IT skills certification programme that prepares all people for participation in the Information Society.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
This is a truly international project with localized versions for various countries.
The Foundation is the global governing body of ECDL and ICDL countries. It is a not-for-profit organisation whose role is to promote, develop and certify computer skills and IT knowledge. The Foundation achieves this by the establishment of ECDL and ICDL Licensees around the world who administer the programme through national Operators on a local basis based on a strict set of standards and quality guidelines

To achieve an ECDL or ICDL, the candidate must successfully pass one theoretical and six practical tests. These tests can be attempted in any order and at any time and must be successfully completed within a maximum duration of three years. Each successfully completed test is endorsed on an ECDL or ICDL Skills Card. Only an accredited Test Centre can carry out testing and issue Skills Cards.

When tests for all 7 modules are successfully completed and the Skills Card is endorsed by the Test

Centre, it is sent to the National ECDL or ICDL Operator and a personalised Certificate (Licence) is issued.

The seven modules are;
- Basic concepts of IT
- Using the computer and managing files
- Word processing
- Spreadsheets
- Databases
- Presentation
- Information and Communication

ECDL/ICDL is not a training course and the National Operator does not provide training. If training is required, this can be acquired through training providers. Candidates should ensure that the training they receive meets the requirements of the official ECDL/ICDL Syllabus. Training providers do not have to be accredited by the National Operator to deliver training, but they must be accredited.

**Source of information**
**http://www.ecdl.com/main/about.php**

4) A similar example, but including training and support, can be found in the Finnish Virtual University (http://virtuaaliyliopisto.jyu.fi – information in Finnish) which is also developing an academic teacher portfolio to record in digital format teachers' ICT experience and pedagogical approaches. There is also a national computer driver's licence available for everybody; training is offered in secondary level institutions and adult education centres.

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**REC 5: Teachers and Students**
***Acknowledgement of both mother tongue and foreign language studies as an integral part of academic and professional qualifications in all fields, and accreditation and validation of such studies as well as independent language learning achievement.***

It is still quite common that there are no specific or obligatory language requirements for students of non-language disciplines in European university degrees, which means that students do not necessarily obtain any credits for their language studies. Due to other demands (study abroad, international work practice, future employment), however, these students are often typical users of the self-access facilities and multimedia labs that are being created everywhere to cater for the need for autonomous language learning. It is also clear that structured independent and co-operative learning has to be taken into consideration when calculating student workload. All too often, especially in the case of students of non-language disciplines, foreign language studies are only considered as an optional add-on. The fact that good communication skills in the mother tongue and in foreign languages are often not seen as an integral part of academic expertise may prevent optimum participation in vertical mobility programmes in the future and affect the quality of learning outcomes in general.

Acknowledging the importance of language learning and cultural awareness within the European context (both of foreign languages and the own mother tongue) is the first step towards creating policies that support the development and integration of new learning environments in higher education. Countries where languages are an accredited part of the degree programmes or where there is a long tradition of multilingualism (e.g. some LWULT language countries) and well-developed technology tend to be much further ahead in implementing NLEs and ILL in language learning and teaching.

***Example of good practice***

### *KIELIKOMPASSI (LANGUAGE COMPASS) & PROMOTION OF MULTILINGUALISM AND ILL FOR NON-LANGUAGE STUDENTS*

**Brief summary of main features**

Kielikompassi is an innovative electronic space formed to enhance the quality of language learning and teaching and to provide a window on the activities of the Language Centre at the University of Jyväskylä. It is an outcome of ten years of departmental action research aiming at integrating the promotion of learner and teacher autonomy and, more recently, new learning environments into the discipline-specific language teaching of the Centre. Systematic action research has been a departmental policy since 1993, and the Centre has been awarded the annually given Best Teaching Quality Award for its efforts two times, in 1996 and in 2003. In 2003 the Director of the Language Centre was also given the Best Director's award of the year. Language centres at Finnish universities operate separately from the faculties and they are responsible for the professional and discipline-specific language instruction (12 languages taught in contact, further 18 on a guided self-access basis in Jyväskylä) of all non-language students, because language studies in the domestic languages (Finnish and Swedish) + 1-2 foreign languages are compulsory components of all higher education degrees in Finland. Kielikompassi is an ongoing development project and has been supported financially by the Finnish Virtual University and the teaching quality project of the university. Involvement of all staff was made possible through administrative arrangements (reduction in teaching hours, jointly agreed weekly meeting times) and continuous training.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**

