

eELP
eEuropean Language Portfolio

FRANCE
Language Policy



Good Practice Executive Summary

The eEuropean Language Portfolio was developed in its 1.0 version in the framework of an informal consortium of European higher education institutions. The development of the accredited 2.0 version was financed by a single university, Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV.

Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV has a long history of ELP use. The eELP was introduced in 2003 and has led to progressively reorganise English teaching across the whole syllabus in Law and Economics. This is why it can be considered more as a language policy initiative than a training initiative. Such a reorganisation is still in process. The financing of the redevelopment of the eELP was obtained considering the potential of the previous version for the purpose of promoting multilingualism in the context of the international university landscape and helping students find employment by enhancing their multilingual skills and their qualifications expressed along the EQF.

The originality of this eELP, compared to others, is that it contains a database which can be open to companies interested in students' language skills for short or long-term missions. At the same time, technically, the eELP is a policy statement in favour of open-source software and user control of who has access to eELPs. The choice of open-source software also ensures that once the eELP released and distributed to higher education institutions, it will create a community of developers which will improve its usability by, for instance, allow for integration in the universities' Content Management Systems. These are the systems used by webmasters and teachers thanks to which they can put information online, on a website, on Dokeos, on Moodle or on other systems.

This eELP being very much employability-orientated, it is completely in line with the most recent EU and regional policy statements on the importance of mobility to foster social inclusion.

Students from migrant communities are among the primary targets of the eELP, as this is the place their plurilingual competence can be displayed. However, the eELP is a much broader language policy tool. Not only has it led to reorganising English teaching in the university in which it has been implemented, but it is also currently changing the positioning of Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV as a whole as a language policy research institution, as language-related technical and pedagogic engineering innovations are receiving international attention in research, associations and projects.

The eELP is to be distributed free of charge to higher education institutions, directly or through RAssemblement National des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur, the French chapter of the European association of

university language centres (CERCLES). This will ensure the eELP is widely used and transferred to other local, national, European and global contexts.

1. Reflects current EU and regional policy on multilingualism

The European Language Portfolio was created by the Council of Europe in 2000 following the publication of the Common European Reference Framework for Languages. The ELP is composed of three parts, plus an checklist:

- the Language Passport, in which citizens are to indicate the levels that they are at in all the languages they know, however partial their competencies in certain languages at certain levels might be. Passport entries are those of Europass;
- the Biography, with invitations to reflect on how the ELP owner has learnt their languages and on how to apply successful learning methods to acquire new competencies and learn new languages;
- the Dossier, in which evidence of language competence is to be collected. The Dossier can be completed with any kind of material, for instance certificates of attendance at a particular course, transcripts, etc.;
- the checklist, with detailed indications of levels along those of the CERFL.

The ELP was created to create a virtuous language learning circle. Learners were to determine their levels using the the Passport, then use the Biographies to decide what learning methods could be used, set themselves realistic, limited objectives through the annex, work to achieve them and document their achievements in the Dossier part, set themselves new objectives, etc..

The desired output of using the ELP was twofold:

- encourage learner autonomy, by providing personalised guidance on the steps to improve language competencies
- foster multilingualism, as the ELP provides an overview of an individual's multilingual profile and suggestions to transfer competence from one language to another.

Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV started using the ELP in October 2003 with 2nd year Economics students. Actually, it was felt that learners' autonomy was an all-important stake in the context of French higher education, following a skyrocketing passrate of end-of-high-school degree and increasing numbers of university registrations. The ELP would also promote the language competencies of foreign students, who represent about 25% of the student population in Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV. It would eventually raise awareness among students from a migrant background of their multilingual competence and possibly increase the pass rate in Economics (below 50% of students registered in their first year pass after 2 years of university studies). Eventually, it would promote student mobility, both during their studies (by encouraging them to do internships abroad, thus feeding their ELP Dossier) and in their job search.

The version of the ELP used in 2003 was targeted at the secondary and tertiary sectors. The Economics faculty purchased ELPs for all 2nd year students. The following year, in order to extend the experiment to 1st year students, it was decided to use CercleS's version of the ELP (CercleS being the European Confederation of University Language Learning Centres), as it was both distributed free of charge and specifically aimed at university students. In house, using the ELP received backing of the languages Department, of the Economics faculty and of the Printing services, which shared the photocopying costs in the second year. The experiment was monitored in the framework of English for Specific Purposes action research, leading to a paper at a national conference and an article in a peer-reviewed journal.

