

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL (ELL) FOR INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Aim

As explained in the General Background provided in Annex 1, the Commission will continue to implement the European Language Label initiative in the period 2014-2020.

While the organisation of an ELL competition and award are not a minimum requirement for the Erasmus+ National Agencies, they are nevertheless strongly encouraged to continue implementing the initiative at national level also in the period 2014-2020. NAs can fund their ELL activities as part of their operating budget supported by the EU contribution to NA management costs.

In order to ensure a highly qualitative and consistent implementation of the ELL at national level, participating National Agencies are expected to follow the guidelines set out hereafter.

Scope of the European Language Label

Over the years the aims of the ELL have become more and more ambitious: the ELL now concerns every level of education and training, aims to highlight and reward innovative initiatives in the field of language teaching and learning in any phase of education and training, functions as a stimulus to exploit and disseminate results of initiatives in the field, and promote public interest in improving language skills as well. The increasingly ambitious goals of the ELL are therefore perfectly in line with the increasing significance of multilingualism.

The ELL may be awarded to any initiative in the context of the lifelong teaching and learning of the languages of the EU and of the participating countries, whether that initiative is taken by education and training establishments, local and regional authorities, employers or associations. The ELL can also be awarded to individuals who have distinguished themselves in the field of language teaching and learning.

Management at European level

The European Language Label is managed by the ELL working group, chaired by the Commission and including at least one representative of each country participating in the ELL initiative (so-called “participating countries” hereinafter). The working group will meet once a year in Brussels.

The ELL working group interacts mainly on the ELL but also on general multilingualism issues. The EC coordinator organises the annual meetings in Brussels, manages the multilingual database and validates entries, coordinates activities for dissemination – publications, conferences, European awards such as the European Language Label of the Label awards 2012 (see Annex 1) –, assures through regular contacts and information that the ELL members are kept up-to-date.

Management at national level

The ELL can be implemented directly by an Erasmus+ National Agency or indirectly by a so-called "national implementing body". In the case of a "national implementing body", the NA shall establish the relevant subcontracting arrangements in so far as the EU contribution to NA management costs is used to support the implementation of the ELL.

In countries where more than one Erasmus+ National Agency has been designated, the different NAs should agree on the implementation of the ELL between themselves in order to ensure a single coordinated national ELL initiative.

Application and selection procedures

Participating countries will select applications via an open call for proposals, issued at least two months before the deadline for applications, and publicised via the appropriate media.

Expert juries set up by the National Agency - or the national implementing body in case the NA subcontracts the implementation of the ELL at national level - will select successful projects.

National juries will always include at least one member from another participating country. The EC coordinator can also be invited as a member of national juries.

Selection criteria

In the process of selecting projects, all national juries will apply common European criteria agreed by the ELL working group. Labels will be awarded only to projects meeting all of the criteria (see Annex 2). Two European priorities for the ELL campaign are established on a two-year basis the year before the start and are proposed by the Commission in agreement with the working group (see Annex 3).

NAs or national implementation bodies may add to the European criteria any national priorities that they deem appropriate, provided that these do not contradict the European criteria. They may, for example, choose in a given year to target a particular sector of language education, or an individual aspect of that education (for example, the use of new technologies).

The Commission and the ELL working group will consider the scope for applying in certain years additional priorities at European level.

Each participating country will determine the number of Labels it shall award in any given year, taking duly into account the need to keep this number within reasonable limits in order to maintain the prestige of the award and the character of excellence distinguishing both projects and individuals awarded.

Timetable

Participating countries will normally award Labels annually, although the smallest countries and regions may choose to do so bi-annually.

The awarded Labels may be valid for the duration of a calendar year or an academic year, as decided by the participating countries.

The nature of awards

Successful projects will receive a certificate which will always have 2 signatures: the signature of the EC Commissioner in charge of multilingualism (who puts at the disposal of the National Agencies the own scanned signature for this purpose), and the signature of the relevant minister at national level.

NAs and national implementing bodies may, at their discretion, also award prizes in money or in kind. However, the Commission will not provide extra funding or prizes for this purpose. National Agencies are not allowed, either, to use EU funds for grant support under the Erasmus+ Programme, or its predecessor programmes to cover the costs of prizes in money or in kind.

Information activities

The Commission and the national implementation bodies will constantly aim to raise the profile of the European Language Label awards and give to it more visibility. Initiatives in this sense may take place at European level, in so far as financial and administrative circumstances allow.

The Commission will publicise the initiative via appropriate publications, providing information to journalists and via its presence at major international events in the field of education and training. It will also set up and maintain pages within the Europa Internet server, and include in these pages links to Internet sites managed by national implementing bodies.

Dissemination activities

The Commission manages a multilingual ELL database where information and the description of all projects and individuals awarded the European Language Label will have to be introduced by the NA of the participating countries once the ELL competition has taken place.

The data in the ELL database shall be made available at least in English and the national language¹ and validated by the Commission. For these actions, access to the database is

¹ The concept of "national language" is synonymous with "language community" and does not imply the mandatory introduction of data and description in the remaining national language/s, which however is considered most welcome.

limited to the members of the NAs who introduce the relevant data and the EC coordinator who validate them. Once these internal actions are carried out, data are publicly available online. National implementing bodies cannot access the ELL database directly.

