European Language Council
Conseil Européen pour les Langues

Piloting the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in the Higher Education Sector in Europe

Transnational project of the European Language Council (ELC/CEL)
Academic Year 1999/2000

Final Report – July 2000

This work was carried out in the context of the project:
A European Language Portfolio – Pilot Phase 1998-2000
co-ordinated by the Council of Europe (CoE) – Modern Languages Section

Brigitte Forster Vosicki
University of Lausanne/Switzerland

Table of contents

1. Introduction

The European Language Council (ELC/CEL) transnational project "Piloting the European Language Portfolio in the Higher Education Sector in Europe" forms part of a wider project "A European Language Portfolio – Pilot Phase 1998-2000" which is co-ordinated by the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe (CoE). In all it comprises 20 national and transnational pilot projects which have been carried out in 14 European countries and which concern all sectors of education – primary, secondary, higher, as well as further education for adults.

Within this framework the primary objective of the transnational ELC/CEL project is to establish whether the Portfolio is a valid tool for learning and teaching languages in the specific context of higher education.

2. Co-ordination of the project

Brigitte Forster Vosicki
Université de Lausanne
Centre de langues
BFSH 2
CH-1015 Lausanne
Tel.: +41-21-692 29 20
Fax: +41-21-692 29 17
Email: Brigitte.ForsterVosicki@cdl.unil.ch

3. Participating institutions (with co-ordinators)

Higher education sector only
Freie Universität Berlin/Germany
ZE Sprachlabor
Mr. Jürgen Steffen: jsteffen@mail.zedat.fu-berlin.de

Universität Bremen/Germany
Fremdsprachenzentrum der Hochschulen im Land Bremen
Ms. Caroline Veltcheff: ifranc1@uni-bremen.de
Ms. Ulrike Brand-Kleider: bremen@goethe.de

Universität Potsdam/Germany
Sprachenzentrum
Dr. Heidrun Klemm: klemm@rz.uni-potsdam.de

Universiteit Gent/Belgium
Talencentrum RUG
Ms. Marleen Coutuer: marleen.coutuer@rug.ac.be

Niels Brock, Copenhagen Business College/Denmark
Faculty of Higher Education
Mr. John Cyril Knudsen: jkn@brock.dk

Jyväskylän yliopisto/Finland
Centre for Applied Language Studies
Dr. Anne Räsänen: rasanen@cc.jyu.fi

University of Ulster and Coleraine/Northern Ireland
Language Resource Unit
Mr. Michael Jones: S0546@SPERRIN.ulst.ac.uk

Université de Caen/France with the Universitetet i Oslo/Norway
Office franco-norvégien d'échanges et de coopération
Dr. Wenche Ottesen: ottesen@ofnec.unicaen.fr

University of Aston/United Kingdom
Department of Languages and European Studies
Dr. Sue Wright: S.M.Wright@aston.ac.uk

Université de Lausanne/Switzerland
Centre de langues
Ecole de français moderne, Faculté des Lettres
Ms. Brigitte Forster Vosicki: Brigitte.ForsterVosicki@cdl.unil.ch

Université de Genève/Switzerland
Département de langue et de littérature allemandes, Faculté des Lettres
Dr. Erika Diehl: erika.diehl@bluewin.ch
Dr. Thérèse Studer: therese.studer@bluewin.ch

Other universities
During the pilot phase of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), the European Language Council (ELC/CEL) had contact with a group of students from the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana/Slovenia. These students have developed an impressive version of the ELP devised for and by the students themselves (http://fly.to/jportfolijo). About one hundred students piloted this version.[1]

4. Dimension of the ELC/CEL transnational project

- Total number of institutions involved: 11.
- Total number of learners involved: during the academic year 1999-2000 approximately 1000 students were introduced to and worked with all or part of the ELP.
- Total number of classes involved: approximately 40, plus independent learners (age: 18 plus).
- Total number of teachers involved: approximately 40.
- Target languages: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Czech.

5. Project history and timeframe

In July 1997 the Council of Europe (CoE) approached the European Language Council (ELC/CEL) with a view to exploring possibilities for cooperation, particularly with regard to including the higher education sector in the pilot phase of the European Language Portfolio. It had in fact been established that certain aspects are specific to higher education, and differ from those relating to secondary education or to further education for adults. The ELC/CEL agreed to set up a transnational project within its framework in order to test the European Language Portfolio.

---

[1] Other universities, not directly involved in the ELC/CEL project, have piloted the ELP: for example Trinity College Dublin/Eire, the University of Fribourg/Switzerland and the University of Calabria/Italy.

Dr. Wolfgang Mackiewicz, President of the ELC/CEL, initiated the project and set up the working group ELC/CEL "Piloting the European Language Portfolio in the Higher Education Sector in Europe". The main stages of the project are the following:

- *25 – 28 November 1998*: Two representatives of the ELC/CEL member institutions, Bärbel Kühn (Bremen) and Sue Wright (Aston), participated in the Third Portfolio Seminar of the Council of Europe – Modern Languages Section in Soest in order to study the applicability of the ELP in the higher education sector.

- *Spring 1999*: Formation of the ELC/CEL working group "Piloting the European Language Portfolio in the Higher Education Sector".

- *July 1999*: The working group met for the first time at the University of Jyväskylä/Finland. Mr. R. Schärer introduced the ELP. Following this meeting all participating institutions received written instructions for piloting.

- *September/October 1999*: Each participating university drew up a description of its project. The ELP transnational project of the European Language Council was also formulated.

- *October 1999*: Fifth Seminar of the CoE for the planning of the implementation of a European Language Portfolio, held in Budapest; Brigitte Forster Vosicki presented the ELC/CEL transnational project.

- *October 1999 to February 2000*: The ELP was introduced into teaching and a few weeks later the Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 1 was distributed.

- *February 2000*: A first interim report was drawn up for the Council of Europe – Modern Languages Section.

- *May 2000*: Brigitte Forster Vosicki represented the ELC/CEL at the Sixth Seminar on the European Language Portfolio Project of the CoE: "Analysis of piloting results, next steps and supporting materials" in Radovljica/Slovenia.

- *May 2000*: End of the pilot phase. The Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 3 was distributed.

- *July 2000*: The final report was transmitted to the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe.

6. Key objectives of the project

A. To establish whether the ELP is a valid tool in higher education language studies from the point of view of clarity, comprehension, relevance, and reliability as perceived by the students.

B. To assess its effectiveness in:
   1) raising students' level of reflection on language learning;
   2) developing sensitivity toward other cultures;
   3) enhancing multilingualism;
   4) increasing transparency and coherence concerning the whole learning process.

C. To assess whether the ELPs used in the piloting are sufficiently complete to cover domains specific to higher education such as: LSP (languages for special purposes), LAP (languages for academic purposes), LPP (languages for professional purposes), as well as translation and interpretation.

D. To evaluate the effect of the ELP on independent learning, guided autonomy or Tandem learning: during the stage of initial self-assessment; as an aid in planning the learning process; as a source of motivation for the student.

E. To test its value as a tool used during teacher training for raising awareness as to what is involved in language learning and teaching.

F. To establish whether the existing documents (attestations, etc.) cover the needs of language learners and students working in a foreign language in the context of higher education.

7. Organisation of the project

7.1 Types of study programmes involved in the project

The ELP was piloted in language courses for students of other disciplines as well as in degree courses and in extra-curricula courses, (e.g. Potsdam, Lausanne, Gent, Copenhagen, Ulster, Berlin, Bremen). It was also piloted in philological language studies (Geneva, Lausanne, Potsdam, Berlin, Aston), and in teacher training courses (Caen, Lausanne, Potsdam). Exchange students were found in all these categories.

7.2 Preparatory training for the participating institutions

The participating institutions did not have the advantage of introductory training in the use of the ELP in higher education. Apart from the co-ordinators who were able to attend a general introductory session at Jyväskylä/Finland in July 1999, most institutions received only printed information giving instructions for its use, together with details of further sources of information. For the most part they pursued their own inquiries by reading the relevant literature, and by consulting those closely involved with the conception of the ELP for other sectors of education in their respective countries. They were advised to consult the Portfolio web site created by the Centre for Teaching and Research in Foreign Languages at the University of Fribourg/Switzerland[2] which had collaborated on the conception and design of the Swiss version of the ELP. This web site contains detailed information on the ELP, and it is possible to download the Swiss version in 4 languages (English, German, French, Italian). Also recommended were the ELP web pages of the Council of Europe[3].

7.3 Project funding

The participating institutions themselves financed the pilot stage. This included the cost of the printed materials and instructions for teachers, meetings, and co-ordination. The ELC/CEL financed some travel expenses.

The Portfolios themselves were also paid for by the universities concerned. Problems arose over the supply and distribution of the ELP and this led some institutions to downscale their projects.

The Swiss version of the ELP was either sold to the students (at a price varying between SFr. 10.- and SFr. 15.-) or supplied free of charge. In some cases it was photocopied and distributed free of charge either as loose sheets or in files.

