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Executive Summary

The Comenius project Multilingual Early Language Transmission (hereafter MELT), started its activities in November 2009. The project partners have, nevertheless, been working together on pre-school provisions for some time before within the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity. This co-operation led to a successful application for Comenius funding in 2009.

The partners represent four multilingual communities: Welsh/ English in Wales, United Kingdom; Breton/ French in Brittany, France; Swedish/ Finnish in Finland and Frisian/Dutch in Fryslân, the Netherlands.

Individuals who work in pre-school settings require the correct skills and expertise to introduce language to young children. The level of understanding and awareness of language immersion methodology varies amongst organisations and practitioners working to introduce these less widely used languages with children from 6 months to 4 years old. The MELT project aimed to address this issue.

The MELT project aimed:
- to identify best practices in language immersion methodology;
- to increase the skills of early-years practitioners;
- to provide young children with a strong educational foundation, enabling them to go on and continue to progress with their multilingual skills;
- to provide parents with information on multilingualism;
- to strengthen language communities and promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

The MELT project has achieved this:
- by researching the early-years provision in the four language communities, looking at different approaches to language immersion and the resources currently available to parents and practitioners;
- by providing information to parents on the benefits of multilingual pre-school education;
- by developing a practical guide for early years practitioners, including teaching tools and resources;
- by employing an individual to work with practitioners and children in a number of early years settings in the four language communities;
- by holding a final conference in Brussels in October 2011, in order to share the messages of the project with a wider audience.

This final evaluation report covers the period from its inception in November 2009 up to the evaluation period of November 2011. In this time, a large number of actions have taken place. Several partner meetings have been held; notably the expert seminar, evaluation meeting and final conference which took place on October 6th 2011, in Brussels.

Four bilingual project flyers have been produced for use in the four language communities. The MELT partners developed a bilingual full colour 40-page Brochure for parents “Multilingualism in everyday life” in the eight languages of the four regions. In addition, a bilingual full colour 96-page Guide for pre-school practitioners
“Multilingualism for children’s everyday life. A guide for practitioners working with very young children” has been produced, edited and translated into eight languages.

The research paper “Multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) Summary of relevant literature on early multilingual learning, related to European smaller state and regional & minority language communities” has a more theoretical approach. This research paper presents theoretical backgrounds and models and practical descriptions of good practices of multilingual early language learning and transmission to children aged 0-4 years in the four regions and describes the implementing process of the toolkit, the first version of the Guide for pre-school practitioners. The publication is augmented by three contributions on special themes regarding language learning and training of practitioners, written by international experts (Dr. A. de Houwer, Dr. G. Holm and Dr. T. Hickey).

During the MELT project a number of awareness-raising local events with parents, practitioners, and incubators were organised in the four regions. The series started in October 2009 and the last event was held in November 2011. Furthermore, some additional events for local authorities were organised in Brittany, Finland, Friesland and Wales.

The MELT project partners continuously worked on its goals and intentions to be able to contribute to multilingual upbringing and intercultural awareness at an early age. Language acquisition can take place sequentially or simultaneously in several languages. The MELT project focuses on the smaller state and regional & minority languages, in particular language acquisition and natural development in these languages. The experts (presented in the MELT research paper) have demonstrated that when parents and pre-school practitioners consistently speak the minority language to children, this will ultimately lead to better results in the majority language as well; the level of development of children’s mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second or third language development. The promotion and stimulation of smaller state and regional & minority languages from an early age is crucial to the overall development of the child, i.e. it’s becoming a permanently multilingual individual, particularly in an era of ever-increasing globalisation.

Please visit the MELT website throughout this link:
http://ntdd2865.fm.netbenefit.co.uk/Melt/Pages/default.aspx

Unfortunately, in 2012 the official homepage website (www.meltproject.eu) is no longer available because the MELT project ended in December 2011 and the partner who hosted the website (Welsh Language Board) ceased to exist. However, in order to meet the request of the partner regions, all project information and developed products are available online and to download for free. Please, visit the websites:
http://www.mercator-research.eu/research-projects/melt
http://www.npld.eu/melt/
http://www.folkhalsan.fi/melt
http://www.divskouarn.fr

Information about the MELT project is also available on the Facebook page:
http://www.facebook.com/melt.prosiect
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1. Project Objectives

The Multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) project is developed and carried out in a partnership between four multilingual communities: Welsh/English in Wales, United Kingdom; Breton/French in Brittany, France; Swedish/Finnish in Finland and Frisian/Dutch in Frysln, the Netherlands. The MELT project aims to raise awareness and strengthen the multilingual upbringing of children in the early years (0-4 years) from birth until primary schooling, either in the minority language or bilingually. This report aims to describe the theoretical background and best practices and strategies in immersing children in a minority language. And the report is aimed at outlining and reporting the project’s achievements and outcomes of the MELT project, over the two of years. Below the project and its aims are described.

The MELT project is a two-year Comenius Multilateral Project co-funded by the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme. The project proposal is a result of cooperation between regions on the pre-school period within the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD). This network considers the pre-school period as crucial for the acquisition and transmission of so-called Constitutional, Regional, and Smaller State (CRSS) languages. The MELT project also explicitly takes these languages as a starting point for its activities. The CRSS language communities can function as natural laboratories for promoting the development of multicultural and multilingual societies.

The communities all have their specific backgrounds, but face a common issue: the use of a minority language in a pre-school setting. This is an issue for both practitioners and parents. The objectives are therefore twofold. On the one hand the project focuses on producing a toolkit with which practitioners can create a language rich and friendly environment for children aged 1–4 years. On the other hand the project wants to increase awareness of the benefits of multilingualism with parents and expectant parents, in particular those of mixed-language families. In the developed brochure, the language development stages of a child growing up in a multilingual environment are described. The MELT project partners also aimed to reach a wider audience, including international, national and local policymakers and authorities in this specific field.

It is widely accepted that the early years are an advantageous time to acquire language skills simultaneously. The promotion of minority languages from an early age is crucial for their long-term future, particularly in an age of ever increasing globalisation. Multilingual communities with a regional or minority language are geographically spread across Europe. Cooperation on an European level is therefore a way to feel not isolated in the own member state, and away to share good practice and expertise in the field. It is this exchange of good practices that has allowed the MELT partner regions and associate partners to share ideas and a common feeling of togetherness.
The MELT project aimed:

- to identify best practices in language immersion methodology;
- to increase the skills of early-years practitioners;
- to provide young children with a strong educational foundation, enabling them to go on and continue to progress with their multilingual skills;
- to provide parents with information on multilingualism;
- to strengthen language communities and promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

The MELT project has achieved this:

- by researching the early-years provision in the four language communities, looking at different approaches to language immersion and the resources currently available to parents and practitioners;
- by providing information to parents on the benefits of multilingual pre-school education;
- by developing a practical guide for early years practitioners, including teaching tools and resources;
- by employing an individual to work with practitioners and children in a number of early years settings in the four language communities;
- by holding a final conference in Brussels in October 2011, in order to share the messages of the project with a wider audience.
Figure 1: An overview of the target groups, products, and overall goals of the MELT project.
2. **Project Approach & Project Outcomes**

The project aims at raising awareness and strengthening the upbringing of children in the early years from birth till primary school, either in the minority language or bilingually. For this aim, the MELT project works on a multi-level approach, aiming to reach two main target groups: both parents and practitioners of children aged 0-4 years in a multilingual community using a minority language. The sections below present the dissemination of the products and results.