To increase visibility of the ELL, participating NAs can also flag ELL awarded projects (not individuals) that are funded under the Erasmus+ Programme in the Erasmus+ Dissemination Platform. For that purpose, a dedicated ELL flag will be established in the Erasmus+ Dissemination Platform.

NAs and National implementing bodies shall use all means they see fit to disseminate information within their countries. In particular, they will: produce publications and advertisements aimed at target groups within their country; notify general and specialist journals of calls for proposals and of awards; invite representatives of the media to award ceremonies; in so far as they have the technical means available, set up and maintain Internet sites with links to the Commission's site and multilingual database and to other relevant national sites (such as the Erasmus+ Programme website of the National Agency).

Annex 1

A brief history

Following the recommendations of the 1995 *White Paper on Teaching and Learning* (Objective 4: Innovative ways to learn languages), the European Commission (EC) launched in 1998 a pilot project called “European Label”. Its initial aims were to identify and disseminate innovative projects in language teaching and learning at a European level. Nearly 150 projects were awarded the Label in the very first year of the competition (1999). This bears witness to the great potential of this initiative, which led to the decision, in 2001, to transform the European Label in a Europe-wide initiative in its own right called “European Language Label” (ELL).

The following year (2002) marked an important milestone in the field of multilingualism: in the conclusions of the European Council held in Barcelona, the ambitious objective of “Mother Tongue + 2” was proclaimed: all citizens should have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills in two foreign languages, in addition to their mother tongue. Since 2002, the ELL has contributed enormously to the multilingualism agenda throughout Europe, with around 2000 projects awarded in the countries that have joined the initiative; currently 28 EU countries (Belgium involving three language communities: Dutch, French and German) + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

The Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity, approved by the Commission in 2003, proposed that the Label initiative be extended by “introducing in each country or region an annual prize for the individual having made the most progress in foreign language learning, and the best language teacher”². The aim of these two new activities (which were launched in about one third of the participating countries) was to acknowledge and publicise success stories related to language learning or teaching. The countries are free to define the nature of these awards: i.e. whether they are granted to renowned personalities acting as ambassadors for language learning or in order to recognize a particular contribution to languages and language learning.

There is a significant amount of work, engagement, commitment and enthusiasm behind the success of the European Language Label. Although implemented at national level, the European dimension of the projects has been fostered. Therefore, in 2012 – the year marking the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona objective – the Commission deemed it appropriate to highlight this dimension by creating the “European Language Label of the Labels” award, a competition organized at European level in which each country nominated one project among those awarded the label in the last decade that was considered the most apt to represent excellence and best practice. This award also meant EU recognition for all nominees by acknowledging the work done at national level to promote multilingualism, as well as added value for the prestige and visibility of the ELL initiative.

Several multilateral projects and networks that have been awarded the ELL have been co-financed within the framework of the consecutive EU funding programmes, most recently the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and in particular its transversal programme called Key Activity 2 Languages. It is however important to underline that not all awarded projects are funded by the European Commission. With or without

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52003DC0449:EN:HTML>

financial support, ELL projects have contributed substantially to promoting language teaching and learning in innovative ways.

Annex 2

EUROPEAN LABEL FOR INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING – EUROPEAN CRITERIA

All projects awarded the European Label, in all participating countries, must meet the following criteria:

- Initiatives should be **comprehensive**. All elements involved – learners, teachers, methods and materials – should contribute to ensuring that the needs of the learners are identified and met. Creative use should be made of the resources available to stimulate language learning. These might include, for example, the presence of native speakers, language practice organised with twinned towns or institutions, or cooperation with local business.
- Initiatives should provide **added value**, in their national context. They should lead to a quantitative and qualitative improvement in the teaching and learning of languages. In quantitative terms, this might mean involving several languages, and particularly those which are less widely used. In qualitative terms, it might mean the use of a better methodology than before.
- Initiatives should provide **motivation**, for learners and teachers.
- Initiatives should be **original and creative**. They should explore previously unknown approaches, appropriate to the learners concerned.
- Initiatives should have a **European dimension**. They should be based upon the reality of the European Union and its linguistic diversity and use the potential which that offers (for example, contacts across national borders, language learning between the neighbouring countries, etc.) to improve understanding of other cultures by means of language learning.
- Initiatives should include innovation which is **transferable**. They should be a potential source of inspiration for others in different countries and contexts. They might, for example, be adaptable to the learning of other languages or to learning by different age groups than those originally involved.

Annex 3

EUROPEAN LABEL FOR INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING – EUROPEAN PRIORITIES

In the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity: an Action Plan 2004 - 2006 (COM/2003/0449 final)³ it is mentioned that “The successful European Language Label will be re-focused [...] by using targeted annual European priorities to focus on good practice”. The aim of defining European priorities is to highlight the European dimension of the initiative. As mentioned above in the Selection criteria, national priorities can also be added, provided they are in line both with the European priorities and the general European criteria.

In 2005 the Commission proposed for the first time two European priorities with two-year duration (2006-2007). Since then, the Commission has proposed every two years during the annual meeting with the ELL working group two European priorities with two year duration starting the following year.

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52003DC0449:EN:HTML>