---

[2] http://www.unifr.ch/ids/Portfolio/
[3] http://culture.coe.fr/lang/fr/fedu2.5.html

Many participants complained about the high cost of the Portfolio, especially as it consisted of an experimental version. As its present cost precludes its use on a wide scale, ways must be found of producing a cheaper version which can be made more widely available (on the Internet, for example). In the future, it is most likely that students will have to bear the entire cost of the ELP.

7.4   Utilisation of the Portfolio with students

All the students involved in the pilot phase received introductory training focusing on the aims and content (i.e. the three main parts) of the ELP when it was first introduced into their courses.

Subsequent use varied from case to case. Either the ELP was fully integrated into the teaching situation and used intensively (e.g. students fixed their objectives with the help of the Portfolio; teachers targeted student needs; work focused on individual projects designed to be included in the Dossier section of the Portfolio and later incorporated into students' final oral exam, or used to obtain ETCS credits; students were closely monitored; activities were designed to raise awareness of the invisible aspects of language learning), or in other cases, only parts of the ELP were used as an occasional teaching tool.

8.   Models used

8.1   Versions and sections used

- The Swiss version of the Portfolio, in English, German and French, was used in almost all universities.

- The University of Bremen/Germany piloted both the Swiss version and, to a lesser extent, that of Dublin. An action research group created a version of the ELP which will be published in September 2000.

- The University of Aston is working on its own version of the Portfolio and has received a grant from the British government to finance on-going research on this project.

All sections of the ELP have been tested. These include the Passport, Biography and Dossier, Global evaluation scale, Self-assessment grid and Checklists for self-assessment of the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference, and self-assessment items for special needs. Some universities used only some of these elements, while others used them all.

8.2   Experience gained from using the ELP and suggestions for its improvement

On the whole, most people involved in the pilot project found the Swiss version of the ELP innovative, useful, and interesting. The items used for defining levels of competence, and the self-assessment checklists were noted as being particularly successful, because of their precision and relevance. However, this version was also widely perceived as being too dense, overloaded, and complex, and for these reasons difficult to use. The participants in the ELC/CEL project have therefore asked for a shorter more user friendly version of the Swiss ELP.

The summary of the Passport should be more prominently placed; this would facilitate a rapid overview for potential users unfamiliar with its concept and content.

8.2.1 Analysis of the self-assessment checklists

A majority of the universities involved in the pilot project were critical regarding the checklists, even though they also acknowledged the quality and the approach of individual items, particularly the positive way in which the competencies are described and the self-assessment constructively thought out. Three universities (Geneva, Caen, and Lausanne) carried out a more detailed examination of the self-assessment checklists, and formulated a number of suggestions for their improvement. These suggestions have been sent to the authors and will be incorporated into the revised version of the Swiss ELP.

Criticisms of the items:

- Some of them are difficult to understand (because the level of language is too academic or too specialised).
- Sentences are sometimes too long.
- It is sometimes difficult to differentiate between items within the same level because many of them resemble each other too closely.
- Generally speaking there are too many items for each skill.
- Within the same level the items are too heterogeneous.
- There is a certain amount of overlapping between the different levels, and the differences between the levels are not always clear. (For the writing skill for example, the difference between level B2 and C1, or between C1 and C2 is not clear).
- The differences between the levels is too great and there is a lack of intermediary levels.
- The items are not always well-expressed (especially in French) and should be revised.
- Many items focus too closely on characteristics associated with a university faculty of arts course.

8.2.2 Suggestions for improvements to the self-assessment checklists

- Reduce the number of items per skill, and aim for greater uniformity in the level of language used for the items.
- Improve the visual impact of the lists.
- Clarify the instructions on how to use the self-assessment checklists. (For example, it should be clearly indicated that learners are only expected to assess themselves according to the items which apply to them.)

9. Data collection methods

Information was collected using the following means:

- Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaires 1 and 3.
- Specialised questionnaires and other material specifically used in courses.
- Discussions in class between teachers and students, and during teachers' meetings.
- Interviews between individual students and their teachers.
- Logbooks and written feedback provided by the teachers.
- Dissertations on language teaching, and other work produced by the students.
- Observation in class.
- The Universities of Lausanne and Geneva used Swiss questionnaires drawn up by the University of Fribourg.

10. Results of the pilot phase of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in the higher education sector in Europe

10.1 Global results

The results of the pilot phase indicate that, over a wide range of disciplines (from non-linguistically oriented to philology), both teachers and students reacted positively to the ELP. So far as teachers are concerned, the whole of the ELP, especially its pedagogical role, was favourably received, whereas student reactions were much more mitigated. This is probably due to the fact that most of the teachers who agreed to take part in the pilot phase, were already acquainted with the ideas underlying the ELP and were thus predisposed to approve of it.

The pattern of responses did not differ significantly according to the country of origin of the different participating institutions. In all cases, for both students and teachers, and at group and individual levels, there was a genuine interest in the project, but at the same time a certain frustration at the difficulties involved. The reactions varied from enthusiasm to rejection, regardless of the teacher who had introduced the ELP; only one university, Gent, did not complete the pilot phase but this was due to an accumulation of unfavourable conditions.

10.2 Difficulties encountered by most of the participating institutions during the pilot phase

- The amount of time required to adequately introduce the ELP into courses, and to conduct the pilot phase (distribution of questionnaires, collection of information, preparation of reports) caused a work overload and, despite initial enthusiasm, resulted in a loss of motivation among students and teachers.

- For both students and teachers the pilot phase was not long enough to satisfactorily integrate the new ideas contained in the Portfolio into the teaching situations.

- Some teachers opted out of the pilot phase for health reasons, or because of restructuring within their institution.

- The lack of adequate training in the use of the Portfolio sometimes led to difficulties in successfully introducing it into classes.

- The absence of additional material (teachers' guide, studies on various aspects of the ELP, supplementary teaching materials, etc.) was perceived as a serious drawback.

- There was a certain amount of confusion in, for example, Denmark, because of the difference between national evaluation charts, in which (as in Anglo-American countries) the best score is A1, and those of the Common European Framework, where it is the lowest score.

- In some cases the version of the Portfolio that was used was judged to be too complex, difficult to understand, and therefore demotivating.

- At Gent University additional difficulties were encountered due to the fact that a Portfolio which was not in their mother tongue was introduced to a group of newly arrived exchange students who were at beginner level in Dutch, and who were totally unfamiliar with the style of teaching involved.

- Lack of Portfolio in the students' mother tongue (in Spanish and Finnish).

10.3 Reasons affecting the return of questionnaires

- In the higher education sector several factors adversely affected the smooth running of the pilot phase. At this level language learning is compressed into relatively short time periods, with courses sometimes only lasting for one semester, or less. In addition each course comprises only a few teaching hours, especially in the teaching of languages to students of other disciplines, or in the case of independent learning.

- Some universities were late in starting the pilot phase and were not able to complete either Questionnaire 1 or 3 of the Council of Europe.

- Because of the time constraint, it was decided not to distribute the Council of Europe Questionnaire 2.

- At this level, and in contrast to the state schools, students enjoy the privilege of academic freedom, and, with the approach of university exams, tend to stop attending language courses, especially when these are optional. This had a negative effect on the return of Questionnaire 3.

- The approach of university exams, and the late distribution of Questionnaire 3 impeded the running of the pilot phase to the extent that certain universities who participated to the end were nevertheless unable to complete Questionnaire 3 (Caen, Geneva) or to ensure the return of a large number of questionnaires (Ulster, Berlin, Copenhagen).

- In spite of the fact that many students showed an apparent interest in the Portfolio many of them failed to return their questionnaires, which was discouraging for the teachers.

- Three universities (University of Aston, Universiteit of Gent, and Jyväskylän yliopisto) only partially participated in the pilot phase, by making occasional and selective use of the Portfolio, and they did not complete either Questionnaire 1 or 3.

10.4 Analysis of Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 1

11 participating institutions:
- Teachers involved: approximately 40.
- Students taking part: approximately 1000 for the academic year 1999/2000, involving about 40 groups as well as students working autonomously.

Returned copies of the Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 1, June 2000:

	Learners	*Teachers*
Total	**301**	**25**
Universität Potsdam	58	10
Universitetet i Oslo et Caen	14	1
University of Ulster and Coleraine	17	1
Université de Lausanne	181	11
Université de Genève	31	2

Target languages: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Czech.

10.4.1 Summary of the Teacher Questionnaire 1

	Yes	No	Don't know	Questions
A 1T	21	0	4	Is the Portfolio useful in assessing the language competence of your learners?
B 1T	22	2	1	Does the Portfolio help you make the learning objectives clear to your learners?
C 1T	13	3	9	Does the Portfolio help you involve your learners actively in the learning process?
D 1T	15	0	10	Are the learners able to assess themselves with the help of the Portfolio?
E 1T	5	4	16	Does the Portfolio help develop sensitivity concerning the cultural diversity of Europe?
F 1T	25	0	0	Do other teachers in your school also use a Language Portfolio?

