

## Information documents

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### Annual Report of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz) to the Committee of Ministers (January-December 2011)

Information document for the GR-C meeting on (date)

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#### Table of contents

1. The ECML: Promoting excellence in language education .....	2
2. Summary of 2011 .....	3
3. Empowering language professionals: Competence – networks – impact – quality .....	4
3.1. Enhancing the professional competence of language teachers .....	5
3.2. Strengthening professional networks and the wider community of language educators .....	7
3.3. Enabling language professionals to have greater impact on reform processes .....	12
3.4. Contributing to better quality of language education in Europe .....	14
4. Budget and staffing .....	15
5. The ECML in Austria .....	15
6. 2011 in figures .....	16

The full report, including the following appendices, is available for download from <http://govboard.ecml.at>:

Appendix 1 – Budget of expenditure 2011

Appendix 2 – Statutory decisions in 2011

Appendix 3 – List of ECML publications released in 2011

Appendix 4 – Calendar of activities 2011

Appendix 5 – List of members of the Governing Board in 2011

Appendix 6 – List of projects within the ECML medium-term programme 2008-2011

Appendix 7 – Activity report 2011 – Canada

Appendix 8 – Consultants' annual report 2011 with statistical data from the programme evaluation

## 1. The ECML: Promoting excellence in language education

The main objectives defined by the Council of Europe in the area of education are:

- preparing for the labour market;
- preparing for active citizenship in a democratic society;
- personal development;
- acquisition and consolidation of a large knowledge base.

Language education is a fundamental element of all these objectives. Language use plays an essential role in all forms of life and, specifically, in all forms of education. It involves more than just a command of linguistic means of communication. Language is a tool for acquiring and transferring knowledge. It is perhaps the most important aspect of the development of human beings, both as individuals and as members of society. Language helps us to understand and make sense of reality, while being a vehicle for creativity.

The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria, is an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe, set up in 1994 to provide a practical response to a need expressed by the Council of Europe's member states: the reinforcement of cooperation in the field of language education and respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe. 34<sup>1</sup> states subscribed to the Partial Agreement in 2011.

The ECML's mission is to support its member states in the implementation of their language education policies taking account of the recommendations of the Council of Europe. It does so by promoting innovative approaches and disseminating good practice in the learning and teaching of modern languages and in this way addresses issues directly related to good quality education as a pre-requisite for social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, and democratic citizenship. These were identified as priority issues for the work of the Organisation as a whole at the Warsaw Summit in 2005 and highlighted again in May 2011 in the report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe entitled *Living together; Combining diversity and freedom in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe* and in Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation (1975)2011 as a follow-up to the report.

Through its focus on promoting excellence in language education, based on quality, standard-setting and innovation, the Centre is well placed to assist member states in addressing challenges within their national education systems as well as to offer support in improving provision in line with key international developments in education such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the European qualifications frameworks.

The ECML is an initiator and coordinator of European and international cooperation. The Centre runs 4-year medium-term programmes of projects organised in cooperation with European experts in the field of language education.

Through its programmes, consisting of expert meetings, workshops, conferences and research projects to which participants from the member states are invited, the ECML provides a platform for gathering and disseminating information, stimulating discussion and training multipliers in matters related to language education. It also maintains Europe-wide networks for teacher trainers, researchers and educational administrators.

The Centre maintains close links with professional bodies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), working in language education. Formal cooperation agreements have been signed so far between the ECML and twelve INGOs having participatory status with the Council of Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", United Kingdom.

The ECML works in close cooperation with the Language Policy Unit, whose primary responsibilities are the elaboration of policies and guidelines for promoting linguistic diversity and plurilingualism and the development of policy planning and standard-setting reference instruments.

As defined within a memorandum of understanding between the Austrian authorities and the Council of Europe, the Austrian host authorities invest approximately €400,000 each year in the ECML, in addition to the obligatory contribution to the ECML budget. This sum is managed by the Austrian Association and largely covers the Centre's costs related to the seat in Graz and the associated running costs, i.e. the rental of the premises and its infrastructure. The other member states of the Enlarged Partial Agreement benefit through this financing as their contributions to the budget of the Centre are directly invested into the ECML programme and assure its functioning through staffing.

## 2. Summary of 2011

In 2011, the European Centre for Modern Languages focused on the development of new instruments and materials for language education professionals in member states. Twenty-one publications addressing key issues in language education were released. The series of practical training kits, guides, research findings, reference materials and frameworks deal with current challenges in language education, such as standard-setting and assessment, promoting quality and excellence, innovation through content-based language education and application of ICT, and developing language skills for a competitive job market.

A large-scale conference in September, involving 200 language education specialists from all over Europe and from Canada, marked the culmination of the *Empowering language professionals* programme of activities (2008-2011). The event served primarily to present the results of ECML projects to key stakeholders and representatives of dissemination networks. 93% of respondents at the conference stated that the event had fully met or exceeded their expectations.

