learn more words when using their preferred learning styles (5% increase compared to control group), a finding which has important implications for teachers.

Nicole Taylor (Spain) investigated teachers' attitudes towards the use of mother tongue in L2 classes. She also looked at when and for what purposes a group of 11–12-year-old Spanish- and Catalan-speaking students were using their L1 in class. The teachers questioned in this study reported that they used the L1 mostly for affective reasons and classroom management but they felt that they should insist on students speaking only English in class. Taylor investigated use of the L1 during pair work and found that students would differentiate between the content of the discourse – which they thought should be in the L2 – and conversational discourse strategies (e.g. asking for help, moving the conversation on), which they carried out in the L1. The L1 was also used to compensate for gaps in the L2. The researcher intervened by raising awareness of this issue and providing language input which catered to the students' observed needs.

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The European Centre for Modern Languages: Recent projects

The hallmark of the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) is the organisation of international language education projects within four-year programmes. Coordinated by European teams, these projects primarily target language experts involved in national and international developments, in associations and in institutions working to enhance standards in language education.

Based on the underlying values of the Council of Europe and its pioneering work in cultural cooperation and language education, the ECML works in cooperation with the Council's Language Policy Division, which develops tools and standards for transparent and coherent language policies. In contrast, and complementary to this, the ECML concentrates on the level of educational practice.

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A characteristic feature of all ECML projects is their vision of an overall concept of language education, integrating all languages rather than focusing on the teaching and learning of individual languages. This approach has proved to be highly effective in creating synergies between different linguistic and educational cultures and communities, promoting plurilingualism and cultural diversity. The following two examples can illustrate this approach:

- The publication 'First steps in teacher training: A practical guide' (Matei et al. 2007; a booklet and a CD-ROM – both available online) is designed to be used by inexperienced teacher trainers of any language. The guide could be used, for example, by those training teachers of Spanish or Swedish as a foreign language in France, i.e. one approach can be applied by different language teaching communities. Ideally, of course, this publication would be used in transversal teacher training modules integrating language teachers of various languages in a context where teacher education for different languages takes place. This approach can contribute to defining and enhancing overall standards of teacher education be it at an institutional, regional or national level.
- The Council of Europe favours plurilingual approaches which can be implemented in any language classroom as a way of promoting linguistic diversity. The training kit 'Plurilingual and pluricultural awareness in language teacher education' (Bernaus et al. 2007) provides practical tools (a booklet and a CD-ROM – both available online) for teacher education designed to promote the introduction of essential aspects of plurilingualism in language teaching.

This is how the ECML works, combining ingredients for language education projects destined to deliver high-value support for language professionals working in teacher training and language teaching contexts. On the content side, the ECML provides a full menu of tools designed to meet current demands in language education.

The ECML programme 2004–2007 grouped projects around the central theme of 'Languages for social cohesion – language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe'. The results of these projects were presented and discussed at a conference in Graz, Austria, in September 2007, to mark the completion of this programme. All project publications are available for download on the ECML website <www.ecml.at>.

The new ECML programme for 2008–2011 was launched at this conference. It is entitled 'Empowering language professionals: Competences – networks – impact – quality'. Twenty new projects have been selected for inclusion in the programme, which is divided into four thematic areas: (i) Evaluation, (ii) Continuity in language learning, (iii) Content and language education, and (iv) Plurilingual education.

In these areas there is currently increasing demand on the professional skills of teachers, who are expected to contribute to national education reform processes and face up to major challenges such as standard-linked tuition, result-oriented assessment, greater autonomy of educational institutions, increasing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity among students, and promotion of lifelong or recurrent education. For the ECML, empowering language professionals means promoting increasing awareness of and confidence in the capacities of language education experts and encouraging members of the profession to be more actively involved in defining and delivering higher standards of language education.

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In order to stimulate readers to browse through the publications of the 2004–2007 programme and check out the projects of the new programme, this article presents an appetising selection of research and project work currently in progress at the ECML:

- The framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (CARAP), Michel Candelier;
- The ECML and the European Language Portfolio, David Little;
- The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), David Newby;
- A Training Guide for Quality Assurance in Language Education (QualiTraining), Laura Muresan.

Some of the projects outlined here are follow-up projects which have been awarded a second term of work funded by the ECML on the basis of favourable feedback from users of the original project publications. The selection also includes an article on a series of projects organised at the Centre dealing with support for the implementation of the European Language Portfolio.