2.1 The Brochure for parents

Specific tools were designed aiming at both target groups. A brochure aimed at the parents was developed to raise the awareness about the benefits of multilingual upbringing. This brochure not only takes into account the local characteristics but also outlines the benefits of bi- and multilingualism. This brochure was presented at local events for parents in all four regions and its content was extensively discussed.

![Figure 2: An impression of the front of the English-Welsh version of the Brochure for parents.](image)

The brochure has been written, not only for parents, but also for the extended family as well for others who deal with children in bilingual and multilingual settings. Although most of the ideas included within this brochure are aimed at families which use two languages side by side, it has also been designed to assist monolingual families who wish to introduce an additional language to the child. The text is written while taking into account previously published material on bilingual upbringing and education in the regions participating in the MELT project. We have made use of best practice presented by Breton, Estonian, Frisian, Sami, Swedish, and Welsh day care staff in the training arranged by the NPLD before the MELT project began. In the chapter Children’s language development up to the age of 4 years we have used text quoted from the Folkhälsan booklet ‘Språkgroddar’.

The brochure is divided into two sections: *Children’s language development up to the age of 4 and Multilingualism in daily life – good ideas.*
In the first part there is an introduction on the so called normal language development from the time before birth until the child is around four years. There are also some tips aiming for each age group for adults included on what they can do to stimulate both the language acquisition and the bi- or multilingualism. In the other section there are some activities and best practises explained that can be used in both childcare and home settings.

In the end of the brochure for the parents a questionnaire is included that makes it easier for the parents to have an overview of their children’s language usage.

Figure 3: The Swedish version of the language questionnaire for the family

In all language versions also websites and book tips for further reading are included, in two of the regions we asked the participating pre-school settings to ask the parents to fill in and return the “language questionnaire”. The results showed that a larger number of languages are present in the pre-school than the practitioners are aware of, and some children won’t meet the target language anywhere else than in the pre-school setting. In Finland the parents became more aware of the fact that some children don’t use the target language during playtime either.

2.2 The Guide for pre-school practitioners

The pre-school practitioners were reached by the means of the first draft of a toolkit, which was later developed into a Guide for Practitioners by the MELT partners. This toolkit contained a five-themed programme for practitioners to stimulate the multilingual upbringing of young children. The concept toolkit has been developed and tested in the four regions by professional pre-school teachers, *incubators* who were trained to test the toolkit at several pre-schools and day-care centres.
Figure 4: An impression of an incubator meeting with practitioners from several different day care centres in Brittany

This so-called incubator phase resulted in a definitive Guide with the title: *Multilingualism for children’s everyday life. A guide for practitioners working with very young children.*

This Guide presents all nine blocks bilingually on each page, the minority and majority language side by side. The content of the Guide for pre-school practitioners is:

- Introduction
- Section 1: Adults as linguistic role models
- Section 2: Collaboration with parents on linguistic matter
- Section 3: Everyday situations and the physical environment
- Section 4: Suggestions for observing and recording children’s language
- Section 5: Working with themes, and emphasis on linguistic factors
- Section 6: How to stimulate children’s language use
- Section 7: Playtime to stimulate language
- Section 8: Reflection
- Section 9: Examples of exercises and activities
- References
- Suggestions for further reading
- Websites and useful links:

The Guide *Multilingualism for children’s everyday life. A guide for practitioners working with very young children* will allow pre-school practitioners to use the blocks in their own way, and in any order they feel comfortable doing so; individual or as a team. The Guide is in a ring binder that will also allow the pre-schools setting to include additional tips and comments during their work.

This Guide containing a theoretical introduction on each theme and language development activities is intended for the whole pre-school setting; the pre-school practitioners in nurseries, playgroups, day care centres and other pre-school professionals dealing with bilingualism and young children from 0 - 4 years. Pre-school practitioners can use this guide for ideas to create a supportive and rich language environment in the day care for children. We hope that, to make language work as an integral part of pre-school activities, everyone will be included in this work.
and that practitioners will continue to work with the language topics for a longer period of time.

Figure 5: An impression of the content in Breton-French version of the Guide.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, by Eric Carle is a good example of a story that has been translated into all languages in the project. It was good to find a story that all incubators were familiar with, because it made it easier for them to cooperate and find good methods for implementing their work in each setting. The purpose to use this story in the Guide is to introduce a story that the children can recall. The story is told using a ‘story box’, and afterwards the children can play various games or continue to develop this story, with these props. This story was chosen, while it includes repetition in the plot and repetition of words or phrases.

Figures 6 and 7: An impression of implementing some language activities of the Guide; storytelling and playing games.
The final version of the Guide has been translated into eight languages and made available online as PDF-files. In addition to its availability online, hard copies (60 per region) were printed and the first copy of the Guide was presented at the final MELT conference in Brussels on October 6th, 2011. Mrs Kinga Gál MEP, co-chair of the Intergroup for Traditional Cultures and Languages of the European Parliament, symbolically received the first copy.

![Figure 8: An impression of the front of the English-Welsh version of the Guide for pre-school practitioners](image)

In addition to this material we have also made a video on the practical work within the pre-schools settings. In the video, available online, different ways to present new vocabulary for small children are shown. In this video all children are dealing with cloths.

2.3 Local events

During the MELT project a number of awareness-raising local events with parents, practitioners, and incubators have been organised in the four regions. The series started in October 2009 and the last event was held in November 2011.
A third target group, policy makers and authorities, were addressed at roundtable meetings in 2011. The aim of these meetings was to inform the target group of the results of the MELT project and raise their awareness about the importance of such an initiative.

2.4 Seminars and evaluation meetings

On 23 July, 2009, in Dublin all partners gathered for the first time at a pre-project meeting to congratulate each other on the successful application and to discuss organisational matters. In a period of two years (2009-2010) four expert seminars were held in the regions: Aberystwyth, Wales/UK – 8/9th October 2009; Tarbes (Occitania, south of France) – 18 November 2009; Leeuwarden, Fryslân/ the Netherlands – 14-16 April 2010 and Helsinki, Finland– 13 December 2010.

These seminars gave the opportunity to meet all partners face to face for in-depth discussions on the content and expected results of the project. During these discussions project goals were made concrete and new targets were set at the different meetings. Besides, different experts on the pre-school age group were invited to speak, to report research results and to give their views based on wide experience.
The seminar gathered pre-school practitioners and experts in the field of pre-school education from across Europe to discuss experiences and share best practice.

The seminar was very much focused on the various methods used at the day care centres, by means of talking together, singing, reading aloud and playing games. Upbringing includes always a balancing between the natural growth of the child and the pedagogical and linguistic support by adults.

An evaluation meeting was held in Helsinki on December 13th, 2010. This was to allow the Project Officers to discuss progress and developments within the various aspects of the project.
In addition to this, the meeting provided an opportunity for all four MELT Project Tutors to discuss and share their experiences and their findings following the implementation of the Toolkit's first block and their contact with the practitioners.

2.5 MELT International Closing Conference

The project, in accordance with the original grant application, organised a closing conference which took place in Brussels on October 6th, 2011 where the final versions of the Guide and research paper were presented. This conference was designed to attract policy makers and people from the field, and at different levels (Regional, National and European). In addition, other multilingual regions in Europe were reached through the associate members. Over 60 participants registered, with over 45 of those in attendance and 43 registered. These included MEPs, international experts specialising in the field of bilingual development in the early years, NPLD partners and stakeholders.