There was an impressive response to the Call for submissions for the Centre's *Learning through languages* programme (2012-2015), with over 400 language education professionals applying to take an active role within the programme by the closing deadline on 1 May. The expert advisory group, reviewing the project proposals, awarded 29 of the 53 proposals received the highest rating and commented on the exceptionally high quality of the submissions. The ECML's Governing Board subsequently adopted the 2012-2015 programme at its meeting in September.

The *Learning through languages* programme will be based upon an inclusive approach to plurilingual and intercultural education and focus on the right of the learner to good quality language education. The programme, which will involve cooperation with leading networks institutions and associations involved in international language education, also seeks to complement and promote synergy with the Language Policy Unit's work and will assist member states in applying and implementing key instruments developed by the Unit. Several of the projects within the 2012-2015 programme target groups with a stake in the provision of high-quality language education, such as parents and the corporate world.

The Centre further intensified its cooperation with civil society through the INGO-Professional Network Forum on language education. The Forum members, comprising 12 international associations and institutions which share common values and expertise in the field of language education and assessment, played an important role in promoting, in particular, the Call for submissions for the Centre's new programme. It is envisaged to disseminate ECML publications via the extensive networks of the Forum members which potentially represent hundreds of thousands of language education practitioners.

Important progress was made in the further development of cooperation with the European Union. To mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Day of Languages, a Joint Declaration was issued by the Secretary General and the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. The Declaration made specific reference to the work of the ECML and the importance of developing further synergies with the Commission. The Council of the European Union also adopted conclusions on language competences to enhance mobility in November, which highlighted the need to make good use of the experience and resources of the ECML in this area.

The prevailing economic climate made it an exceptionally challenging year for the Centre, with three states (the United Kingdom, Greece and Hungary) announcing their withdrawal from the Partial Agreement as of January 2012 as a consequence of budgetary constraints. Due to the short notice afforded, restructuring and reorientation had to be carried out rapidly by the Secretariat. As a result, new forms of co-operation and the agreements involving additional third-party financing are currently in the process of examination. This experience also highlighted the need to contextualise the ECML's work in relation to other relevant developments in education such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the European qualifications frameworks, as well as to national reform initiatives.

With the regard to potential new member states, following the presentation of the ECML's work to a high-level working group commissioned to develop a proposal for a future strategy on foreign language teaching at all levels of the Danish education system, the working group had included a recommendation in its final report that Denmark join the Partial Agreement. The Executive Director of the ECML was invited to speak at a major conference in Belgrade relating to national language education policy, where the Serbian Minister for Education expressed strong interest in developing closer links with the ECML.

The current economic and budgetary crisis in Europe places significant pressure on many member states to examine their level of contribution towards international cooperation. States' efforts to sustain this cooperation are to be valued today more than ever. Solidarity and cooperation at international and intergovernmental level also represent an efficient way to deal with the crisis in the contemporary globalised world. One of challenges for the Centre, in a time of austerity, is to present clearly the economic and cultural benefit, both for individuals and for countries, of learning languages.

### **3. Empowering language professionals: Competence – networks – impact – quality**

The Centre's 2008-2011 programme, *Empowering language professionals: Competence – networks – impact – quality*, addressed challenges in education as expressed for example in the Council of Europe's "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue" (2008) and in the Lisbon strategy objectives in education and training. Standard-linked tuition and result-oriented assessment, greater autonomy of educational institutions, increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity among students and promotion of lifelong or recurrent education were identified as some of the burning issues impacting on national reform processes. Language teachers, teacher trainers and language professionals responsible for putting policies into practice were targeted as key actors in this change process.

The programme had four thematic strands reflecting the national priorities as identified by the Centre's member states:

- A. Evaluation;
- B. Continuity in language learning;
- C. Content and language education;
- D. Plurilingual education.

Within each strand a set of projects addressed key issues faced by states, offered professional development, established ongoing international networks, promoted quality in the respective areas and developed concrete instruments and approaches which were published and disseminated to specified groups. In a bottom-up approach, working with professionals at grassroots level, the Centre acted as a catalyst for innovation, seeking to assist member states in implementing change in practice. The programme comprised 23 projects which varied in duration. Over its life span any given project involved between 100-200 professionals in its activities.

At the outset of the programme the ECML established four fundamental priorities for its work:

- enhancing the professional competence of language teachers;
- strengthening professional networks and the wider community of language educators;
- enabling language professionals to have greater impact on reform processes;
- contributing to better quality of language education in Europe.

The sections below present an overview of how the Centre addressed these priorities and contributed to the overall goal of the programme of empowering language professionals.

In total the 4-year programme, which concluded with the *Empowering language professionals* conference in Graz at the end of September, covered over 400 events, directly involving some 4000 participants in 40 states in Europe and beyond, with contributions to over 300 conferences, seminars and workshops worldwide.

### 3.1. Enhancing the professional competence of language teachers

ECML activities sought not only to encourage teachers and other actors in language education to acquire new knowledge in their field of expertise, but also, and even more importantly, to see that this knowledge was put into effective practice in their working environment. Through this process of professional development the Centre aimed to facilitate individual language teachers in contributing to change and innovation in their work. Support for language professionals as agents of change therefore represented a direct investment in achieving higher quality language learning.

