The History of **ALTE**

The Association of Language Testers in Europe: **The first 30 years**

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FOREWORD

By Nick Saville

1989 was an important year in European political history that culminated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The breaking down of borders led to new opportunities for mobility across the continent, and this was reflected in many areas of society, not least in language education.

It was against this backdrop that the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) first came into existence in 1990 thanks to the initial vision of a small number of people and the enthusiasm and energy of an expanding group of participants over many years. I have been privileged to be involved in the ALTE story from the beginning and I am pleased to be ushering a new era in 2020 with the publication of this volume.

Nowadays, ALTE is a well-established INGO with a reputation for leadership in multilingualism, language learning and assessment. In this volume, the story of this development is told, focusing on the people and events that shaped the evolution of the Association over a 30-year period.

From the outset, it was recognised that there would be benefits for all in sharing expertise and know-how. Language assessment in the early 1990s was just emerging as an academic discipline in its own right, but it was still poorly developed in most parts of Europe. There was a clear need for greater professionalism and higher quality language tests and certification, and the desire to address these issues united the founder members of ALTE in a common mission.

Much progress has been made since then, as the story tells, especially in the widening participation in ALTE activities by more people and in the range of topics now covered by ALTE through its events and special interest groups. Some central themes have, however, remained at the centre of ALTE's concerns, in particular multilingualism and the prioritisation of learning and assessment of all languages, and not just a privileged few.

A preoccupation with standards, and the understanding of the key concepts

needed to align multiple language assessments within a common framework, has also been a central theme. ALTE's Framework of Levels predated the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and so the Association was able to make a strong contribution to the development of the CEFR in the 1990s. Close collaboration with the Council of Europe has continued to this day. Perhaps the jewel in the crown of ALTE's achievements has been the development and implementation of its own Code of Practice and Quality Management System, including the procedures for auditing and the recognition of quality standards through this process. This has not only brought about higher levels of assessment literacy amongst members and affiliates, but we have also seen measurable improvements in the quality of the assessments that are now offered by ALTE members and those who make use of the ALTE approach. The ALTE Q-mark is now widely recognised and is looked out for by test users seeking a guarantee of quality.

For nearly 30 years, ALTE's constitution was based on a legal entity known as an EEIG – European Economic Interest Grouping – established under European Union regulations. This served the association well for many years, but by 2015 it had become clear that a new and more encompassing legal framework would be needed in future, one that would widen participation in ALTE and enable different types of membership, both in and beyond Europe.

The final chapter of the story so far outlines the process that has led to the establishment of a new legal entity from 2019 onwards. ALTE has now become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and it is hoped that this new structure, with a more comprehensive range of membership arrangements, will provide a sound basis for ALTE to continue its development over the next 30 years.

In future, I look forward to reading new chapters – with many more examples of ALTE's multilingual collaboration, exciting new projects and the widening impact of ALTE's work in the field of language learning and assessment.

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ALTE's Beginnings

The Association of Language Testers in Europe, ALTE, is an association of institutions that produce tests of languages for the context of learning an additional or foreign language. It was established in 1990 on the initiative of the Universities of Cambridge and Salamanca to address issues of quality and fairness in language testing amongst assessment bodies in Europe. Through time, it has identified and acted on these issues in different ways, and continues to do so 30 years later in its new legal status.

ALTE's original objectives were set in 1990. They were to:

- establish common levels of proficiency in order to promote the trans-national recognition of certification in Europe and to facilitate the accurate comparison of qualifications in different languages;

- establish common standards across Europe for all stages of the language testing process (namely test development, question and item writing, test administration, test marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings);

- improve language assessment through collaboration on joint projects, the sharing of best practice and the exchange of ideas and know-how;

- provide a forum for discussion and collaboration through regular conferences and meetings.

The original objectives were used to form the objects of the revised status of ALTE in 2019. For more information on the change of legal status, as well as the new objectives, see pages 103-104.

At the time of ALTE's transition to a new legal status in 2019, ALTE had 34 member organisations spread over 22 countries and representing 25 European languages. A list of these members can be found in Appendix A. Members include some of the world's leading language assessment bodies, cultural institutes and various types of organisations representing many national and regional languages. In addition, ALTE now has over 60 Institutional Affiliates

and several hundred Individual Affiliates. ALTE Institutional Affiliates are organisations with an interest and active involvement in language testing. They are not full members, and the quality of their tests cannot be guaranteed as they have not gone through a quality audit. However, they aspire to meet high standards of quality in language assessment. Individual Affiliates are individuals who have signed up, free of charge, to receive news from ALTE.

ALTE's members in 2019 came from the countries in blue

Languages play a key role in the modern world and multilingualism can promote inter-cultural awareness and tolerance as well as economic prosperity. As the European Commission made clear in 2010: 'A labour force with practical language and intercultural skills is crucial for economic growth and better jobs, enabling European businesses to compete in the global market place. Multilingualism can also contribute to personal development, reinforce social cohesion and promote intercultural dialogue, creating opportunities to discover other values, beliefs and behaviour.' (European Commission website, www.europa.eu, November 2010).

The Council of Europe sees language and access to multilingualism as a basic human right in a Europe that seeks to increase mutual understanding between all its citizens. In fact, one of its fundamental aims today is to protect and promote the diversity of Europe's cultural heritage, of which regional or minority languages are a large part. Since 1992, the Council of Europe's member states have been able to confirm their commitment to the protection

of this heritage by ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This Charter was adopted as a convention in 1992 and entered into force in 1998, and has been ratified by 25 countries.

In the late 1980s, a natural result of European barriers coming down was increased international mobility, with society needing to become more multi-lingual. This in turn spurred on a need for better language teaching and language assessment that would be fit for purpose for individual test takers as well as for other stakeholders – employers, educational institutions or government bodies. It was particularly important that language qualifications should be a fair and accurate reflection of what a test taker could do in a language and how well s/he could do it. In addition, as individuals frequently needed to be proficient in more than one language, there was a growing need for levels of attainment to be accurately compared to those in other languages, and for certification to be recognised around the world.

When ALTE was established there were no recognised international frameworks, and language certification was variable in terms of the levels to which it referred. However, examination developers and other users were beginning to become aware that they needed a mechanism to understand levels and what they meant, and how exams in different languages related to each other, both in relation to content and to level.

It was in this context that ALTE was formed and its original objectives articulated.

The need for collaboration

The concept of an association of language testers that would begin to address these issues, share expertise and compare experiences, was first put forward by Mike Milanovic, who at that time was Head of the newly established Evaluation Unit within the EFL Department of UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), now Cambridge Assessment English. Milanovic observed that within Europe, *"while there were small groups of individuals engaged in language testing activity, for the purposes outlined in the ALTE objectives, there was relatively little communication between the people who were doing it. English was already the most widely taught and assessed language at that time but the need for assessment in other languages was growing fast. How to ensure quality and equivalence was a real issue."*

In November 1989, Milanovic, alongside Mike Nicholls (who was on secondment to UCLES from the British Council at the time), visited the Universidad de Salamanca, which like Cambridge, was one of Europe's oldest

Mike Milanovic, Head of the newly established Evaluation Unit within the EFL Department of UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), now Cambridge Assessment English

universities, and the seeds of collaborative activity were sown. Salamanca had started to produce the Diploma of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE) exams, which looked similar to the UCLES exams, and the idea of collaboration was an appealing one. However, it was clear to Milanovic that the concept of collaboration with a larger number of institutions would be even more powerful. A natural progression would be to try to form a larger group of organisations in order to extend collaborative activity more widely across Europe and to try to develop a shared system of levels across a number of languages.

Contact was established with Sabine Schulz and Sibylle Bolton from the Goethe-Institut in Munich, with Simone Lieutaud at the Alliance Française in Paris, Giuliana Grego Bolli and Maria Grazia Spiti at the Università per Stranieri di Perugia (University for Foreigners of Perugia), Professor J Malaca Casteleiro from the Universidade de Lisboa in Lisbon, and Carles Duarte i Montserrat from the Generalitat de Catalunya in Barcelona. Establishing these contacts was facilitated by the fledgling group of Cambridge Examination Liaison Officers (CELOs).

It quickly became evident that the representatives of the participating organisations welcomed the opportunity to create a forum to engage with issues in language testing:

> *"There was a real need for external collaboration in the area of language assessment and certification, especially in some parts of Europe. The setting up of ALTE confirmed it. There was the same need in Italy: at that time, there was no systematic and theory-based approach to language assessment, and working towards language certification was a real problem for us because we didn't have specific competence and experience in this area. I was teaching Italian linguistics at the University [for Foreigners of Perugia] but I had no*

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professional experience in language testing. I was charged by my university to develop an assessment system for Italian as a foreign language, and I was desperately looking for publications and expertise in this area. There was no interest at that time, in the academic context, in this sector. So for my personal and professional growth it was fundamental to be involved in ALTE."

Giuliana Grego Bolli, Università per Stranieri di Perugia

"I strongly felt the need for an organisation like ALTE. I started working as a test developer for tests in German as a foreign language at the headquarters of the Goethe-Institut in Munich in 1989. I missed very much not being able to discuss questions in test development with colleagues working in the same field. In 1989, [Mike] Milanovic contacted me and suggested exactly what I had been looking for, namely an organisation for test developers from different European countries with the aim of improving the quality of our tests and discussing and exchanging ideas and know-how. Also, the fact that ALTE grew so quickly after its foundation shows that the need for such an organisation was not only felt by me but also by other colleagues in other European countries as well."

Sibylle Bolton, Goethe-Institut

"I was immediately interested in ALTE because I had felt for some time the necessity to harmonise the levels of European examinations. At the time, each country had their own performance levels and examinations were not comparable. Therefore I felt that an organisation like ALTE was necessary to compare different examinations in Europe and to make the different examinations more transparent to stakeholders. Another reason why I thought ALTE was necessary was the exchange of know-how with European colleagues in the field."

Sabine Schulz, Goethe-Institut

Following Milanovic's initiative, it was agreed that a meeting should be held in November 1990 to consider the formation of a group with the aim of promoting future collaboration in the area of European language testing and certification, and the concept of ALTE was born.

