

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE LABEL AWARDED TO INNOVATIVE PROJECTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

European priorities for the European Language Label Awards 2021-2022

The new European priorities for the European Language Label Awards 2021-2022 reflect the policy priorities of the European Commission as a whole. They open up the opportunity to demonstrate how language learning can be connected with the big challenges of our time and contribute to cross border solutions based on understanding and communication.

The new Communication on the European Education Area published on 30 September 2020 reflects the Education and Training framework post 2020. Both the "Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages"¹, adopted in 2019 and the "Council Recommendation on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning"² adopted in 2018 are part of this framework and therefore still to be considered as guidelines and references. The content of the priorities below reflect the overall objectives and actions put forward within the European Education Area framework.

In 2021-2022 the European Language Label will be awarded to projects from all fields of Education and Training that support at least one of the following European priorities listed below. The European priorities may be complemented by national priorities.

1. Enhance language learning through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digital media

The Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages stresses the importance of digital tools for language learning and professional development of educational staff, in the field of language learning, such as massive open online courses, including eTwinning and the School Education Gateway's Teacher Academy.

The potential of digital tools could be fully embraced to enhance, language learning, teaching and assessment in a lifelong learning perspective. Technology can massively support broadening the language offer, provide opportunities for language exposure, and be very useful for supporting those languages which are not taught in schools. Developing critical thinking and media literacy and an appropriate and safe use of technology can be an essential learning element in this context.

New ways of learning need to be explored for a society that is becoming increasingly mobile and digital. The importance of this has been further emphasised through the 2020 Covid 19 crisis, which made it necessary for schools, including VET schools and other organisations in the education field, all over the world to rely on digital teaching methods

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-improving-teaching-and-learning-languages_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/council-recommendation-on-key-competences-for-lifelong-learning_en

to a much higher extent than before. In the wake of post-pandemics , blended learning is likely to remain integrated in teaching practices to a much higher extent than before. Language teachers often have an advantage compared with other subject teachers in terms of experience with online resources³. Digital developments allow for more languages to be learned and practiced outside the classroom and curricula. Current assessment procedures do not fully reflect these developments.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (i.e. teaching subjects through a foreign language), and digital and online tools for language learning have proven efficient for different categories of learners. Language teachers across Europe could benefit from continuous professional development in both updating their digital competence and learning how they can best support their teaching practice by using different methodologies and new technologies. An inventory of open educational resources could support them in this, taking into account the work of the Council of Europe.

2. Language learning and promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship is one of the strategic objectives for cooperation in education and training at the EU-level. School success for all is part of the vision about the future of education, which will guide the work towards a functioning European Education Area. This involves support for multilingual children in such a way that competences in other languages than the language of schooling is considered an asset and not a deficit.

Label projects should explore how language learning can, in a lifelong learning perspective, support active citizenship and ethics, foster the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. For example, label projects could offer opportunities for people’s participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities in all stages of lifelong learning process. The focus will also be on raising awareness for and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards the common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as discussing social, cultural and historical heritage.

This priority can be integrated in projects promoting “language awareness” in schools and vocational education institutions, as defined in the Annex of the 2019 Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages. Competences in the language of schooling as well as in other languages are crucial for participation in democratic life and for social and civic engagement. Cultural and linguistic diversity in schools and in society can contribute to an interesting and dynamic learning environment, where many different languages can flourish and enrich a healthy exchange and a dynamic debate. For further reference, see the outcomes of the policy experimentation project LISTIAC (Linguistically Sensitive Teaching in All Classrooms)⁴ and related projects co-funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages⁵.

³ <https://oecdeditoday.com/coronavirus-foreign-language-teachers/>

⁴ LISTIAC project web site: <http://listiac.org/>

⁵ <https://www.ecml.at/> - for example the themes “Plurilingual and intercultural education” or “Supporting multilingual classrooms”

3. Professional development of language teachers

The European Education Area has set out ambitious goals for making mobility a reality for all and for promoting innovative and inclusive education systems. Teachers – and their initial education and professional development throughout their careers – are key in achieving these objectives.

Transnational mobility contributes to the competence development of teachers and future teachers and the attractiveness of the teacher profession. Teachers have also a key role in the internationalisation of schools. Mobility and collaboration with schools in other countries can provide them with motivation, contacts and international experience needed to make the European Education Area a reality in European schools.

Label projects can contribute to this by exploring for example the following areas:

- Practices that allow for enhancing the mobility of language teachers. International mobility of teachers during initial teacher education is not very common and ranges considerably between countries. A consultative working group from Erasmus+ National Agencies identified at the end of 2019/early 2020 still important obstacles to the teachers' mobility in general.
- Bringing together institutions providing initial teacher education and providers of continuing professional development that address issues such as effective use of digital tools and online learning, education for sustainable development, teaching in multilingual classrooms, how to create an inclusive school.
- Ways for improving competence and career opportunities for language teachers, of diversifying opportunities of career development and facilitating the formal recognition of the different forms of professional development, including competence acquired in other contexts or abroad.