Within the 20 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2011, 93% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the event they participated in contributed to developing their professional competence (94% in 2010).<sup>2</sup>

The 2011 programme involved the direct training and professional development of 796 language education professionals within 20 ongoing projects. The programme of activities comprised seminars, network meetings, national training events, project coordination and consultancy meetings and a conference concluding the *Empowering language professionals* programme.

The Centre published a series of 21 language learning instruments aimed primarily at language teachers and teacher trainers. As the issue of access is fundamental to reaching practitioners the Centre introduced a number of measures to ensure that the results are both easy to access and to promote to a wide public:

- the materials were designed in a user-friendly way with the target readership indicated clearly on the cover of each publication. All are available for download from the ECML web platform ([www.ecml.at/publications](http://www.ecml.at/publications));

<sup>2</sup> All survey figures presented in the report result from the ECML's evaluative scheme, introduced in 2008 to coincide with the launch of the 2008-2011 programme

- in each case, a flyer and a 'roll-up' display for conferences and fairs was developed to promote the publication/website in the working languages of the project. These provide a short abstract and explain how the materials can be used;
- each of the project websites has been transformed into a promotional instrument for the results. The sites contain not only the downloadable versions of publications but also additional materials and instruments. Interviews recorded with the project coordinators and, in some cases, users provide a concise summary of the key features and added value of the results;
- the results were promoted via a wide range of networks including the ECML's National Contact Points in each member state, the networks of each project, the partners within the INGO-Professional Network Forum on language education and language teacher associations. It is also proposed to use social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn in order to achieve a wider readership;
- as a clear link exists between the publication of the results in member state languages and their take-up in the respective countries, the Centre strongly encourages countries to look into translating the most relevant results to their context into national languages.

The publications, which serve language professionals from primary to tertiary level, build upon the previous work of the Council of Europe in language education. Some complement existing tools and focus on implementation issues to facilitate and promote their widespread application, such as *Using the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)* in the area of quality and assessment. The EPOSTL, which was initially developed in 2007, has been translated into 12 languages and been taken up in teacher education programmes all over Europe. The 2011 publication presents examples, discussions and research findings of how the EPOSTL is used in initial teacher education courses, in bi-lateral teacher-education programmes and in teaching practice.

*Relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Highlights from the Manual* offers an introduction to linking examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in a valid way. The procedures outlined in the publication assist teachers to develop their own classroom-based tests. This represents a particularly important area of work for the Centre with institutions frequently purporting to have linked testing to the language levels of the CEFR, without having a valid basis for this claim.

All projects in the area of evaluation have produced innovative and valuable tools which enable language teachers at different levels of education to have a better knowledge of the key document, the CEFR, and assist teachers in practical ways of implementing CEFR-related principles in their classroom activities.

With a view to exploiting the full potential of ICT the *Developing Online Teaching Skills - Bite-size training for language professionals training kit* offers a tool for language teachers which promotes up-to-date online teaching technology. It includes short activities for online language teacher training, suggestions for reflective activities and collaborative tools for sharing "self-training" experiences. The platform on which the tools are hosted has already been translated into several different languages by user groups.

In the area of content-based language education, the publications developed assist teachers in their everyday work with tools to achieve better quality in their teaching and to involve parents and other stakeholders. *Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in content teaching: A training kit for teachers* demonstrates in which ways the languages and cultures present in the classroom can be developed as a cross-curricular resource at primary and secondary level. In today's classrooms, with their rich mix of pupils from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the publication and accompanying activities' website offers practical ways for making use of the potential provided by diversity for the benefit of all. The *Content-based teaching for young learners* website focuses on primary level and offers a vast resource of intercultural materials and activities using (4) languages for developing children's knowledge of the world in parallel to their linguistic competences.

With regard to plurilingual education, a number of theoretical and practical areas were explored, related to making the Council of Europe's aim of promoting plurilingual education a reality. Underlying all of the publications is the conviction that plurilingual development is an educational advantage which promotes cognitive flexibility, and, for those whose first language is not that of schooling, that the acknowledgement of migrant and minority languages is a strong factor in forging individual identity and in social and educational inclusion.

*A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* represents a ground-breaking set of instruments opening ways for implementing pluralistic approaches in classrooms in order to develop the plurilingual and intercultural competences of learners of all subjects. It describes the knowledge, attitudes and skills which through "plural" approaches to language teaching – awakening to languages, intercomprehension between a variety of languages, and integrated approaches to teaching different languages rather than learning each one in isolation – can be developed. The set of instruments comprise a theoretical framework, a "kit" to help teachers use the framework and a bank of some 250 online teaching activities.

The *Language associations and collaborative support* publication focuses on building and developing networks and is aimed at those involved in the running of language teacher associations at international, national, regional and local levels. It provides guidance on the effective running and networking of associations. With thousands of teachers actively involved in language teacher associations around Europe, this represents a very important channel of dissemination for the ECML.