Figure 15: Fltr. Mrs Jannewietske de Vries (Frisian Minister for Finance, Recreation and Tourism, Language and Culture), Mrs Lena Louarn (vice-President for languages of Brittany– Breton Regional Council), Mr. Ronan Le Louarn (Head of the service in charge of the languages at the Breton Regional Council), Mrs Kinga Gál MEP (the European Parliament Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages), Mrs Rita Jones (Mudiad Meithrin- Wales) and Mrs Veronica Hertzberg (Folkhälsan- Finland) speaking at the MELT final conference.

The opening session at the conference, included presentations from our guest speakers. Mrs Jannewietske de Vries, the Frisian Minister responsible for Language and Culture provided a brief history of co-operation in Europe regarding pre-school
provisions and multilingualism. Furthermore, she outlined the importance of the MELT project in promoting multilingualism in the early years. She also stressed that through the combination of the project’s theoretical work and the various practical tools created (Brochure for Parents and Guide for Practitioners), the project will prove to be of great value in enriching users in daily practice.

In addition, Mrs Kinga Gál MEP, who co-chairs the European Parliament Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, stressed that there is a growing recognition that policy needs to reinforce and safeguard the value and use of multilingualism. She also noted that practical projects such as MELT help policy development by demonstrating the practical worth of multilingualism in important areas such as early years and childcare.

Mrs Rita Jones, Deputy Chief Executive of Mudiad Meithrin presented an overview of the organisation, in addition to the resources and support that it provides to practitioners. Veronica Hertzberg, National Immersion Agent at Folkhälsan discussed the results and products of the MELT project. This presentation focused on both the pamphlet for parents and guide for practitioners, whilst also assessing the feedback given on the implementation phase.

The morning session continued with presentations from two international experts (Dr. Annick De Houwer and Dr. Gunnila Holm). These presentations looked at bilingual development in the early years and the education of early years practitioners. Mrs Veronica Hertzberg, who was in charge of the Brochure for parents and the Guide for pre-school practitioners, presented the first hard copy to Mrs Kinga Gál.

Mrs Idske Bangma concluded the morning session with a brief overview of the Research Paper’s content, in addition to best practices, recommendations and future challenges.
The afternoon session comprised of four workshops, dealing with topics relevant for further dissemination and implementation of the MELT project. These included:

A) **Continuity**: Continuity pre-school-primary school: linking between pre-school and primary education > portfolio on curriculum + individual child

B) **Competencies**: Competencies and skills of practitioners of pre-education > training (pre-service / in-service)

C) **Parents**: How to involve parents, family and the peer environment?

D) **Language Policy**: What can local and regional authorities contribute to the implementation of linguistic human rights at local level?

The conference was concluded by a summing up of the four workshops and a speech given by the project leader, Dr. Alex Riemersma.

Figure 17: An impression of one of the MELT Closing Conference Workshops

Figure 18: A group photo of all participants of the MELT conference.
2.6 Dissemination

Other dissemination activities, besides the local events and the closing conference consisted of a MELT Facebook page, the project flyers, four newsletters, four international press releases, four regional press releases and the website http://www.meltproject.eu (from 2012 available on http://nttd2865.fm.netbenefit.co.uk/Melt/Pages/default.aspx)

These dissemination activities will be discussed in individual sections below.

Website

The first communication tool developed by the MELT Project was the MELT website hosted on the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity site which ensured that the cost of creating the website was minimal for the project.

Figure 19: An impression of the MELT website page

The website was developed in conjunction with an external company and was launched in 2010. It is a tangible outcome of the MELT project and is available to all, and highly accessible. It is a vital tool for the dissemination of all MELT work and acts as a showcase for the work achieved by all partners. The site will continue to be used following the project. It aims to include all information on the project’s products and results.

All relevant news and events regarding the field of multilingual early language transmission are also posted on the website. All information posted on the Facebook page is also linked up to the website to ensure maximum exposure.
Unfortunately, in 2012 the official homepage website (www.meltproject.eu) is no longer available because the MELT project ended in December 2011 and the partner who hosted the website (Welsh Language Board) ceased to exist.

Please visit the MELT website through this link:
http://ntdd2865.fm.netbenefit.co.uk/Melt/Pages/default.aspx

Please visit the MELT Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/melt.prosject

All project information and developed products, are available online and to download for free. Please, visit the websites:

http://www.npld.eu/melt/
http://www.mercator-research.eu/research-projects/melt
http://www.folkhalsan.fi/melt
http://www.divskouarn.fr

The official homepage of the MELT website is split into four main areas:

**About Us**
This area provides a brief overview of the MELT project background, its aims and how those aims were to be achieved.

**Project Information**
This area provides access to all MELT products and outputs. These include the guide for practitioners, pamphlet for parents, MELT research paper and also the project flyers.

**News and Events**
This area covers the latest developments within the project i.e. meetings held during the project’s lifetime (MELT Expert Seminar, Evaluation meeting). In addition to this, information and results from the closing conference held in Brussels are also posted here.

**Members**
This area provides detailed information on the partners' background and their specific roles and responsibilities within the project.
The information is collated by the Administrative Officer appointed by the Welsh Language Board using updates provided by all partner regions.

The total number of visits to all MELT pages since its launch is 4373. One of the most popular methods of accessing the website was through our official Facebook
page. This clearly demonstrates not only the website's ability to disseminate results directly, but also the usefulness of Web2.0 as a tool to redirect users to the website for further information.

![Figure 20: MELT Website Views Statistics (November 2010 - October 2011).](image)

![Figure 21: MELT Website Popular Pages](image)
Conference Page

As can be seen from the graphics below, information regarding the closing conference was viewed on the website 464 times, and in 75 different regions. This clearly demonstrates the interest shown by a wider audience, and that a great number of visits were made by non-attendees of the conference. This will undoubtedly improve the dissemination of results and findings presented at the event.

![Figure 22: MELT Closing Conference Page Statistics (Google Analytics)](image)

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<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 23: Top 20 Regions (MELT Conference Page Visits)](image)
Facebook Page

In April 2010, the MELT project created a Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/melt.prosiec) with a view to disseminate its results, activities and news to a larger audience. It has now over 200 active users with over 1500 page views since its inception. This clearly demonstrates the interest of a wider audience for issues dealing with early years immersion in a minority or regional language.

Information posted on the Facebook page includes all MELT related news, notification of events, articles, additional news feeds from other partners and EU or local policy developments.

Figure 24: an impression of the MELT Facebook page (on the big picture the international expert Dr. Annick de Houwer presenting her contribution of the MELT research paper).

Newsletters

The original application stated as an objective the distribution of four newsletters during the project’s lifetime. All four newsletters have been published and translated into eight languages (Welsh-English, Breton-French, Frisian-Dutch and Swedish-Finnish).

These newsletters were not only made available on the project website, but were also sent out via e-mail to stakeholders and other interested parties over a period of two years, to ensure as wide a dissemination as possible. These newsletters have included an overview of the project background, information on the implementation
period of the guide, updates on various MELT seminars, in addition to the local events held within all four regions.

Distribution of the newsletter has increased significantly from its original number (including the original project applicants) to approximately 250 recipients within the four partner regions. These contacts from participating countries, and also from other interested parties have been collated in the form of a database. These include individuals and organisations with a direct interest in language planning, policy makers at regional level and other interested parties.