Kielikompassi is divided into four main sections: *Teaching and Learning* provides information about language learning options in different languages. *Learner Space* includes a collection of language learning materials and activities, ranging from a learner training module for assessing and developing independent language learning skills to NETRO and Cinema pages aiming at the development of cultural literacy, multiliteracy and critical reading. Staff Only section, then, is to provide fluent and efficient information flow among staff (70 altogether in 2003). *Info* section provides information about the electronic space itself, as well as on the Language Centre in general. A student council is also involved in the development. Present focuses are on introducing the ELP and on identifying and describing individualised learner pathways for the implementation of the Bologna process to be finalised by 2005.

**Problems and Issues**

Engaging in departmental action research in a large multicultural and multilingual department requires strong commitment from all parties and open communication, strategic management, and continuous support. The University of Jyväskylä is also presently writing its language policy and designing an international campus, both of which will be implemented across the university. In addition, a continuous support system has been in existence since the year 2000 for both teacher and learner mobility and for learning and teaching non-language subjects through English.

**Source of Information**

http://kielikompassi.jyu.fi/indexeng.htm
http://www.jyu.fi/kielikeskus/

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## REC 6: Teachers

***Identification of core elements constituting the professional profiles of HE language education in general and in terms of NLEs.***

It will be clear from what came before in this report that the roles of teachers have been changing rapidly in the last few years. This has involved a repositioning of the teacher, and a reappraisal of the skills necessary to manage this change. Terms such as 'facilitators', 'mentors', 'counsellors', 'advisers',

'helpers', 'learner support officers', 'language consultants' and 'moderators' have appeared to try to characterise this professional change. In some cases, it has meant the emergence of a new professional role which appears to be distinct from the 'teacher', especially in terms of the new computer skills that are needed (e.g. linguistic engineer or language environment system administrator). The importance of professionals who can appropriately use a variety of environments to suit the new learners' profile and needs, as well as to prepare the new generation of graduates has been repeatedly highlighted by the various National reports prepared by the Scientific Committee.

All this will undoubtedly have an impact on new job profiles in the language learning profession. It is no longer sufficient for teachers to transfer existing knowledge or stick to a ready-made textbook, because more and more learner involvement and tailoring are needed in order to offer motivating and relevant language instruction. The professionals of today and tomorrow need to know how online language learning processes develop and can be guided, what principles and practice are embedded in open and distance learning applications and how NLEs are managed, in other words, we need people who are good at languages and at computers at the same time and who can combine the technological innovations with the content-driven needs of teachers and learners, and still arrive at a stable, reliable and pedagogically solid solution. Another major challenge is to include materials development in the tasks of teachers and to train them to become coaches and course designers and administrators, whose professional expertise is updated regularly through reflective practise and research.

***See examples in REC 1, 2 and 9.***

**3b Institutional (and national) requirements and policies – Infrastructural prerequisites**

**REC 7:** ***Development of national and institutional educational visions, policies, and strategies to recognise and foster the value of multilingualism (along with the maintenance of the own language as a scientific language) and cultural competence, as well as ICT and life-long learning skills, as integral parts of academic and professional competence.***

Multilingualism and cultural competence have been brought to the fore by increased internationalisation in universities, particularly staff and student mobility programmes. Together with ICT and life-long learning skills, these can only be made into a lasting phenomenon if embedded in larger national and institutional visions, policies and strategies. To date, national-level policies regarding the use and integration of NLEs, ICT and ILL in education and the development of the knowledge society in general are more common than institutional policies. Institutional policies and strategies should, however, also be developed because they **provide a framework** for practical-level operations particularly for mobility and IaH programmes and for the maintenance of LWULT languages. Too often, for instance, international students are seen in institutions more as a problem than as a resource, because their education often implies changes in the routines. Instead, strategies to systematically promote virtual mobility as a preparatory phase for physical mobility and as an approach to internationalisation at home, as well as strategies to monitor and enhance the implementation of institutional policies should be continuously updated on the basis of societal developments. The European diversity of languages and cultures should be seen as a particular strength that provides a competitive edge for institutions e.g. in terms of the Erasmus Mundu efforts, and promoted also at the policy level as such. The scales of the CEF and the ELP should be used for structuring HE programmes and provision, for describing learning outcomes and for validating and recognizing linguistic skills and competences acquired elsewhere in the European learning space.