The first meeting: November 1990, Barcelona

The inaugural meeting of what was initially known by UCLES as the 'European Collaboration Project' took place in Barcelona on 10 and 11 November 1990. The Generalitat de Catalunya hosted the meeting and the chair was Carles Duarte i Montserrat, then Head of the Linguistic Advisory Department in the General Directorate of Linguistic Policy of Catalonia.

Generalitat de Catalunya

Eight institutions were represented at this inaugural meeting: Alliance Française; Generalitat de Catalunya; Goethe-Institut; Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (España); University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES); Università per Stranieri di Perugia; Universidade de Lisboa; and Universidad de Salamanca.

Also in attendance were two Greek institutions, the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki. They did not attend subsequent ALTE meetings until the University of Athens joined ALTE in 1996.

In many countries, the process of developing exams was at a very early stage. In Italy, just as in some other countries, the assessment tradition was based on a viva voce (oral) approach, but it was apparent to the Italian team that developing a set of internationally recognised exams using this traditional approach alone would not be a viable option. UCLES exams had been running since 1913 but although they were widely known and used (about 200,000 candidates in 1990), they were much less developed than they are today

with only four exams in its suite. All the meeting attendees agreed that collaboration would be mutually beneficial. Two particular areas of common interest on which the new association would later concentrate were agreed upon in the first meeting:

- establishing common levels of language proficiency in order to promote the transnational recognition of certification in Europe
- establishing common standards for all stages of the language testing process (namely test development, question and item writing, test administration, test marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings).

It was felt that ministries of education, employers, teachers, universities and others around Europe needed to understand what language proficiency levels meant and how exams in different languages compared with each other. European citizens were rapidly becoming more mobile, political and economic barriers were breaking down, and the importance of linguistic and inter-cultural competence became increasingly apparent. There was clearly a need for a system that allowed for qualifications in different languages to be compared, not just on the basis of an unsupported claim about a level but also on the grounds of quality – whether the exam system and administration of it was fit for purpose. Thirty years later, these are still two of the fundamental aims of ALTE.

Members also agreed to collaborate on joint projects and to exchange ideas and know-how, and to seek support for the group's activities from other European institutions.

First steps

As a first step in collaboration, and to try to fulfil the above aims, it was agreed that each institution should produce descriptions of its own main examinations. The outcome of this exercise would be a short publication (ALTE Document 1 – see Chapter 2), aimed at test users, and with a grid placing all the exams in relation to each other against a common proficiency scale. This grid was to become the ALTE Framework.

Participants also discussed conditions of membership of the group, its working arrangements and funding, how to register it legally as a new association, and its name. It was tentatively agreed to adopt the title ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe, and Milanovic was asked to take on the role of Secretary.

Participants at that first meeting have vivid personal recollections of the atmosphere in Barcelona:

"There was a strange atmosphere, because we were all studying each other. We felt like we shared something in common and so we tried to understand each other and [see] if this association could have a future, and after the first meeting I thought it definitely could." Giuliana Grego Bolli

"What struck me from the beginning was the frankness and openness of our discussions. The ALTE members were very willing to admit problems and to discuss possible solutions." Sibylle Bolton

"The meeting concluded quite positively with the basic principles of ALTE which we're still using: to compare exams, to share knowledge and to work on quality systems. It's interesting that in ALTE you can probably trace most of what we do and are still trying to do right back to that first meeting." Nick Saville, UCLES (now Cambridge Assessment English)

Consolidation (1991-1993)

The newly formed Association of Language Testers in Europe met again in April 1991, in Perugia at the Villa la Colombella, then a seat of the University's Centre for International Studies and Relations, now a UNESCO building, a magnificent 16th century villa located in the Umbrian hills.

Photo reproduced with kind permission of the University for Foreigners of Perugia

Members were working to consolidate the new Association. Various decisions were made: members opted to carry on meeting twice a year, and planned the dates and venues of their next five meetings up to the end of 1993. All meetings were to be held at weekends to facilitate attendance. Each member would take a turn at hosting, requiring a considerable level of

commitment from those involved. The meetings were therefore set out as: Cambridge, November 1991; Lisbon, April 1992; Alcalá de Henares, November 1992; Paris, April 1993; and Munich, November 1993.

They decided that the group would be funded through member subscriptions, and information about ALTE would be disseminated externally via a newsletter, *ALTE News*, which would be produced after every meeting. Milanovic recalls that it was surprisingly straightforward to keep the continuity going in ALTE and for its work to evolve, as, unlike the meetings of many other European projects, there was a core of the same people, evolving but not changing dramatically from meeting to meeting.

ALTE's legal status and constitution

At the second meeting, the member institutions had to begin to consider how to formalise ALTE's activities.

A 'mission statement' was agreed upon; the first step towards a formal constitution:

> ALTE members are institutions which currently produce tests of their own mother tongue as a foreign language or are in the process of developing tests of this kind.
>
> ALTE promotes transnational recognition of European language certification through the establishment of a common system of levels of proficiency and the adoption of agreed standards of professional practices in language testing.

Also to be considered were the legal implications of running an international association, with European legal procedures thought to be more appropriate.

"We had to decide on how to form [ALTE] as an association. It would have been simpler to form it under the law of one particular country, but we didn't want to do that because it would send the wrong message. So I met with a lawyer, Glynne Stanfield, and he investigated a suitable European legal structure – coming up with the suggestion of constituting ALTE as a European Economic Interest Grouping. We worked on that quite a lot and finalised it at the November 1991 meeting in Cambridge – I was asked to act as Manager of the Association."   Mike Milanovic, Manager of ALTE 1991–2014

The objective of a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) was 'to create a new legal entity based on European law to facilitate and encourage cross-border cooperation' and 'to facilitate or develop the economic activities of its members by a pooling of resources, activities or skills. This will produce better results than the members acting alone' (from www.europa.eu).

At that time, the ALTE EEIG was one of the first to be established in the education sector, as most EEIGs were set up in the commercial sector.

The official signing of the EEIG Agreement took place in Cambridge in November 1991. The eight signatories were the Alliance Française, the Cervantes Institute, Cito, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Goethe-Institut, UCLES, the Università per Stranieri di Perugia, and the Universidade de Lisboa. Following the signing of the Agreement, registration of ALTE as an EEIG was successfully completed in February 1992. It meant that ALTE had a formalised constitution with a Manager and a Council of Members whereby each institution nominated one person and one alternative and hence every organisation was represented, with clearly set-out decision-making and membership procedures (for example, full membership only being open to organisations from member countries of the EU and European Economic Area), and voting rights.

Membership

Membership was gradually starting to grow as new institutions were admitted to the group. Cito joined in 1991 as the representative of Dutch as a foreign language, and the University of Salamanca and the Spanish Ministry for Education and Science were replaced by the newly formed Cervantes Institute representing Spanish.

The assessment of Danish as a foreign or second language was becoming more pressing in the early 1990s as the immigrant population grew. The Danish Language Testing Consortium was formed in 1993 specifically to enable three organisations to become an ALTE member. These were the Institut for Nordisk Filologi at the University of Copenhagen, the Danish Refugee Council, and Studieskolen. This partnership was an early example of ALTE's impact in bringing together organisations with similar interests: the Institut for Nordisk Filologi supplied tests for the teaching of Danish overseas; the Danish Refugee Council provided language lessons and testing to refugees; and Studieskolen produced Danish tests at a high academic level for students wishing to study at Danish universities.

As John E Andersen, representing the consortium in the 1990's observed:

"When it comes to testing, it is true that Denmark is a small area or market, but even a small language area needs to aim for top quality testing. Test results need to be valid and reliable whether they come from tests taken by hundreds of thousands, or tests with only a few thousand or a few hundred candidates."

At the end of 1993, when the University of Salamanca rejoined and ALTE membership stood at 10 institutions representing nine languages, Salamanca and Cervantes actually played different roles with the University taking responsibility for developing examinations and Instituto Cervantes being responsible for delivering the examinations worldwide through its rapidly growing network of cultural institutions.

The membership was expected to grow quickly as LINGUA funding from the European Commission had been won to assist ALTE members with travel and accommodation for the twice-yearly meetings.

To keep pace with the growing membership, additional members of staff were taken on to assist with the running of the Secretariat in Cambridge. In 1992, a graduate assistant, Patrick Cronin, had been brought in, and in spring 1993 he was joined by Rosalie Kerr who took on the role of ALTE Co-ordinator.

As the membership grew, the Association was faced with some issues that needed resolving.

The application for membership from the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV) headed by Hans Teichmann raised an issue because the DVV was also a member of another grouping of test providers. Should ALTE include members who were already part of another group?

Another issue also raised in connection with the DVV was whether ALTE should accept more than one institution representing the same language, given that the Goethe-Institut was already a member. At the initial ALTE meeting, each language had been represented by a single organisation, but a decision was subsequently made that additional representatives of the same languages could be admitted. Initially the DVV was asked to form a collaborative relationship with the Goethe-Institut. However, on the Membership Working Party's recommendation, the DVV was accepted as a member in its own right in April 1995.

There had also been some interest in ALTE from organisations then based outside the EU, in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The possibility of these organisations forming formal links with ALTE, perhaps through affiliation, was discussed.

Creating a toolkit

"The most exciting period in my view was during the 1990s because we were working all together on the same projects, we were just a few people and the projects were fundamental for the association."　　　Giuliana Grego Bolli

By early 1991, the members had begun the task of furthering the agreed aims of ALTE (i.e. promoting the transnational recognition of European language certification; establishing common levels of language proficiency; and establishing common standards for the testing process). This resulted by 1993 in a comprehensive set of documentation to support ALTE's aims and which formed the basis of a toolkit to support language test development. The key components were:

Document 1 – European Language Examinations: Description of Examinations
Document 2 – European Examination Systems
Document 3 – The ALTE Code of Practice
Document 4 – The ALTE Framework

All members undertook to translate and adapt the documents for use in their own contexts and with extended groups of stakeholders – not just the few who attended meetings. The need for a glossary of shared concepts was recognised very early on in the process.

Sabine Schulz remembers:

"During the first meetings the focus was on establishing common standards and on making the levels of our examinations comparable, i.e. harmonising the level system within Europe and all the members considered this to be an important aim and worked hard to achieve it. In the beginning, most of the time during the twice-yearly meetings was spent on working together on different projects, and this work was done during the meetings and was afterwards continued at our organisations."

