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European Language Portfolio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

USER'S GUIDE



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ELPDHH User Guide

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1. Introduction to the European Language Portfolio for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing user

In your European Language Portfolio, you can keep a record of;

- Your language learning achievements.
 - These can include your mother tongue (language you have grown up with and habitually use).
 - These achievements include both those for which you studied formally (e.g. at school) and informally (e.g. through a friendship or work connection where you acquired the language).
- How you learn a language (e.g. what works best for you, what experiences you have had as a language learner).
- How you get on with people of different cultures from your own.

You can use it:

- To show anyone who needs to know (e.g. a future employer) how well you manage in various languages.
- To let a new teacher where you have got to in your language learning and how they might teach you best according to your kind of ability. It can also help the teacher understand better your needs as a deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) learner.

The ELP is in three parts:

1. A **Language Passport**, which is a brief record of your level of achievement in one or more languages. You keep this record up to date, adding new successes as they occur. A full description of how it works is given in Section 2 of this Guide.
2. A **Language Biography**. Here you have an opportunity to say how you are progressing, what sort of language learning activities seem to work best for you and what your experience of language learning has been. A full description of how it works is given in Section 3 of this Guide.
3. A **Language Dossier**. Here you keep **evidence** of how well you have progressed with various languages. A full description of how it works is given in Section 4 of this Guide.

Important advice!

Although it is normal to present the three parts in the above order, you may find it sensible to record information about your learning and progress in a different order.

For example, one of the first things that happen in your language learning is the experience of how you were taught, which you could write about in your Language Learning Journal (Dossier section). When you first discover that you can perform a language task successfully, you might want to record this in the checklist of tasks in the Language Biography.

Only when you are satisfied that you can perform all the checklist tasks for a skill at a particular level, would you be able to record this achievement in the Language Passport.

What you achieve and write down in your ELP is assessed by referring to the Council of Europe's widely recognized **self-assessment scale**, (see below). The scale has six

attainment levels, from a beginner's level (A1) up to the highest level (C1). It recognizes five skills (e.g. speaking, reading) at each of the six levels. More will be said about this later.

Special considerations for this ELP

A European Language Portfolio model may vary according to:

- Which country has designed it (e.g. the Czech Republic)
- How old the intended user is (e.g. Primary school pupil, Adult)
- What sector the user works in (e.g. Banking, Engineering)
- What special needs the user has (e.g. Blind or visually impaired)

This special version is designed to be suitable for you as a deaf or hard of hearing user. It recognizes that you may need to:

- use 'DHH-specific modes' in performing some language tasks. Examples are:
 - The use of single letter signs (finger-spelling) or single word signs
 - The use of strategies for giving or receiving messages, such as the writing of notes instead of speaking or lip-reading instead of listening
- use 'DHH-specific devices, such as:
 - Hearing aids
 - Assistive hearing devices (e.g. amplification or sub-titling)

When you use the above modes or devices, it is understood that:

- you may take longer than a hearing person to perform some tasks. This should not count against you when your performance is assessed.
- the mode or device you use may have some shortcomings that interfere with complete accuracy of communication or understanding. This should not count against you when your performance is assessed.

This version also recognizes that a DHH language learner, there are some language acts you cannot be expected to perform (depending on the extent of your deafness or hearing impairment). For example, it would not be reasonable to expect you to understand a public announcement where the speaker is not visible and there is no-one visible to you to repeat what it says. Nor would it be reasonable to expect you (if your speech is seriously impaired) to convey a message to someone who cannot understand whatever mode you are accustomed to using.

Another thing this version allows for, though it is a small point, is that you cannot be expected (unless you have an earlier history of hearing) to understand as fully as a hearing person might, language relating to sound (e.g. 'to tinkle', 'a hoarse voice', 'the stamping of feet).

