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European Language Portfolio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

USER'S GUIDE



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USER'S GUIDE

User's Guide to the European Language Portfolio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

Contents

Introduction to the European Language Portfolio.....	3
Communication Skills.....	3
What can I do with my Portfolio?.....	3
How to complete the ELP DHH	4
1. The Language Passport	4
2. The Language Biography.....	5
Language Biography Appendices	5
3. The Language Dossier	6

Introduction to the European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio is used to record your language skills and ability to communicate in other languages. Every user creates his or her own personal European Language Portfolio (ELP for short), and your ELP will be about you.

You can use your ELP to demonstrate your language ability to teachers, to friends and family, or to employers. This European Language Portfolio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (ELP DHH) has been developed especially to take account of any difficulties you might have because of deafness when using a foreign language, especially when you are talking and listening to hearing people.

You can show your skills by using examples from any languages you know, such as

- your mother tongue (the language which you grew up with)
- other languages of your family or your community
- languages which you have been taught (for example, at school, college or on a study visit)
- languages which you have learned from experience (for example, through work, travel or a hobby)

The ELP covers all languages. It is called the *European* Language Portfolio because it was designed in Europe; but it applies to any language, whether spoken in Europe or not, such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese or Urdu.

Communication Skills

Because you are deaf or hard of hearing, your ELP DHH will show the circumstances or conditions which might affect your use of languages.

There are five communication skills. The skills referred to in this ELP DHH are:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking with other people
- Making announcements and speeches
- Understanding what people say

For some people, the language of the country or region where they live may be like a foreign language to them if they have been brought up to sign. The ELP DHH can easily be used to measure their ability in the spoken language around them.

The ELP DHH does not deal with the use of sign languages or finger-spelling. This *European Language Portfolio for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People Project* recognises that deaf sign languages are independent of oral languages. The descriptions of ability in sign languages would be quite different from the descriptions of ability in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening which are found in the Deaf ELP.

The influence of sign languages, with their richness and complexity of facial expressions and movements of the hands, arms or body, may well help deaf and hard of hearing people to explain things when they are trying to use a foreign language. If you are good at using gestures, then that is an advantage, just as any learner or hearing person might use mime or simple drawings as an aid to making themselves understood.

What can I do with my Portfolio?

The ELP has been devised by the Council of Europe, and the ELP is recognised throughout Europe and in many other parts of the world.

Here are some examples of what you can do with your personal ELP DHH.

Employers

- let them know what languages you know
- let them know the level and range of language skills you have
- let them know about your language learning objectives
- let them know about your intercultural experiences

Family or friends

- show them the progress you have made
- show them the range of languages you use
- show them your priorities in learning a language
- show them your intercultural experiences

Teachers

- let them know what level you are at
- ask them to assess/evaluate and confirm your progress in the Language Biography
- ask them to produce evidence/observer statements about your progress for the Dossier
- show them how you prefer to learn a foreign language
- explain how you like teachers to teach a foreign language
- make clear the needs you have as a deaf or hard of hearing learner of languages

How to complete the ELP DHH

There are three main sections in the ELP DHH.

1. The **Language Passport**: this is your ‘passport’ with a summary of your language skills, any formal qualifications, and your range of languages.
2. The **Language Biography**: this is your story of how you gained the abilities you have got. It offers advice about what may reasonably be expected of you as a deaf or hard of hearing learner.
3. The **Language Dossier**: this is a file of examples of your use of languages - from home and family, work, travel, hobby, school, or wherever you want.

1. The Language Passport

The *Language Passport* provides a summary of how you use foreign languages. It shows your language skills and levels of ability, and any qualifications you have. It also shows the range of languages that you know and use. The Language Passport also explains the role of the Council of Europe and the recognition of the ELP DHH across Europe.