In order to gain a better understanding of the types of examinations and certification offered by all ALTE members, they continued the work begun in the first meeting of describing their own institutions' exams. The aim of this project was to produce a description of all general language examinations offered by each institution and a brief guide, *European Language Examinations: Descriptions of Examinations*, was the result. This was an important document because it was the first time a coherent overview of all the members' available examinations was brought together. It became known as *ALTE Document 1* and

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was published in 1993 in English, with ALTE members subsequently making their own arrangements to produce translated versions. Aimed at test users, it was distributed through branches of members' organisations and to university departments throughout Europe and beyond, and revised as necessary to include the exams of new ALTE members as they joined.

A comparative study of *European Examination Systems* (ALTE Document 2) was also developed. Members produced narrative descriptions of their exam systems under four headings representing the main stages of the exam process:

- Examination Setting/Preparation
- Marking
- Results
- Security

Sharing and making transparent the processes followed by each member organisation was the first step towards being able to compare and assess methods of writing and administering exams, and prepared the way for setting common standards across Europe for all stages of the language testing process. It was the initial stage in establishing a code of best practice for members. It put these processes and systems into the public domain thus providing users with a way of evaluating and comparing examinations on the basis of evidence as opposed to marketing messages. As such it represented quite a breakthrough in language testing terms in Europe.

While there were various codes of practice available in the field of assessment, there was no such document available as a backdrop to language testing in Europe. All members agreed, however, that it was vital that such a code should exist and so the fourth meeting, in Lisbon in April 1992, was dedicated to developing a code of practice, designed to enable all member institutions to establish and adhere to a clear set of standards in their testing and certification activities, and to meet explicit criteria in terms of four major examination qualities: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. The Code of Practice for ALTE Examinations (see Appendix G), setting out the responsibilities of ALTE members towards exam users and takers, and laying down minimum standards to be met by all members' exams in terms of provision of information about the nature and administration of exams, exam results, and fairness, was later added as an appendix to Document 2, thus creating a comprehensive document describing both the ways in which ALTE examinations were produced and the standards which they were expected to meet. The development of the Code of Practice is one of the key milestones in the history of ALTE and in Chapter 5 it will be seen how the ALTE Quality Management System evolved from it.

Given the different stages of development of each ALTE member, expecting everyone to adhere to the code immediately was unrealistic. Equally, producing a highly detailed code would have been very difficult to achieve at this time. However, in order to support the work of ALTE members, Milanovic and Saville compiled an internal discussion document called *Principles of Good Practice for ALTE Examinations*. It was detailed and theoretical, designed to lead to improvements in practice over time and to feed into the Code of Practice, which was intended as a public document designed to report on present practice being followed, rather than standards to aspire to in future.

The beginning of the ALTE Framework

Central to ALTE's early work was the establishment of a common descriptive framework of levels of proficiency to see how exams compared with each other.

> *"I had felt for some time the necessity to harmonise the levels of European examinations. At the time, each country had its own performance levels and examinations were not comparable. It was clear to me that an organisation like ALTE was necessary to compare different examinations in Europe and to make the different examinations more transparent to stakeholders. It was very helpful that ALTE, right from the beginning, worked on establishing performance levels and placing member examinations on these levels."*   Sabine Schulz

The process

The group firstly had to agree the external reference points on which to base the descriptions of each level of proficiency. They decided to classify exams on a provisional five-band scale ranging approximately from Waystage Level at the bottom to Advanced Level at the top. This allowed the members to work on the assumption that different language examinations placed at the same level might be comparable in terms of difficulty and coverage of the language. By this time, UCLES had already introduced a five-level system, represented by its five exams based on the Council of Europe's Waystage and Threshold levels at one end and long-standing UCLES exams at the other. Members agreed that it made sense to use the UCLES system as a starting point.

Members needed to make a judgement about where each of their own exams sat on the framework, placing them alongside others. The result was a provisional table of exams at five levels, albeit quite sparsely populated in the first instance.

Nick Saville explains the ALTE Framework to the Duke of Edinburgh on his visit to UCLES in May 1993, as Dr Peter Hargreaves (then Chief Executive of UCLES EFL, now Cambridge Assessment English) looks on.

There then began the lengthy process of carrying out systematic comparisons between exams in different languages thought to be at corresponding levels of the framework. A programme of empirical research was undertaken to support the judgements made. Question Paper Content Checklists were designed (based on content checklists prepared and used by the Evaluation Unit in Cambridge) and were used to focus attention on the test method characteristics employed in the examinations. The checklists relate to the description of test content and the development of an instrument to allow for the systematic comparison of examination materials across various languages. The instrument was designed to offer two levels of description:

1. A brief checklist which permitted the rapid assessment of the salient features of a test.

2. A more detailed checklist that allowed for the specific description of materials within components of a test battery or for test tasks used for various purposes.

"For language testing in general, I think ALTE did a great job in enabling us to get an overview of what different countries were doing in terms of language testing, and while we were gathering information about exams and who was doing what, we realised that we needed information about how to describe an

exam, so one of the first things we had to do was the ALTE Content Analysis
Checklists, to try to generalise the approach on how you can characterise an
exam – that was one of the major steps in the beginning."

<div align="right">

Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Goethe-Institut

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Use of the checklists led to discussion and the repositioning of some exams on the table (see the next page for a copy of the original ALTE Framework, November 1992 version).

It was agreed that if the resulting framework was to be for public use, then this type of subjective comparison would not be sufficient, and validation through experimental work would also have to be carried out. With that in mind, a Critical Levels Project was planned, with the aim of setting up a framework based on a series of critical levels of language performance in work and society that would be validated through extensive research. As mentioned above, the levels were based on the systems already in place for UCLES exams. The concept of a common underlying scale had already been introduced in UCLES and the five levels in the UCLES system had taken 80 years to evolve, each level arising from a recognised need in the real world.

The proposed programme of work was complex and represented a big commitment from members in terms of the length of the planned project, the time it would take, and also in terms of funding. Additional meetings over and above the twice-yearly meetings also started to take place in order to work on specific projects. Members agreed to seek external funding so that the planned projects did not become a drain on the internal funds of ALTE members.

Recollections from the early meetings

This period was clearly an extremely busy one, but participants also found the meetings enjoyable, with participants being described as 'just a bunch of nice people'. Additionally, the trips home after the meetings were opportunities for participants to reflect on how they were going to change things when they got back to their respective testing organisations.

"My background was in language teaching, and when I first started attending
ALTE meetings, I was just about to start working in the test development unit,
so I had a lot to learn. I needed more background on theories and methods of
developing tests, so it was ideal for me to attend ALTE meetings where there
were people I could learn from.

Examinations in general language proficiency offered by ALTE

November 1992

Language	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
CATALAN Generalitat de Catalunya	Certificat Internacional de Català: Nivell Bàsic (NB)	Certificat Internacional de Català: Nivell Llindar (NL)			
DUTCH CITO Arnhem		Netherlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-1) Netherlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-1)			
ENGLISH University of Cambridge	Key English Test (KET)	Preliminary English Test (PET)	First Certificate in English (FCE)	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
FRENCH Alliance Française		Certificat Elémentaire de Français Pratique (CEPF)	Diplôme de Langue Français (DL)	Diplôme Superieur d'Étude Françaises Modernes (DS)	
GERMAN Goethe-Institut Munchen		Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaf)	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)		Kieines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KUS)
ITALIAN Universita Italiana per Stranieri (Perugia)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 4 (CELI 4)	Certificato di Conoscests della Lingno Italiean Livello 1 (CELI 5)
PORTUGUESE Universidade de Lisboa		Certificado de Lingua Portuguesa			
SPANISH Instituto Cervantes and Universidad de Salamanca			Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)		Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)

Original ALTE Framework document, November 1992 version)

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The first two meetings I attended, in Paris and Munich, I remember were rather small affairs in terms of members attending – we all fitted into a seminar room that holds about 20 people. But there was continuity of people attending so you got to know each other quite well. It was nice that we got to know each other personally – Simone Lieutaud [from the Alliance Française] invited us to her home, for instance.

I think there was a European spirit in the air; apart from the professional side of things we noticed that it was something quite special to have people from all these different countries together on a regular basis.

I always enjoyed the meetings, the fact that we met at different places was an incentive and there was always a spirit that the host tried to show their colleagues the best side of their home and their culture, so sitting together and talking in the evening was nice and everyone enjoyed that."

Michaela Perlmann-Balme

"I was in the process of finishing my MA dissertation on language testing where I proposed two exams at the Threshold and a level beyond this (later to be known as Vantage level). I had to struggle my way through to get to the viva because no one had ever written a dissertation on that topic. Testing was understood as a measuring tool which could be written by anyone. ALTE came like a balm for all of us who were starting in this business. ALTE was a group of people who had the will, the desire and the vision of doing better together."

Jose Pascoal

"Until I left in 1993, each meeting was a 'key moment' for me. We learned so much, worked on new projects, had interesting discussions and came to important decisions."

Sabine Schulz

"The meetings were good fun, enjoyable but very hard work. We were working on interesting things, in a small group of about 10 to 20. Membership didn't grow too fast in the first few years, we knew each other quite well and we engaged in projects very collaboratively. It was nice that every meeting was in a different place."

Mike Milanovic

"The benefits were huge. For me personally, the twice yearly meetings were like intensive further training sessions in testing."