Languages suitable for inclusion in the passport and elsewhere in the ELP

The ELP is about encouraging people to learn as many languages as possible. Such an ability enables the user to interact with people from different linguistic backgrounds from the user's:

- facilitating mobility of labour
- helping members of different linguistic communities to tolerate and understand each other's views and culture.

Although you, as a '**DHH user**' (and this term is used for convenience's sake to refer to you in the ELPDHH) may regularly communicate by various means with hearing people in your own country, the emphasis in the ELPDHH is on your ability to communicate with people whose

language is not that of the hearing community in which you grew up. For convenience, we can call these people FL (foreign language) speakers. Here are just some examples of skills you might learn that are suitable for recording here.

- You can lip-read and understand what a FL speaker is saying.
- You can understand a FL when the speaker is able to sign their language using a signing convention you understand.
- You can speak a FL which, although the set of sounds you are able to utter are not entirely standard to the FL listener, is consistent and comprehensible.
- You can sign FL words or spell them out so that a FL speaker who knows the signs you use can understand.

You can see that there could be many possible kinds of exchanges with a speaker of a language foreign to you that might be valid for recording purposes.

There are sometimes problems as to what sorts of language interactions are relevant to the ELP for assessment and recording. These are considered in an appendix to this guide.

The levels of competence that may be recorded

The CEFR self-assessment scale mentioned above describes 6 different levels language competence. The level you achieve depends on such things as:

- How many different words and expressions you know in the language.
- How accurately you can use the grammar of the language.
- How long and complicated the sentences are that you can put together or understand.
- How complicated or sophisticated the ideas and topics are that you can express or follow.
- Whether your understanding of the language and culture is sufficient to express or grasp attitudes or hidden meanings.

The skills that may be recorded

The scale recognises five communication skills. These are:

Listening

For you, as a DHH learner, this would include the understanding of any form of non-written communication. Therefore lip-reading of the language spoken or understanding any signed communication of that language at a given level of attainment can be recorded in your Language Portfolio. The level you record will depend on various features of the message received, such as its speed of delivery and other aspects listed above. At all levels, the use and recognition of non-verbal signals (gesture, stance and facial expression) may be of special help to you in understanding shades of meaning.

Spoken interaction

This is a skill which you can record if you are able to hold a conversation with the speaker of another language. It will obviously include listening as referred to above, but is essentially an exchange of views, information, etc, to which you are able to contribute according to your proficiency in the language in question. The level you record will depend on how complicated the exchange is. It may range from exchanging simple facts to taking part in a full discussion or argument giving reasons for your point of view.

You and the other speaker or speakers may be using different modes – e.g. manual or oral – from each other. What matters is that each side is able to follow the other. As above, at higher levels, the use and recognition of non-verbal signals (gesture, stance and facial expression) may become increasingly important in understanding each other's attitude.

Spoken production

This skill differs from that of 'Spoken Interaction'. It concerns how you can deliver a talk. It might range from a short presentation of your personal details to a lengthy and complex speech or lecture, depending on the level recorded. At higher levels, you should show you are aware of the needs of your audience, e.g. recognising that a listener or listeners have not followed and need you to repeat or clarify a point. At higher levels, it is important that you have structured what you say so that your argument is easy to follow. Obviously, your chosen mode of expression must be one that the audience is equipped to follow. As with the above, non-verbal signals (other than signed language) can be important for emphasis or conveying a mood, such as humour.

For Reading and Writing, your (DHH learner's) situation may not be very different from that of the hearing learner. If you have been deaf from birth, however, you will have no experience of the spoken form of the language. This may sometimes make the learning process more difficult, as you will have visual, but no auditory memory of words used. Nonetheless, your ability to read and write will be assessed as if you had learnt the language as a hearing person.

Reading

This skill is applicable to all forms of written text, including the printed page, handwritten letters and notes, and all on-screen text such as e-mails and telephone texts. The level you record is determined by the length, linguistic and intellectual complexity of the text.