European Language Porfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Teacher Questionnaire 1

A 1T: 84 % | 16 %
B 1T: 88 % | 8 % | 4 %
C 1T: 52 % | 12 % | 36 %
D 1T: 60 % | 40 %
E 1T: 20 % | 16 % | 64 %
F 1T: 100 %

Responses in percentages

Legend: ■ Yes □ No ▨ Don't know

10.4.2 Summary of the Learner Questionnaire 1

	Yes	No	Don't know	Questions
F 1L	210	23	68	Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in the foreign languages?
A 1L	172	52	77	Does the Portfolio help you understand the learning objectives?
B 1 L	212	30	59	Does the Portfolio help you to assess your language skills?
C 1L	217	26	58	Do you find it useful to compare the teacher's assessment of your language competence with you own assessment?
D 1L	115	98	87	Should building up a Portfolio be part of regular class work?
E 1L	191	20	90	Do you like having a Language Portfolio?

European Language Portfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Learner Questionnaire 1

F 1L: 70 % | 8 % | 22 %
A 1L: 57 % | 17 % | 26 %
B 1 L: 70 % | 10 % | 20 %
C 1L: 72 % | 9 % | 19 %
D 1L: 38 % | 33 % | 29 %
E 1L: 63 % | 7 % | 30 %

Responses in percentages

Legend: ■ Yes □ No ▨ Don't know

10.5 Analysis of Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 3

11 participating institutions:
- Teachers involved: approximately 40
- Students taking part: approximately 1000 for the academic year 1999/2000, involving about 40 groups as well as students working autonomously.
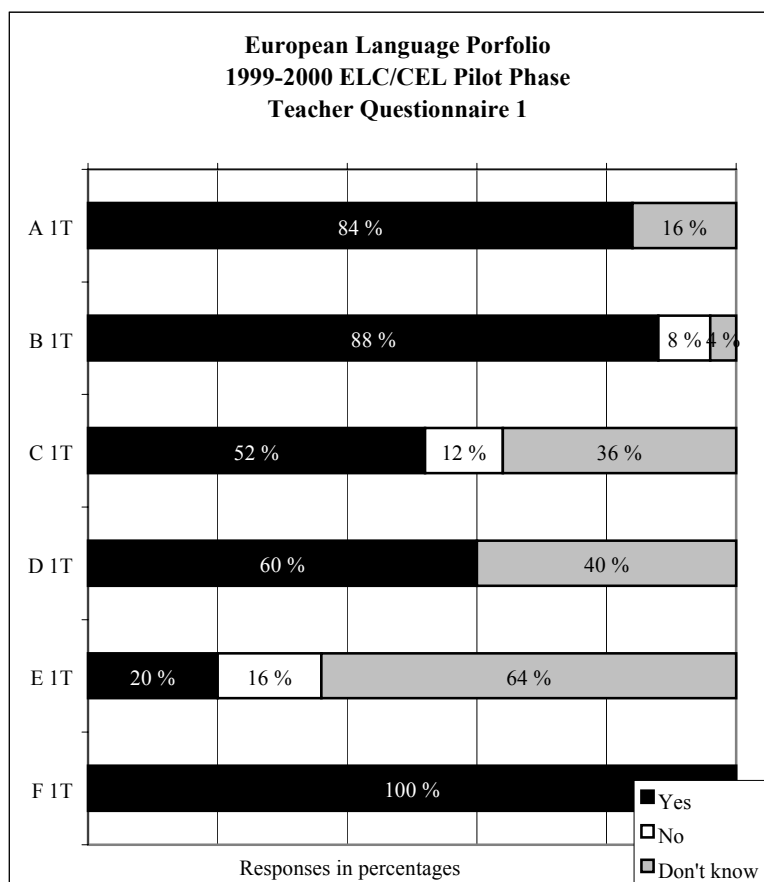
Returned copies of the Council of Europe Teacher and Learner Questionnaire 3, June 2000:

	Learners	*Teachers*
Total	**146**	**25**
Freie Universität Berlin	7	1
Universität Bremen	22	6
Universität Potsdam	24	6
Copenhagen Business College (p. 1 only)	7	0
University of Ulster and Coleraine	3	2
Université de Lausanne	83	8
Université de Genève	0	2

Target languages: English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Polish, Czech.
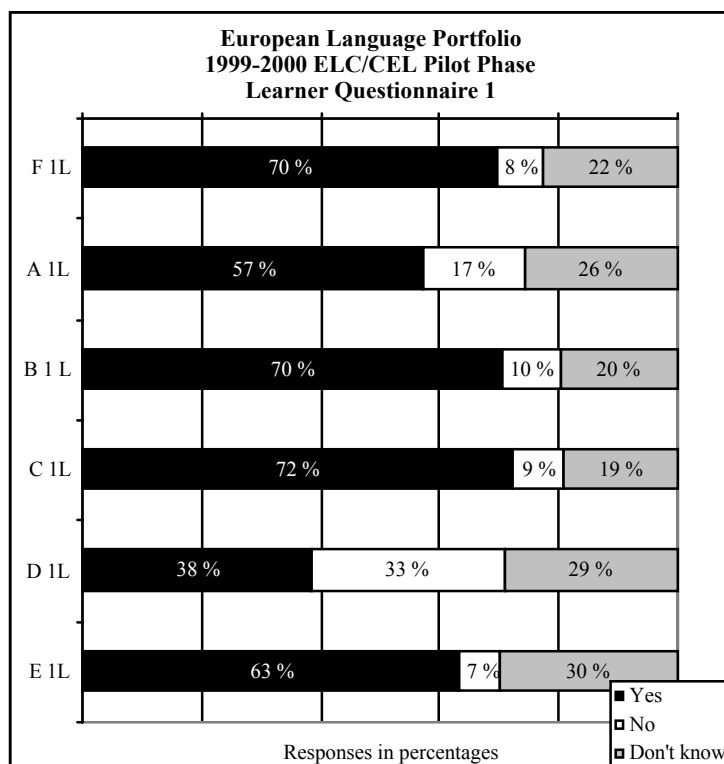
10.5.1 General comments concerning Questionnaire 3

- Unanswered questions have been classified as "Don't know".

Teacher Questionnaire 3

- Many people commented on the fact that it was very difficult to reply with a simple "yes" or "no" to questions E T3 ("Are learners able to handle the Language Portfolio?"), F 3T ("Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?"), and G 3T ("Did you in general agree with their self-assessment?") as the replies vary according to the student; some can, others cannot.

- In the case of question G 3T, which focused on the degree of agreement between students' self-assessment and their teachers evaluation, many people underlined the fact that although there was a high level of agreement, it should also be recognised that students often underestimate or overestimate their abilities because of their type of personality or because they are unfamiliar with this critical way of viewing themselves. Due to these factors the two assessments can differ widely. In addition, the self-assessment questions focused on numerous very precise skills, and unless the teacher had had adequate opportunity to systematically test these competences it was extremely difficult for him/her to accurately assess the students' abilities.

- Question 2 TA, ("The ELP helps to clearly show the objectives and the progress made.") in fact consists of two questions and it is possible to answer one in the affirmative and the other in the negative.

- How can one reply to question 17 TA ("My initial reservations have changed.") if in fact one had no initial reservations?
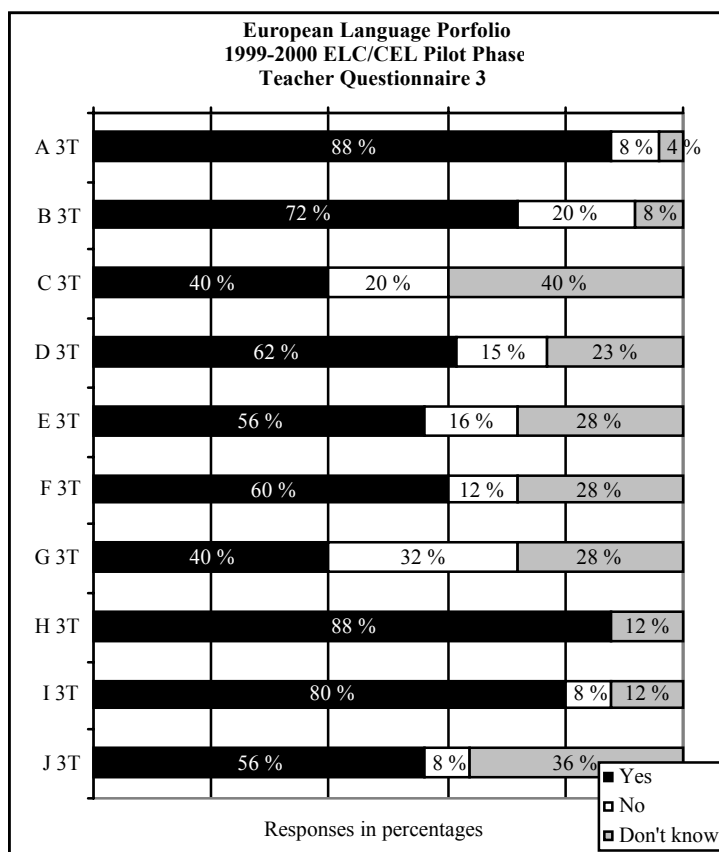
Learner Questionnaire 3

- The basic design of this questionnaire was criticised, as well as the limited scope given to learners to express their opinion (for each question there were only 3 possible replies to

choose among). Many people regretted the fact that the learners were not given the opportunity to give their real opinions on such a complex topic.

