

Workshop 2: Observatory

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Aims and objectives

Within the HELP network, the Observatory is to be created as an instrument to monitor the impact of HELP activities both inside and outside the network in order to ensure that HELP policies and practices are adapted to changing circumstances.

The workshop focused on the general conditions and demands for the creation of such an instrument. Discussion evolved around 7 questions, listed below together with the summarized discussion results.

Outcomes

1. What sort of information is needed?

- Identify existing sources of relevant data at national and European level
- Complexity:
 - A. What languages and level at entry level?
 - B. What languages and level when leaving higher education?
 - C. how do they get from A to B?
- **Grid of levels** needs to be defined depending on learning objectives
- Need to agree upon **standards** and **benchmarks**
- Reality vs. theory - not only language teaching but learning
- Select most important items / grid of data at later stage of discussion
- Need to be communicated well to employers/outside

2. Who should collate it and how?

- Existing data? **Identify sources** at national/European level who have but may not release information
- Task to be assigned to the **HELP Central office**
- **Taskforce** (5-6 people) to get process started and look at
 - data situation in several countries/difficulties of data collection
 - best practices
 - organizations who have done a similar exercise in other fields
- Help of **professional body**, e.g. ACA to benefit from existing experience
- Involve student organisations and career services – employability aspect (link TNP – ENLU)

3. How often? In what format?

- Balance between **reassuring regularity and new developments**/"hot topics"
- 3 major demands:
 - Stable and regular format
 - Innovations
 - Examples of Good practice

4. Where does the information go?

- Who and how will act on this information? Where do we fit into the **power chain**?
- **Get it to decision makers** at government, European, institutional level
- Where does information go, what are the **channels**?
 - Central office
 - "outposts" / correspondents
 - NGOs / stakeholders
- **Monitor** whether all member states are reached
- HELP as a "one-stop shop" – **general portal** for all initiatives, conferences etc. related to language learning

5. How to motivate respondents?

- **Focus/Package information** depending on different target groups
- Establish **relationship** since beginning
- "**inbuilt mentality**" needed
 - Make people see the benefits of an observatory and of providing the figures
 - Open Doors example – prestige and visibility as motivators for institutions

6. How can we monitor?

- Common Framework (CEFR) to monitor knowledge at entry and on leaving
- Monitoring progress (from A to B) is difficult
- **Tools:**
 - EQF
 - ECTS-format: workload combined with outcomes (number of contact hours, Level/assessment)
 - Europass
 - Diploma Supplement
- **Studies** gathering existing information, plus case studies

7. What status/influence could/should the observatory have?

- **Point of reference:** one place to look for data, sound parameters
- **Internal influence**
- Gain **external influence:** Someone in power should be able to say:

"I just looked at the latest edition of the Observatory and..."