However, to keep in line with students' work methods and use of IT and to cancel distribution costs, it was felt that an electronic version of the ELP was needed. At the time, the only available electronic version was that of CercleS but the ELP workgroup at Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV considered it did not respond to the identified needs of students (who were perceived as needing encouragement and backing to use the ELP) and teachers, many of whom were holding temporary positions as English teachers, particularly in 1st and 2nd year in Economics. An informal consortium of prospective European university users of an electronic version of the ELP was formed. It gathered the University of the Basque country (Spain), the Fachhochschule from Schmalkalden (Germany), the IUT Bayonne-UPPA (in the French Basque country, in the Aquitaine region, which is also that of the University of Bordeaux), Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV, the IUT Bordeaux 4 and the Dublin Institute of Technology. All partners but the Irish and German ones were located in the Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarra regrouping of regions.

The ELP led to a reorganisation of English teaching across the Economics syllabus. Target levels were set up in first and second years. First year students, early in the academic year and before the beginning of the tutorials, are gathered in an amphitheatre. Positioning in groups organised along levels takes place. Students are distributed the European levels grid and asked to identify their levels in the five competencies. Grids are then collected and organised into three piles: one for complete beginners in English (often African and Asian students whose foreign language in high school was French, not English), one for those students with 3 competencies at A or below, one for the others. From one year to the next, the distribution of students between the A and the B group varies. However, this lightweight positioning method has proved satisfactory and has been continuing since 2005. Access to the complete beginners' group was even officially extended to all students, whatever their subject and their year of study. Actually, student mobility being traditionally high in French universities, due to the low cost of higher education in France, foreign students arrive at all training levels. The whole technical, pedagogic engineering scheme was presented at a 2006 international conference on ePortfolios.

In spite of the obvious interest the project raised, funding for the programming of the eELP came late. A professor volunteered to develop a 1.0 version of the eELP, which was used from 2006 to 2010. Six interface languages were integrated, namely English, French, Spanish, German, Occitan and Basque, thanks to the dedication of project partner institutions. In order to raise momentum, the eELP was presented at various national and international conferences (RANACLES 2006 and the 2007 CercleS ELP seminar among others). The database of the eELP, which was one of its most distinctive features, soon became huge: in June 2010, the 1.0 eELP had over 6,000 student users from around thirty higher education institutions across Europe, making it one of the most widely used ELP of its kind. The database was analysed in 2008 and results of the analysis were presented at the 2008 Eurocall conference.

The French national programme for raising the pass rate of undergraduates (the so-called “plan Licence”), which was stagnating nationally below 50%, eventually prompted Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV to employ a professional developer to finish the development of the eELP in order to apply for Council of Europe accreditation. Development of the 2.0 version took place over roughly a year, between February 2010 and March 2011.

The redevelopment allowed to implement features which had not been fully developed in the 1.0 version. For instance, the filtering of the database in order to find individuals with a specific declared competency in a specific language had to be carried out manually by importing the whole database in such software as Excel or Access. It was Access which had been used to present the results of the database analysis at the 2008 edition of Eurocall. Three levels of access had been built in the 1.0 version, for students, teachers and visitors, but student groups management needed improving for both teachers and visitors. The current version of the eELP allows private companies, after Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV authorises access to the students' database and students accept their data to be viewed by visitors, to search for the most suitable student for a job or a temporary mission. Thus, the eELP is very much employability-orientated, in line with the Lisbon agenda. The eELP also responds to the Europe 2020 priorities of fostering social inclusion through languages.

When and if accredited, the eELP will be distributed free of charge to all higher education institutions wishing to place it on its servers. RANACLES, CercleS's French chapter, has offered to act as a key distribution point to French universities. Technologically, the 2.0 version of the eELP is based on « frameworks ». They consist of a set of components, tools and methods which make application development easier.

- Components, which are tested and functional bricks of software, are designed to add a level of abstraction so as to overcome certain hardware and/or software limits and often avoid to reinvent the wheel;
- Tools allow to automate certain tasks (particularly regarding code testing);

- Methods are a set of tested conventions and organisations. When followed, they allow for a homogeneous and structured code and increase security and « maintainability ». This permits future developers to add new functionalities and correct flaws.

The frameworks which have been used in the 2.0 version are all open-source and have been chosen for their installed database, because they are common, because much documentation is available online and because they run under not-so-recent platforms.

The policy actually addresses lifelong learning relating to contextualised employment needs.