- On page 2, the replies are in a different order according to whether the French or English version was used ("Disagree" and "Don't know" were inversed)

10.5.2 Summary of the Teacher Questionnaire 3

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Questions
A 3T	22	2	1	Is the ELP useful in assessing the language competence of your learners?
B 3T	18	5	2	Is the ELP useful in clarifying learning objectives with your learners?
C 3T	10	5	10	Does the ELP help you understand your learners' potential?
D 3T	16	4	6	Is the ELP useful in developing learner autonomy?
E 3T	14	4	7	Are learners able to handle the Language Portfolio?
F 3T	15	3	7	Are learners able to self-assess their language competence?
G 3T	10	8	7	In general, did you agree with their self-assessment?
H 3T	22	0	3	Do you find the ELP is a useful tool for the learners?
I 3T	20	2	3	Do you find the ELP is a useful tool for you as teacher?
J 3T	14	2	9	Do you think the ELP should be widely introduced in schools?

European Language Porfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Teacher Questionnaire 3

	Yes	No	Don't know
A 3T	88 %	8 %	4 %
B 3T	72 %	20 %	8 %
C 3T	40 %	20 %	40 %
D 3T	62 %	15 %	23 %
E 3T	56 %	16 %	28 %
F 3T	60 %	12 %	28 %
G 3T	40 %	32 %	28 %
H 3T	88 %		12 %
I 3T	80 %	8 %	12 %
J 3T	56 %	8 %	36 %

Responses in percentages

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Questions
1 TA	4	13	8	The levels in the Common Framework are so broad that they do not allow my learners to appreciate their progress.
2 TA	15	4	6	The ELP helps to clearly show the objectives and the progress made.
3 TA	24	0	1	Maintaining the ELP is useful it allows self-reflection.
4 TA	19	2	4	The ELP helps me and my students to reflect on the language and on how and why we learn it.
5 TA	20	3	2	The official status of the ELP needs to be clarified.
6 TA	17	6	2	The self-assessment grid is not always clear.
7 TA	12	10	3	The descriptors used in the checklists are not always clear.
8 TA	16	4	5	I hope more detailed sample lists for the different levels will become available.
9 TA	3	12	9	My learners found it difficult to say whether they would be able to understand a video or a lecture.
10 TA	5	8	12	Our teachers and learners reported that the ELP enhances motivation.
11 TA	14	5	5	Self-assessment is the most critical part because it is not a common tradition.
12 TA	11	8	6	I learnt a lot about my students, their motivation and their potential.
13 TA	9	12	4	I needed more time to prepare my lessons.
14 TA	9	11	5	I initially needed more time to prepare my lessons.
15 TA	14	8	3	I needed time for myself to cope with a new experience.
16 TA	5	11	9	My students do not see the need for an ELP – it does not add anything.
17 TA	6	5	5	My initial reservation has changed.
18 TA	7	8	10	Somehow the ELP does not seem to reflect the general development of my learners. What might be ok at the age of 10 might be inappropriate at 20.

**European Language Porfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Teacher Questionnaire 3**

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
1 TA	16 %	52 %	32 %
2 TA	60 %	16 %	24 %
3 TA	96 %		4 %
4 TA	76 %	8 %	16 %
5 TA	80 %	12 %	8 %
6 TA	68 %	24 %	8 %
7 TA	48 %	40 %	12 %
8 TA	64 %	16 %	20 %
9 TA	13 %	50 %	37 %
10 TA	20 %	32 %	48 %
11 TA	58 %	21 %	21 %
12 TA	44 %	32 %	24 %
13 TA	36 %	48 %	16 %
14 TA	36 %	44 %	20 %
15 TA	56 %	32 %	12 %
16 TA	20 %	44 %	36 %
17 TA	38 %	31 %	31 %
18 TA	28 %		40 %

Responses in percentages

■ Agree
□ Disagree
▨ Don't know
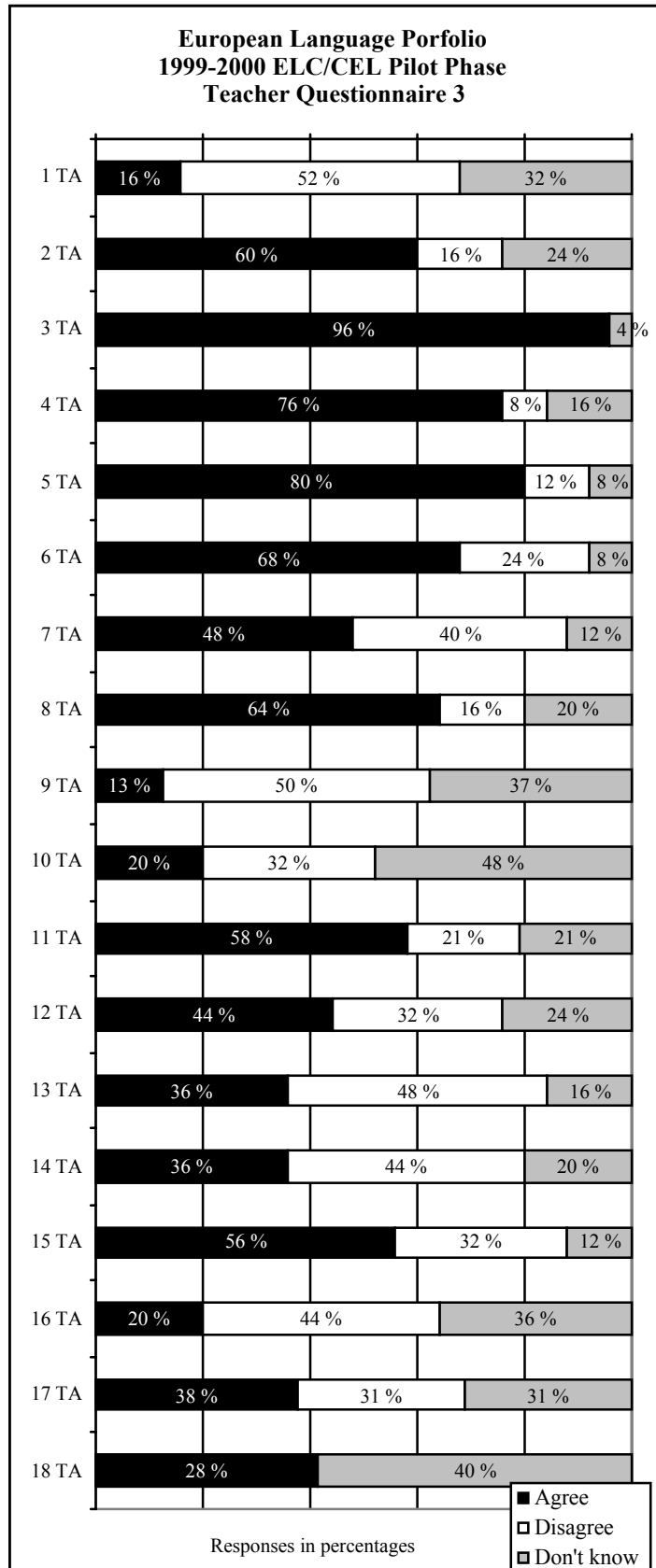
10.5.3 Replies to the open questions on Teacher Questionnaire 3

These replies come from the universities of Lausanne, Geneva, Ulster, Bremen, Berlin, and Potsdam. They have been grouped together and summarised.

Question K 3T: " What do you like best about the Portfolio?"

- The overall concept.

- The encouraging attitude towards multilinguism.

- The existence of a Common European Framework of Reference for assessing language skills.

- The opportunity to include all language learning experiences, not just those validated by diplomas.

- The fact that it has stimulated a European-wide reappraisal of language learning and teaching.

- The information that the Portfolio provides concerning learners' needs, learning profile, motivation, blockages, etc.

- The introduction of new techniques for self-assessment, in particular by using the self-assessment checklists.

- The emphasis placed on skills already acquired, rather than on mistakes and gaps in knowledge.