To coincide with the monthly release of the Mercator newsletter, information regarding the MELT project was included within these documents (e.g. Mercator Newsletter number 75, and http://www.mercator-research.eu/news/newsletter/). The Mercator centre has increased their mailing address list since 2002, which now includes 1920 separate addresses. These include over 1500 members and institutions throughout Europe, in addition to 300 international experts. Furthermore, the Mercator newsletters provide links to the MELT newsletters and the MELT website.

![Figure 25: An impression of a MELT newsletter](image)

**Project Flyers**

In accordance with the project application, a design and publication of the MELT project flyer was produced in the fall of 2009, with 200 hard copies of the Project Flyer available in each of the languages used for the project, with 800 produced in
total. This proposed timetable was designed to quickly raise awareness of target groups within the first months of the project.

This was achieved through disseminating all project flyers to the participating preschool provisions. In doing this, it not only ensured that both parents and practitioners were aware of the project’s background and its aims, but also allowed them to become actively involved with the project.

Figure 26: Impression of the MELT Project Flyer (Welsh – English Version)

Contact with the press

The MELT project has issued 4 press releases during the project’s lifetime in order to increase the visibility of the actions. These press releases have covered the launch of the project, the publication of MELT products such as the pamphlet for parents and guide for practitioners, and also information regarding the final conference. Due to amendments made regarding the implementation timetable of the research paper, this was not included within any of the four press releases as was initially intended.

All press releases have been posted on the MELT website under the Project Information strand as well as being sent out to partners and stakeholders within each partner region.

In addition to the press releases noted within the original application, further contact has been made with local press within a number of the regions. These include articles published in Le Telegrame (Breton Newspaper) and also Friesch Dagblad (Newspaper in Fryslân) and the local papers in Finland. Furthermore, Mrs Margaret Francis (MELT Project Tutor in Wales) was interviewed by a local paper, The Pontypridd Observer, where the MELT project background was discussed, in addition to the implementation of the guide at a local setting (Cylch Meithrin Pentre’r Eglwys).
2.7 Research paper

Within the MELT project, there is a scientific component that comprises two deliverables: a scientific article on the results of the project and this research paper. The scientific article will present the outcomes of the incubator phase in which the Guide is tested at the participating pre-schools in the four regions. This scientific article will be published in 2012 in an international journal with the theme (two-way) immersion.
The research paper has a more theoretical approach. The research paper *Multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) Summary or relevant literature on early multilingual learning, related to European smaller state and regional & minority language communities* presents theoretical backgrounds and practical descriptions of good practices of multilingual early language learning and transmission to children aged 0-4 years in the four regions. Also the implementing process of the Guide is discussed and presented. The recommendations and challenges for the future are presented. Looking back at this MELT project, and when considering all studies and recommendations in official documents, the most important recommendation of all is concerning the relationship between theory and practice. At local and regional level, as well as at national and European level, stakeholders and policy makers, scholars and practitioners should take into account that all their ideas, proposals and work must be carried out for the benefit of the growing children. This MELT publication is augmented by three contributions on special themes regarding early language learning and training of practitioners, written by international experts (Dr. A. de Houwer- Germany, Dr. G. Holm- Finland and Dr. T. Hickey- Ireland).

![Figure 30: the front of the MELT Research paper.](image)

### 2.8 MELT Quality and Monitoring Plan

To maintain the quality and focus of the MELT project, a *Quality Plan* has been drawn up and put in place.

The Project’s Quality and Monitoring Plan was built on a team process that depended on communicating information and planning. A cohesive dialogue between MELT partners was created by means of three initial meetings and then regular Skype meetings. The Quality and Monitoring Group consisted of managers from each of the individual partners. The Project’s Quality and Monitoring Plan underpinned the actions of the MELT project in meeting the European Commission’s Lifelong
Learning Programme’s expectations by achieving the agreed deliverables. As can be seen throughout this report, these agreed deliverables have been achieved or explanations are offered about any deviation.


In addition, Skype meetings between local partner leads were held on the following dates: 9.02.2011, 9.03.2011, 19.05.2011, 16.06.2011, 06.06.2011, 2.09.2011, 19.10.2011.

The Skype meetings for the incubators, chaired by the lead partner from Folkhälsans förbund were held regularly during the time when the incubators worked on the field within their pre-school settings. The incubators met in April 2010 in Leeuwarden and in December 2010 in Helsinki, as mentioned above. The incubator Skype meetings were held: 08.09.2010, 13.10.2010, 24.11, 09.02.2011, 23.03.2011, 09.05.2011, 07.06.2011, and 07.09.2011.

During the incubator Skype meetings, we assured that all incubators were trained and prepared to work with the next theme in the toolkit. The incubators did also reflect on the previous visits to the pre-school settings. There was also an opportunity for questions and answers and sharing best practices during the work process.

The final MELT conference which was held on 6 October 2011 also provided an opportunity for the MELT Quality Group to meet and review activities.

### Quality and Monitoring Responsibilities

The Welsh Language Board was overall responsible for drawing up the quality element measurements, distributing them, analysing results and producing reports. The Welsh Language Board, therefore, produced the following feedback instruments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Means of measuring quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content of expert seminar</td>
<td>Feedback questionnaire and report. Report produced and disseminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness raising guide</td>
<td>Feedback from incubators and presented to Quality Group in Skype meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide for practitioners</td>
<td>Questionnaire for practitioners, Discussion with incubators, Report produced and disseminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final conference</td>
<td>Feedback questionnaire. Report produced on results of questionnaires.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality Standards

The quality standards relevant to this project are:

Collaboration of partners – each undertaking the relevant allotted work packages in accordance with timetable and partners’ satisfaction and production of deliverables to time

The lack of a research paper produced and presented to the Leeuwarden workshop in April 2010 was a major difficulty in quality terms. This issue was never fully resolved and there was a failure to feed this element of empirical research into the development of the guide which was produced. However, the scientific paper has more than compensated for this deficiency. The development of the guide was based on research in the field of multilingual early years’ childcare and education.

The Quality Group discussed some issues relating to the delay in the incubation period in Friesland. This was eventually resolved.

There were also discussions about the content of the toolkit and some partners were concerned that the content and design of the product did not meet their expectations. The obligatory common European design of the final design could, in the opinion of one partner, affect the willingness of some organisations to use the guide. Local modifications were, therefore, necessary.

The support of the NPLD Secretariat was necessary for a number of elements, in particular the final conference arrangements.

Relevance of deliverables to raising profile of regional and minority language immersion, promoting bilingualism and multilingualism and increasing the skills amongst immersion education practitioners.

These three areas were addressed during the project. It would be true to say that the third element of skills development was more prominent through the incubator period. The profile raising occurred through the dissemination activities and especially the final conference.

Potential impact on policy development and improvement to practice

The project is able to present tangible evidence about these two elements which were a continuous consideration for the group. Evidence is presented through the evaluation reports from the incubation period and the final conference of the quality of this project in terms of policy and practice development of multilingual transmission and early years’ development.