***Examples of good practice***

### *1) BEST PRACTICE – BEST LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS*

**Brief summary of main features**
The Best Practice – Best Language Teaching Methods project (Leonardo II) aims at demonstrating five of the best language teaching methods for teaching some less taught European languages (LWULT languages). Ready to use – and free – teaching materials will be produced for each method in Danish, German, English, Spanish, Basque, Gaelic, Dutch and Romanian. The rationale for the project is derived from a survey done in the EU countries in 2000, indicating that teachers of less taught languages often lack pedagogical and methodological training and that course materials for these languages are rarely communicative in nature. The main target group for the project is teachers of less taught languages in technical colleges.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The methods exemplified in the project products include computer-assisted language learning in context, task-based learning, tandem learning, simulations and PhyEmoC (physical, emotional and cultural approach). The products include a video library, a manual with method descriptions, instructions and materials and a website with newsletters, materials, and discussion areas for teachers to share. All materials will be available for downloading from the website.

**Source of Information**
http://www.languages.dk/methods

**2*) See also examples for REC 2, 4 and 5.***

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## REC 8: *Embedding of the use of NLEs for language learning in the general institutional policy and effort, including systematic promotion of virtual mobility.*

Although more and more institutions are today developing strategies for using NLEs in general, actual policies regarding their use in language learning and teaching are still relatively vague or lacking even in countries where strong national policies exist. Often NLEs are not integrated in the curricula of language teaching in HE institutes: they are neither an objective nor a means or a strategy. If some guidelines or recommendations of language instruction are given, they are usually included as part of the general information strategy or internationalisation strategy of the institution and not as separate documents underpinning learning ethos. Thus, many universities which emulate networked learning and the development of virtual campuses often end up trying to reproduce real university learning environments based on very traditional models of knowledge transmission. Disseminating local examples of good practice and networking nationally, as is also proposed by the report presented by the International Certificate Conference, should be arranged because national solutions are often more applicable than pan-European ones in the local contexts.

The same applies to language education. Proponents of online learning have been attributing to the computer the role of promoting student-centred communication, collaboration, social interaction and a sense of community. Yet, many pedagogical frameworks currently practised are often narrowly addressing these themes, and attempt to transfer to the technology the power to transform. Many such frameworks are often driven by institutional accountability, which demands proof that the high investment in equipment (in this case sophisticated digital technology) really works. However, as in the case of autonomous learning and the establishment of self-access centres, and CALL software, the computer is not a methodology, and its effects cannot be researched independently of the particular context and way in which the technology is implemented (e.g. the broad socio-cultural variables, such as the role of universities as an instrument of social control and sorting, the general culture of teaching,

and the individual and shared beliefs of teachers and learners). As a result, new media are often introduced in a top-down fashion, and computers have frequently been confined to transmission models of learning, focusing on drill-and-practice activities, self-testing tasks, requiring low level cognitive skills of rote memory and knowledge transmission platforms. It is crucial that the true value and potential of ICT-enhanced environments is recognised and promoted also at the policy level and staff development arranged accordingly.

***Example of good practice***

***The IN6ENIO On-line Authoring Shell, Content Manager and Learning Environment***

**Brief summary of main features**
*Proyecto IN6ENIO* is an R+D project, entirely funded by the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, which has been designed and developed by the CAMILLE Research Group led by Ana Gimeno. The project has two basic practical aims. On the one hand, to create a language independent, on-line multimedia CALL authoring shell, and on the other, an on-line learning environment offering courseware designed and created with the *IN6ENIO* authoring tool.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified**
The authoring shell, which is open to registered users completely free of charge, enables teachers to create entirely new language courses or to build upon existing materials contained within the system's database. The materials embedded in the system comprise the *IN6ENIO* database and are hosted on a central server. When registered, teachers may access the database and feed their own newly created courseware with materials taken from the archive. The materials can be accessed as isolated multimedia components (video, audio or image files) or as readymade exercises or reference materials. Courseware-design is based on the template approach to CALL authoring. At the moment 14 exercise templates are available, as well as templates to design reference materials such as grammar, use of language or culture notes, in addition to bi- or monolingual dictionaries.