- The way in which learners are encouraged to think about their level of acquisition, set their objectives, and take responsibility for their language learning, thereby increasing their sense of personal implication in the learning process, and making them more independent.
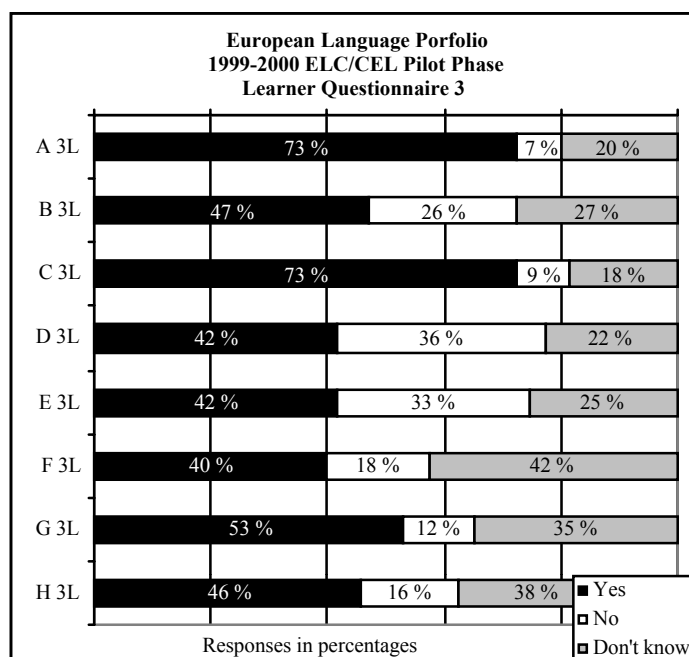
Question L 3T: "What do you like least about the Portfolio?"

The only criticism made by almost all the teachers involved in the pilot phase focused on the visual presentation, size, and complexity of the Swiss version of the Portfolio, which means that:
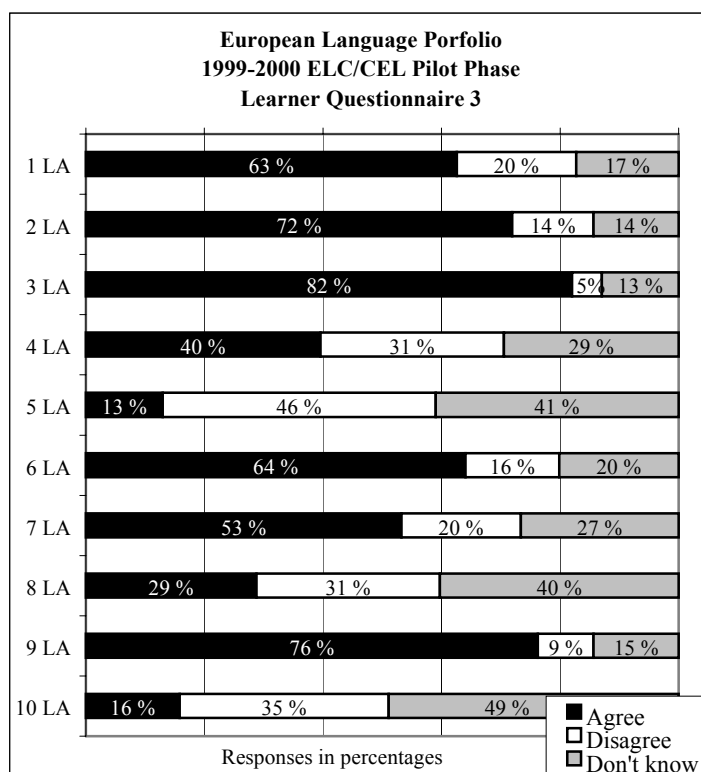
- There is no comprehensive overview.

- It is complicated to use.

- It is daunting for students.

- It is too cumbersome.

10.5.4 Summary of the Learner Questionnaire 3

	Yes	No	Don't know	Questions
A 3L	106	11	29	Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?
B 3L	69	37	40	Does the Portfolio help you see progress in learning?
C 3L	106	13	27	Does the Portfolio help you assess your competence?
D 3L	61	52	33	Does the Portfolio stimulate you to participate more fully in the language learning process?
E 3L	61	48	37	Do you feel the Portfolio puts more responsibility on you as a learner?
F 3L	58	26	62	Do you like added responsibility for your own learning?
G 3L	77	18	51	Do you think the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?
H 3L	67	24	55	Do you think all learners should be encouraged to keep a Language Portfolio?

European Language Porfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Learner Questionnaire 3

A 3L	73 %	7 %	20 %
B 3L	47 %	26 %	27 %
C 3L	73 %	9 %	18 %
D 3L	42 %	36 %	22 %
E 3L	42 %	33 %	25 %
F 3L	40 %	18 %	42 %
G 3L	53 %	12 %	35 %
H 3L	46 %	16 %	38 %

■ Yes
□ No
▫ Don't know

Responses in percentages

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Questions
1 LA	87	28	24	I find the ELP useful, it helps to know what one still needs to learn.
2 LA	100	19	20	The ELP helps to reflect on language learning.
3 LA	114	7	18	The ELP is useful to evaluate where one stands.
4 LA	55	43	41	The ELP takes up too much time.
5 LA	18	64	57	A waste of time – school marks are sufficient.
6 LA	89	22	28	I like to compare my language competence on a European Scale.
7 LA	74	28	37	The ELP should be connected with teaching and the work in class.
8 LA	40	43	56	The ELP should be brought up to date once a month.
9 LA	106	13	20	The ELP makes sense if used regularly.
10 LA	22	49	68	The ELP improves the dialogue between me and my teacher(s).

European Language Porfolio
1999-2000 ELC/CEL Pilot Phase
Learner Questionnaire 3

1 LA	63 %	20 %	17 %
2 LA	72 %	14 %	14 %
3 LA	82 %	5%	13 %
4 LA	40 %	31 %	29 %
5 LA	13 %	46 %	41 %
6 LA	64 %	16 %	20 %
7 LA	53 %	20 %	27 %
8 LA	29 %	31 %	40 %
9 LA	76 %	9 %	15 %
10 LA	16 %	35 %	49 %

■ Agree
□ Disagree
▫ Don't know

Responses in percentages

10.5.5 Replies to the open questions on Learner Questionnaire 3

These replies come from the universities of Lausanne, Ulster, Berlin and Copenhagen. Seventy eight replies were received, grouped together, and summarised.

Question I 3L: "What do you like best about your Portfolio?"

38 out of 78 replies commented favourably on the self-assessment checklists as an aid to self-evaluation. All the other points mentioned below appeared on average one to three times in the replies.

The first group of comments concerns the Portfolio as a teaching tool:

- The general concept.
- Its clarity and good organisation.
- The Passport, which contains a succinct summary of the information contained in the ELP.
- The Biography, which highlights learners' skills by showing concrete examples of their work.
- The fact that the assessment criteria are the same for all languages.
- The fact that all types of linguistic and cross-cultural experience can be included.
- The fact that it is European.
- The fact that it is officially recognised could be a positive aspect when looking for employment in Europe.
- The fact that it can be completed in the learner's mother tongue.
- It provides a place where learners can store examples of their language work.
- It can be completed individually.

The second group of comments looks at the Portfolio in relation to the language learning process:

- Learners are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning.
- It helps learners to understand their own potential, and become more consciously aware of the learning process.
- It helps learners to focus clearly on their needs and objectives.
- It takes into account skills not formerly considered important or relevant.
- It clearly shows the learner's progress.

Question K 3L: What do you like least about your Portfolio?"

In connection with the Portfolio itself:

- Too much information, too long and dull, too complicated, too repetitive, too bureaucratic, too meticulous.
- The multiplicity of questionnaires, charts, and text, detracts from an overall view of the Portfolio both for the learner and any other user.

- Its cost.

- It takes up a lot of space.

- The layout.

In connection with the time it requires:

- A lot of time is needed in order to understand how it is organised, and how to complete it.

- Using it in class is time-consuming and therefore demotivating.

In connection with the language-learning process:

- The Portfolio is completely useless.

- It makes no perceptible difference.

- It is difficult to integrate into traditional ways of learning.

- It is not well enough integrated into the syllabus.

- It is too personal.

- Self-assessment is difficult, particularly in situations which one has not experienced.

- Self assessment is too subjective.

- It constitutes an infringement on the personal liberty of the learners, and gives the impression that one should conform to a mould.

In connection with help received:

- Not enough help was provided by the teacher.

In connection with its use as an officially recognised document

- Doubts as to whether other people (future employers) will read it.

- Doubts concerning its worth as a document on the job market.

10.6   Results connected with the specific objectives of the ELC/CEL Project

10.6.1 Objective A

To establish whether the ELP is a valuable tool in higher education language studies from the point of view of clarity, comprehension, relevance, and reliability as perceived by the students.

10.6.1.1 General impressions by the students

Students from the participating institutions using the Swiss version of the ELP did not feel that objective A had been attained, even though their replies were positive concerning the value of the ELP as a learning tool, and as a means of enriching the language learning experience in higher education. A close analysis of Questionnaires 1 and 3, together with other observations indicate that the current version of the Swiss Portfolio is complicated to understand and handle, which makes it difficult to satisfy Objective A. As far as its relevance and reliability are concerned, students were reticent about endorsing these two qualities, not only on pedagogical grounds, but also from the point of view of long-term validity implying official recognition. In fact the official status of the ELP, and its international recognition, have yet to be clarified.