All ECML publications aim to raise quality in language education, strengthen professional networks, encourage reforms leading to the integration of new concepts and practical solutions in the teaching of languages at all levels.

Prior to the release of the publications, *Babylonia*, the Swiss review of language teaching and learning, featured two articles on projects of the *Empowering language professionals* programme from the MARILLE project, "Majority language instruction as basis for plurilingual education" and the CARAP project, "A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches" offering practical examples and teaching ideas for the classroom.

### **3.2. Strengthening professional networks and the wider community of language educators**

The dissemination of the major principles and instruments promoting enhanced standards in language education developed by the European organisations can only be achieved via effective information and communication structures. The sharing of knowledge, ideas and initiatives throughout the wider professional community of practice has a powerful impact on the content and quality of the work of the individual, on overall developments in theory and practice, and on the cohesion of the educational community and its public profile.

Within the 20 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2011, 95.1% of respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the ECML event they participated in motivated them to become more active networkers (94% in 2010).

In addition to its work with the individual project networks, the ECML worked in cooperation with a wide range of organisations and networks at national and international level which, when combined, have a vast potential outreach.

### *National contacts*

- the ECML's network of National Contact Points (NCPs) was set up in 2001 and was in operation in 34 member states and in Canada in 2011. NCPs are responsible for dissemination of information on the ECML and its work, particularly its publications and other products, to a relevant target audience at local, regional and national level through their own established networks.
- ECML National Nominating Authorities (NNAs) are persons/official agencies in each member state responsible for selecting participants for the Centre's activities.

Both networks played an important role in the widescale dissemination of the Call for submissions for the 2012-2015 programme. National expertise in the ECML 2008-2011 activities is highlighted on the Centre's website dedicated to its National Contact Points (<http://contactpoints.ecml.at>), which registered approximately 12,000 page views per month. The page "Experts involved in ECML activities" includes the contact details and the activities in which nominated experts were involved during the programme of activities. The annual reports of the respective Contact Points focused in particular on the activities organised, the target audiences, and the impact achieved at national level.

The following examples illustrate the type of work carried by the Contact Points, which greatly assists in raising the profile of the Centre at national level and in tailoring approaches and instruments to the context of the country:

- the Contact Point for Austria, the Austrian Centre for Language Competence, published a brochure in 2011 outlining examples of practice with regard to the implementation of the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* in Austria. The brochure presents concrete examples on how the EPOSTL has been implemented in initial and further language teacher education at the universities of Vienna, Graz, Innsbruck and Salzburg and provides an overview of implementation strategies in this field;
- le Courriel européen des langues is a free online newsletter, issued three times in 2011 by the International Centre for Pedagogical Studies (CIEP), the National Contact Point for the ECML in France. The newsletter provided information on the activities of the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of language policy, with articles on ECML activities and publications and on French participation in the Centre's workshops.

### *Cooperation with professional INGOs*

The INGO Professional Network Forum (<http://www.ecml.at/professionalsnetworkforum>) is formed of international associations and institutions that share common values and expertise in the field of language education and assessment. The Graz Declaration of 2010 defines the basis and objectives of cooperation. Each of the partners has signed an individual Memorandum of Cooperation with the Centre. The network is coordinated by the ECML.

The INGO Forum comprised the following associations and institutions in 2011:

The International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), the Conseil européen pour les langues / European Language Council (CEL/ELC), the European Association for Quality Language Services (EAQUALS), the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA), the European Parents Association (EPA), the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), the World Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV), the International Association of Multilingualism (IAM), the International Certificate Conference (ICC), and the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) of the University of Ottawa, Canada.

The INGO Forum represents a major pillar of cooperation for the ECML and has attracted a new clientele to the work of the Centre. In 2011 it provided an effective channel for dissemination in the Centre's Call for submissions and also for the results of the *Empowering language professionals* programme. At its meeting in February 2012 the partners focused on ways of maximising the potential of access to their combined network of hundreds of thousands of language education practitioners.

## *Canada*

Although the ECML's networks are primarily based in Europe, since the signing of a Memorandum on Cooperation and Liaison with the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) based at the University of Ottawa in 2008, the Centre has developed ever closer contacts with Canada. Within seven of the Centre's projects there has been ongoing cooperation between Canadian and European experts

The participation of Canadian experts in the ECML projects provides mutual benefits. It contributes to highlight at the international level the Canadian expertise and competencies in language teaching and learning in the specific area of the respective project and Canada can greatly benefit from the European methods, strategies and best practices in language education and research in a plurilingual and multicultural environment. Among the points of added value of the Canadian involvement is the increasing awareness of the ECML and its services in Canada.

In addition to ongoing collaboration of Canadian experts in the ECML programme in 2011:

- Graham FRASER, the Canadian Commissioner of Official Languages, made a video statement to the participants at the ECML conference;
- Jim CUMMINS from the University of Toronto, during his keynote speech at the ECML conference, provided evidence from research showing the need for language teachers to seek to empower the learners, to give them confidence and value all their skills and competences;
- a letter of support was submitted to the Canadian authorities from a number of respected members of the University of Toronto academic community supporting the case for Canada's membership of the ECML;
- the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers used its newsletter to disseminate information on the ECML on a monthly basis to its national network.