Registered learners of the courses created with the *IN6ENIO* authoring shell have access to the entire on-line learning environment. Currently two courses are available: an intermediate level course for learners of Valencian —*Valencià Interactiu Grau Mitjà*— and an intermediate English course called *Intermediate Online English*.

Within the courses, in addition to receiving appropriate feedback, learners can call up progress reports to monitor their work at any point during the learning process since the relevant data is automatically transferred to the server while the materials are in use.

The *IN6ENIO* multimedia CALL authoring shell and on-line learning environment are unique in the sense that all the components are managed via the web. The system is completely machine independent, allowing teachers to work from any computer at hand. It is an extremely versatile and flexible open system that can be constantly updated and improved.

**Source of information**
**http://www.upv.es/camille** (in Spanish)

**REC 9: Establishment of an adequate technical infrastructure accompanied with tailored and continuous technical support.**

This is perhaps the most obvious recommendation, although not as straightforward as it might appear, because "adequate" is also a relative concept from the pedagogical point of view, in other words, ICT-

enhanced approaches can be pedagogically solid even when the most sophisticated technology is not available. Yet, in order to fully incorporate learner autonomy into the pedagogical approaches, a variety of measures need to be taken. One of them concerns the adaptation of the infrastructure. Large investments are necessary in order to ensure the use of new media and new learning approaches in teaching. The facilities which promote independent learning include networked multimedia language centres/labs and typically provide, for instance, access to the Internet, online courses and reference materials, digitised teaching and learning materials, video-conferencing and interactive communication opportunities, satellite TV, VHS recorders, CD Rom/DVD players. Even though policy makers are often more inclined to provide funding for equipment than for user support (even in institutions with a good infrastructure), the technical infrastructure is not everywhere equally reliable and stable, and often concrete and ready available technical support is missing.

## *Examples of good practice*

### *VIRTUAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN SWITZERLAND: FORUM NEW LEARNING*

**Brief summary of main features:**
The 'Forum New Learning' is a 3-year Virtual Campus Project conceived for teachers in Swiss Virtual Universities. Its main aim is to foster methodological competence in New Learning Technology. This is accomplished through exchange and collaboration; a shared communication and information platform; shared knowledge management; training courses; basic support; and counselling for research projects.

All of these features have converged to the establishment of a learning community focused on New Learning Technologies. Current membership stands at 340 French and German speaking teachers, with more than 500 documents (Learning Objects) in the database that include as appropriate, details of the institution(s) concerned; funding, timeframe, and main features or activities: enough to convey a clear idea of what is involved.

**Analysis of the innovation(s) and good practice(s) exemplified:**
With minimal means a virtual community has been created in a short time, using a learning platform as its portal. The results are mixed. There is active exchange and quite a lot of sharing takes place, but intensive coaching and guidance is constantly needed.

The outstanding feature is that even if this domain is still under development, which means that relevant information is still sometimes difficult to find, the people looking for solutions to problems immediately get the newest results from the people creating the new knowledge - the experimenting and sharing teachers. The community does enable teachers to learn what they need, when they need it and from people who have the practical experience - their peers.

**Problems and Issues:**
This mutual training initiative is saving money where it replaces scores of training workshops and courses. On the other hand, the whole project is still quite expensive to run. Although it is relatively easy to provide the necessary knowledge and support for beginners in the area, it is more difficult to provide the answers to all the different needs generated by advanced teachers using the new technology.

Technical problems still weigh heavily on the development any initiative in the field, and the necessary pedagogical competencies are rarely sought after actively. This means that moderation and conciliating needs is a rather delicate process where the authorities funding the community often do not have the same interests as the participating teachers or the community members.