The ECML will launch another call for project proposals for the second half of its current programme (2010–2011). Language professionals who are aware of European developments, already operate in transnational networks and are interested in the possibilities of the ECML are invited to keep an eye out for this call, which will be published on the Centre's website (www.ecml.at) early in 2009.

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Cadre de reference pour les approches plurielles des langues et des cultures – Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures (CARAP)

The term 'pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures' refers to didactic approaches which use teaching/learning activities involving more than one variety of languages or cultures. This is to be contrasted with approaches which could be called SINGULAR in which

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the didactic approach takes account of only one language or a particular culture, considered in isolation. The project team[1] has identified four PLURALISTIC approaches: the INTERCULTURAL APPROACH, the INTEGRATED TEACHING OF STUDIED LANGUAGES, the INTER-COMPREHENSION OF RELATED LANGUAGES and AWAKENING TO LANGUAGES ('language awareness' as far as it is dealing with more than one language or culture). The basic assumption – which turned out to be well-founded – was that these approaches would have enough educational objectives in common to justify the development of a common framework.

If one considers – along with the Common European Framework of Reference – plurilingual and pluricultural competence as a global one, 'encompassing the full range of the languages available to [the language learner]' (Council of Europe, Language Policy Division 2007: 129), and not as 'a collection of distinct and separate competences', one has to recognize that pluralistic approaches have a key role to play in its construction. As expressed in the *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*, '[m]anaging the repertoire [which corresponds to plurilingual competence] means that the varieties of which it is composed are not dealt with in isolation; instead, although distinct from each other, they are treated as a single competence' (Council of Europe, Language Policy Division 2007: 67). And this can only be done by making use of pluralistic approaches.

Therefore, the lack of any reference framework of the knowledge, skills and attitudes which may be developed by such pluralistic approaches was perceived as a gap to be urgently filled, in order to facilitate the task of creating links between the different pluralistic approaches themselves in curricular work, as well as creating links between these approaches and the learning of communicative language competences within specific languages and, more widely, establishing links between the benefits of pluralistic approaches and other, non-linguistic subject areas.

The methodology adopted for developing the framework was basically an inductive one. The team started from a systematic analysis of the content of about one hundred publications pertaining to the domain of the four pluralistic approaches, from which extracts describing the competences were collated, allocated to categories and synthesized.

Theoretical decisions had to be taken concerning the concept of competence. After a critical survey of the different ways in which competence can be defined, it was decided to view it as the organised set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (called RESOURCES) which an individual possesses or can acquire in order to solve specific problems, as well as the individual's ability to activate these resources in an integrated way to be able to cope with tasks.

The present outcome – the CARAP (Candelier 2007) – is a framework document of about sixty pages (plus theoretical and methodological explanations) consisting of

- a table of global COMPETENCES and MICRO-COMPETENCES (such as 'Competence in managing linguistic and cultural communication in a context of "otherness"') in which pluralistic approaches have a key role to play;
- three lists of descriptors of RESOURCES, concerning, respectively, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS and ATTITUDES belonging to the same area.

[1] Antoinette Camilleri-Grima, Michel Candelier (coordinator), Véronique Castellotti, Jean-François de Pietro, Ildikó Lörincz, Franz-Joseph Meissner, Anna Schröder-Sura and Artur Noguerol, with the participation of Muriel Molinié.

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In its current form (September 2007), the CARAP may be of interest to anyone involved in the development of curriculum and teaching materials, in teacher training and, of course, in research work on teaching/learning (all) languages.

The next stage of the project (2008–2009) is dealing with the development of a tool for use by teachers based on the present CARAP. It will help teachers to integrate into their practice principles such as the necessity of relying on the initial linguistic competences of all learners and of putting synergies in place within the learning process of all the languages involved. It will include a simplified version of the CARAP, an indication as to which pluralistic approaches are more directly relevant to different categories of descriptors, some commentaries about the levels of learners and elements of progression, some examples of didactic activities relevant to pluralistic approaches, and a pedagogical guide about how to use this tool.

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The ECML and the European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was conceived in 1991 in parallel with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe 1992), realized in a network of pilot projects between 1998 and 2000 (Schärer 2000), and launched for wider dissemination in 2001 as one of the Council of Europe's contributions to the European Year of Languages (for an account of the background to the ELP, its aims and purposes, and the challenges it poses, see Little 2002). Already during the pilot projects it was clear that the success of ELP implementation would depend on the effective dissemination of ELP-related information, experience and know-how, and the provision of appropriate in-service support for teachers. Thus it was that the ECML's second medium-term programme (2004–2007) included two projects with these ends in view.