On the basis of the positive experience to date, it was decided to extend the Memorandum on Cooperation and Liaison to the Centre's new programme, with the explicit intention of Canada becoming a member state of the Partial Agreement.

## *Cooperation with the European Commission*

The Council of Europe and the European Union share the aims of preserving linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe and promoting learning and use of languages as a means to support intercultural dialogue, social cohesion and democratic citizenship, and as an important economic asset in a modern knowledge-based society. There is a recognised need on both sides for more consolidated cooperation. This is specifically important in the context of the Centre's dissemination of the results of its 2008-2011 programme and in the launch of its 2012-15 programme of activities.

The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Day of Languages was marked with a Joint Declaration by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn JAGLAND, and the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla VASSILIOU. The Declaration, available in 25 languages, welcomed: '... progress made during the past decade in raising awareness about Europe's rich linguistic heritage, encouraging multilingualism in society and in motivating European citizens to learn more languages' and reaffirmed the commitment of both organisations '...to encourage lifelong language learning for personal fulfilment, full participation in Europe's democratic societies and professional development. The Declaration also highlighted the particular importance of languages in today's environment, 'Against the current backdrop of increasing mobility, globalisation of the economy and changing economic trends, the need to learn languages and develop plurilingual and intercultural education is more obvious than ever before.' The Declaration made specific reference to the work of the ECML and the importance of developing further synergies with the Commission.

The 2012-2015 ECML programme includes a number of themes relevant to the work of the European Commission such as 'young learners', 'Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)' and 'mobility', where cooperation is envisaged. The Centre is currently working on a cooperation action plan related to common priority areas together with the Multilingualism Policy Unit.

The Centre's "Quality education in Romani for Europe" (QualiRom) project was successful in its bid for funding under the European Commission's Key Actions 2 programme in 2010. Under the agreement, the ECML receives funding over the 3 years of the project as one of the partners in the initiative which is coordinated by the Karl-Franzens University in Graz. In 2011 the project (<http://qualirom.ecml.at>), involving 8 partners and 7 associated partners, piloted the Curriculum Framework for Romani (CFR) and the corresponding European Language Portfolio models developed by the Council of Europe. The Centre is also an associate partner in 5 other Commission-funded projects.

#### *Other networks*

Cooperation with the International Federation of Modern Language Associations (FIPLV) provided the basis for the "Language Associations and Collaborative Support" (LACS) project within the Centre's programme. The project focused on the dissemination of the results of the ECML's work through the networks of language teacher associations. A follow-up project within the 2012-2015 programme is set to mediate ECML work through language teacher associations and other networks at regional and national level. The project will also seek to motivate people to adapt the ECML projects to their local environment in order to facilitate widespread impact on learning and teaching.

Other institutions acting as cooperating partners in ECML projects in 2011 and offering access to their networks were the European Association for Quality in Language (EAQUALS), the Dutch Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), the CLIL Cascade Network (CCN), the Institut national de recherche pédagogique (INRP), the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS), Moscow State Linguistic University, the International German Teacher's Association (IDV), the Fédération internationale des professeurs de français (FIPF) and the Education and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity International Association (EDiLiC).

The "Language-Rich Europe" initiative of the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC), headed by the British Council, was launched in November 2010 after a successful bid for funding from the European Commission. The project focuses on identifying indicators for language policy, language use and attitudes to language learning. Ultimately the project seeks to bring about changes in perception regarding the importance of languages and institutional change as well as assisting in agenda setting in European countries and in policy change. The ECML is involved as an associate partner offering its expertise when dealing with the development of the project structure, providing access to the ECML expert networks, and planning to host events related to the project.

On a local level the ECML continued its cooperation with the Sprachennetzwerk Graz (Language Network Graz, <http://www.sprachennetzwerkgraz.at>), a Graz-based network of institutions working in the area of language education (see also section 5). The ECML also pursued its involvement in the implementation of the European Language Portfolio in local schools – a project initiated by the Sprachennetzwerk. The ECML is a key partner through its European dimension and expertise.

#### *European Day of Languages (EDL)*

The Day differs from the Centre's other activities in that it is not focused on a specialist target public but encompasses everyone interested in languages. With activities often organised as large-scale events in city and town centres around the continent as well as in schools, universities, adult learning centres, and businesses the EDL has a potential audience of millions of Europeans.

Upon the initiative of the Council of Europe, the European Day of Languages is celebrated each year on 26 September to promote cultural richness and plurilingualism in Europe and to encourage lifelong language learning. Since its launch in 2001, every year hundreds of events in celebration of languages are organised around Europe.

The Day is coordinated jointly by the European Centre for Modern Languages and the Language Policy Unit. National Relays nominated by the participating Council of Europe member states act as multipliers, circulating EDL information and disseminating the promotional materials provided, as well as carrying out promotion for the Day at national/regional level and through the press.

The coordination of the Day principally involves launching communication initiatives, liaising with National Relays, distributing EDL promotional materials and maintaining and developing an EDL web platform.