**Source of information:**
Andreas Röllinghoff, FNL-moderator, rollinghoff@icsa.ch

http://www.fnl.ch

***Similar examples also exist in other countries.***

**REC 10:** ***Adequate funding for staff permanence and development and for academisation of the higher education language teaching profession.***

One of the drawbacks of modern technology is that the pace of evolution is so high. People barely have time to adjust to a given piece of software before they have to change over to a completely new version. New commercial virtual learning environments such as Blackboard, WebCT and Merlin take considerable effort to get to know but are in some ways limited in their possibilities. Added to this is the fact that long-term planning is often difficult because of the temporary status of particularly those language teachers who are not dealing with language as a discipline but mostly with the use of language for academic and professional purposes. Successful integration of NLEs, however, requires time and effort as well as joint actions for the teaching staff of an institution, which is why equal partnership and mutual respect for expertise are very important.

There seems to be much more willingness in the institutions to invest in technical infrastructures than in ensuring that there is enough qualified personnel to maintain and support full use of the installations. The pedagogical aspects have been largely neglected particularly if language teaching carries little weight in the university context, and the excellent facilities are often only offered as extracurricular opportunities where the students are left alone to do their language learning activities in any way they wish. It is difficult for the staff to be committed to the development of new pedagogical approaches in a situation such as this, and it is equally difficult for students to engage in independent language learning without proper learner training or guidance. Without investing in the pedagogical side of ICT enhanced language teaching and ILL, however, even excellent facilities and equipment will remain in mechanical use only. In addition, developing pedagogical applications requires staff permanence and opportunities to do research and action research, which is often impossible because of the low status and temporary positions of HE language teachers.

The changes in the attitudes, initiative, and approaches required from both learners and teachers in order to manage knowledge and skill construction together in a reciprocal partnership while using new learning environments in a flexible way are substantial in nature and can only be implemented over a considerable time period. Continuous professional development is therefore a prerequisite for the successful implementation of NLEs.

**REC 11:** ***Identification of reference points for the assessment of NLEs implemented, for improved (interdisciplinary) co-operation and collaboration, and for continuous quality enhancement.***

The use of NLEs should not be a departmental, institutional or even national phenomenon. Experiences in the use of NLEs and the design of learning materials for them should be pooled. Cooperation and collaboration are crucial both in technical, pedagogical and strategic terms. In order to do this, common reference points for the assessment of NLEs have to be established. Joint evaluation of effectiveness based on common criteria is a necessity.

## 3c. European level requirements and action

**REC 12:** ***Creation of a European Information Centre/clearing house /virtual language centre for learning and teaching in the area of languages with the task of collecting and disseminating the following:***

- ***database for existing software platforms in Europe and a database of E-learning materials and tasks;***
- ***examples of good practice, case studies and guidelines for the development of learning environments and learning materials;***
- ***research findings in areas relevant to the use of NLEs.***
- ***quality assessment and enhancement guidelines in the field.***

Apart from training, the most commonly cited problem in the National reports was the lack of adequate information on NLEs. Dissemination of information on successful initiatives is necessary. This will promote co-operation between different institutions with the aim to improve the quality of research, development and practice and avoid the costly duplication of efforts. Interdisciplinary professional co-operation is also necessary, for instance, between language and content teachers and software and hardware designers in order to arrive at suitable applications and solutions for piloting.

Suggestions were presented in the National reports, as well as the International Certificate Conference, for resources for online learning opportunities of all European languages through a joint European web portal which would bring together all existing activities and organisations of European higher education institutions and serve as a main port of call for coordination and dissemination of information and experience. This kind of an aim, however, also presupposes design of and commitment to national visions, policies and strategies regarding multilingualism, as well as acknowledgement of language studies as an integral part of future professionalism in all disciplines.

The centre should be established as a permanent information service and disseminate through e.g. the following channels: the web site itself, a discussion forum (online), workshops, staff development initiatives, online publications, etc …

The overall aim has to be to inform and enhance the quality of learning and teaching in languages throughout Europe, more particularly with respect to e-learning.

***Related examples in REC 1 & 9.***

**REC 13:** ***Design and implementation of postgraduate and professional development programmes and modules for HE language teacher and non-language teachers teaching in mobility-related contexts.***

As mentioned before, staff training and professional development are crucial for the successful implementation of NLEs. More and more often, however, both offline and online teacher development courses, seminars and workshops are being run, as well as modular diploma courses in language teaching technology, network moderating and advising, and designing materials for ICT enhanced environments. This process has to be stimulated. Staff training courses should include specific modules/subjects to train teachers in the use and integration of ICT in the language curriculum. This should be carried out from a critical point of view giving teachers a basis on which to perform a sound evaluation of the resources available. An in-depth knowledge of the various tools available is crucial since teachers will be unable to motivate their students unless they themselves are fully acquainted with the range of learning environments that can co-exist with a more traditional learning environment.