10.6.1.2 Learners perception of self-assessment: a detailed example

The question of clarity, ease of comprehension, relevance, and reliability as perceived by the students was examined in greater detail in connection with the self-assessment which was the section most frequently used by all the participants in the project. Students responded positively to the global self-assessment grid, the self-assessment checklists and the detailed items, not only on the grounds that they help the learners to precisely define their skills in the target language, but also because students were enabled to:

- Define their needs and objectives, using the language of the ELP.

- Set learning objectives at a personal and group level.

- Highlight problems impeding progress, which is essential in language learning at advanced and university levels.

- Assess skills already acquired, rather than focus on gaps in knowledge, identify skills still to be mastered, or define personal levels of competence in comparison with those of others.

- Achieve a more wide-ranging assessment of their skills than that provided by exams alone, which test a relatively restricted selection of competences.

- Take greater responsibility for learning since only the learners can determine their real level of competence and define short or long-term learning objectives.

- Become more aware of what is involved in the learning experience.

- Build up their self-confidence, once initial difficulties had been overcome.

The following difficulties and objections to self-assessment were mentioned:

- A considerable number of students could not understand the items relating to skills, or had not yet encountered such skills; this unsettled or frustrated students and led them to question the utility of the ELP.

- This incomprehension was accentuated in cases where the self-assessment was conducted in a foreign language, rather than in the students' mother tongue.

- Students felt insecure when they were required to assess their competence in different skills and found that these involved several different levels (e.g. when their passive skills scored higher than their productive skills).

- Those learners accustomed to objective assessment through exams validated by diplomas felt that self-assessment was too subjective, could not be taken seriously, and lacked the stamp of official recognition.

- Students were troubled by the idea of an evaluation that was not based on an imposed curriculum culminating in an external examination.

- The self-assessment checklists were felt to be too long and therefore discouraging.

- Teachers' lack of experience in using this type of assessment added to students' feeling of insecurity.

Self-assessment was a new experience for the majority of students participating in the pilot project. However, once initial difficulties had been overcome they rapidly acquired confidence in using this method. The more advanced their language level the greater was their degree of assurance.

10.6.2 Objective B

To assess its effectiveness in:
1) **raising students' level of reflection on language learning;**
2) **developing sensitivity toward other cultures;**
3) **enhancing multilingualism;**
4) **increasing transparency and coherence concerning the whole learning process.**

The results of the European Questionnaires clearly show that in a university context the ELP satisfies points 1) and 2) mentioned above. For example, 72% of the students agreed with the statement 2 LA, ("The Portfolio helps to reflect on language learning."). Time and again students emphasised the utility of the Portfolio in promoting understanding of the language learning process, and increasing awareness of the invisible factors that are involved.

Point 3) is difficult to evaluate. In fact only 20% of the participants gave an affirmative reply to question E 1T ("Does the Portfolio help develop sensitivity concerning the cultural diversity of Europe?"). More detailed studies need to be carried out on the potential utility of the Portfolio regarding this question, and in relation to students' understanding of inter-cultural competence.

Point 4) received the most detailed replies from the University of Ulster (in a group comprising 22 learners) where use of the Portfolio, and in particular the "Language Learning Biography" revealed the unsuspected variety and wealth of multilinguism and cross-cultural experience within the group. It also highlighted the uneven nature of skills acquired, the varied length of exposure to each language, and the different ways in which languages can be learned, etc. All the students in this group were surprised and pleased to note that, thanks to the Portfolio, all their cultural and linguistic experiences were taken into account, both within and beyond the educational context. The Portfolio therefore does seem to be a valid tool in encouraging multilinguism.

10.6.3 Objective C

To assess whether the ELPs used in the piloting are sufficiently complete to cover domains specific to higher education such as: LSP (languages for special purposes), LAP (languages for academic purposes), LPP (languages for professional purposes), as well as translation and interpretation.

10.6.3.1 The need for special items for an academic context

The Swiss version of the Portfolio was designed for general language learning, and does not, therefore take into account the special aspects of language learning and use in the university context. This is the reason why a working group, University Portfolio, composed of members from 6 Swiss universities, produced supplementary items for the self-assessment checklists, (initially in German) which enabled the Swiss version of the ELP to be adapted to the university context.

10.6.3.2 Origin and development of specific items for the university context

The working group University Portfolio used the UNICERT items as the basis for its work, and to these added new ones. All these items were regrouped and classified according to the levels established by the Council of Europe. The working group eliminated any items which were unclear or which did not meet with its approval. It then fine-tuned the items and verified that the style   and   language   used   was   compatible   with   the   self-assessment   checklists

already formulated. In contrast to the items taken from the Common European Framework of Reference, those written by the University Portfolio working group have not been statistically calibrated, and are therefore less reliable. They are open to further modification and improvement. The self assessment checklists are in fact open lists which can be added to as the need arises. They exist in Word format on the Internet at http://www.unifr.ch/ids/Portfolio/.

The chosen items are the following :

Level	→👤 **Listening**
B1	I can understand the main points of a lecture when clear standard language is spoken and it concerns a topic that I know about from my studies.
B1	I can understand the main points of radio and television programs when they are about a topic that I know about in my field and standard language is spoken.
C1	I can understand radio and television programs that touch my field, even when they are demanding and linguistically complex.
C1	In lively and controversial discussions in my own field, I can recognise participants' positions, arguments, and argumentative strategies.
C2	I can understand the oral presentations necessary for an academic career, even when they include a high percentage of idiomatic and metaphorical expressions.
	👤↔👤 **Spoken Interaction**
B1	In informal situations with colleagues or fellow students, I can speak about topics in my field.
B1	I can manage most situations involved with the organisation of my studies.
B1	I can orally formulate questions on specialised issues.
B2	I can speak with teachers about work I have done for my studies (written work and seminar papers).
B2	I can efficiently solve problems dealing with the organisation of my studies, for example, with teachers and the administration.
B2	I can actively participate in conversations on literary and other cultural topics.
C1	I can actively participate in a discussion of a complex matter in my field.
C1	I can defend my opinion on technical matters in my field, even in debates.
C2	I can actively and effectively participate in discussions and conversations on any topic in the academic field.
	👤→ **Spoken Production**
B2	I can give a short talk in my field, either using keywords or without notes.
B2	I can fully comment on a topic of general interest, including examining its various aspects.
B2	I can express myself in longer connected speech on topics in my field, to a large extent using appropriate technical terms.
C1	I can give a speech to specialists in my field in accordance with accepted conventions and practice.
C1	Using schematic representations, I can explain in detail complex interrelationships in my field.
	👤→ **Reading**
B1	I can quickly locate information I am looking for in texts from my field.

B2	I can extract detailed information from texts in my field.
C1	In a difficult text, I can recognise the structure of the argument, contradictions, and inconsistencies.
	✍ **Writing**
B1	Using keywords, I can note the most important points of a simple text in my field.
B1	In my field, I can write simple texts correctly using the most important specialized terms.
B1	I can record the course of a scientific experiment in keywords.
B2	I can write summaries of moderately difficult scientific texts in my field.
B2	I can write seminar papers on my own, although I must have them checked for linguistic accuracy and appropriateness.
B2	I can write a seminar report.
B2	During a lecture, I can note its main points using keywords.
C1	Without outside help, I can write seminar papers that are largely correct and stylistically appropriate.
C1	I can present in writing a comparison of scientific positions.
C1	Without major difficulty, I can use the specialised terms and idiomatic expressions in my field.
C2	I can rewrite colleagues' texts that have not been written in their mother tongue, improving them grammatically and stylistically.
C2	With a view to publishing, I can write scientific texts in my field that are largely correct and stylistically appropriate.
C2	I can write a critical statement (e.g. a review) of published scientific works in my field.

Once the new items had been added to the standard self-assessment checklists of the Swiss version of the Portfolio, it was tested at the Universities of Lausanne and Geneva. There was no adverse criticism of those items which had been introduced in order to take into account the specific requirements of language learning in a university context.

Still lacking are items for translation and interpreting, which exist as separate domains of study at tertiary level. These skills are frequently required in the course of university studies, or for professional reasons.

10.6.4 Objective D

To evaluate the effect of the ELP on independent learning, guided autonomy, or Tandem learning: during the stage of initial self-assessment; as an aid in planning the learning process; as a source of motivation for the student.

The ELP was piloted in two types of independent learning situation:

- in the course of a Tandem situation in which two people of different mother tongue are paired together, and agree to meet regularly in order to teach each other their respective languages (Lausanne, School of Modern French: 16 learners, with the possibility of obtaining ECTS credits);

- during independent learning in a multimedia Centre working with tutors and language advisors (Lausanne Language Centre: 9 students); and in self-directed learning (Bremen: 22 students).