Writing

This skill applies to any text you create in the language recorded, whether by handwriting or typing, for whatever purpose. The level recorded will depend on the text's length, formality, linguistic and intellectual complexity. If the text is dictated to you, the same provisions apply as for listening and your performance might satisfy the criteria (self-assessment framework) for two skills.

Important note on skills for DHH learners!

For the purpose of keeping a Language Portfolio, you have no obligation to record equal progress in all five skills. Whereas most traditional language qualifications require you to reach a similar standard across all skills, it is all right in the ELP to have achieved different level in different skills or even to omit skills from the record (This is worth bearing in mind if, say, an employer needs you only to be able to read and write a language for correspondence purposes.)

This can be particularly reassuring for you as a DHH learner, for whom certain language tasks (according to your degree of deafness or hearing impairment) may be impracticable.

The Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) self-assessment scale is in your **Language Passport**. For each of the five language skills described above, and for each of

six levels – A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 – in ascending order, there is an ‘I can’ statement. If, for example, when speaking, what you can do is best described by the statement for Speaking Level B1, (Beginning: ‘*I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions....*’) this is the level you record. The recording process is explained later.

Equality issues

In the text, and for convenience, you, the owner of the ELP, are described as the ‘DHH learner’ or ‘DHH user’ (deaf or hard of hearing learner or user).

2. The ELPDHH explained, section by section

There follows a full account under the three sections already mentioned (Language Passport, Language Biography and Dossier) of what to expect and how to use the ELPDHH.

2.1 The language passport.

This is a formal summary of all the information in your ELP regarding attainment levels and qualifications. Levels of attainment recorded include:

- ❖ Mother Tongue (national language and language used at home or in the community of your upbringing. (see also Language Biography entry). For DHH purposes, ‘Mother Tongue’ may be a spoken language (oral deaf) or any form of sign language (manual deaf) which you are accustomed to using.
- ❖ Languages other than Mother Tongue. That is to say, languages that are ‘foreign’ to the cultural community/nation etc to which you, the DHH learner presume to belong.

Please note:

‘Sign language’ – e.g. British Sign Language – poses some special problems which are dealt with in the Appendix. If you are a predominantly sign language user, you should go to the Appendix for a full explanation of how sign languages fit in with the ELP.

The Language Passport has the following sections:

The role of the Council of Europe.

All ELPs must include this paragraph

General description and contents

This is also required. It explains what the Language Passport is and for whom this version is designed. It lists the contents and summarises what each section is about.

Further advice on using this Language Passport as a deaf or hard of hearing user

This gives general advice about what may reasonably be expected of you as a deaf or hard of hearing learner.

Profile of Language Skills. This is the first page to be recorded and allows for up to 3 languages to be entered in addition to your Mother Tongue.

The profile page should be completed, first, entering your Mother tongue or Mother tongues. For you, as a deaf or hard of hearing user, there are various possibilities. If you are ‘oral deaf’, i.e. can speak the language of your hearing community, then you will want to include

that language. If you have never learned to utter the spoken language of your hearing community, then it is appropriate to enter your preferred DHH-specific mode of communication. You might, nonetheless, be able to lip-read the language of your hearing community and record this here.

For each of the numbered languages, enter, for each skill you have, the CEF (Common European Framework – see references to Self-assessment Scale below) level you think you have reached (from the Self-assessment Scale in the Passport). There are **five skills**. (See above)

The profile section is followed by the **Self-assessment Scale**. This is the scale you and your teacher/tutor will refer to when deciding at what level you are able to perform in the range of skills. Each item is known as a **descriptor**, which takes account of such things as the length and complexity of the language you can understand or produce. (See above, page 4, ‘Levels of Competence’) Because it is a self-assessment scale, each descriptor begins, ‘I can...’. You will see that in some places special reference is made to the conditions under which you can reasonably be expected to perform the task as a DHH learner.