These modules/subjects need to contemplate the existence of new learning environments with and without the support of ICT, and the added value related to their introduction in practice, in order to avoid a situation where it is the equipment which provides the direction for language learning and teaching and not the pedagogically sound principles.

Training courses like the ones mentioned above should be combined into postgraduate and professional programmes whose validation can be recognised by European institutions and be included in universities' career structures. Several relevant professional development programmes are already in existence in Europe (e.g. ICT4LT, TALLENT, programmes in language learning and technology and in language advising), but such efforts have not been coordinated or networked yet.

***PROJECT PROPOSAL***

Construction of a European Virtual Language Centre which will create *pathways in four to five languages at three levels*. They will be based around the ELP and create self-study plans and learning circles. The latter will take place face to face through the OLC/Language Centres of the countries involved and also online through the creation of online study groups. Further to that, the needs of the tutors will also be addressed and *training for e-tutoring and learning support* will be provided online and through the creation of a professional online support group. *A special EAP area* will be designed to cater for the need of staff in all disciplines who are now asked to deliver their courses in English to multilingual and multicultural student groups.

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**REC 14:** ***Development of a digital teacher portfolio.***

In parallel to the European Language Portfolio for learners (described above in REC 4), a digital teacher portfolio should be worked out. This portfolio could be used both at the pre-service and in-service levels. In the portfolio, a teacher could show evidence of pedagogical expertise, knowledge and skills related to design, development and the implementation of New Learning Environments and other innovations. One of the problems concerning the relatively low status of language teachers in Higher Education is the fact the academic recruiting is not usually done on the basis of pedagogical expertise but on the basis of scientific research merits. Exceptions to this, however, also exist and e.g. in Denmark and Finland a pedagogical portfolio is already a compulsory part of the application documents and selection criteria for any teaching position in Higher Education.

***PROJECT PROPOSAL***

Design of a European Teacher Portfolio for Higher Education language teachers to record in digital format their academic achievement and linguistic and pedagogical experience, experimentation, training, etc., as well as their development and use of NLEs, approaches for ILL and life-long language learning and other innovations in their teaching. Modular professional development programme arranged on a network basis and in the target languages of the teachers by various European universities on the basis of their particular strengths and orientations in the field. Programmes would also include training to use ELP and other standardised frameworks for offline and online language instruction at the HE level, as well as action research related to REC 16 below.

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**REC 15:** ***Establishment of common, more standardized and flexible learning platforms and spaces to ensure easy access of resources and expertise.***

The concept of learner autonomy seems to be completely foreign in some countries with advanced technology. Could this be due to the constraints from adopting platforms that are too inflexible to allow real learner choice? The market is dominated by commercial programs such as Blackboard and

WebCT, which are not perfectly suited for language learning and cannot be modified in ways that might be more amenable to language learning. Often they do not allow opening up course materials to the outside community (because of strict registration policies), thereby making community learning or reaching out to native speakers virtually impossible. In view of this, a strong case was made in the subgroup for open source software which can be modified by the language teaching community in linguistically relevant ways and which does not have the restrictions associated with the major commercial platforms.

One of the problems with existing ICT learning materials is the transferability across systems. Organisations such as the IMS Global Learning consortium endeavour to promote the widespread adoption of specifications that will allow distributed learning environments and content from multiple authors to be compatible (compare in this respect the RTF file format for text processing). The technological codes that describe these specifications have been worked out by IMS and now enjoy wide acceptance, but in terms of content specifications too, standards have to be worked out by the various disciplines. Within Europe, the most widely accepted reference for language learning at present is the CEF. This document provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner. There is a definite need for the standardization of such content coding systems for language learning materials and has already been adapted for use as a coding system for e-learning materials.

