



Prof-ELP: A European Language Portfolio to Improve Employees' and Future employees' Professional Foreign Language Skills

1. Introduction

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a personal document created by the Council of Europe in which users, people who are learning a language – either in formal education or outside –, can record their language skills and language and intercultural learning experiences. They can use the ELP to support their language learning, through reflecting on their own personal learning styles, setting themselves new learning objectives and understanding how to assess their progress and achievement of language competence using the parameters of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The Professional European Language Portfolio (Prof-ELP) is a European project which aims to develop an on-line Language Portfolio for professionals. The Prof-ELP tool, carried out by partners from Greece, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the UK, is in the pilot testing phase at the moment. As a Language Portfolio, Prof-ELP complies with the requirements of the Council of Europe has set for all ELPs, namely, to be structured in the following three main parts:

- **Passport:** Shows what the user is capable of doing in different languages. It contains the results of a self-assessment of the user's linguistic competence at the levels of the Common European Framework (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2), information on qualifications obtained, and a summary of his/her learning experiences.
- **Biography:** Describes the user's language and intercultural experience and competence in each of the languages. Designed to support the learner in understanding how to learn a language, set personal objectives and plan and evaluate progress and achievement.
- **Dossier:** Contains examples of documents that evidence language skills and knowledge. (Certificates, diplomas, written work, projects, audio recordings, videos, presentations, etc.)

However, ProfELP incorporates specific features that make it a particularly useful tool for a certain type of user (adults at work or preparing for work) in a specific context of use (companies or the workplace). It aims to be an ELP that can be used by any adult entering or already in the job market, a tool that can respond to the needs of employees (or future employees) who wish to improve their competence in other languages and hence their employability.

2. Future users and use scenario

The Professional Portfolio is a tool that belongs exclusively to the user, in this case, employees or future employees. Nevertheless, in the current employment context, the Prof-ELP provides other options for use that to date have not been considered in the design of other ELPs. One of these is the possibility of it functioning as a useful tool both for employees or future employees and for other stakeholders involved in language training for employment, for example employers and language teachers or trainers. This is why Prof-ELP enables the access of these stakeholders (employers



and tutors) to certain sections of the user's portfolio. Prof-ELP offers three different user's profiles:

1. User (employee or future employee)
2. Employer
3. Tutor

2.1. Use by employers

The Prof-ELP is considered useful for companies in that it provides an overview of the language skills of employees or future employees. Indeed, its main function for employers is informative. As a result, the section of the Prof-ELP that the employer may access will be the Passport, which provides an overview of the user's skills in foreign languages. By using this tool, an employer can check the linguistic competencies that employees (or job-seekers) have. In the first case, the Passport helps the employer initially to identify training needs for employees or future employees and later to check the results of a training plan; in the second case, it helps in the recruitment process.

2.2. Use by tutors

The use that a tutor can make of the Prof-ELP is not only related to the informative function of the tool but (and mainly) to its pedagogic function. The access to a user's Prof-ELP will help the tutor to identify the user's training needs (through access to the self-assessment section) but this will also help him/her to better understand the employee's situation in terms of knowledge of languages and cultures as well as learning about his/her learning preferences (through access to the Learning Experiences and Preferences sections). The Prof-ELP thus provides the basis for joint planning (tutor-employees) of training, i.e. to help the learner reflect on and understand his/her current level of language skills, to set goals, define the timescale(s) for achieving these goals, the manner in which they will be achieved, and the criteria for checking progress.

3. Prof-ELP features

Prof-ELP is an innovative ELP specifically designed for the professional domain. As a Professional Language Portfolio, it has the following features:

- It is designed to be used by an adult **throughout his/her professional life**.
- It allows its user to record all his/her language experiences in all his/her **different jobs**.
- It is **specific** enough to be different from other adult ELPs and **general** enough to be comparable, exportable and transferable.
- It aims at finding a **balance between the pedagogic and the informative** functions.
- It offers **specific descriptors for the professional domain**: "can-do statements" designed for professionals who will be able to self-assess their linguistic competencies and set their language learning objectives more easily



and according to their needs. Furthermore, the descriptors have been specifically developed following the CEFR principles and recommendations.

- It involves a new set of users:
 - o Incorporates two more users apart from the owner of the Portfolio: **employers and tutors**. Each of them will have access to certain parts of the Portfolio if the employee decides to give them the permission to do so. Employers will basically have access to the Passport, and tutors to various sections in the Biography and the Dossier.
 - o Aims at implementing the professional use of the Passport through the introduction of the **Employers as users of the tool**. Employers will find it useful to access the information of their workers' Passports. The Passport is a useful tool to record the linguistic abilities of employees and their progress after training.
 - o Aims at implementing the pedagogical function of the Biography, giving **access to the tutor** to the relevant parts. The tutor will find it useful to access the self-assessment, the objectives and the learning preferences of their students. This will help them plan and design the training.

As a tool, the Prof-ELP offers the following features:

- It is a digital ELP that aims at enhancing the **functionality and usage** of the ELP.
- It is free and **easy to access** on the internet.
- It is **clear and self-explanatory** for an easy use.
- It is **renewable**, so that it can be easily updated.
- It is **focused**, avoiding formats that require more effort to be produced or understood; e.g. checklists are preferred to open questions.
- It offers **easy and flexible retrieval of information**.
- It implements the **connections and data transfers** between the different parts of Prof-ELP.
- It implements the **user-tool interaction** through:
 - o a main page with information about the percentage of usage of the tool and prompts to motivate the user to complete the rest of the sections.
 - o reminders of approaching deadlines.
- It offers the possibility to **send messages and documents** to the other users and automatically upload files to the Dossier.
- It offers **guides and supporting materials** for its potential users (learners, teachers and human resources divisions) that help its integration in the context. The materials will guide the users so they will be able to make the best of the tool in their particular context.

4. Summary



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This presentation aims to show the functionalities of this on-line tool and the benefits of its use for the different stakeholders:

- **Employees and future employees** will have access to a new self-learning and self-assessment tool on professional language skills and competencies that will also allow them to provide information about their language proficiency on professional environments on a language scale valid at the EU level.
- **Employers** will be provided with a tool that will allow them to get an overall picture of their employees' or applicants' language proficiency on generic professional competencies and to identify the employees' training needs.
- **Language training providers** will be able to tailor training processes and to design courses according to the user's professional needs with regard to foreign language skills.