Project C5, 'ELP implementation support (impel)', designed and implemented a website that facilitates the exchange of information and experience. The project was coordinated by Hans Ulrich Bosshard (Switzerland) and the members of the project team were Gisella Langé (Italy), Dick Meijer (Netherlands), Rolf Schärer (Switzerland), Gabriele Tänzer (Germany), John Thorogood (United Kingdom), and Sally Rehorick (Canada, observer). In March 2007 the project was presented to a workshop held at the ECML and attended by

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32 participants from 26 Council of Europe member states. The project gathered information on ELP implementation from a large number of member states, and this information is now available on a new website, together with planning, monitoring and feedback tools (http://elp.ecml.at/).

Project C6, 'Preparing teachers to use the ELP', developed a kit of materials for use at in-service seminars. The materials were trialled at an international workshop held in Graz, Austria, in November 2004 and attended by 37 participants from 32 countries. Between 2005 and 2007 selections from the materials were used at national ELP events in 17 countries, after which the kit was revised for publication with an accompanying explanatory booklet. Project C6 was coordinated by David Little (Ireland) and the members of the project team were Hans-Peter Hodel (Switzerland), Viljo Kohonen (Finland), Dick Meijer (Netherlands), and Radka Perclová (Czech Republic). The materials are available from the ECML as a booklet and a CD-ROM, and online as part of the website developed by Project C5 (http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/Elp_tt/Results/).

The ECML's third medium-term programme (2008–2011) again includes projects designed to support ELP implementation. Two two-year projects draw on the Project C6 kit of materials to support national training events in Council of Europe member states that were not part of Project C6. The first of these (2008–2009) is coordinated by Margarete Nezbeda (Austria). There will also be a four-year project designed to support the next stage of ELP implementation. Project C6 was largely concerned with the use of the ELP by individual teachers of particular languages; its focus, in other words, was pre-eminently on the ELP's pedagogical function. But according to the ELP Principles and Guidelines (Council of Europe 2006), the ELP is designed not only to support the development of learner autonomy but also to promote plurilingualism. Whereas the former objective can be achieved by an individual teacher working on her own, the latter depends on whole-school policy and practice. The goals of the new project, 'The ELP in whole-school use', are to identify existing and potential whole-school ELP projects and bring them together in an international workshop in Graz; undertake a series of case and impact studies; write a guide to the development, implementation and evaluation of whole-school ELP projects; and disseminate results and outcomes partly through publication and partly via a seminar for decision makers. This project will be coordinated by David Little (Ireland); the members of the project team are Francis Goullier (France), Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti (Switzerland), and Rose Oehler (Austria).

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European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages: A reflection tool for language teacher education

Coordinator: David Newby; Project group: Rebecca Allan, Anne-Brit Fenner, Barry Jones, Hanna Komorowska, Kristine Soghikyan, Sylvia Velikova

In 2004 a project was launched by the ECML entitled 'A Framework for Teacher Education' (FTE). This project had the very general aim of making some contribution to the 'harmonisation' of teacher education among member states and set itself three specific goals: (i) to address the content of teacher education with a view to identifying 'core competences', (ii) to formulate corresponding didactic competence descriptors relating to language teaching, and (iii) to embed these in a portfolio to help student teachers reflect on their knowledge, skills and values.

This project resulted in the compilation of the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (*EPOSTL*), which was published in English and French in 2007. The *EPOSTL* is a document intended for students undergoing their initial teacher education which encourages them to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, helps them to assess their own didactic competences and enables them to monitor their progress and record their experiences of teaching during the course of their teacher education.

The *EPOSTL* was developed by a team of teacher educators from Armenia, Austria, Norway, Poland and UK, assisted by student teachers and teacher educators from all 33 member states of the ECML. Building on insights from the Common European Framework of Reference and the European Language Portfolio as well as the European Commission-financed project European Profile for Language Teacher Education – A Frame of Reference (cf. Kelly & Grenfell 2004), it seeks to help prepare students for their future profession in a variety of teaching contexts.

At the core of the *EPOSTL*'s three-part structure, reminiscent of the European Language Portfolio, is the 'Self-assessment' section consisting of 196 'I can' descriptors relating to didactic competences language teachers may strive to acquire during the course of their teacher education and beyond. These descriptors are organised according to seven categories representing various aspects of language teaching: the context (of teaching), methodology, resources, planning a lesson, conducting a lesson, independent learning and assessment. An example of a descriptor in the methodology/speaking section is 'I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in speaking activities'.