**REC 16:** ***Access to funding for networked research projects, including longitudinal research on NLE-assisted language learning.***

The increased use of information and communication technologies has raised new research questions whose investigation will allow a better understanding of the inter-relation between technological development, language and culture learning. The findings of this exploration will affect the way in which teachers design courses, interpret new learning spaces, interact as professionals and deal with the meaning and construction of knowledge and skill. They will also necessitate closer co-operation, for instance, in the case of expanding the opportunities of learning a less widely spoken and used language electronically. It is in this way that true multilingualism can be promoted more systematically. There is therefore an important role to be played by research in informing and forming new learning and teaching paradigms. To date, there has been relatively little published research that explores the relationship between the use of computer networks, language learning and social implications. Much of the published literature consists of anecdotal teacher reports with a small number of systematic studies examining narrow slices of data, such as the outcome of particular class sessions, students' use of particular discourse features, rather than provide a longitudinal, and contextualised account of the overall implementation of the online activities and their broader impact on the students' learning experiences on and offline. Most of this research is also limited to the English language. The nature of research should therefore attempt to mirror the variety of languages and cultures, which Internet use supports.

## 4. Summary of Recommendations and Primary Parties of Implementation

for the integration of New Learning Environments into Higher Education language learning and teaching and the promotion of multilingualism, multiculturalism, life-long learning skills and employability

| RECOMMENDATION | PRIMARY PARTIES INVOLVED (S/T=students & teachers; INST = institutions; NAT/EUR = national/European |
|---|---|
| **1. Systematic learner development for independent language learning and use of ICT-enhanced NLEs and their support systems.** | **S/T** |
| **Continuous pedagogical and technical training and support for teachers to guide and support the learning outcomes and core competences pursued by students.** | **T/INST** |
| **2. Systematic and structured use of NLEs for life-long learning and employability (tailored language programmes for academic and professional purposes).** | **S/T** |
| **Identifying communicative prerequisites implied by job descriptions in real life and designing socially relevant learning tasks, materials and programmes for them.** | **S/T/INST** |
| **3. Systematic debriefing and support of both mobile students and staff and for internationalisation at home ( IaH).** | **S/T, INST** |
| **4. Adoption of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and other relevant joint European frameworks of reference and assessment to guarantee transparency and reciprocal recognition.** | **S/T, INST, NAT** |
| **5. Acknowledgement of both mother tongue and foreign language studies as an integral part of academic and professional qualifications in all fields, and accreditation and validation of such studies as well as independent language learning achievement.** | **S/T, INST/NAT** |
| **6. Identification of core elements constituting the professional profiles of HE language education in general and in terms of NLEs.** | **S/T, INST** |
| **7. Development of institutional and national educational visions, policies and strategies to recognise and foster the value of multilingualism (along with the maintenance of own language as a scientific language) and cultural competence, as well as ICT and life-long learning skills, as integral parts of academic and professional competence.** | **INST/NAT** |
| **8. Embedding of the use of NLEs for language learning in the general institutional policy and effort, including systematic promotion of virtual mobility** | **INST** |

9. **Establishment of an adequate technical infrastructure accompanied with tailored and continuous technical support.** **INST**

10. **Adequate funding for staff permanence and development and academisation of the higher education language teaching profession.** **INST/NAT**

11. **Identification of reference points for the assessment of NLEs implemented and for improved (interdisciplinary) co-operation and collaboration, and for continuous quality enhancement.** **INST, NAT**

12. **Creation of a European Information Centre / Clearing House/ Virtual Language Centre for learning and teaching in the area of languages with the task of collecting and disseminating the following:**
    **a) a database for existing software platforms in Europe;**
    **b) a database of learning materials and tasks;**
    **c) examples of good practice, case studies and guidelines for the development of learning environments and materials;**
    **d) research findings in areas relevant to the use of NLEs**
    **e) quality assessment and enhancement guidelines in the field.** **EUR**

13. **Design and implementation of postgraduate and professional development programmes and modules for HE language teachers and non-language teachers teaching in mobility-related contexts.** **EUR, NAT**

14. **Development of a digital teacher portfolio.** **EUR, NAT**

15. **Establishment of common, more standardised and flexible learning platforms and spaces to ensure easy access of resources and expertise.** **EUR, NAT**

16. **Access to funding for networked research projects, including longitudinal research on NLE-assisted language learning.** **EUR, NAT**

## 5. REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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