- The eELP promotes a wider knowledge and use of all languages throughout the Union
- The eELP promotes lifelong learning and learner mobility
- The eELP seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of provisions and outcomes
- The eELP ensures the provision of the necessary skills and qualifications for the world of work

In 1998, with the Bologna declaration, university language policy became a natural extension of EU policy. The EU became more committed to creating a European area of higher education in order to adjust to globalisation. This was considered key to promote citizens' mobility among countries by making degrees comparable and compatible to increase employability. The Bologna declaration later served as a basis for some of the successive reforms of the French higher education system (Universités 2000, the 1999 U3M law, the 2002 "LMD" law and the 2006 research law). The Lisbon strategy aimed at achieving full employment by 2010 by raising citizens' knowledge. The EU put forward proposals regarding education and languages and developed its own field of intervention, with programmes to incentivise the creation of Computer Assisted Language Learning resources, networks and other forms of cooperation at a European scale. The EU Commission was a proponent of the promotion of entrepreneurship at all levels of education. projects concerned with the relationships between multilingualism and employability fall into the scope of the EU's aims. For 10 years, the EU has chosen to regard multilingualism, its official language policy, as linked to education, not as something acquired once for all. Multilingualism currently sits along Education, Culture and Youth in the hands of a single commissioner. In the framing document of the Europe 2020 strategy, EU Commission President Barroso announced initiatives directed towards innovation, young people education, IT, natural resources, the industry and reducing unemployment and poverty. The focus of the Commission is clearly moving towards multilingualism as an educational outcome which is instrumental to employment. In relation to higher education institutions, universities have

been increasingly expected not just to pass on knowledge but to make graduates ready for the world of work: the working group on employability, in its report to EU ministers, even stated that this was universities' main role in society. Increasing employability is exactly what the eELP has set to do.

2. Includes incentives to enhance and sustain language learner motivation and employment benefits

See above. The eELP, whose database of learners can be opened to duly identified employers, which can help students who would wish so to find employment thanks to their language competence. This promotes social inclusion, one of the topmost priorities of the Europe 2020 agenda. It is worth noting that students remain in control of who accesses their eELPs and can view who has visited them.

CECRL levels are mediated through pedagogic engineering initiatives in force at Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV to accompany eELP use. Even beginners (pre-A1) now have a dedicated English learning group with an A1 target level, so as the compulsory uptake of languages does not act as a barrier for those international students from Asia and Africa or for students who have never studied any English until they arrive at university. This makes the most of the momentum in favour of English, as most students are now aware that English will help them network in their future profession, whether or not related to law or economics (Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV being a law, economics, management and social sciences university).

The languages department website (<http://langues.u-bordeaux4.fr>) linked towards the 1.0 version of the eELP. The website dedicated to languages in the framework of the economics syllabus (<http://langues-ecogestion.u-bordeaux4.fr>) already links to the 2.0 version of the eELP. The eELP will also be used as a tool to help select students to degree courses or mobility programmes, taking into account its declarative mode, which may then be completed with other forms of external or internal assessment (through language certificates, for instance, or in-house tests).

Informal learning contexts are taken into account through the Biography and the Annexes of the eELP. Learners are to be able to add their own reflexions on how they have learnt languages outside school and university and on their overall multilingual competence.

Linkage with the Europass Passport is strong. The eELP contains the same entries as the Europass Passport. A link on the Passport page invites to visit the Europass website. A 2010 survey of Europass users indicates that an automated translation of the Passport would be very much needed and that there should be extra space in order to mention informally acquired competencies and that a digital format would be more flexible. The eELP has such features. In fact, although the eELP was developed in two languages,

French and English, its technical development makes it easy to translate, as all files to be translated are placed in just a few .po files, editable in text format. Thus, the eELP can be translated in and unlimited number of languages. The information of the default language of the web browser automatically loads the eELP in the relevant language, if translation has been carried out. If the browser is in a language in which the eELP has not been translated, the default language of the eELP is English.

The screen capture below shows the “base” page of the eELP in student access mode.



The checklist (currently labelled “annex”) is that of the CercleS 29.2002 ELP. Students may also know who has visited their eELPs. The “tools” tab gives access to the levels grid of the CEFRL.

3. Reflects regional strategy for employability and intercultural benefits

See above. The eELP fosters student mobility, for incoming and outgoing students (as part of Erasmus programmes for instance), as it makes them reflect on their language levels, multilingual competence and employability thanks to their languages.

The eELP was born out of the joint effort of the many university services involved in promoting students' employability, namely the career service, international relations, IT, printing, languages department and deputy chancellors, in order to make sure their needs and, most importantly, those of students, are responded to.

In terms of concrete strategy, the table below is an indication of the planned outreach of the eELP scheme.

Dissemination channels	Targets
Distribution through RANACLES's website	25 universities
Distribution to universities member of the consortium	5 universities
Distribution to universities and high schools which were using the 1.0 version	20 universities, 5 high schools
Creation of a community of developers	10 developers
Presentation to stakeholders	90 participants (employers, policy-makers, language training institutes)
Workshop with the University of Bordeaux language teachers (four universities)	50 teachers
Email to learned societies' newsgroups	1,500 teachers

4. Addresses local language minority and migrant community language resources

See above. The eELP and the pedagogic engineering that goes with it promote migrants' languages and overall social inclusion while ensuring economic growth and intercultural understanding.