Sibylle Bolton

"It was important to me that from the beginning, ALTE wasn't simply a scientific association but more a professional oriented association. Scientific associations are important, but nobody asks you about the daily work concerned with producing and administering language certification. In ALTE we had the opportunity to speak to colleagues around Europe working in this area daily, and exchange competencies and experiences. In my view that was and still is a key feature of ALTE, and at the beginning it was just fantastic. What was very important is that the people involved became friends. There was a good atmosphere, great collaboration. ALTE was made by the people involved at the beginning, not just the aims, but because the people found a way to work together."
Giuliana Grego Bolli

The general feeling amongst participants is that at that time, UCLES took the lead in discussions, but rather than this being seen as a negative, it was felt that UCLES was providing support for those members who felt they lacked experience:

"What I remember from the first ALTE meetings was that the members were insecure – except for Cambridge, of course, who had much more knowledge and experience in the field than the rest of us. And that we were all highly motivated to work on improving our tests. [Mike] Milanovic gave us the benefit of his experience, encouraged us and gave us lots of support."
Sabine Schulz

"The contribution of UCLES was important; I still remember the first language testing course run by people in UCLES – we desperately tried to study and learn about statistical analysis and other things and they were a great support. We attended a lot of training courses."
Giuliana Grego Bolli

The early meetings set the tone for open and frank discussions, and a desire for the professionalisation of language testing, with people overcoming their initial hesitance and taking the opportunity to hold discussions and ask questions:

"I remember that there was Mike Milanovic from UCLES and the Manager of ALTE, and John de Jong as representative of Cito. The professional discussions were often launched by these two 'leaders' and it was a bit like a classroom full of pupils, with Mike and John leading the discussion and the rest of us trying to join in! Language testing is not really something that gets a lot of people excited … but we had specialists all together in the same place, so you could ask specialised questions that you may not have been able to ask people at home."
Michaela Perlmann-Balme

ALCALÁ DE HENARES

Camino el verd humit	*I walk the grass*
Entre les pedres,	*among the stones*
Com si fossin mots	*like words*
O sons antics	*or former sounds*
Ara rescripts	*that we rewrite*
Per les nostres petjades.	*with our footsteps.*
Camina el temps	*The time is walking*
A dins dels nostres ulls;	*in our eyes.*
Les veus, les mans	*We mix again*
De nou s'entreteixeixen.	*voices and hands.*
Dins del pati ressona	*In the courtyard echoes*
El nom d'un vell silence.	*the name of an old silence.*

(Translated by the author, November 1992)

Carles Duarte i Montserrat, a published author and poet in Catalan, was Head of the Linguistic Advisory Department of the General Directorate of Linguistic Policy of Catalonia in the early days of ALTE and to commemorate the fifth ALTE meeting, he wrote this poem in November 1992, dedicated 'Als meus amics d'ALTE' ('To my friends from ALTE')

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LTRC in Europe

The Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) was formed in the United States in the 1970s and became the pre-eminent conference for those involved in research in language testing. In 1993, it was hosted in Cambridge and Arnhem – the first time it had been held outside the US and the first time it had been held across two countries. Both Cito and Cambridge were partners in ALTE and it was the close collaboration that had evolved in the early 1990s that made such a complex shared event possible.

Language testing as a discipline had developed largely in the United States and the UK, although a growing number of language testers from Europe were now becoming involved. In the photograph can be seen various individuals from ALTE, including Sibylle Bolton, Giuliana Grego Bolli, John de Jong and Michaela Perlmann-Balme. Holding LTRC in Europe for the first time could be said to be the beginning of the internationalisation of language testing, and was no doubt due, in part at least, to the growing prominence of ALTE. In 1992, ILTA – The International Languages Testing Association – was formed as a result of the early LTRC conferences. ALTE members have always shown a willingness to participate as individuals or to promote collaboration on an institutional level and ALTE has been an ILTA Institutional Affiliate for many years.

The Council of Europe, Rüschlikon and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The Council of Europe's second Rüschlikon Conference is very closely linked to early developments in ALTE. It took place in Switzerland in November 1991, in the week before the third ALTE meeting, and was attended by 127 participants from 27 countries. Representatives from most of ALTE's member institutions were present. The conference was organised on the initiative of the Swiss Federal Government on the theme of *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, Certification.*

In Rüschlikon, the Council of Europe initiated the work that resulted in the publication of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP). It was decided to establish an Authoring Group and a consultative board of experts (which included Mike Milanovic and John de Jong) to look at developing comparability, coherence and transparency in the description of language proficiency, and mechanisms for better co-operation across Europe.

Much work took place through the 1990s, a lot of it in parallel with developments taking place in ALTE, though ALTE's focus was largely in the area of assessment and less so in relation to the learning and teaching of languages at that time. However, the approach taken to creating a 'can do'-oriented level system based on calibrated statements using Rasch analysis was very similar. The ALTE approach also linked the Can Do statements to performance in exams across a range of different languages.

Growth and Development (1994–1999)

The second half of the 1990s was a period of growth and development for ALTE. There was a shift in focus, from striving to initiate the structure and procedures of the association, to expanding membership and promoting ALTE within existing member countries, developing and revising the materials, and maintaining and developing relationships with European and other institutions.

The late 1990s saw the admission of Associate Members and a change to the format of ALTE meetings, making them accessible to a wider audience, as well as the continuing development of the ALTE Framework and the commencement of the Can Do Project, which has become one of the key achievements of ALTE.

ALTE's work in the 1990s is characterised by very close working relationships with the Council of Europe and the European Commission. It was an important era since it established all the major projects which were funded by the European Commission through the LINGUA programme and which have left an important legacy.

Membership: Changes in Europe and expansion of ALTE during the 1990s

During the 1990s, ALTE began to seek out additional members. There was a deliberate strategy on the part of ALTE to seek out other institutions that were testing their own language and were not yet involved in the association and to invite them to participate. ALTE's expanding membership eventually led to changes in the structure of ALTE meetings, and an opening up of the association in terms of opportunities for organisations and individuals to link to and benefit from its work. It also brought its own set of problems and challenges. For example, there were concerns about whether work already in

progress should be consolidated before membership was expanded. Additionally, decisions had to be made regarding admitting members from languages or countries already represented, and also allowing some form of link with ALTE for organisations not in the EU/European Economic Area.

Membership Working Party

ALTE took questions relating to its membership very seriously. In late 1994, a Working Party (consisting of Sibylle Bolton from the Goethe-Institut, Simone Lieutaud of the Alliance Française, and Marie-Christine Sprengers from Cito) was set up to develop strategies for future ALTE membership. The Working Party decided to make approaches to organisations in countries not yet represented such as Austria, Belgium, Finland, Greece and Sweden.

In the early days, ALTE membership had been 'one language, one member' in an effort to ensure a wide coverage of languages and countries. After ALTE was more established, it had been formally decided that additional representatives of the same language could be admitted, provided they met the membership criteria. But there were other decisions regarding membership that needed to be made.

In the case of non-EU countries such as Norway and Hungary, the Secretariat looked into the constitutional position on membership of, or other forms of affiliation with, a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG) by organisations in these countries. ALTE members were not inward-looking, and were always open to the idea of being inclusive, but certain constraints came with EEIG status and the legal position needed to be established given that full membership of an EEIG was reserved for economic operators exercising activity in an EU member state. In 1995, once it was confirmed by lawyers that Norway, as a member of the EEA (European Economic Area), could join an EEIG, a Norwegian institution was invited to the next meeting and joined ALTE in November 1996.

Membership procedures

By the time the Working Party was formed in 1994, a set membership procedure had been developed, and in April 1996 a document was approved setting out formal procedures for joining ALTE, a process which could take several months.

A new member was expected to carry out a detailed analysis of its exams using the ALTE checklists, the results being discussed at the next meeting, with

the possible outcome of the member being asked to make changes in order to fulfil the requirements in the Code of Practice. They also had to pay an annual subscription; send a representative to meetings of the Council of Members twice a year; and commit resources, both human and financial, to cooperate on the projects central to the Association – specifically at this time, achievement of the standards set out in the Code of Practice, and active participation in the ALTE Framework Project.

Widening participation and Associate Membership

There were 19 Full Members representing 16 languages by the end of the 1990s. As previously mentioned, the issue of widening participation was important to ALTE members, and in spring 1995, discussions began regarding the introduction of Associate Membership status for organisations unable to become full members, enabling them to have some sort of link with the work of ALTE. This came about following enquiries from organisations outside the EU/EEA: Dr Igor Diakonov from Moscow State University, having been made aware of ALTE and its Code of Practice document, had written to Mike Milanovic expressing an interest for his institution to be represented in ALTE. It was decided in November 1997 to admit Associate Members, following the same membership process as full members, and they would have the same rights and benefits as full members, except concerning voting rights. It was felt that the benefit of such links being established might be an improvement in the standard of testing in those countries, as well as increased publicity for ALTE members' examinations.

By the end of the 1990s, ALTE had five Associate Members: the Russian Language Testing Consortium; the National Examination and Qualifications Centre, Estonia (now Foundation Innove); the Latvian Naturalisation Board; the Lithuanian Language Centre, University of Vilnius; and the Hungarian Foreign Languages Examination Board (ITK).

> *"ITK was looking ahead to EU membership and preparing itself, and part of this was the wish to join ALTE, in order to try and integrate, to forge relationships with other European institutions, and also to share its own achievements."*
> Dr Jenő Fonyódi, ITK

It was necessary for the ALTE Formation Agreement to be redrafted in 1999 to make provision for the formal admission of Associate Members. ALTE continued to be an EEIG as this was still the most appropriate legal arrangement for an organisation consisting of partners from many different countries

at that time; it was also an appropriate format given that applications to the EU for funding projects were ongoing.

Benefits of involvement

New members were always aware of the benefits – personal and organisational – of becoming involved with the work of ALTE:

> "ALTE expanded my personal as well as professional horizons to a great extent. Working together with so many people from all over Europe, from different educational and testing traditions, gave me the opportunity to build up a network of colleagues and friends across Europe, to provide me with new ideas, and to put the local issues with which I was confronted in my work into a much broader perspective.
>
> For example, thanks to discussions I had within ALTE, I could develop my vision about my responsibility as a language tester for developing tests in the area of migration and integration in a much better way than without this input. At the same time, because some of my colleagues were also involved in ALTE, this influenced my organisation to take a position on this issue as well.
>
> In a similar way, ALTE was a forum for exploring the implications of the CEFR, through discussions, workshops, presentations, and initiating a Special Interest Group to explore the meaning of the CEFR both on a theoretical and a

ALTE members at the Salamanca meeting, November 1994

practical level. This had a very positive effect on my work on relating our examinations to the CEFR. I could bring colleagues from other departments in my organisation into contact with colleagues from ALTE to discuss the implications of the CEFR.