The ELP was viewed more favourably in this context than when it was used with groups in more traditional learning situations (see table below). This is probably because students who choose to learn independently have already acquired the skills necessary for working with the ELP, i.e. the will to take responsibility for their own learning.

Learner Questionnaire 3 (part a)
A Comparison of the Results Between All Forms of Learning
and Independent Learning
("Yes" as a percentage)

| | All Forms of Learning | Independent Learning | | | | Questions |
		Total	Learning with Guided Autonomy	Tandem	Self-Directed Learning	
A 3L	73 %	82 %	88 %	100 %	59 %	Does the Portfolio allow you to show what you can do in foreign languages?
B 3L	47 %	72 %	63 %	88 %	64 %	Does the Portfolio help you see progress in learning?
C 3L	73 %	84 %	100 %	88 %	64 %	Does the Portfolio help you assess your competence?
D 3L	42 %	66 %	50 %	81 %	68 %	Does the Portfolio stimulate you to participate more fully in the language learning process?
E 3L	42 %	64 %	50 %	69 %	73 %	Do you feel the Portfolio puts more responsibility on you as learner?
F 3L	40 %	49 %	38 %	44 %	64 %	Do you like added responsibility for your own learning?
G 3L	53 %	67 %	50 %	88 %	64 %	Do you think the time spent on keeping your Portfolio was time well spent?
H 3L	46 %	66 %	88 %	56 %	55 %	Do you think all learners should be encouraged to keep a Language Portfolio?

What emerges most clearly from the replies to Learner Questionnaire 3 is that students value the reporting function of the Portfolio. However, they are much less enthusiastic about the new role of the learner, who is expected to invest a great deal more effort in the language learning process.

Independent learners commented favourably on the self-assessment checklists and the Dossier. They were also stimulated and motivated by the idea of designing a personal learning project, since the written/spoken outcome of such a project, which could be shown to third parties as evidence of standards attained, encouraged learners to persist in their language studies.

More detailed work needs to be carried out on the role of the ELP in improving learners' motivation, as, up to now, it is mainly the teachers who have commented on this aspect. When it comes to determining their source of motivation, learners are much more reticent in their comments and do not necessarily recognise a link between this and the use of the Portfolio.

The Portfolio provides a coherent framework for independent language learners, since it helps them to understand all the factors involved, and to organise their language learning activities. Thanks to the ELP learners can evaluate their previous learning experience, assess their levels in the different skills, set themselves objectives, design a personal learning project, note down progress made, and produce examples of work which can all be kept in one place. Above all, the Portfolio provides a common language which facilitates communication between the learners and their language advisors or tutors.

The positive role of the Portfolio for independent language learning is particularly relevant for universities where multimedia centres are at present rapidly expanding.

10.6.5 Objective E

To test its value as a tool used during teacher training for raising awareness as to what is involved in language learning and teaching.

Two universities focused on this aspect; the University of Lausanne, where a group of 32 students from all over the world followed courses in the School of Modern French in order to obtain the FLE (Français langue étrangère) teaching diploma; and the University of Caen, with a group of 17 Danish students spending an exchange year in France while training to be French teachers. In both cases the ELP was the starting point for a discussion on the nature of the learning process, and its relation to teaching methods.

The trainee teachers in the Lausanne group, who made occasional use of the Portfolio, were clearly aware of its utility and worth in validating their own personal language learning experience and skills. But they were much more hesitant when it came to deciding whether it would be useful to them in their future teaching role, (only 9 replied "Yes" to this question, 2 replied "No", and 21 "Perhaps").

At Caen, the trainee teachers had almost terminated their studies, and they worked much more intensively with the ELP. They completed the self-assessment checklists three times and produced written work for the Dossier, which formed an integral part of their final oral exam. Five students even chose the ELP as the topic for their diploma project.

This group highlighted the obstacles that render it difficult to introduce this new tool into teaching programmes and into institutions. As they themselves had received a basically traditional type of education, they were well aware of the incompatibility between traditional curricula, and the methods and objectives contained in the Portfolio. For example:

- In connection with the mode of evaluation: the ELP is formative as opposed to the traditional certificate-sanctioned system; the self-assessment approach cannot be taken seriously unless it is recognised as forming an integral part of the final exam-based evaluation.

- Independent learning as opposed to working within the constraints of traditional, externally imposed curricula implies a change of role for both student and teacher. It demands great flexibility on the part of the latter since there is no longer a fixed programme to work through, but, instead, a series of objectives to be attained by various means. It is essentially learner oriented and the aim is to help each student to discover his/her own best learning situation and adapt the teaching input accordingly.

The ELP provided students with a pedagogical experience applied to themselves and suscitated similar reactions to those associated with any pedagogical innovation. These ranged from scepticism, reticence and even opposition to enthusiasm and a sense of satisfaction with the new challenges that it posed, and the improvements which resulted from the introduction of such a system.

The ELP seems to be particularly valid in the context of teacher training, because it combines a theoretical approach and a reflective attitude towards the learning process with practical applications applied to the learner him/herself. This is why it has a great potential as a tool for raising awareness of the multiple factors involved in language learning and teaching.

10.6.6 Objective F

To establish whether the existing documents (attestations, etc.) cover the needs of language learners and students working in a foreign language in the context of higher education.

10.6.6.1 The Portfolio documents

Criticism of the checklists was analysed earlier (see section 8. 2. 1 above) The participating institutions judged the other documents contained in the Portfolio to be well structured and comprehensive. They facilitate an overview of the learner, thanks to the summaries at the end of each of the 3 sections, while at the same time providing more detailed information which contributes to a precise profile of the linguistic and intercultural characteristics of the ELP user. Most of the adverse criticism of these documents focuses on their great number, which overwhelms the user. On the one hand it is the number of documents that make the ELP into such a comprehensive tool, but on the other hand they detract from its clarity and make it difficult to understand, especially as at present an adequate general overview of the whole Portfolio is lacking. The graphic uniformity of these documents - they all look alike - further exacerbates the situation. However, in their favour it should be emphasised that these documents are sufficiently detailed to cover most aspects of language learning and teaching in higher education. What is still required, for those who undertake studies in a language other than their mother tongue, is some form of attestation which could serve as a basis for ECTS accreditation.

10.6.6.2 Criteria for obtaining attestations in higher education institutions

Institutions which intend to use the ELP should modify the course attestations which they issue so that they comply with the items describing skills contained in the Portfolio (which are themselves taken from the Common European Framework of Reference). Besides basic personal information and a brief description of the dates and length of course followed, these attestations should include some indication of the level of the course according to the Common European Framework of Reference, and this should be printed on the back. Where appropriate the number of ECTS credits allocated to the course should also be mentioned, together with a brief description of the objectives and content of the course. Two types of attestation will probably be necessary, one simply awarded on the basis of participation in a course (mentioning percentage attendance), and the other in the case where an exam is successfully passed. By providing a description of the completed course, institutions will validate the efforts made by students, and facilitate comparison with other courses.

10.7   Other results

In spite of the fact that some of the pilot phase results were somewhat mitigated, the experience was on the whole an enriching one for most of the participants involved. The concept was perceived as being innovative, and there is little doubt that it is applicable to domains specific to higher education, such as specialised languages, languages for academic or professional purposes, language teaching in the context of philological studies, independent language learning, and in teacher training.

However, after only such a brief pilot phase it is not at the moment possible to evaluate the long term likelihood of the ELP being widely used. Most of the students involved in the pilot phase do not wish to see it introduced as a compulsory element in the education system, but are favourably disposed towards its optional use. Teachers are of the same opinion. For example, in reply to question E 1L ("Do you like having a Language Portfolio?"), 63% of the students replied in the affirmative. But replies to question D 1L ("Should building up a Portfolio be part of regular class work?") consisted of only 38% in favour, 33% against, and 29% "Don't knows".

The project participants repeatedly raised the question of academic freedom, and mentioned the organisational problems involved (very large groups comprising more than 100 students which preclude any individual approach to teaching), or the fact that the ability to work autonomously and to take responsibility for learning already form part and parcel of the learning process in higher education. Whilst it is in fact true that university students have a greater capacity for working independently than students in other learning situations, at the same time little attention is paid to the manner in which learning take place. It should nevertheless be admitted that this is less true for languages than for other university subjects.

The time therefore seems ripe for the introduction of the Portfolio into the higher education sector, particularly in view of the fact that within the institutions that participated in the ELC/CEL Project, the ELP initiated or reinforced a movement towards deeper reflection on, and a desire for change in language teaching, which could bring about a significant improvement in the language learning process.

Taking into account the opinions expressed during the pilot phase of the Portfolio, the following measures should be implemented in order to guarantee its successful introduction:

- Revision of the Swiss version used for the pilot project.

- Revision and improvement of the ELP prior to using it in higher education.