On its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary the Day inspired greater numbers than ever before around Europe and beyond to become involved in a unique celebration of languages and their diversity. Over 600 individual events were recorded in the EDL's calendar, with activities even taking place as far afield as India, Canada and Australia. A glance at the [2011 EDL picture gallery](#) illustrates the enthusiasm and continued popularity of the Day as well as the variety of actions organised,

In addition to the Joint Declaration of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, indicated above, new features in 2011 represented:

- online voting for the 'EDL's most innovative event' was added to the events calendar. The inaugural winner was Grabrik primary school from Croatia. The event, with the intriguing title 'Look at me, I am beautiful', received over 650 votes;
- sign languages were given greater prominence on the website through a special FAQ area, developed with the assistance of members of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and a new section on the EDL quiz on this area was added. In addition, the Language Policy Unit organised an event entitled 'Sign languages - a unique contribution to our linguistic and cultural diversity' in co-operation with the EUD;
- an EDL video clip, developed by the ECML, is featured on the main page of the site. The clip was screened on the Austrian television network ,ORF, and ARTE has agreed to broadcast the clip in the run up to the 2012 EDL.

Substantial credit for the continued success and celebration of the Day goes to the EDL National Relays.

#### *Networking tools*

In addition to 30 websites managed and updated by the ECML in 2011, activities benefited from increased interactive communication via Facebook and Twitter, especially to promote the European Day of Languages. Given the fact that pupils and students now make widespread use of social media, the Centre has added these to its range of networking tools. For the European Language Portfolio, a Facebook page was created by the coordinator of the ECML's "Training teachers to use the European Language Portfolio" project, which was actively used to promote the relaunch of the ELP site.

Over 6,750 subscribers received the 18<sup>th</sup> issue of the ECML newsletter, the *European Language Gazette*, Winter 2011/Spring 2012. The issue focused specifically on: the *Empowering language professionals* conference, the 21 new ECML publications released, the new *Learning through languages* programme to be launched in 2012 and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary the European Day of Languages. A special edition of the *Gazette* was also published in January 2011 promoting the Call for submissions for the 2012-2015 programme.

### 3.3. Enabling language professionals to have greater impact on reform processes

The ECML's support for language education professionals and their networks assisted teachers to play a more influential role in their professional environment, also better equipping them to participate effectively in the consultations involved in decision-making processes.

Within the 20 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2011, 82.1% of survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that participating in an ECML event encouraged them to play a more influential role in reform processes in their professional environment (83% in 2010).

In order to gather quantitative data and qualitative feedback from the direct target groups of the ECML programme the Centre introduced an evaluative system at the outset of the 2008-2011 programme. The system comprises a set of tools providing evidence of the quality of ECML services as well as indications of take-up and follow-up of projects in the member states. All data is made available to ECML national representatives (Governing Board members, National Nominating Authorities and National Contacts Points) to ensure transparency.

Evaluation is an inherent part of all educational activities including educational reforms. Valid and reliable information is needed for decision-making at all levels and by all parties involved in the educational provision. By developing new approaches and tools in evaluation and assessment, the ECML projects in 2011 have made a contribution to ensuring that better information is available.

With regard to plurilingual education, facilitating better understanding of the principles of a number of facets in this area and dissemination of practical, workable approaches to its implementation can have a major impact, as plurilingual approaches' contribution to cognitive and social development is increasingly recognised.

Some examples of feedback on the initial impact of ECML work, which were received from the beneficiaries of programme activities in 2011, are:

"I organised a workshop for my colleagues at the English language and literature department promoting quality aspects of language education that were introduced at the ClassRelEx workshop. I have also brought ECML materials which are now available at our Department. I also give lectures on English language didactics to future English language teachers (in-service and pre-service) and 'Quality education' as well as 'Creating reliable exams' are new topics in the syllabus."

"I have participated in two round tables in the National Congress of EOI celebrated in Madrid, in which I had to speak about a) new curricula in the EOI of Valencian Community and b) Progress assessment according to the CEFR. Apart from that, I gave a course on assessment according to the CEFR in the EOI of Marbella and also a presentation in the University of Deusto in Congress about Teaching and evaluating Spanish to immigrants. Finally, I have also given courses on documents that I found in the ECML as for example the Portfolio of the learner of language teacher."

"In my teaching and research I use the products of the project, especially the bite-sized training units about Moodle, YouTube, Wiki, Forums and SurveyMonkey. The experience shared during the [ECML] workshop and the fruitful ideas are now used in my courses in the sphere of e-learning for students and teachers at early stages of their career."

"The [ECML] website already contains excellent etools which will make all professionals work better and more effectively in class."

“It [training at an ECML workshop] will help me to put into cooperation all foreign language teachers as far as language awareness is concerned. This is difficult to achieve in my country and I feel I have the key to unlock the path to this target after my participation in this workshop. It will also be helpful in my role as a trainer to help teachers in using ECML material.”