Evaluation Report


This report is based on the responses of a total of thirteen feedback forms collected at the end of the MELT Expert Seminar.
1. **General Aspects**

Those attending the seminar were asked to comment on the following aspects of the organisation of the seminar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very Suitable</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
<th>Not very Suitable</th>
<th>Not Suitable at all</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication beforehand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation beforehand</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Arrangements</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance of Programme</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refreshments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, those attending the seminar were positive about the arrangements, in particular the refreshments and the venue, which was the local country hall of a Frisian municipality. There, in fact, theory and practice, could encounter easily. It is apparent that there was a need for communication beforehand to be improved and also the relevance of the programme was not considered totally appropriate. One respondent noted that she had misunderstood the purpose of the seminar and had arranged a speaker who would have been better suited for another type of event. Another commented on the lack of clarity specific goals of the concerning the seminar and was unclear about the specific nature of the required contribution from speakers.

2. **Programme Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Very Suitable</th>
<th>Suitable</th>
<th>Not very Suitable</th>
<th>Not Suitable at all</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 1 – Lillemor Gammelgård</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 2 – Hywel Jones</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 3 – Sikko de Jong</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation 4 – Yannig Robin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, generally, those attending valued the contributions made by the speakers. One respondent noted that the seminar had resulted in the deepening of insights in how theory is best linked to practice. Those who had heard Lillemor Gammelgård speak previously, however, were less sanguine. Her presentation was thought to be generally relevant and thoughtful, although not specific enough for the actual needs of the MELT project. Some felt that Yannig Robin had misunderstood the purpose of the seminar and as a result his presentation was less useful. The other concerns
expressed were that the seminar had not been founded on specific desk research to inform the MELT project.

**Evaluation Report on the MELT Toolkit and its Use by Practitioners**

**Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to describe how practitioners viewed the initial draft of the Toolkit; how they responded to its use; their judgement on the support they received from the incubators and the impact the Toolkit had on their practice. This information was collected by means of a questionnaire distributed to the day centres in the four regions/countries by the incubators. In all, six questionnaires were provided for analysis from day care centres in Brittany, seven from Wales, eight from Friesland and nine from Finland, making it possible to use feedback from 30 settings. However, the Friesland practitioners had decided to modify the questionnaire sent to them by the MELT Quality Manager as they wanted to add more detailed questions suitable for their context. The Friesland amended-questionnaire did retain some of the original questions and the responses to these have been included in this report. Where these are added to the responses of the other three regions/countries who used the recommended questionnaire, an * has been placed by the side of the question to indicate the inclusion of the Friesland answers.

It should be further noted that the Friesland questionnaires displayed a high degree of commonality as they had collaborated to complete the questionnaire during a joint workshop session. For each separate section, it was possible to examine to what extent particular regional variations emerged to different questions. These variations, if any, will be highlighted in the following text.

**Background**

**Type of settings**

The 30 different settings who provided information about the Toolkit and its use demonstrate a variety of different types of early years provision. In Wales, the Toolkit was trialed in mainly play group situations run by Mudiad Meithrin, although one private nursery was included. Predominantly the children come from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds and are offered part-time provision. In Brittany, three schools were involved as well as day care settings and respondents noted the use of the home language more than in Wales. In Finland, a more structured day care system with five settings offering full day provision was evident. The Finland respondents described the linguistic complexity of the children. The Friesland settings varied between day care and play group and they indicated both the use of Frisian and Dutch.

**Type of setting providing feedback on Toolkit and its use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of setting</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Time allocated</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Linguistic background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylch meithrin – non-</td>
<td>23 9</td>
<td>2-4 4</td>
<td>Half day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Site Type</td>
<td>Group Type</td>
<td>Group Size</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Day Structure</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylich meithrin – non-maintained sector play group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>Half day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>100% from non-Welsh speaking backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylich meithrin – non-maintained sector play group</td>
<td>31 14</td>
<td>2-3 4+</td>
<td>2 sessions am and pm</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>12 children from Welsh/English speaking backgrounds 22 from English speaking homes 1 from Welsh speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylich meithrin – non-maintained sector play group</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2½-4</td>
<td>Half day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td>12 children from Welsh/English speaking backgrounds 22 from English speaking homes 1 from Welsh speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylich meithrin – non-maintained sector play group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>Half day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cylich meithrin – non-maintained sector play group</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>2 sessions per day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Private nursery</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 months – three years</td>
<td>Full day/hal day</td>
<td>Welsh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>6 classes – 20 pupils in each</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>Day care centre</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breton mainly some</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>13-17 in a 115 size school</td>
<td>Breton – small amount of French for smallest children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>9 children 18 children 4-5 5-6</td>
<td>French and Breton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>Day care centre – regular and drop-in</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Breton and French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany</td>
<td>Day care centre</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mainly French some words in Breton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>32 1-6 Full day</td>
<td>Swedish Monolingual Swedish and Finnish and bilingual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>12 21 1-3 3-6 Full day</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>15 21 2-4 5-6 Full day</td>
<td>Swedish, although some use of Finnish Bilingual – mainly use Finnish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>20 2-6 Half day and full day</td>
<td>Swedish Swedish/Finnish and bilingual backgrounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>33 2-5 Half day 2 Swedish and one immersion</td>
<td>Swedish/Finnish/ Bilingual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>45 0-6 Full day</td>
<td>Swedish Swedish/monolingual Finnish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>8 1-4 Full day</td>
<td>Swedish Swedish/monolingual Finnish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>20 2-6 Full day and half day</td>
<td>Swedish Half from bilingual/half from monolingual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Pre-school play group</td>
<td>2½-4 2/3 times a week – 2.5 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>0-4 2/3 times a week 8-10</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Pre-school play group</td>
<td>2½-4</td>
<td>2/3 times a week – 2.5 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Pre-school play group</td>
<td>2½-4</td>
<td>2/3 times a week – 2.5 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2/3 times a week 8-10 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2/3 times a week 8-10 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friesland</td>
<td>Day care</td>
<td>0-4</td>
<td>2/3 times a week 8-10 hours per visit</td>
<td>Frisian and Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Range of staff**

The range of staff contributing to the evaluation exercise was as varied as the settings. In Wales, this included play group leaders and 15 assistants who provided comments as well as two students. In Brittany, three teachers, as well as three child care assistants and one youth activity worker responded. Those choosing to offer feedback from Finland were one director of childcare, six pre-school teachers, nine child carers and one nurse. Friesland did not include this information in their modified questionnaire.

**Contact with the project**

Participants came into contact with the project initially through the start-up meeting organized locally and then through individual visits to settings. In Wales, the regular visits to settings were used to present the Toolkit and then explain and support its use. In Finland, a mixture of incidental explanation during visits and roundtable discussions was used. This pattern was mirrored in Brittany and in Friesland.

**Initial Participation in the Project**
Practitioners were questioned about their initial contact with MELT and in particular about their early perceptions of the project. The results collated for this question exclude Friesland. The respondents indicated that they found it easy to understand the purpose of the project and also the place of the Toolkit within the project. They were also clear about their role in MELT. The only slight concern voiced by the practitioners was in finding time to undertake the tasks involved in the project, with only two respondents noting that this was ‘very easy’.

**Initial perceptions of MELT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding the purpose of the project</th>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Not very easy</th>
<th>Not easy at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the purpose of the toolkit in the project</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding your role in the project</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving time to participate in the project</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments recorded included noting that time should have been found to provide training for all staff in each day care setting. A minority of settings reported that there was some initial uncertainty about responsibility for use of the Toolkit within individual settings but that those issues were resolved after consultation with the Incubator.