(In the Language Biography (explained in the next section) each of these descriptors is broken down into 5 language tasks to make a checklist of what you can do.)

Summary of language learning and intercultural experiences

In this section, (Part 1) you are asked, for each language learned in your own country, to enter brief details of the time spent learning it (a) in the classroom, (b) through work practice (c) through contact with speakers of the language or (d) by any other means.

After that, (Part 2) you are asked to record language learning based in the country where the language is spoken, (a) when attending a language course, (b) when using the language for study or training, (c) when using the language at work or (d) under other circumstances. There is then a space in which you can give further information on language learning and intercultural experiences. The expression ‘intercultural experiences’ means such experiences as:

- Meeting people from a culture that differs from your own
- Spending time (e.g. for work or leisure purposes) in places where the culture differs from your own. (This is explained in more detail under the Language Biography section)

Certificates and Diplomas

This section consists of a grid into which you enter brief details of any language qualifications you hold. These may have been awarded for school or university-based studies or, for example, intensive work-based language training courses. (In the Dossier section of the Portfolio, you can keep the actual certificate(s) of diploma(s) as evidence of your Passport record.

2.2. The Language Biography

The second part of the ELP is the Language Biography. Whereas the Passport is a summary document, briefly recording the levels attained for each skill, the Language Biography gives you the opportunity to provide a detailed picture, not only of where you have got to with languages, but of how you got there and how you feel about yourself as a language learner. (If you have had to learn a DHH-related skill such as lip-reading and can remember the experience, you might wish to record this somewhere in the Language Biography.)

The Language Biography encourages you to acknowledge and value languages from your home background, even if, outside the home, you may speak the ‘official’ language of the

country where you live. It enables you to write about some of your language learning experiences that may have happened outside a classroom, for example, making a new friend, or working abroad – experiences that may even have been more important to you than those of your formal education.

Under the sub-section 'Intercultural skills' you can record your general or particular experience of interacting with people of other cultures than your own. Here, the emphasis is on customs and expectations of different cultures, rather than on language alone.

The sections explained in order

In the section '**My personal language background**' you can list (at the top of page 2):

- your **mother tongue(s)**;
- any other languages you have learnt through your background (e.g. spoken in the community where you were brought up).
- Languages other than the above, (**Languages I have learnt**) whether you have learnt them formally (e.g. at school) or informally (e.g. through work or personal contact)

There are then forms you can fill in for each language you have learnt. (Each language has its own form and three are provided. (If you have more than three learnt languages, you should photocopy one of the forms.)

Fill in this form, as far as you can, for each language you are learning or have learnt.

In the next section '**My present language learning**', (pages 5 - 15) there are **checklists** of tasks that are based on descriptors in the self-assessment scale that appears in your Language Passport. For each of the self-assessment descriptors for each skill and level there are five tasks. For each task, there are three stages of progress you can record. If you can complete the task 'a little', perhaps with help, you write 1. If you can often do it 'fairly well' but still have some problems, you should write 2. If you can do a task of this kind 'really well', you should write 3. After this, you can record how important it is to make progress on the task, by giving it a priority from 1. (highest) to 5. (lowest)

Your tutor can also say how they think you have progressed. E.g. they may feel you are more proficient than you think, at the level you are attempting. An example is given in this section of how the record would be completed.

This is a good example of how using the ELP can encourage you to discuss your progress with a tutor, focusing on your performance in a particular task.

After this, there is a sub-section on '**My language Learning Experience**' (page 16) . The first part of this invites you to think about yourself as a learner. Do you 'play safe', or are you a 'risk-taker'? Do you like to work alone or in pair- or group work?

On the grid, mark with a X or by shading, whereabouts you think you might be. For example, if you like to be quite sure of the grammar and vocabulary you will need, but once you have mastered these, you enjoy demonstrating your skill in a group activity, you might mark one of the boxes in the top left-hand quarter. There is also a box below in which you can write reasons for your choice of position.