Ultimately, the quintessence of the impact of ALTE on my work is 'looking further than my boundaries'."
<div align="right">Henk Kuijper</div>

Changes to the structure and format of meetings in the 1990s

The ALTE Sub Groups

Larger numbers of Members meant that the biannual meetings started to become unwieldy and to function less effectively, and by the late 1990s, a trend was starting towards having Sub Groups during meetings, where members could split up into smaller groups to discuss issues relevant to their particular situation and interests and then report back to the whole group.

These Sub Groups (precursors of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs), which are an integral part of how ALTE works today) met independently, and members could decide which ones they wanted to join.

As Sibylle Bolton noted: *"The decision to change the structure of ALTE meetings was a key moment in ALTE's history. Because ALTE grew so quickly, it was no longer possible to work as one group. This transition from one group doing everything to Sub Groups working on particular aspects and reporting back on their work to the members as a whole was an important step and it went very smoothly. It widened the scope of our work."*

By 1999, Sub Groups had been set up for the Promotion of ALTE (reflecting the change of focus towards getting ALTE known in the member countries), Business Language Testing, the ALTE Website, Young Learners, Associate Members, and the European Language Portfolio project, and people were encouraged to sign up for the Sub Groups they were interested in.

"Looking back I see a huge difference between my first meetings and the way ALTE is now. Then, about 25 people sat around a table discussing the agenda points and following some presentations, all centrally. By the end of the 1990s, Sub Groups had been initiated and this could be seen as the first step to the greater participation of all ALTE members. But we were still searching for a way to proceed effectively with the Sub Groups, with Mike [Milanovic] emphasising that the Sub Groups should take on responsibility for progressing their own work and carrying out projects, reporting back to everyone as

*necessary. Nowadays, Sub Groups (now called Special Interest Groups or SIGs)
certainly do this, and the SIG structure has become a distinctive feature of
ALTE, with many members now being actively involved, and being able to
meet on a regular basis and focus on co-operation. I think it is this broad
involvement that makes the great difference."*　　　　　Henk Kuijper, Cito

Changes in the time and structure of meetings

In 1996, ALTE meetings stopped being held at weekends and began to be held
during the working week.

As Nick Saville noted: *"The early events were held on a weekend so you'd
arrive after work on a Friday and get home on Sunday evening, and go back to
work on Monday, which was helpful in those early days because it allowed the
members to attend at a lower cost to their institutions, but when ALTE had become
established it needed to be seen more as part of the 'day job', and so we tried to do
that by bringing it into the week."*

At the end of 1999, a change to the structure of future meetings was
proposed by Mike Milanovic, who suggested that meetings should be held over
three days (from Wednesday to Friday), with the intention of addressing
concerns from members about how ALTE could be more effectively promoted
locally and also by opening up the meetings so that local people could attend.
It was also felt that this would allow members to focus specifically on the areas
of interest most relevant to them and to plan their time at ALTE meetings more
effectively.

Day 1 was to consist of Sub Group meetings; Day 2 would be devoted to the
business meeting and ALTE project meetings; and a third Conference Day was
added, which could be promoted to a much larger audience, presentations
given, and there would be an opportunity to involve many more people from
the local region and to publicise the work of ALTE. A similar 3-day meeting
structure is still being used today, with anyone from the local region or beyond
able to become involved by attending Day 3 and sharing in the expertise and
networking on offer, whatever their interest in language testing.

ALTE Secretariat and staffing

Mike Milanovic was re-elected as ALTE Manager in 1997 and was joined by
Marianne Hirtzel who was taken on in April 1998, replacing Rosalie Kerr as the
ALTE Co-ordinator in Cambridge. By 1999, the need for an assistant was also
identified as ALTE was now involved in so many projects, further promotion

Marianne Hirtzel   *Neil Jones*

was planned, and the workload on the Secretariat was increasing. Neil Jones from the UCLES Test Development & Validation team also began to work with ALTE on some aspects of the Can Do Project, especially statistical procedures. He played a crucial role for those members where statistics and measurements were not standard practice, and was very influential on a number of members at that time.

> "*My first impression of ALTE was that it seemed really exciting, working with lots of different organisations all around Europe. There was a steady membership throughout those years in terms of the personnel attending, and everyone was really keen to get involved and to help each other.*"
>
> Marianne Hirtzel, formerly of Cambridge Assessment English

Formalising the relationship between ALTE and the Council of Europe

In April 1997 Mike Milanovic, together with representatives from Cito and the Global Language Network, signed a joint statement to formally offer continued support to the CEFR project, specifically 'in deliberations and measures aimed at operationalising and piloting the Common European Framework and the European Language Portfolio in the areas … of language testing, assessment and certification'.

In April 1998, at ALTE's 16th meeting, the Council of Europe recorded its appreciation for ALTE's important contribution to the trialling and further development of both the CEFR and the Vantage level specification project.

The ALTE Framework Project

The ALTE Framework of Levels grouped together exams in different languages to allow for comparisons to be made. The levels had been defined by existing examinations already provided by ALTE members. The Framework represented an attempt to group together those exams which appeared to be at similar levels of difficulty, and as such was an ongoing undertaking.

The Framework project had begun in 1992, and by 1994 a research programme had been initiated, question paper content checklists had been designed, and a critical levels project was planned, with funding awarded for three years (1993–1996) by the LINGUA bureau, to fund the empirical validation of the levels through the construction and calibration of a series of performance based tasks (Can Do statements).

By the mid-1990s the Framework project was still at a relatively early stage of what was planned to be a long-term undertaking. Throughout the 1990s the Framework continued to develop, with the collaboration of all ALTE members and support from LINGUA.

By 1994, considerable agreement had been reached on the content definition of the three lower levels of proficiency. This placing of exams on the three lower levels of the framework was arrived at by a systematic process of comparison of the exams concerned. It was done by using content analysis checklists which focused on the test method characteristics and the components of language ability being tested. This involved looking at factors such as the components making up the exam and the weighting given to each, the types of texts used and their function (explaining, describing, instructing, persuading, etc.). Comparisons were also made of candidate performance in writing and speaking (based on script analysis and videos of candidates taking oral tests). At levels 1 and 2 (see the next section) links could be made to the Council of Europe Waystage and Threshold specifications.

Naming of levels

Members needed to ensure that the terminology they used in describing the levels was consistent. For example, ALTE used the term 'Independent User' synonymously with ALTE Level 3; however, in some contexts related to English language teaching this term was synonymous with Level 2, which was potetially confusing. So, terminology needed to be harmonised, but for the moment level names remained unchanged, and the specifications about what a learner could be expected to do at each level were influenced by the Council of Europe's work:

The ALTE Framework: Levels 1–3

LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

LEVEL 1

Waystage User

Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Bàsic (NB)
Danish	Test 1
English	Key English Test (KET)
German	Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache (GBS DaF)
Irish	Réamhtheastas Gaeilge (RTG)
Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)
Luxembourgish	Zertifikat Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaf)

LEVEL 2

Threshold User

Catalan	Certifikat Internacional de Català, Nivell Llindar (NL)
Danish	Test 2
English	Preliminary English Test (PET)
French	Certificat Elémentaire de Français Pratique (CEFP)
German	Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)
Irish	Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG)
Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)
Luxembourgish	Eischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaf)
Portuguese	Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)
Spanish	Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)

LEVEL 3

Independent User

English	First Certificate in English (FCE)
French	Diplôme de Langue Français (DL)
German	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)
Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)
Luxembourgish	Zweten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaf)
Spanish	Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)

ALTE Level 1 – Waystage User (Based on the Council of Europe Waystage 90 specification)

ALTE Level 2 – Threshold User (Based on the Council of Europe Threshold 90 specification)

ALTE Level 3 – Independent User

However, it is important to note that ALTE's aim was not to replace the CEFR with the ALTE Framework. At the 18th ALTE meeting Mike Milanovic described the ALTE Framework being "complementary to the Council of Europe Framework … an operationalisation of the Framework for examination purposes".

1996: the Council of Europe and Vantage Level Specification

John Trim and Jan van Ek of the Council of Europe were at this time working on developing a specification above Threshold level – called the Vantage level – planned to be 'as far above Threshold level as Waystage is below it' (Trim, quoted from 1996) and involving learners developing their use of language beyond the basic skills needed at Threshold Level.

ALTE members had great interest in the Council of Europe's work as many of their own examinations were based on or influenced by the Council of Europe specifications. Indeed the names Waystage and Threshold had been adopted by ALTE to refer to its own two lower levels. Many members had exams at ALTE Level 3 (see below for the ALTE Framework Levels 1–3 as it was in 1996) and so the Council of Europe's level three description was very interesting to them.

ALTE members provided input into the development of Vantage level specification, reviewing it and commenting on it in relation to ALTE, and Trim attended and made presentations at several ALTE meetings around this time, including in Dublin in November 1995 where he presented a draft consultative document of what was to become the CEFR. Several ALTE members reviewed and provided feedback on this and other consultative documents that led to piloting the CEFR prior to its publication in 2001. An ALTE Sub Group later worked with Trim and the Council of Europe in the elaboration of a Breakthrough level to complement the Waystage, Threshold and Vantage levels.

van Ek requested ALTE's assistance with the validation of Vantage. One or two experts (item writers, test constructors or senior teachers) in each member country provided comments and feedback on Vantage level to be included in a report, which was used as the basis of a series of six regional workshops between June and November 1998, led by Trim and van Ek, hosted by ALTE members and attended by local practitioners. ALTE funds were made available to send Trim and van Ek to take part in these workshops (from which Trim produced a report, published by the Council of Europe in 1999) and to cover sending out questionnaires, which ALTE helped to design.