**Views on the draft Toolkit**

Participants were asked about their views on the initial version of the Toolkit. They were positive about its purpose but less so about the structure. Content, though, was generally thought to be suitable and easy to understand.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Purpose of the toolkit</em></th>
<th>Very easy to understand</th>
<th>Easy to understand</th>
<th>Not very easy to understand</th>
<th>Not easy at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Structure of overall toolkit</em></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Block 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Block 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Block 3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments recorded praised the fact that they were able to obtain new ideas for use in their settings. This is a constant theme of the evaluation with the majority of the practitioners recording that they had benefited in terms of gaining new ways of working with the children in their care.

The more general comments recorded outline how practitioners found the Toolkit useful once they became more familiar with its content and were more settled within their roles in the project.

‘I did not read the whole toolkit, but rather I went through the main parts. At first the structure and the text did not seem easy but I became more familiar’
‘I found the activities quite heavy to work through; there was a need for more teacher-friendly material’.

‘The content of Block 1 was quite heavy and need to be adapted considerably’.

‘Putting in place new approaches, ways of working that have been used and approved in other areas enables us to move forward faster and gain energy’
‘All the activities were clear and easy for staff to use. The children enjoyed all the activities’

‘The children enjoyed the card game and the linking songs to the pictures’. It was necessary to work out the different roles within the project, but once they were sorted out, things went well.

‘We included the MELT project into a play, read stories and made the story more alive’.

‘Suggestions of pre-school/parent collaboration on development of minority language of L2 speakers are not useful in this context (Frisian). Parents would consider this too meddlesome.’

‘I would like to see this toolkit in a new format. We welcome this work to our setting as we do not have a language scheme at the moment’.

‘The purpose of the toolkit is easy enough, but we have encountered some problems applying it into our structure. The day care settings we are working with are already engaged in a project aimed at structuring the language policy of institutions in such a way that the bilingual development of the children is stimulated. It was necessary to use the toolkit in a manner that did not interfere with or confuse the ‘route’ to bilingualism the teachers had entered upon’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of Block 4</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content of Block 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ease of use</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding and using the toolkit

Participants were then asked to comment in more depth about the Toolkit after using it in the trial period. Their views are outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very easy</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Not very easy</th>
<th>Not easy at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the toolkit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Structure of overall toolkit</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*How to use activities in settings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating use and effect of toolkit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to use theory and background information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding vocabulary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, during implementation of the Toolkit, the structure proved problematic. The most appropriate aspect of the trialling was the ability to use suggested activities within the variety of settings. In the main, practitioners succeed in grasping the underpinning theoretical thrust of the resource. However, it appeared that more guidance was needed to be given to how best to evaluate the use of the Toolkit.

The comments recorded reflected the responses included in the table above:

‘Found that during the first two sessions, the vocabulary was quite difficult to understand; it was also difficult to put in place most of the activities because of lack of time, the organisation of the setting and the different age groups. I only went through the activities I was interested in’.

‘Some of the ideas seen during the project have already been applied and the rest will be used from September onwards’.

‘The activities presented help to create a different and varied approach. We evaluated some activities but we did not really have the time to discuss too much of the theory’.

‘Evaluating the use and effect of the toolkit was difficult because of the lack of time. However, the theory and background became easier to understand. Finding time was really difficult to explore ideas between activities’.

‘The toolkit was aimed at too broad an audience, resulting in the fact that it was too simple for experienced teachers and too complex for starting teachers. Also some chapters were too long, with many sub topics – these
should be broken up into smaller sections. Some topics had too many suggestions – there were 25 in one chapter and only 3 in another’.

Support received from incubator during trial period

Practitioners were asked to indicate how useful the different aspects of assistance received by the MELT Mentor were. The responses are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Not very useful</th>
<th>Not useful at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explaining use of toolkit</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting theory</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting new ideas for practice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing different approaches</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating use of toolkit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen, therefore, that practitioners were well supported by the incubators. From the responses presented, they explained the use of the Toolkit well as well as highlighting new ideas and approaches. They also succeeded in the main in explaining the theory behind the Toolkit. Less effective, as has already been indicated, was the attention paid to evaluating the use of toolkit.

‘The incubator was wonderful – just the right person for the job! We have had great ideas coming from the support we received and we still need more’.

‘We appreciate and welcome the project as we were helped to explore more the focus on language development’.

‘Before each visit we went through what we have done and through the content of the following chapter’.

‘We have reformed the toolkit in order to make it function more as a checklist. During four or five visits, our incubator oversees whether the daycare setting is working according to the advice given in the toolkit’.

‘It was really important that the Incubator visited us. Due to MELT, I have changed my habits and spoke on Swedish continuously. The parents are really pleased with MELT. We really needed the project and do need the Incubator to visit us in the future’.

‘I really enjoyed the round table conversations, they brought me new ideas, while discussing my practice and this gave me more confidence’.
‘We evaluated some activities. We did not have the time to discuss theory and background information extensively. We are only really interested in the activities of daily practice. It’s really good to have a booklet, in which you can search for new ideas and ways to work. It is not so easy to attend training courses. And now we had the toolkit and the incubator visiting us and they were both filled up with new ideas’.

The Impact of the Toolkit

Practitioners were finally questioned about the perceived impact of the use of the Toolkit on their practice. Primarily, the Toolkit had enabled them to gain and use a wider variety of ideas and had contributed to increasing their stock of activities. Respondents also noted a positive impact upon the way they reflected on their own practice. Supporting more attention to planning was less apparent according to the practitioners who responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact upon Approach</th>
<th>Numbers noting this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More attention to planning</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Adoption of ideas presented in toolkit</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Use of activities contained in toolkit</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of new ideas</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on practice</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Other please note – increased use of language - 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amongst the comments recorded about the impact on practice were:

‘This project has given us plenty of ideas on language development. It has also made us to realise the importance of planning language activities along with reflection and assessing. We have thoroughly enjoyed being part of this project’.

‘This has been a very good experience. This has helped me to find ideas and to introduce the Welsh language to non-Welsh speaking children. I would appreciate more support like this. This would benefit all members of staff starting in the cyllch and they would benefit from the training’.

‘Lots of these things were familiar from the book Språkplantan, and that’s not new. The methods are well known, but the material was new’.

‘Overall, I have learnt a lot and now I am looking forward to using the activities more often and thinking more about the language I use’.
'This project has given me more ideas and made us realise how important it is to plan language activities within themes'.
more adept at planning the presentation and reinforcement of language patterns and are more skilful in increasing the use of regional or minority language within the various settings;

more effective in the use of the toolkit when closely supported and monitored by the Incubator whose input was considered invaluable. The project demonstrated that the use of this relevant resource coupled with the specialist contribution of the Incubator was instrumental in causing positive change in practice.

Evaluation report of MELT Final Conference - 6 October 2011

This report outlines conference participants’ views on the organisation, conduct and content of the final organisation held by the MELT project at Brussels on 6 October 2011. 15 questionnaires were received and analysed. The following report is based on that analysis.

Conference Arrangements

Overall, the publicity about the conference and the conference arrangements themselves were viewed very positively by participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Publicity about the Conference</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organisation before the Conference</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arrangements at the conference</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Location</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Refreshments</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conference Programme</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conference content

This section outlines participants’ opinions on the presentations made to the conference by a range of different experts, representatives of key organisations as well as partner organisations. It also demonstrates the way participants viewed the workshops to which they contributed.