“Gaining a better understanding of oral language assessment tasks and marking criteria has ensured that in-service courses that I designed and ran during the remainder of the year were based on a high-quality basis of principles than if I hadn't attended the event. Our in-service courses were much the better for my having attended the training in Graz. Since attending the training event in Graz, I have been working with the State Examinations Committee in improving the assessment criteria that are used in the assessment of Gaeilge (Irish language). These criteria are now being changed/improved as a result of my training in Graz. 2,300 teachers of Gaeilge who attended our courses since last Christmas have been exposed to this information also.”

#### *European Centre for Modern Languages' 2012-2015 programme*

On 1 May 2011, the Call for submissions to the 4<sup>th</sup> programme of the European Centre for Modern Languages *Learning through language: Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education* (2012-2015) came to a close.

Between November 2010 and April 2011 a series of 23 promotional events in 18 countries presented the key ideas behind the new programme to over 2,000 participants as well as outlining the different options for becoming involved. As a result, the Centre received 53 project proposals and over 200 individual applications to either coordinate or participate as a team member within one of the Centre's defined 'tender' projects.

The new programme, which will include 15 projects in its core section, will focus on the learner, the learner's needs and the learner's perspective. It will underline the learners' right to open and lifelong access to quality education and highlight the fact that the learners' educational careers are based on adequate development of language competences. It will also promote approaches for valuing all learners' languages and cultures which are key to successful integration in learning communities and societies.

Projects in the new programme will promote inclusive approaches and aim at developing plurilingual and intercultural competences considering both formal and informal/non-formal learning contexts.

The programme seeks to achieve significant impact on learning by:

- developing practical tools and materials either directly for the use of learners or for teachers, teacher educators and/or other actors in the field of education;
- communicating and disseminating results of ongoing and completed ECML projects to key stakeholders.

#### *Setting up a new format of activities*

In parallel with launching project work for the new programme, the Centre will establish more flexible formats of activities providing direct, targeted assistance to its member states, focusing, in particular, on achieving tangible impact at a national level. Consequently, the ECML is currently developing a concept for a new domain of operation entitled "Targeted support to the ECML member states" to focus on identified priority topics of interest for its members and priority areas proposed directly by member states. This initiative seeks to work in closer contact with representatives of ECML member states and to provide direct consultation and training in areas of identified needs.

### 3.4. Contributing to better quality of language education in Europe

Through improved competences, stronger networks and greater impact of its members, the language-teaching profession can become more actively involved in improving standards in language education.

As a Council of Europe institution, the ECML operates within the context of the ongoing language education work of the major European organisations. A great number of the projects in its programme therefore built on existing European language education principles and tools, particularly the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) developed by the Language Policy Unit.

The ECML offered access to developments and expertise within the Council of Europe and, in many projects, direct links with ongoing work in the Unit's programme.

Within the 20 language education projects coordinated by the Centre, which were surveyed in 2011, 92.1% of survey respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the ECML event they participated in highlighted quality aspects of language education that they will promote in their professional environment (91% in 2010).

#### *Cooperation within the Council of Europe*

The secretariats of the ECML and the Language Policy Unit were active in promoting complementarity and coherence between work undertaken and in ensuring that relevant results from the ECML's activities fed into the Unit's work, where appropriate, and vice-versa. The two projects linked to the implementation of the European Language Portfolio represented good examples of such synergies. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) website, [www.coe.int/portfolio](http://www.coe.int/portfolio) was successfully relaunched on 26 September. The site, jointly coordinated by the Language Policy Unit and the ECML, now provides a vast range of material on the use of the Portfolio and on the development of new ELPs.

The "Quality education in Romani for Europe" (QualiRom) project piloted the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* (CFR) and the corresponding European Language Portfolio models developed by the Council of Europe.

Further projects, in the 'Evaluation' strand, delivered training in different aspects of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and produced important new instruments in this area.

The majority of results achieved by the ECML in 2011 will feed into the Unit's online platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was also regularly updated on relevant activities of the Centre in particular in relation to the "Minority languages, collateral languages and bi-/plurilingual education" (EBP-ICI) project, which released its publication in September 2011.

#### *Project evaluation*

Quality within the Centre's programme is monitored and promoted by four programme consultants who identify synergies and point out potential overlaps. The consultants are supported in their work by the Centre's evaluative scheme. In 2011 the consultants acted as an editorial board, advising on quality aspects of ECML publications and also played a key role in the rating of project submissions for the 2012-2015 programme.

#### 4. Budget and staffing

Within the 2008-2011 programme the direct costing of project activities was based upon an overall figure of €2.25 million.

In establishing the programme, the secretariat sought to balance the numbers of activities, in so far as possible, equitably over the four years so that the budget required for each of the years was approximately the same.

The 2011 budget of the ECML, comprising €1,706,000 in member state contributions, was adopted on 23 November 2010 at the 1099<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. This was supplemented by a carry-over of approximately €230,000 from the 2010 programme account and €20,000 from the 'staffing and overheads' budget. The ECML's working budget in 2011 therefore totalled €1.956.000. 2011 represented the most cost-intensive year of the programme, with the publication of the results of 21 projects and their promotion via a large-scale conference (where the Centre covered the costs of approximately 120 participants and experts).