Assessing the levels of new members' exams

As new members joined ALTE and more exams were added to the Framework it was decided that they should be assessed as to their position on the Framework by two or three other members. For some languages (for example Russian), this could mean consulting bodies outside the ALTE membership

Language Examinations

Language	Level 1: Waystage User	Level 2: Threshold User	Level 3: Independent User	Level 4: Competent User	Level 5: Good User
Català	Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Bàsic (NB)	Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Llindar (NL)	–	–	–
Dansk	Test 1	Test 2	–	Danskprove 2	–
Deutsch	Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache (GBS Daf)	Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaf)	–	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)	Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP) Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)
English	Key English Test (KET)	Preliminary English Test (PET)	First Certificate in English (FCE)	Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
Español		Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)	Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)	–	Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)
Français	Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1 (CEFP1)	Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2 (CEFP2)	Diplôme de Langue Français (DL)	Diplôme Supérieur d'Etude Françaises Modernes (DS)	Diplôme de Hautes Etude Françaises (DHEF)
Gaeilge	Réamhtheastas Gaeilge (RTG)	Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG)	–	–	–
Greece		Veveosi Elinomathias	Greece	Greece	Greece
Italiano	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 4 (CELI 4)	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 5)
Lëtzebuergesch	Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Fremdsprach (ZLaF)	Eischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Fremdsprach (1DLaF)	Zweten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Fremdsprach (2DLaF)	Lëtzebuergesch —	Ieweschten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch (IDL)
Nederlands		Niveau Elémentaire Kennis (CNaVT)	Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I) Niveau Basiskennia (CNaVT)	Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II) Niveau Uitgebreide Kennis (CNaVT)	–
Norsk		Språkproven i norsk for fremmedspråklige vokane	–	Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige Høyere nivå	–
Portuguesa		Certificado de Lingua Portuguesa (CELP)	–	Diploma de Lingua Portuguesa (DILP)	–
Suomi	Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Perustaso 1	Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Perustaso 2–3, Keskitaso 3	Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Keskitaso 4–5, Ylin taso 5	Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Ylin taso 6	Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Ylin taso 7–8
Svenska	–	–	Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)

The ALTE Framework table of members' exams at five levels (1997).

if there was no one within ALTE sufficiently proficient in the language in question.

A framework at five levels

Some of the exams provided by ALTE members were at higher levels and so as time went on it was necessary to add two more levels to the framework. In November 1996 at the 13th ALTE meeting in Luxembourg, the Framework table was revised to include the tests of organisations who had recently become members, and to elaborate on general language examinations at the higher levels. It was expanded to cover five levels, including descriptions based on the Can Do Project (see below). All members once again had to check the provisional placing of their exams. Level descriptions were still being worked on to make them more consistent.

The framework would continue to expand and develop as new members and Associate Members joined ALTE and as its applications continued to grow; for example, it could also be used in the development of new exams, as it enabled members to identify levels at which their organisation did not produce any exams and then to develop a test at that level, e.g. a new Catalan exam, Nivell Avançat, at ALTE Level 3 was developed in 1999, filling the gap in the above table.

Developing the ALTE materials - three LINGUA awards

LINGUA funding was essential in supporting and furthering ALTE's work at this time, with three grants awarded to ALTE for projects all feeding into the overall aim of producing a usable framework of comparison.

This was firstly for the Glossary of Multilingual Testing Terms, and also for two stages of project work: Test Materials Development and Analysis (a 1-year project comprising content analysis – i.e. the checklists, a training course and guidance document for item writers) and a longer project, 'Establishing a Framework for Critical Levels of Language Performance in the European Community'. This was planned to take three years and the levels were to be empirically validated through the construction and calibration of a series of performance-based tasks reflecting activities at the different critical levels. These calibrated tasks would provide the basis for a framework allowing the reliable mapping of different language qualifications onto the same scale, a process which was returned to many years later by several ALTE members as part of the SurveyLang Consortium for the European Survey on Language Competences.

The Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms

As members worked on developing the Code of Practice document, the difficulties of talking about language testing issues in the range of languages represented became apparent. In particular, it was sometimes difficult to know how to translate a term from one language into another, and there was a need to clarify much of the special terminology related to testing. So, work began on a short *English language glossary of terms* which was appended to *Principles of Good Practice*. It subsequently became evident that established testing terminology did not exist in every ALTE language. In order for members to be able to communicate effectively and establish language testing as a professional discipline in their countries, it became apparent that there was an urgent need for a *Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms* covering all the ALTE languages. It was intended for use not just by the ALTE members but by the wider testing community, as ALTE members were undoubtedly not the only people involved in language testing to have encountered difficulties with terminology.

> *"When ALTE was formed, I think it's fair to say that the discipline of language testing was undeveloped across many European countries … so the vocabulary relating to many concepts was often deficient. We needed to be able to talk to each other. So we decided to do the Glossary. We felt we were helping to create the profession of language testing across member countries. It's pretty clear that without the technical terminology, you don't really have a discipline. And as new members joined, more of them created their own Glossary."*
>
> Mike Milanovic

Initial work on the Glossary project was based on existing lists of language testing terms, including a list compiled by the Dutch member organisation Cito. This was translated into English – the working language for establishing which terms should be included in the list. All the other language versions were produced by translating from the English list. The early stages of work involved adding to and deleting from the list originally developed by Cito, with other dictionaries and glossaries being consulted in order to do this, as well as terms being suggested by members.

The multilingual aspect of the task presented a challenge to the collective linguistic skills of ALTE representatives. Michaela Perlmann-Balme of the Goethe-Institut recalls the members sitting around a table together, going through each term one by one, and discussing whether it was necessary to include it and whether the definition was plausible.

Grappling with some of the concepts themselves also presented difficulties, as Perlmann-Balme recalls:

"We were editing and discussing as we were sitting in this room, and it was obvious that the knowledge of statistical terms was not the same amongst all the people in the room; some worked on the administrative side, or they were directors of institutions, they were not psychometricians. A very nice colleague from Denmark said several times, 'I don't think we have this term in Danish', and someone said to him, the fact that you don't know this term doesn't mean that it doesn't exist in your language! I didn't dare to say anything, but I realised after a while that this must be a very specialist field!"

Translation into the ALTE members' languages, and work on standardising all the different language versions, were underway. Publication of the completed Glossary in 10 languages was planned as part of the UCLES/Cambridge University Press Studies in Language Testing (SiLT) series, in print and CD-ROM form. The CD gave users the opportunity to hear the headwords read by native speakers.

Those involved in the production of the Glossary wanted it to be of use to the widest possible range of people, including classroom teachers and others whose primary interest was not testing, as well as those directly involved in producing or administering tests. Therefore, definitions were made as brief and clear as possible, and many basic terms (such as *question paper, candidate,* and even *examination*, plus the names of commonly used item and task types, e.g. *multiple choice, dictation, composition, cloze test*) were included, as well as more technical vocabulary.

The next stage was to translate the Glossary from English into the other nine project languages (Catalan, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Irish, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish). It was hoped that the Glossary would have a significant role to play in the development of language testing in the less widely taught languages included, by helping to establish new terminology alongside the more well-known equivalent terms in the more commonly used European languages. The completed Glossary in English and some other languages was submitted to the European Commission's LINGUA programme in January 1996, and the completed 10-language version was published by UCLES/Cambridge University Press as SiLT Volume 6 in 1998. Other languages were added as new members joined ALTE and sought to catch up with the projects which had been completed by the early members.
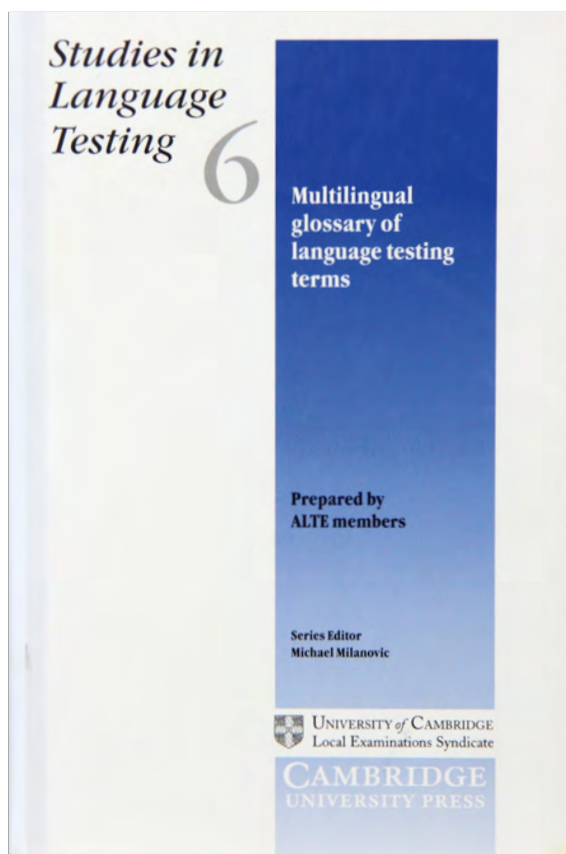
The completed Glossary in English and some other languages was submitted to the European Commission's LINGUA programme in January 1996, and the completed 10-language version was published by UCLES/Cambridge University Press as SiLT Volume 6 in 1998.

Content analysis checklists and item writer guidance

ALTE members needed to be able to group exams together into the various levels by comparing and analysing their content and the demands the exams made on the people who took them. Hence, a necessary step was to produce materials to help with exam content analysis (i.e. checklists to facilitate a detailed breakdown of the most important features of an examination), and materials for training the people whose job it was to write test materials.

Content analysis checklists were used in the ALTE Framework project at the stage where 'Can Do' statements had been written and provisionally grouped at critical levels, with test tasks then written to reflect these levels. The test tasks had to be analysed in great detail to ensure that they were viable and that they were placed at the correct level. Hence, for the purpose of describing the tasks, very detailed checklists were devised for reading, listening, writing and speaking. The checklists were potentially useful for any institution or company with an interest in evaluating teaching or testing materials.

Item writer guidance materials were similarly of interest to anybody who needed to develop a new test or to write materials for an existing test. They provided a comprehensive account of the whole process of test development

and production with lots of practical advice and exercises. Later, in 2005, they were revised and updated.

ALTE members could translate the checklists and guidelines into their own languages.

The Can Do Project

From April 1994 onwards, ALTE's aim of establishing a framework of levels in order to compare language qualifications was advanced by the association starting the 'Can Do Project'.

The aim of the project was "to validate the ALTE framework using empirical methods, to describe the ALTE levels in can-do terms, and to provide tools for establishing and describing the level of particular exams" (Neil Jones, 1997).