Presentations

Conference participants rated the presentations highly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lena Louarn (Brittany, France) – Vice-president for languages of Brittany – Breton Regional Council</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Relevance of the subject</td>
<td>Quality of the presentation</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinga Gáš (European Parliament) – Co-chair of Intergroup EP for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jannewietske de Vries – (Fryslân, the Netherlands) – Frisian Minister of Finance, Recreation and Tourism, Language and Culture</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Jones (Wales, UK) Deputy Chief Executive of Mudiad Meithrin,</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veronica Hertzberg (Finland) - Results and products of the MELT Project</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annick De Houwer (Germany) - Expert on Early Bilingualism Developments and the role of input and attitudes.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunilla Holm (Finland) – Expert on education for day care pedagogies at the bilingual Helsinki University</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idske Bangma (Fryslân, The Netherlands) – Author of MELT research paper</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality of the presentation | 9 | 2 |
--- | --- | --- |
Alex Riemersma (Fryslân, The Netherlands) - Project leader Reporting back from workshops, MELT future –MELT II? | Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
Relevance of the subject | 9 | 3 | 1 |
Quality of the presentation | 9 | 2 | 1 |

**Workshops**

Participants could attend two out of four workshops. The following tables indicate the opinions recorded about these workshops. Again, the responses are, in the main, favourable.

| Workshop 1 A Continuity pre-school – primary schools | Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
Relevance of the subject | 4 | 5 | |
Quality of the session | 5 | 4 | |

| Workshop 1 B Competencies and training | Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
Relevance of the subject | 8 | 1 | |
Quality of the session | 8 | 1 | |

| Workshop 2 Parents | Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
Relevance of the subject | 6 | 1 | |
Quality of the session | 5 | 2 | 1 |

| Workshop 2 Language Policy | Excellent | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory |
--- | --- | --- | --- |
Relevance of the subject | 4 | 1 | 1 |
Quality of the session | 3 | 1 | 2 |

**Additional comments recorded**

The general comments recorded were also positive. The general theme was that the conference was informative and encouraging. In their view, it had succeeded in highlighting the purpose, conduct and results of an important project. Participants were keen to see the project continuing. This project has succeeded in linking theory and practice. Next steps are essential to maintain this good work.

**Conclusion**

The responses recorded above were gathered through the means of the questionnaires returned. Overall, it can be seen that the conference managed to include a range of speakers who could locate the MELT Project within a wider policy and theoretical context. Participants noted that they had appreciated these presentations and valued the opportunity to participate in workshops on relevant topics. The organisation of the conference was also considered to be effective.
3. Further Project Outcomes & Results

The Project Outcomes & Results have been discussed during the project approach, above in chapter 2. In addition to the presented products and achieved goals illustrated above, the project has had further success and the dissemination of resources and findings will continue following the project end date.

The MELT project and its results were discussed by Meirion Prys Jones, the Chair of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) from Cardiff (Wales, UK) and the EU Commissioner Mrs Androulla Vaisiliou at their meeting held on 17 September 2011. The EU Commissioner welcomed this project as a good example of a European project which encompasses theory and best practice. She also expressed her appreciation of the project as a good example of cooperation between regional and minority languages (RMLs) and migrant languages.

At the end of her opening address to the closing conference in Brussels, Mrs Kinga GÁL (MEP and co-chair of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages of the European Parliament) invited Alex Riemersma, the MELT project leader, to present the outcomes of the MELT project at the next meeting of the Intergroup of the European Parliament on 15 March 2012 in Strasbourg. This presentation will not only provide further publicity for the MELT Project, but will also create opportunities for further dissemination of the project results, and allow cooperation with other EU projects, in particular projects aiming at migrant languages. This is very much in line with the vision expressed in the Staff Working Paper within the Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020): Language Learning at Pre-primary school level: Making it efficient and sustainable - A policy handbook (SCE [2011] 928).

In terms of dissemination to third parties Mrs Idske Bangma presented the MELT project at the conference on Early Language Learning organised by the RML2future Network and Fuen in Klagenfurt (Austria) on 25-27 September. This was very timely as the main theme of this regional conference was early multilingualism. Mrs Veronica Hertzberg presented the MELT-project for the NPLD General Assembly in Eskilstuna, (Sweden) 27 October.
4. Partnerships

Ever since the application phase of the MELT project there has been close co-operation between the partners through the regular meetings of the NPLD. This has provided a fruitful platform as well as a good means to stay in contact with the associate members of the MELT project.

These associate members are all NPLD members with an interest in multilingual pre-school education. These members represent: Ireland, Estonia, Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia (Spain), Scotland (UK), Sweden, Hungary, Norway, Lithuania and Occitania (France). Through regular presentations at the general assembly meetings of the NPLD these partners are kept up to date with the progress and outcomes of the MELT project.

The MELT partners themselves have their own network, both in their respective regions and internationally, where they can find, discuss, and spread new ideas.

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More information on: http://www.npld.eu/

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The lead partner of the MELT project, the *Fryske Akademy*, represented by the *Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning*, has a long tradition in the field of multilingual education in Fryslân, the Netherlands. The Mercator Research Centre, established in 1987 by the European Commission, has strong international contacts through its activities and international projects. Within the MELT project, the Mercator Research Centre closely co-operates with the Sintrum Frysktalige Berne-opfang (SFBO), the organisation for bilingual and Frisian medium pre-school provisions in Fryslân.
Folkhälsan is a Swedish-speaking NGO (non-governmental organization) in the social welfare and health care sector in Finland. It carries out scientific research and provides social welfare and health care services as well as information and counselling in order to promote health and quality of life, where language is seen as an aspect on health. Folkhälsan is a large provider of social welfare and health care services - child welfare and day-care, outpatient clinics for adolescents, rehabilitation clinics for people with disabilities and service housing for the elderly. Folkhälsan consists of regional and local associations and non-profit limited companies and foundations. Folkhälsan has about 1.700 employees, hundreds of volunteer workers and 17.200 members in the local associations.

More information on: http://www.folkhalsan.fi (available in Swedish, Finnish and English)

The Welsh Language Board promotes and facilitates the use of the Welsh language. It co-operates with several public sector bodies, private businesses and voluntary organisations. In the MELT project there is special co-operation with the Welsh-medium pre-school organisation Mudiad Meithrin. The Welsh Language Board is the lead body in the establishment of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity.

More information on: http://www.byig-wlb.org.uk (available in nearly fifty languages)

On April 1, 2012 the Welsh Language Board ceased to exist. Responsibilities and language planning activities are taken over by the Welsh Government and its newly appointed Language Commissioner.

The Regional Council of Brittany is a public body. Since 2007, it has set up a linguistic policy regarding the Breton language. Therefore it develops pedagogical tools in association with the educational authority. It works closely together with Breton organisations like Divskouarn (association of day-care centres, also a partner), Diwan (immersion schools), Dihun (Catholic bilingual schools) and Divyezh (public bilingual schools).

More information on: http://www.bretagne.fr (available in eight languages)
Divskouarn is a non-profit organisation that works on a local level on the awareness and the structuring of bilingual day-centres. Divskouarn was officially recognised as full partner of the partnership at a later stage (approval by the Commission in August 2010), though they have been involved from the application phase onwards.

More information on: [http://divskouarn.free.fr](http://divskouarn.free.fr) (in French and Breton)
5. Plans for the Future

The Brochure is an empowering tool for all who are involved in day care, in parent and toddler groups and play groups; and indeed, the Brochure is likewise useful for grandparents and god-parents who take care of young children.