On the next page (17), you can say how you rate, on a score of 0-5 a number things a teacher might ask you to do in a language classroom. Some of these are very controlled, while others require you to use guesswork and deduction. Which do you look forward to and which do you feel less comfortable with? Only write scores in the white boxes on the right, leaving the shaded boxes blank. Add up your scores for column A and those for column B.

There is a key to your answers immediately after this questionnaire (page 18). It gives you a short profile of what sort of a learner you are, outlining your strengths and suggesting areas for further development.

The next sub-section is about '**Intercultural experiences and encounters**' (page 21). It focuses on how effectively you feel you interact with people whose background culture differs from yours.

You are first asked to record any experiences and encounters with people of different cultures that you feel have been important in forming your attitudes. As a DHH learner, you may, for example, have noted that people of some cultures are naturally more, or sometimes less, inclined to take deafness or hearing impairment into account in the way they converse with you.

In each instance you should record, (a) describe the encounter and (b) say how it influenced how you now react to such encounters.

There is then a section (page 22), which helps you assess your level of '**Intercultural Skill**' at three broad levels, Basic, Independent and Proficient.

After each descriptor, there is space to comment on how this descriptor fits in with your own perception of your skills.

Finally, there is a **checklist** (page 23), of a number of issues that can affect the way you get on with people whose culture differs from yours. For example, one issue is how people of various cultures respond to or provide for, the needs of DHH people. This is to set you thinking in practical terms about how well you manage now and whether there is room for progress in this area. You may wish to record other such issues, either ones you have thought of or arising from your actual experience.

2.3. The Dossier section

When you record in your Language Passport that you have reached, say, Level B2 in German Reading, it is helpful to be able to demonstrate this. To do so, you should include **evidence** of your attainment, especially if, for example, you need to make accurate claims for a job application.

The **Dossier** is the part of the ELP in which this evidence is stored. In practical terms, storage of evidence could be a ring-binder for paperwork, with sleeves for such items as video-recordings or CDs submitted as evidence. It could equally be a wallet or box-file or an electronic file. Of course, if you, as a DHH learner, demonstrate listening and speaking by visual means, such as lip-reading, a video recording would be useful evidence.

However you store this material, it must be the right sort of evidence. You should be able to identify and sort it methodically, so that anyone who needs to know can find it without difficulty. For this reason, there is a Dossier notes section that explains everything and provides pages for listing, with references, every sample of evidence.

Because the Dossier guidance has been very carefully structured, it will only be briefly explained in this Guide.

An introductory sub-section lists the entire **contents** of the Dossier section with brief notes. **User notes**, (a) explain what sorts of evidence you can provide and (b) suggest how you might 'code' each sample, providing a reference to:

- which language is exemplified
- which skill is demonstrated
- which sample is meant (in case several pieces of evidence have been produced for that skill).

A final letter is added to the reference code to show whether the evidence sample is a **simulated** task produced in a learning situation (**S**), whether it is a **witness statement** written e.g. by someone who has seen you perform real life tasks at the level indicated (**W**), or whether it is a **certificate or diploma (C)** awarded by the state or an educational institution.

For each language, a **summary page** should be completed (pages 6 – 8). On it, for each of your attainments (a skill demonstrated at a given level) there is a list of evidence samples provided, each with a reference (as outlined above). A sample summary page (page 5) provided to assist you. If you need further pages for other languages, page 9 is a photocopy master for these.

You can complete as many summary pages as you have languages to give evidence for.

After this, there is a **sample of evidence title page** which should be attached to each sample. This explains how the evidence was produced, e.g. ('My teacher recorded me taking part in a conversation about asking for directions, using role-play cards'). It will normally be signed by the teacher responsible for the assessment.

Next, there are two **witness statement forms**.

The **language competence witness statement form** is filled in by a suitably qualified person (e.g. a work manager) to state that he/she has witnessed you performing a real-life language task (or habitually doing so as required) that meets the requirements (descriptor) of the level claimed.