The Can Do Project was important against the backdrop of the CEFR:

> *"There was a perceived need within Europe for transnational recognition of certification, but the problem that certification could be variable in terms of the standards to which it referred, and so Can Dos evolved to try and make that more transparent, and that evolved into the CEFR concept. People around Europe needed to understand levels and what they meant, and how exams equated with each other."*
> Mike Milanovic

> *"The idea that we would be able to use the Can Dos in some empirical way to anchor the exams of the ALTE partners to one another was a very interesting, nice idea – presuming that they would function in the same way for each language."*
> Neil Jones

The 'Can Do Statements' provided definitions of what language learners can actually do in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking within several categories, such as professional life, social life, and studying. They became a useful tool with a range of applications, being readily understandable even to non-language testers. They were used as a checklist of what language users can do and hence make the task of identifying a language learner's current level of achievement and need for future training much easier; they can provide a basis for the development of diagnostic test tasks, activity-based curricula and teaching materials; and they can be of benefit to training and personnel managers in carrying out linguistic audits in the workplace and in specifying language requirements for posts.

A set of hundreds of Can Do Statements had been developed but was not yet calibrated. Calibration involved deconstructing the Statements (which were

quite complex) and shortening them into Can Do statements that people could endorse or not endorse. The idea was to verify empirically the work that had been done so far.

The statements were grouped together at a series of 'critical levels' (levels at which significant advances in language learning appear to take place), covering the entire range of language ability from beginner to advanced.

Validation of the Can Do Statements was planned to begin in early 1996, but a bid for further European Commission funding through the Socrates programme was rejected. ALTE members revised their proposal and re-submitted it to Socrates in September 1996. However, no funding was granted, partly because the European Commission believed that the work would continue without further Socrates funding.

The first task would be to collect data via questionnaires in order to calibrate the Can Do Statements, as, at this time, levels were subjectively assigned and the difficulty of Can Dos could vary.

In 1998, the data collection commenced. The Can Do Scales were divided into three questionnaires (work, study, and social/tourism) initially in eight ALTE languages, which could be answered by exam candidates ticking 'yes' or' no' in answer to statements about what they could do in a particular foreign language. From the responses received it was possible to ascertain whether the statements were in the correct order of difficulty.

Examples of some Can Do Statements at the different levels of proficiency:

Category: Social and tourist activity – casual socialising. Skill: listening/ speaking

Level 1: CAN take part in a simple conversation of a factual nature

Level 2: CAN express straightforward opinions, but not always with tact. Will not be able to discuss/argue a complex point of view.

Level 3: CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way, but if called upon to defend them may not be able to do so.

Level 4: CAN pick up nuances of meaning/opinion, but may still use occasional inappropriate language in sensitive or contentious conversations/discussions.

Level 5: CAN participate in conversations/discussions with only the occasional, minor lapse of appropriacy/understanding.

Data analysis was completed by summer 1998. This was no small task. Marianne Hirtzel recalls that she moved offices around the time when the questionnaires were being keyed in for analysis, and the movers commented that they had never seen so many stacks of papers in anyone's office!

Analysis resulted in revision of the Can Do Statements. For example, it became evident that if a statement was very simple or general, then more people would endorse it. A statement like 'I can read everything' would be endorsed by more people than the more specific 'I can read a car repair manual'. Some of the statements were streamlined, and negatively worded statements or double negatives (which did not calibrate well and resulted in erratic responses) were revised or removed, so that the statements focused more on what the candidate COULD do rather than what they could NOT do.

There was also the difficulty that people, culturally, have very different notions of the meaning of 'Can Do':

> *"We would find cultures in which people were rather bullish and said they could do everything, and others where people were rather modest. Also, levels are normed with respect to expected standard of performance. So, in the Netherlands, people say "Oh, CPE (a C2 level exam) is not nearly as hard as people say it is", because their norm is much higher. But there are other countries where the norms are much lower. And when you get people to self-rate, as we did here (and later in the European Survey on Language Competences), the self-ratings are quite good, but if you then compare the ratings in the Netherlands to a country where the expected standard of competence is much poorer, the people who rate themselves very high in the 'poor' country are coming out far below the people who rate themselves at A1 in the 'high' performing country, so everything is normed."* Neil Jones

The final stage was to devise a series of examination tasks in all the ALTE member languages to test the knowledge defined at the various levels (produced by people trained using the item writer guidance, and analysed with the aid of the content analysis materials).

The Can Do Project continued into the 2000s with work being done to link the Can Do Statements to exams on the ALTE Framework.

Developing more materials

The User's Guide for Examiners

In November 1995, ALTE was commissioned by the Council of Europe to produce a *User's Guide for Examiners*. The Guide was designed to help anyone

involved in the preparation of language tests, particularly those wishing to make full use of the Framework. Based on some sections of the LINGUA-funded Guidance for Item Writers, it comprised an outline of the test development process; a description of how test materials were produced and the stages involved; and the evaluation of tests and fairness in the context of their potential to have far-reaching educational and social impact.

Until this time, the language testing community had produced relatively little practical guidance in matters relating to test development and management. The Guide was therefore important because it was produced by practitioners well established in the field, with considerable expertise, and was the result of a process of reflection on shared experience in several countries. It is an example of how the existence of ALTE as a forum for sharing expertise could benefit the entire language testing community.

It was submitted to the Education Committee of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Cooperation in early 1996, in English and French. (Versions in other languages would be required by the Council of Europe with ALTE members logically being the right people to carry out the translations.) The Council of Europe published it as *Language Examining and Test Development* in 2001.

Updating ALTE Documents 1 and 2

As an ongoing task, new ALTE members' tests had to be analysed for inclusion in Documents 1 and 2 (the *Guide to European Language Examinations* and *European Examinations Systems*), using the ALTE checklists. Document 1 also needed to be updated to elaborate on the Framework at the higher levels, including descriptions based on the Can Do Project. Additionally, Documents 1 and 3 were produced in French versions during this period.

The ALTE Handbook

Incoming ALTE members also necessitated an update to the ALTE Handbook which was planned for November 1999 with a supplement for details of the Associate Members and their examinations. Marianne Hirtzel recalls that, with so many different members, work on the Handbook was never truly completed: "Just when you thought it was sorted, someone would change their details or a new member would be added, so that was a challenge!" Subsequent revisions of the Handbook were made more general, with less detail about examinations, which tended to go out of date quite quickly.

Relationship with EAQUALS

EAQUALS – established in 1991 – is a pan-European association with its headquarters originally in Trieste, Italy. It brings together a number of organisations within and beyond the EU that provide language teaching for non-native speakers in Europe, and aims to promote and safeguard quality in those organisations, and to promote the improvement of foreign language teaching and learning throughout Europe. Some ALTE members (initially the Goethe-Institut and UCLES) were also members of EAQUALS.

In 1994, in recognition of the synergy between the two organisations, ALTE and EAQUALS agreed to exchange information and documentation and allowed each other observer status at their meetings.

In the late 1990s, EAQUALS and ALTE started to work jointly on a project to produce a Portfolio for Adult Language Learners. The idea behind the Portfolio was to provide individuals with a means of recording and giving value to their lifelong language learning both inside and outside formal education, and hence to support the integration and mobility of citizens within Europe. It could record a person's linguistic abilities in a form which was easily recognisable across Europe, and could therefore be used to support people applying for jobs, education or training in another country. Any level of ability could be recorded in the Portfolio, and so it could serve to motivate students to develop competence in several languages, thereby supporting plurilingualism.

The two organisations continued to work jointly on an EAQUALS-ALTE version of the Portfolio in the 2000s (see Chapter 4).

The FINGS group

The FINGS group was set up by representatives from Finland, Ireland, Norway, Greece and Sweden, who had all recently joined ALTE, to represent the interests of the so-called 'cultural languages'.

In early 1997, the group received two years' funding under the European Commission's Socrates LINGUA D programme, to translate and adapt existing ALTE materials (i.e. the content analysis checklists, item writer training materials, Can Do Statements and multilingual glossary).

They then moved on to developing a Breakthrough Level Specification (completed at the end of 1998); the lowest level of competence recognised in the Council of Europe Framework. Breakthrough level had never been worked out for the more widely taught languages such as English, Spanish, French and

German because it had not been seen as important. 'In the area of international certification it seemed useless to test a level where learners have so little to show and which has so little use for the job market ... it was felt that there was almost "nothing" worth assessing' (Perlmann-Balme 2013:86).

However, the FINGS group believed that a specification at this basic level was of particular importance to the less widely taught and used languages. In their proposal for developing a Breakthrough specification, they clarified that their target groups were students wishing to gain some knowledge of a less widely spoken language, but who would not be obliged to study through the medium of the taught language; and those living or working temporarily in the hosting country and wishing to learn the language for fun or out of cultural interest; with both groups of learners not being motivated to acquire a higher level of linguistic competence. The FINGS group felt that in order to promote their languages in a global linguistic context and stimulate learners with low motivation and low expectations in terms of their language proficiency, it was necessary to offer an indication to those learners that they were 'on their way', rather than show them that they had reached a particular point on a given scale; hence the development of a Breakthrough level.

This would pave the way for producers of tests in the more widely taught languages to produce Breakthrough level exams, which could be of particular relevance, for example, in motivating young learners or adults to start to learn a foreign language, or for the purpose of migration and integration.

FINGS representatives in 1999

Ongoing Work (2000-2012)

Summer 2000 saw the 10th anniversary of the founding of ALTE. The association had grown to 19 Full Members and seven Associate Members, but the issue of how to bring ALTE to a yet wider audience was in the minds of members.

This period was also when the association worked hard on what is generally regarded as one of its most significant achievements, the ALTE Quality Management System or QMS, an ongoing project which resulted in a key milestone in 2012 with the introduction of the ALTE Q-mark.

Secretariat and staffing

Barbara Stevens joined the ALTE Secretariat in 2002, replacing Marianne Hirtzel. Her first meeting was the 25th meeting in Salamanca in November of that year.

Barbara Stevens left in 2008, and Martin Nuttall joined Cambridge ESOL (formerly UCLES) in November 2008 as European Projects Manager with responsibility for the ALTE Secretariat.

An assistant was also taken on in the Secretariat to provide permanent administrative support as the amount of administrative work was increasing along with expanding membership plus affiliates.

Inception of the ALTE Evaluation Unit

In 2003, Sibylle Bolton had observed that trialling and statistical analysis were weak points for many ALTE member organisations. She suggested that an evaluation unit should be set up by ALTE in order to perform trialling and statistical analysis on behalf of these organisations. This idea was supported by other ALTE members who were experiencing difficulties with these aspects of their work. The unit could be of particular benefit to ALTE members who were

Martin Nuttall of Cambridge ESOL (formerly UCLES) joined in November 2008 as European Projects Manager

struggling to meet the standards defined in the Quality Management System because they lacked the resources and knowledge necessary.