The Brochure for parents is printed and is translated into eight languages. These brochures – 300 hard copies printed per region - are distributed to parents mainly during local events aimed to raise awareness on the importance and possibilities of bi- and multilingualism in the early years. The Brochure has proven to be a success, with all printed copies now distributed! However, different regions across Europe have indicated that they are enthusiastic and wish to translate the Brochure and Guide also in their own languages.

The Brochure for parents is also available on line, but The Conseil général du Finistère (Brittany, France) has taken the initiative concerning the Brochure for Parents. The Conseil général du Finistère has decided to re-print an amended version of the Brochure for Parents (Breton-French version) to the number of 10,000 copies, and to distribute the Brochure among all young parents during the year 2012 through the childcare services of Finistère. The brochure will be also translated in other languages and all version will be available on the “Campagne bilinguisme” website of Divskouarn (http://www.divskouarn.fr/index.php?rub=la_campagne). This is an unexpected but very welcome result of the MELT project in terms of valorisation and dissemination.

In 2012, Folkhälsan will organize a follow up seminar for all the practitioners that took part in the MELT-project. The pre-school practitioners will reflect again on the final Guide and go through that once more. Also the parents brochures will be disturbed to the pre-school provisions that have not received it yet. Below the program for February 4th 2012.
For the year 2012; the Provincial administration of Fryslân has offered the Fryske Akademy / Mercator Research Centre the financial resources to continue some aspects of the MELT project, in particular the drafting of the above mentioned scientific article and a new research paper. The MELT project will be sustained through an inventory of existing teaching qualifications in the pre-school sector and of tools used for the guidance of contacts between pre-school sector and primary schools concerning language learning and teaching.

Furthermore, the provincial administration of Fryslân has granted the initiative of the Fryske Akademy to prepare a new application to the LLP Comenius program (deadline February 1, 2012) for a follow-up project of the MELT for the years 2013-2015. The new project “Promotion of Early Linguistic Diversity” (PELD) will focus on the dissemination of the MELT products (Brochure, Guide and Research paper) as well as on the implementation of the MELT products and ideas developed to the training of practitioners (pre-service and in-service) for the pre-school sector in more languages and other European regions.
6. Contribution to EU policies

In the Research paper: Multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) Summary of relevant literature on early multilingual learning, related to European smaller state and regional & minority language communities (Bangma, I & Riemersma A.M.J., 2011) recommendations and challenges for the future are presented.

A quote from chapter 6.4 Recommendations with respect to Early Language Learning and Multilingualism (p.82):

The European Commission has identified pre-primary education as a priority theme for cooperation between Member States in 2009-10, in particular to promote generalised equitable access and reinforce the quality of provisions and teacher support. Recently, in July 2011, the European Commission released a Staff Working Paper within the Strategic Framework for Education and Training (ET 2020): Language Learning at Pre-primary school level: Making it efficient and sustainable. A policy handbook (SEC (2011)928). In this working paper on Early Language Learning (ELL) all general aims, goals and benefits of early multilingualism are summarised and proclaimed: “The aims of any ELL policy for children in pre-primary education should be to foster intercultural and multilingual education focused on the development of the child’s personal potential. Where appropriate, it could also be to provide an introduction to a particular language that will be taught later on in primary school” (p. 9). Within this working paper a special chapter is dedicated to ‘Children with a minority or migrant background’. In that chapter a double message is emitted. On the one hand the benefits of multilingualism are underscored: “Children with a minority or migrant background will usually benefit when offered equal opportunities to access language learning and support to maintain and improve both their first language/mother tongue and the second language. Their established repertoire should therefore be further valued and promoted” (p. 23). On the other hand, the transitional approach is promoted: “The participation of these children in programmes that provide systematic language support in the language of instruction at pre-primary level should therefore be encouraged, since it would be beneficial for their social integration and educational journey” (p. 22). The phrasing suggests an opposition between the maintenance and fostering of mother tongue which differ from the state language, and the language of instruction at school. From the perspective of equal footing of mother tongue and standard language, both languages of education serve to foster the child’s social integration and educational journey. Explicit language policy and measures are essential in order to put formal declaration into practice. The EU policy handbook at hand which is aimed at national authorities and administrations in charge of childhood education and care and of language education, further stresses the importance of lifelong learning, and the increase of awareness of linguistic diversity, the importance of informal settings for language acquisition by language use in the right cultural context. Also the training of staff is recommended as well as permanent and consistent advice to parents and families who often find it difficult to choose which language(s) they should use to raise their children.
Chapter 6.5 of the research paper presents challenges for the future at three levels: micro, meso and macro. Some quotes (p. 83):

At micro level, most important of all in the processes of raising our children through languages is the constant (and continuously to be encouraged) awareness of parents and their peers that they have a choice.

At meso level, regional and local educational authorities should take it as their responsibility to insist on the integrative or holistic approach of the health and wealth organisations in cooperation with vocational training.

At macro level, national governments should include in their educational policy not only an increase of participation of pre-school education, which is proclaimed by the EU in the Agenda 2020, but must also give priority to the improvement of the continuity of language learning through primary school and secondary education. National legislation must be based on equality of the target languages and aimed at full language development. With respect to the training of practitioners and day care servants, sufficient provisions for teacher training must be guaranteed, including in-service training programmes. Training programmes must include promotion awareness programmes focussing on balanced plurilingualism, as well as methodologies of immersion and language acquisition approaches in various linguistic settings. Such programmes can be developed and targeted at speakers of regional minority languages as well as immigrant languages.

For more information: Multilingual Early Language Transmission (MELT) Summary of relevant literature on early multilingual learning, related to European smaller state and regional & minority language communities (Bangma, I & Riemersma A.M.J., 2011).
7. Closing remarks

A quote from the closing remarks from the project leader Dr. Alex Riemersma:

‘This project has proven to be a real European project in terms of bringing together not only a variety of experts and practitioners, representing a number of different cultures, languages and best practices, but also a variety of traditions and expectations, cultures of co-operation with regard to organising conferences and meetings. First of all I want to express our gratitude to all hundreds and thousands of practitioners who every day and every week do a wonderful job in stimulating the children’s linguistic development, the most important job of all’.

This MELT project (2009-2011) and its products (the Brochure for parents, the Guide for Pre-school practitioners, the Research paper, the website, the Facebook page, the local events, the expert seminar and the closing conference) shows that there is a future possible for our children to be able to grow up in a minority language and become multilingual. The only remaining comment on those products is a compliment to all the MELT partners who worked so intensively. We truly can be proud of the content and the design of the publications, but we – and the European Commission - can also be satisfied that we have managed to deliver these products right on schedule, before the end of the year 2011.

Recommendation to the NPLD and others is to make this good-looking Brochure and Guide available in even more languages than the present eight project languages. That would be one of the best follow up and dissemination actions of the projects for the near future. The publication on line in English is fine, and of course of great help for lots of people, but in Europe, English will not be enough.

In the perspective of the European ambitions, a translation of the MELT publications the Brochure for parents and the Guide for practitioners not only into German and into Spanish would be preferred, but also, for example into Turkish and Arab or Berber would be welcomed greatly.

All in all, when looking back at this MELT project, and when considering all studies and recommendations found in official documents, the most important recommendation of all concerns the relationship between theory and practice. At local and regional level, as well as at national and European level, stakeholders and policy makers, scholars and practitioners should take into account the fact that all their ideas, proposals and work must be carried out for the benefit of growing children.