Several sections which describe you:

- a profile of your language skills
- your language learning experiences
- your intercultural experiences
- your language qualifications: any certificates, diplomas, or whatever you might have

Profile of Language Skills

This is a one-page summary about your ability in a particular language. It covers how you learned the language, why you use it and what you use it for. You can complete a Personal Language Profile sheet for every language you know, including

- languages you have learned or are learning in a formal setting (e.g. at school or work-based training)
- languages you have learned informally (e.g. through travel, a hobby, or work)
- languages you have grown up with at home or in the community of your upbringing

You also record your mother tongue, the language you grew up with. The majority of ELP DHH users are ‘oral deaf’ - that is, they can converse, read and write in the language of their hearing community. Some ELP DHH users have never learned the spoken language of the hearing community, and their mother tongue is sign language. That should be recorded, and the spoken language of the hearing community might be listed as a foreign language.

On each language profile you enter your ability level in five different communication skills:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking with other people
- Making announcements and speeches
- Understanding what people say

Self-assessment Scale

The Self-assessment Scale is what you and your teacher/tutor refer to when deciding your ability levels in the communication skills. The Self-assessment Scale describes six levels of ability

Basic User (A1, A2), Independent User (B1, B2) and Proficient User (C1, C2)

with examples of tasks and activities carried out at each level. This is a summary of the detailed descriptors in the Language Biography: see next section.

Summary of language learning and intercultural experiences

The first part of the summary is about your experiences of studying the language in a country where it is not normally spoken – for example, formal education, such as going to school - but could include languages learned

- in the classroom
- through work practice
- through contact with speakers of the language
- by any other means.

The second part is for information on language learning and intercultural experiences, including residence in the country of the language learned for any reason – such as a short visit to a friend or an extended period of work in the country. The focus is on

- 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.

Certificates and Diplomas

In this section you enter brief details of any language qualifications you hold. These may have been awarded for school or university-based studies or intensive work-based language training courses.

In the Dossier section of the Portfolio, you can keep the actual certificate(s) or diploma(s) as evidence of your Passport record.

2. The Language Biography

The *Language Biography* provides a detailed description of the skills and abilities you have in languages. For example in one language, you might be able to go on holiday or shopping – so you can talk and understand – but you cannot write anything. In another language you might spend all your time reading from maintenance manuals, and so hardly ever speak the language.

In the *Language Biography* you can also describe what you like or dislike about the language teaching you are getting or have experienced, as well as the ways of learning you prefer. There is also a section about your intercultural experiences in the other language.

Most users of an ELP enjoy completing the *Language Biography*; when it is finished it tells your personal story. Circumstances which affect the use of languages by deaf or hard of hearing people are explained in more detail in the section *Language Biography*.

Language Biography Appendices

The Language Biography has two appendices. One provides an overview of language ability levels in the five skills, summarised on five pages, and useful for quick reference.

The first Appendix provides insights into your preferences in Language Learning Experiences and includes an extended Learning Activities Quiz. It then moves to Intercultural Experiences with a detailed checklist about being effective when interacting with people of other cultures.

3. The Language Dossier

The *Language Dossier* is where you bring together examples of your work, achievements and samples of language in use by you. These illustrate the skills and levels of ability which you have selected as part of the self-assessment in the *Language Biography*. The *Language Dossier* also includes information about *Keeping a Languages Learning Journal*, building on the reflections you made in the *Language Learning Experience* part of your *Language Biography*.

You use the dossier for your own purposes. It might to show an employer to help you get a particular job. It might be just for your own interest; or to show your family or friends.

If you are using the dossier to help you apply for a job, then you might include forms and documents you can read or complete in the foreign language; service manuals you can use; or at a more difficult level a video of you giving a presentation.

If you know a language through family connections, you might compile a dossier showing letters you have written, or a recording of a wedding speech you have given.

You can include testimonials from teachers, employers or people you use the languages with. Your *Language Dossier* is the evidence for your European Language Portfolio - just as artists, designers or models have portfolios of their work.

Detailed instructions on compiling the dossier are in the Language Dossier itself.