While the primary aim of the *EPOSTL* is to support a reflective mode of teacher education, it can further facilitate discussion of aims and curricula between teacher educators working within different national or European contexts. By making some of the main aims of teacher education transparent, it may also serve as a basis for assessing a student's performance in teaching practice. The *EPOSTL* is currently being translated into several European languages.

At the beginning of 2008 a follow-up project commenced entitled 'Piloting and Implementing the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages' (EPOSTL2). This project, which follows a modular structure, focuses on four principal areas: building up a network structure for dissemination; structured piloting of the *EPOSTL* in teacher-education

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institutes; compilation of case studies of how the *EPOSTL* can be implemented; modes of using the *EPOSTL* for curriculum development in teacher education; and quantitive and qualitive empirical research on the use of the *EPOSTL* in member states. In addition, activities held in connection with the *EPOSTL* will be monitored and documented.

It is hoped that, as with the Common European Framework of Reference, the *EPOSTL* will provide greater transparency of aims and didactic competences in student education for both students and educators, and will support a reflective mode of teacher education. Used in conjunction with the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education*, it will aid harmonisation of bottom–up, need-based objectives and top–town curriculum planning.

The *EPOSTL* is available from the ECML in English, French and German, and can be downloaded from the website <http://www.ecml.at/epostl>. Further information can be obtained from the author of this report.

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A training guide for quality assurance in language education

QualiTraining was the title of the ECML project focusing on quality assurance in language education (2004–2007). At the same time, it is the acronym for the main project outcomes: *A Training Guide for Quality Assurance in Language Education* and the (trainer) training in the field of quality management organised within the project framework. The members of the *QualiTraining* co-ordinating team are Frank Heyworth, Galya Mateva, Laura Muresan (project co-ordinator) and Mary Rose.

The project reflected the team's continued interest in practice-based research regarding quality assurance in language education (capitalising on the expertise gathered through the previous ECML project on Quality Assurance and Self-assessment for Schools and Teachers, 2000–2003), as well as the growing interest in national and regional contexts for standardisation in areas such as evaluation and quality control in education. Observation of practice and small-scale surveys, complemented by feedback received from practitioners working with the CD-ROM *Quality management in language education* (Muresan, Heyworth, Matheidesz & Rose 2003), revealed persisting needs for consolidating expertise at local level, as well as an emerging interest in transferring quality concepts and best practice developed in ELT to the teaching and learning of less-widely used and taught languages.

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To enhance the effectiveness of the cascading and training process, the team members embarked on the challenging task of developing a guide for trainers and multipliers that would address both generic aspects of quality management and examples of how these could be applied to a variety of local contexts. One of the main research questions has been: How do successful institutions deal with needs identified and what quality management instruments and procedures do they put in place to turn a minus into a plus?

Experts and successful practitioners participating in the *QualiTraining* workshops were invited to contribute case studies, taking a self-reflective and problem-solving approach.[2] In addition, detailed feedback was encouraged from all the participants in project events, in order to identify what would be most needed for the consolidation of a quality culture in language education institutions in various local contexts, as well as to fine-tune *QualiTraining*, so as to make it relevant to language professionals at various levels of involvement in quality management processes in their institutional context.

The *QualiTraining* guide has now been published, as a book and CD-ROM, and is also available online (Muresan, Heyworth, Mateva & Rose 2007). The following two research questions accompany its piloting: (i) How can a collaborative group of organisations achieve common quality standards? (ii) How can generic aspects be best mediated and how can we adapt/transfer what works well in one educational context to other contexts?

A new ECML project, QualiTraining at Grassroots Level (2008–2009), will help the team – Galya Mateva, Maria Matheidesz, Laura Muresan (coordinator) and Mary Rose – to continue the training of trainers and multipliers through network events and national and regional workshops to facilitate the implementation of *QualiTraining* concepts, processes and materials at 'grassroots level' in a variety of educational contexts. It is hoped that this will be achieved through targeted networking, identifying active members willing to contribute to national events; encouraging a practice-based enquiry approach; adapting workshop materials and supplementing them with further case studies; further developing the web-based component; and developing tools for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of *QualiTraining* in various educational contexts. To ensure the project's sustainability, the coordinating team will seek to publish action research outcomes in journals and to consolidate a network of networks.

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[2] The case studies were contributed by Michel Boiron (France), Philip Dahl (UK), Svetla Dimitrova & Svetla Taschevska (Bulgaria), Stephen Hughes (Spain), Brigitte Ortner (Austria) and David Turrell (UK).

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