5. Provides for international networking and/or mobility

See above. The accredited eELP will be used as part of the selection process in some university mobility programmes. Pedagogic engineering fuelled by the eELP fosters meaningful language learning in a European context.

6. Incorporates the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) with transparent validation/ credits

The EQF has not been adapted nationally yet, to update the current French qualifications framework, which dates back from the 1960s. However, the eELP is already EQF-compliant: students are expected to indicate their level using the EQF, translated into French. This, in turn, encourages student mobility.

The following screen capture shows how visitors (companies searching for particular skills) can filter students' profiles, by language and EQF level.



The screenshot displays the 'European Language Portfolio' interface. At the top, it shows 'connected as Marc Antoine' and a language dropdown set to 'english'. Below the header, there are tabs for 'Base' and 'Students', with 'Students' selected. A 'Contact' and 'Logout' button is visible. The main content area is titled 'Students' and contains a table with three columns: 'Identity', 'Validated studies / Specialty', and 'College / University'. The table lists three students: Martin Martine, Martin Julie, and Martin Jules. Each row includes a small profile picture, the student's name, their validated studies (including EQF levels and specialties), and their college/university. A 'How to use' sidebar on the right provides instructions on how to interact with the interface, such as filtering criteria and seeing student profiles. The footer includes the Council of Europe logo and the text 'Council of Europe - Université Montesquieu - Bordeaux IV'.

Identity	Validated studies / Specialty	College / University
Martin Martine	End-of-high school degree (EQF level 4) <i>Négoce des affaires étrangères</i>	IUT Montesquieu - Bordeaux IV
Martin Julie	Licence AES (EQF level 6) <i>Démographie, économie du développement</i>	Université Montesquieu - Bordeaux IV
Martin Jules	Higher National Diploma (EQF level 5) <i>Aménagement du territoire et développement local</i>	Université Montesquieu - Bordeaux IV

In visitor mode, EQF levels appear under the “validated studies/Specialty” heading.

7. Can be readily & usefully implemented

See above. The accredited eELP will be distributed free of charge to universities, which will be able to install it on their servers. Maintenance will be easy, as the eELP was created using recent open software.

8. Transferability assessment

8.1. Evidence of transfer

The policy is in itself transferred from a Council of Europe initiative backed by EU policy.

It has already been transferred at IUT Bayonne-UPPA, where the 1.0 version is still in use. The IUT Bayonne has just received the 2.0 version.

The eELP will be distributed free of charge to HEI and VET institutions across Europe.

8.2. Innovation

No adaptation is required from institutions wishing to receive it. The fact that this eELP is both compliant to Council of Europe main requirements (as it has received a pre-accreditation which will be transformed into a definitive accreditation provided minor amendments are made) and employability-orientated makes it very innovative.

8.3. Dependence on political context

eELP use depends on the will of learners, individual teachers, higher education institutions, regions, states and other European stakeholders. All of them, at their respective level, have a role to play. Université Montesquieu-Bordeaux IV has made the deployment of the eELP a university priority. In this framework, a website dedicated to how the eELP is used is currently being developed.

To summarise, the eELP can be introduced at any level, micro or macro, raise momentum and obtain support at macro level, or possibly the other way round; information is to be available soon regarding local implementation.

8.4. Flexibility

eELP use is very flexible. The eELP is a multi-faceted tool which can be used for training purposes (like Melia), to promote mobility, foster motivation, encourage network building, develop a multilingual awareness, etc.. Institutionally, the eELP, through the Dossier, allows to examine applicants' language profiles (on a declarative mode) based on the whole of their language repertoire, not just on one particular language. This wholistic approach can enrich selection criteria for a training programme, a job or an internship.

More than a tool, the eELP is a philosophy in itself. CERFL levels can be justified not just by filling in an eELP, but also by providing recruiters and course managers with positive evidence of achievement in a variety of languages. As such, the portfolio approach allows for maximum transferability, within and beyond Europe. In the US, two language portfolios have been created inspired from the ELP, namely Linguafolio (<http://www.ncssfl.org/links/index.php?linguafolio>) and the Global Language Portfolio (<http://glp.elenes.com/credits.html>).

8.5. Multi-region transfer

There does not seem to be any obstacle for multi-regional transfer, in the framework of a global or European partnership. It can be transferred to partnerships of teachers, HEI, regions and states.