The **intercultural competence witness statement form** is also used for real-life situations, but to comment on your ability to interact effectively in situations where cultural differences are an issue.

The last two forms are:

1. for entering details of **certificates and diplomas**
2. for entering details of **course attendance certificates**.

The final section of the Dossier is your **Language Learning Journal**. This is an optional activity, but you may find it useful to keep a daily or weekly record of your learning experiences, e.g. noting which activities or techniques worked best for you, either with a teacher or while studying on your own. There are suggestions as to what you might record, but you can add to these.

Appendix – Frequently asked questions and answers

Q.

Does the ELP cover communication with other deaf people?

A.

It is possible that your assessed performance involves other deaf people, but it is likely that, in most cases, you will be communicating with hearing people since they are in the majority unless, perhaps, you happen to be attending a special institution or event provided or organised for deaf people.

Q.

Does this ELP recognise Sign Language?

A.

The learning of sign languages other than one's own is not strictly within the scope of this version of the ELP, and merits a version of its own, because the assessment of sign languages is so highly specialised. However, it is reasonable to suggest that:

- You may record in the Language Passport and Language Biography the Sign Language you use every day as your 'mother tongue'.
- If you (as a 'mother tongue' sign language user) learn a form of sign language other than your own (e.g. International Sign Language) you should be able to record your achievements in this different version as a 'learnt language'.

Q.

If complete sign language systems are not normally likely to be the object of assessment or recording, what is the status of finger-spelling?

A.

In one sense, the use of these systems overcomes the problem with signing, (that it bypasses the words of spoken languages) because a DHH person representing spoken language A can exactly convey words used in spoken language B. The problem here is that the communication process would be impossibly slow for any but the lowest level of spoken interaction. Finger-spelling would normally be supplementary to a faster system, as it is when used in combination with full sign language (e.g. to make clear an unusual Proper Noun)

Q.

What about individual word signing?

A.

This might be acceptable if you have learnt the foreign language manual signs and they are sufficiently different from your own to require learning. The problem with all manual word signing is that it goes straight to the notion conveyed, 'by-passing' the words of spoken languages and may in some cases be guessed at, as with non-verbal gesturing. As with finger-spelling, although faster, you would have difficulty in conveying long and complex utterances fast enough to make a conversation bearable.

Q.

There are many different categories of deaf and hard of hearing people. What does this mean for using the ELP?

A.

It means that you, the learner, (and your teacher, if you are being formally taught and assessed) need to look carefully at what kinds of language acts (and, therefore, what actual

skills) you can reasonably perform for assessment. The table below is not intended to be exhaustive, but gives an idea of the range of circumstances that may need to be adapted to.

History	Implications	Modes/support	
		Listening	Spoken interaction/production
Born deaf – no training in speech production	All outward communication must be visual	reading signed language lip-reading	'Speech' entirely achieved by (e.g.) signing Note-writing
Born deaf – able to be trained to produce speech	Outward communication may be either visual or oral	lip-reading	Either (e.g.) signing or oral speech with possible variations owing to lack of auditory feedback
Became deaf after acquiring facility for speech	Outward communication may be, (though not necessarily) oral Early loss of hearing may mean that oral facility is less developed	reading signed language lip-reading	Oral speech with possible variations owing to lack of auditory feedback Possibility of (e.g.) manual signs as supplementary/resource
Hard of hearing	Implication vary according to onset of hearing deterioration Outward communication more likely oral Use of some form of hearing aid very likely	mainly dependent on hearing aid and assistive hearing devices possible supplementary use of lip-reading/and reading signed language	Mainly oral speech

You can see that for certain categories of DHH learners, some tasks may be very difficult to accomplish, but (see 'Important note...' page 6 above) The ELP record of achievement (unlike most traditional language qualifications) does not require all skills to be brought to the same level.