Total expenditure for 2011 amounted to €1,749,080 (status 27 February 2012). The following categories represented the major areas of programme expenditure for the year (2010 percentages in brackets):

- Travel and subsistence: 46% (57%);
- Publications/promotional materials: 19% (10%);
- Honoraria: 17% (17%);
- Interpretation: 5% (8%);
- Web development/IT maintenance and telecommunications: 5% (5%);
- Postage: 2% (2%).

As the Centre did not produce all 2<sup>nd</sup> language versions of the publications in 2011 and as a result of changes in staffing, a carry-over will be available for the 2012 budget. Additional income will also be generated through the "Quality education in Romani for Europe" project which benefitted from European Commission funding.

Due to financial cutbacks in 2012 (the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, Greece and Hungary reduced the budget by approximately €280,000) it was necessary to suppress 3 positions in the areas of PR and Communication and Translation and Terminology and to also cut one post related to Finance and Administration. Two of the challenges for 2012 will be to restructure in the area of staffing, making greater use of outsourcing in the light of a reduced workforce and to seek additional sources of income.

#### 5. The ECML in Austria

The Austrian Association of the ECML (*Verein EFSZ in Österreich*) acts as the local partner of the ECML in Graz, thereby fulfilling Austria's commitment as host country to provide a seat for the Centre and a local secretariat. Its main function is to maintain and develop the premises of the ECML and provide assistance in day-to-day logistics. It also plays a valuable role in acting as an interface between the Centre and local, national and regional bodies.

As part of this function, the Austrian Association organises initiatives and facilitates synergies between the ECML and the region. It supports events aimed at a broader interested local or regional public and works to facilitate the transfer of ECML project results to the region.

In the framework of the ECML's medium-term programmes, the Association organises a series of events entitled: *CONTEXT - Connecting tertiary education experts*. The aim of these is to make the Centre's work better known locally by inviting ECML experts to take part in an event connected to a subject matter of one of the projects. The target group for these lectures, presentations or round table discussions is an audience of university students and teachers from Austria.

Another contribution to the dissemination process for the ECML's work in Austria is the support that the Association provides for central activities for multipliers of the Graz-based Austrian Centre for Language Competence.

The Association has also invited all institutions in Graz involved in the field of languages to come together in the *Sprachennetzwerk Graz* (the Graz Language Network). This provides a platform for building up and strengthening synergies and exchange of information. Beyond the general objective of promoting plurilingualism, the Network aims to make the competences of the institutions based in Graz more visible both nationally and at European level and to underline the city's specificity as a place of language-related expertise.

When the ECML's premises are not being used for its programme activities, they may be used by outside institutions to host activities corresponding to the Centre's vocation. The fact that the Graz Centre is one of the external Council of Europe offices has made it an obvious choice for events organised by or in cooperation with the Council of Europe, such as Pestalozzi Workshops and Seminars. A number of external international meetings and conferences have thus been attracted to Graz, drawn by the prestige of the ECML. At the same time, national educational activities are held at the Centre whenever possible, one example being the dissemination events organised in cooperation with the Austrian Centre for Language Competence. These events raise the profile of the Centre and help to establish its reputation as an international meeting point within the region. External usage also provides a contribution to the considerable costs borne by the Austrian authorities for the provision of the ECML facilities.

For the ECML conference 2011 the Austrian Association coordinated the social programme offered by the Austrian Authorities. In combination with high-level representation of the City of Graz, the Province of Styria, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Culture, the Federal Ministry of Science and Research it highlighted the support and esteem for the ECML at all levels in Austria.

Selected external events in 2011:

26 January 2011

Austrian multilingual in-service training "Scopriamo l'italiano – descubramos el español – découvrons le français"

30 March 2011

Austrian dissemination event: presentation of the Call to the *Learning through languages* programme

14 – 17 June 2011

Pestalozzi Module "Diversity of World Views"

20 October – 22 October 2011

EU-Project meeting "International radio partnerships"

## 6. 2011 in figures

### *Activities and participation*

- 796 language professionals took part in capacity building activities directly financed by the ECML
- 128 events (in total) were supported by the ECML
- 35 events directly organised and financed by the ECML
- 22 national /international events involving over 2,000 participants promoted the Call for submissions for the *Learning through languages* programme
- 1 major conference involving 200 participants
- 20 active projects within the *Empowering language professionals* programme

*Publications*

- 21 new publications issued by the ECML
- 480,000 accesses of ECML publications on the ECML website

*Web dissemination*

- 30 websites within the Centre's web platform
- 3,2 million page views of all sites on the ECML's web platform
- 6,760 subscribers to the European Language Gazette
- 140 events registered in the ECML's International Events Calendar
- 180 language education experts promoted their services via the ECML's Experts' Database

*European Day of Languages*

- 612 events organised in 47 European countries registered in the European Day of Languages events calendar
- 350,000 page views of the European Day of Languages website in September

*Expenditure*

- €1.75 million total expenditure of the ECML