- A full-scale training programme for teachers before the introduction of the ELP, and on-going training during the initial phase of its use: this should include workshops on the content and potential use of the ELP; appropriate teaching techniques; suggestions for suitable activities; access to background information; availability of a trained specialist or help -line to deal with difficulties arising during the introductory period.

- Adequate support for the learners, especially in the initial phase.

- Full integration of the ELP into teaching curricula (e.g. by including the self-assessment and Dossier work in examinations, or by adapting attestations and course descriptions to include ELP criteria) so that its use always has a well-defined purpose.

- On-going action research after the pilot phase in order to obtain fuller information on reactions to its use.

- Additional studies focusing on different aspects of the Portfolio, e.g. training for self-assessment; encouraging learners to actively participate in their learning process; development of multilinguistic skills, etc.

11. Examples of good practice

These include one fully completed Portfolio, examples of Learner Biographies, and a selection of Dossier projects (written work, cassettes, a multimedia project /Macintosh on CD-Rom).

12. Pool of experts

Some of the people who participated in the pilot project are ready to offer their services as advisors/trainers (to lead teacher training sessions, give lectures at meetings or conferences, write articles for journals, etc.).

13. Plans and strategies for implementation of the ELP

- Some of the institutions participating in the pilot project have expressed their willingness to continue working with the Portfolio. Using the experience acquired during the pilot phase as a base, future studies should be more effective.

- Changes directly related to the ELP are beginning to be made in many institutions. The University of Bremen, the Institut français, and the Abteilung Deutsch und Niederländisch are planning to revise their curricula and to adapt their certification so that it conforms with the Common European Framework of Reference. These institutions together with the Language Centre at the University of Lausanne are in the process of reorganising their classification systems for material available in self-access centres according to the criteria of the Framework. The School of Languages and European Studies at the University of Aston will carry out research with the aim of creating a Portfolio.

- It is planned to set up a European working group on the Portfolio. The objectives of the group will be to:
  - Promote use of the Common European Framework of Reference, and the ELP, which represents its practical application, in the higher education sector;
  - Make better known the pedagogical principles which underpin the ELP, e.g. the Portfolio-based evaluation, autonomous learning, learning how to learn, life-long learning, encouragement of multilinguism and multiculturalism, greater transparency;
  - Continue to develop and improve the Portfolio for use in higher education.

- Universities enjoy academic freedom and are more autonomous than the primary or secondary sectors of education (e.g. there are no uniformly imposed curricula). Therefore, if it is planned to encourage the use of the Portfolio, and the teaching approach on which it is founded, in the context of higher education, then it is indispensable to systematically inform and co-operate with all the actors concerned (learners, teachers, institutions, relevant authorities, the general public, etc.) and to actively recommend its use.

14. Public interest in the ELP and the pilot project

14.1 Articles published in the press

- An article describing the ELP published in "Uniscope", journal of the Rectorate of the University of Lausanne, in May 1999.

- An article on Mobility and the Portfolio appeared in "Auditoire", students' journal, University of Lausanne, in December 1999.

- Europäisches Sprachenportfolio Schweiz, Newsletter /March 2000. Brief interim report on the "Pilot phase of the Portfolio in higher education" by Brigitte Forster Vosicki.

14.2 One-day workshops, conferences

- 10th September 1999, under the auspices of VALS-ASLA (Swiss Association of Applied Linguistics) in Neuchâtel/CH, Brigitte Forster Vosicki et al. organised a workshop led by Prof. Günther Schneider and his collaborators on the topic "The European Language Portfolio and Language Teaching at the University".

- 21st June 2000, at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg/DE, Michael Jones presented the European Language Portfolio.

- 24th June 2000, at the Third Annual One-Day Conference of UACE Linguists, at the University of Cardiff/GB, Vicky Davies and Michael Jones referred to the ELP in a presentation entitled "Supporting Independence in Adult Language Learning".

- 5th July 2000 at the CILT Conference at the University of Nottingham/GB, Michael Jones discussed the ELP in a presentation entitled "The New Communicators: Graduates with Languages - Teaching Modern Languages in Universities in the 21st Century".

- 14 –16th September 2000 at the CERCLES (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education) Conference at Antwerp/BE, Brigitte Forster Vosicki presented the results of the transnational project of the ELC/CEL in a paper entitled "Piloting the European Language Portfolio in the Context of Higher Education in Europe". This will be published in the Proceedings of the Conference.

14.3   Diploma work and seminars on the ELP

- "La méthode Portfolio: Est-ce qu'on peut utiliser le Portfolio à l'université en Norvège?" Teaching diploma dissertation by Hanne M. Frotvendt, Arskurs i fransk 1999-2000, OFNEC (Office franco-norvégien d'échanges et de coopération) – Université de Caen.

- "La méthode Portfolio, Le processus d'apprentissage, Le Portfolio, comment fonctionne-t-il à l'université?", Teaching diploma dissertation by Mari Lous, Arskurs i fransk 1999-2000, OFNEC – Université de Caen.

- "Comment se servir du Portfolio au collège (FLE-matière facultative)", Teaching diploma dissertation by Ingrid Berg, Arskurs i fransk, mars 2000, OFNEC – Université de Caen.

- "Comment on utilise l'ELP à 'Arskurs for laerere' en 1999-2000. Echecs et succès. Conséquences pédagogiques", Teaching diploma dissertation by Anne-Brit Aas, Arskurs i fransk, 2000, OFNEC – Université de Caen.

- "Le Portfolio européen – Est-il possible de l'utiliser dans les universités norvégiennes?", Teaching diploma dissertation by Marit Gjone Sandsleth, Arskurs i fransk, 2000, OFNEC – Université de Caen.

- "Das Europäische Sprachenportfolio. Allgemeine Präsentation und Beschreibung der Erprobung am Sprachenzentrum der Universität Lausanne", summer semester 2000, seminar paper in German by Sigrid Andenmatten – Université de Lausanne.

14.4   Contacts with the public

- Dr. Heidrun Klemm of the University of Potsdam, contacted the Minister for higher education of the Land of Brandenburg/D, and members of the European Parliament, on the question of funding for pilot projects, and in this context presented the ELP.

- The report on the transnational project will be published on the web site of the European Language Council (CEL/ELC): http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/.

15. Conclusion

The project entitled "A European Language Portfolio - Pilot Phase 1998-2000", co-ordinated by the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe, was already well advanced when the ELC/CEL decided to take part in the experiment as late as October 1999. This decision was, moreover, taken by language sections or institutes, language centres, or by individuals working in these establishments, rather than by whole faculties, or university authorities. For these reasons the ELP has not so far achieved a wide impact, either in the participating institutions, in faculties in general, or on curricula design.

Nevertheless, there has been a growing interest in the ELP, and in its underlying ideas, which are becoming steadily more well-known. Evidence for this lies in the changes which are already being introduced into some of the participating institutions. There is in fact considerable scope for using the ELP in higher education.

This new tool has great potential for encouraging a new approach to teaching and learning; for example, by emphasising the importance of independent learning, by taking account of invisible factors which influence language learning; by making use of formative evaluation during the whole study period; or by including Portfolio work as a complement to formal examination-based certification.

One of its most attractive features, in the context of higher education, is that the Portfolio provides a standardised description of language levels and skills, based on the Common European Framework of Reference, which is valid throughout all of Europe. It is precisely this type of global reference system which is at present lacking in institutions of higher education, where it is at present difficult to ascertain students' real language levels, since these are ill-defined in vague terms with no accurate description of the content of the courses followed or levels of examinations passed, all of which precludes any comparison from one country to another.

From this point of view the ELP could assume the role of a quality assurance tool with respect to language teaching in higher education, precisely because it concentrates on greater transparency concerning the content of courses, objectives set, and teaching methods employed. It would thus constitute a common base for all those involved in the processes of learning, teaching and evaluation.

A further advantage of the ELP is that, for any language, it enables an evaluation to be carried out in terms that are clear, comprehensible, non prescriptive and transnational, and which fully embrace the wide diversity of approaches to language teaching and learning, and the multiplicity of evaluations which exist in Europe. In this sense it has much in common with the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) which enables mobility students, for example, to move from one system of evaluation to another, but which in no way supersedes local testing systems.

The "Reporting function" of the ELP also has an important role to play in the university context, particularly with regard to admission examinations, participation in mobility programmes, entry into post-graduate studies, recognition of studies carried out in foreign universities, or of other types of language experience including visits abroad, professional placements in foreign countries.

Finally, there is no doubt that the Portfolio evaluation results in a more complete profile of a student's language skills and competences than the certification system in use at the present. The ELP takes into account all linguistic and intercultural experience, both within and outside any given education system, and mentions all certificates and diplomas obtained by the student. The Council of Europe Common Framework of Reference ensures that they are clearly described and comparable. If adopted, it would no longer be necessary to rely only on international language testing services, such as the TOEFL, which are at present required in order to gain access to numerous universities or study programmes but which do not test precisely those productive skills which are absolutely indispensable if a student wants to successfully follow courses taught in a foreign language.