> *"This applied especially to the area of psychometrics and statistics, as at that time not many institutions had psychometricians on their staff. There was also the question of resources – smaller institutions had fewer staff and not many resources, hence they felt that they would fail to meet the standards set out by ALTE."*
>
> Henk Kuijper

Some of the members did have the experience and resources to provide a statistical analysis service to the others, and three partners became involved: the Goethe-Institut, Universidad de Salamanca, and Il Centro per la Valutazione e le Certificazioni Linguistiche, Università per Stranieri di Perugia (CVCL). They were joined in 2005 by Centro de Avaliação de Português Língua Estrangeira (CAPLE) in Portugal, and later by the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. A validation officer based in Cambridge, Peter Hardcastle, was taken on in 2004 to carry out work on the exams of these institutions. He was replaced from 2005 to 2013 by Michael Corrigan.

Widening participation

In order to widen participation, ALTE began to open its doors in the late 1990s to non-EU/EEA organisations as Associate Members. It had also, following Milanovic's proposal in 1999, changed the structure of its bi-annual meetings and introduced two open-to-all Conference Days per year to promote ALTE

more effectively at a local level and to enable the outcomes of its work to be more widely available publicly, as well as to enable ALTE members to learn about local language testing projects. These conference days were free of charge until 2015, when the host organisation could decide to set a small charge if appropriate.

Expanding Membership

ALTE membership continued to grow steadily. ALTE was gaining a prominent position in the world of language testing, with members representing a broad base of language testing experts across Europe, collectively providing exams for a large population of test takers in Europe and throughout the world.

ALTE already had Associate Members in six of the countries which joined the EU in 2004 – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Slovenia – and legal procedures needed to be initiated to formalise the change of status from associate to full membership.

In 2000, all the Associate Members signed the Deeds of Adherence, enabling them to be officially registered as part of the ALTE membership. This marked a new phase in the history of ALTE, uniting more and more nations who were striving to achieve high standards of quality in language testing following an agreed code of practice. The assessment of the Associate Member's exams was ongoing. It was felt that with the admission of Poland and Slovenia and the numbers of affiliates growing, there was an increasing need for Associate Members to work together.

Ina Ferbežar from the Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language, attended her first ALTE meeting in 2000 and recalls its significance in developing her confidence in her work:

"I was working on a project to upgrade the system of testing Slovene, and I was more or less alone. I had heard about ALTE in the late 1990s, and I was lucky to meet Clara de Vega Santos from the University of Salamanca when she was in Ljubljana. I have friends who speak Spanish and who invited me to meet Clara. She advised me to write to Mike Milanovic, and so I did.

At my first ALTE meeting I was a little bit afraid because I was new in the field and I had never really studied testing, I'm a linguist, and I was afraid about what everyone would say to me – but everyone was so nice and they all said to me, 'Ina, we all started like that, we were also small centres', so for me it was very important."

Ferbežar says that hosting a meeting was important in feeling that the Centre had become truly integrated within ALTE: *"A key moment in my institution's history was the 26th meeting that we organised in Ljubljana in 2003; it really made us feel involved, and that we were a part of the group – it was a real initiation!"*

Julia Todorinova from the University of Sofia explains how ALTE membership has benefited her institution:

"For my organisation, being in ALTE gives us the opportunity to participate in all ALTE projects and we have learned a lot, especially from the practice of such big and reputable institutions as Cambridge ESOL, Goethe-Institut, CIEP [Centre international d'études pédagogiques, now France Éducation International] and CVCL. Other institutions in Bulgaria dealing with language testing now seek and appreciate our expertise."

Todorinova recalls the first meeting in which she was involved, in Sofia, 2006, and how she and a colleague organised a trip to Rila Monastery for the participants – despite increasing in size, the meetings were still an opportunity for the host to show the other attendees what their town or city had to offer. She feels that ALTE membership has also been of personal benefit to her:

"For me personally, the years in which I have been fully engaged in the work of ALTE are extremely valuable, useful and significant for my professional development. I am very happy that I have been fortunate to meet and work with such outstanding professionals as my colleagues from ALTE".

In Summer 2000, ALTE had 19 Full Members representing 16 languages, plus seven Associate Members. By Spring 2004, there were 27 members representing 23 languages, plus two Associate Members (Russia and Bulgaria), the other associates having progressed to full membership. ALTE was also welcoming around 15 observer associations to each meeting. Its representation of regional languages (e.g. Basque, Catalan and Welsh) was steadily increasing. By May 2010, ALTE membership totalled 33 organisations representing 26 languages.

Observers and affiliates

Having begun to admit Associate Members, ALTE was still trying to find ways in which those unable to become ALTE members - both organisations and individuals – might share in and benefit from its work. One of the ways in which this was eventually achieved was the admission of observers (later Affiliates) to ALTE meetings.

It was acknowledged that some organisations, as well as attending open conference days, might also wish to take part in ALTE workshops and Sub Groups, which they could do as observer delegates (although at the same time acknowledging that observer attendance was not appropriate in certain parts of meetings where confidential or business matters were being discussed).

By 2001, discussions were ongoing about whether to let certain organisations attend meetings with observer status. Some members were concerned that an influx of observers would make the meetings too large and impractical, as well as affecting continuity of work if different observers attended each time, but overall the introduction of observers was felt to be a beneficial development in terms of widening participation.

That year the first two observer applications were approved – ESADE from Barcelona, and Österreichisches SprachdiplomDeutsch (ÖSD) from Vienna – and their representatives attended their first meeting in Budapest in November 2001.

Individual participation in ALTE

The possibility of individuals joining ALTE originally arose in 2003 in connection with a series of events to be run by ALTE under the banner of the European Commission's Linguistic Diversity programme and concerned with the less widely spoken languages, which were to be open to individuals interested in language testing. This raised the question of individual membership of ALTE, and the Membership Committee initiated discussions about the implications, and whether the character of ALTE would be changed. The outcome of these discussions was the introduction of Individual Affiliate status.

Affiliate status

At the 33rd meeting in April 2007, in the wake of a revised ALTE constitution (see below), affiliate status was introduced both for institutions and individuals. Institutional affiliation was essentially a renaming of observer status and was intended for institutions that had an interest in the testing field but that did not or were unable to meet the membership criteria, as well as for those organisations that wanted to apply for ALTE membership in the future but did not yet have the expertise to do so, especially given that with the introduction of the auditing system, organisations now had to demonstrate the extent to which they adhered to the 17 Minimum Standards.

> ALTE has taken steps to widen participation in its activities by bringing in new categories of Institutional and Individual Affiliates allowing a wider range of organisations and individuals to make a real contribution to the development of a truly International approach to language testing.
> (Weir and Milanovic 2009, in *Language Testing Matters: Investigating the wider social and educational impact of assessment – Proceedings of the ALTE Cambridge Conference, April 2008,* Edited by Lynda Taylor and Cyril J Weir, 2009)

The new constitution also provided for individual association with ALTE. Individual Affiliates were able to share some of the benefits available to ALTE members – they could attend conference days and other events and receive ALTE information via regular newsletters.

Open Conference Days

May 2000 marked the first 3-day ALTE meeting. It was hosted by the Alliance Française in Paris and included the first ALTE open-to-all Conference Day on the Friday, with over 100 participants.

In recognition of the fact that organising a 3-day ALTE meeting was now much more work for the host, a committee was set up in 2001 to help arrange ALTE meetings, and provide support and ideas for workshops and presentations. Attendees began to be given a choice of workshops and Sub Groups to attend on the first two days, and on the third day presentations were given on ALTE projects and on current issues in language testing, by leading names in language testing such as Cyril Weir, Barry O'Sullivan, Anthony Kunnan and John Trim as well as by local presenters.

"I remember I was impressed by the conference days, not only because the topics of the presentations were attractive and topical, but also because the speakers were outstanding professionals in their fields and you could learn a lot."

Julia Todorinova

Sub Groups

The Sub Group format continued to work well and was welcomed by members as a means of continuing the work of ALTE as the organisation grew in size, as not everyone could be, or wished to be, involved in everything. Mike Milanovic as Manager emphasised that the Sub Groups – subsequently known as Special Interest Groups or SIGs – should be self-sufficient and take responsibility for their own work and for reporting back, since it was neither possible nor desirable for the Secretariat to run every area. Sub Groups began to be able to request ALTE funding to meet outside the biannual meeting structure.

In 2002, Sub Groups were in existence concerned with the following areas:

- The Code of Practice

- Work Oriented Language Examinations

- Breakthrough Level

  (This Sub Group built on the work of the FINGS group since 1996 and worked closely with John Trim of the Council of Europe (just as ALTE members had done during the development of the Vantage-level specification) to produce a specification for an objective at Level A1 of the CEFR. This was the lowest level considered worthy of public examination and was relevant to summer school learners, Erasmus students, people living/working temporarily in a country, and migrants.)

- Teacher Certification

- Young Learners

- The ALTE Framework

- Associate Members

- The Nordic Sub Group, which consisted of members from Denmark, Norway and Sweden. They found it useful to share their experiences given their shared cultural and teaching traditions and the similarities in their languages.

Developing Assessment Literacy – the ALTE Testing Courses

Demonstrating its commitment to increasing assessment literacy within the language testing community, ALTE ran its first testing course – an Introductory Course in Language Testing – in Munich in September 2005.

The course was taught by Professor Cyril Weir from the University of Bedfordshire and Professor Barry O'Sullivan then at the University of Roehampton. It focused on the practical application of testing and assessment theory. After very positive feedback from course participants, further courses were planned, and Perugia and Maynooth offered to host subsequent ones.

In April 2009 in Santiago de Compostela, a 2-day course was incorporated into the ALTE meeting and conference week, so the 3-day conference became a week of activities with a 2-day pre- or post-conference course.

In November 2009, ALTE made another addition to its portfolio of courses with the first ALTE Foundation Course, held in Maynooth. This was a 1-day course.

International Conferences

2001 was designated the European Year of Languages by the Council of Europe, the European Union and UNESCO. The purpose of the initiative was to highlight the importance of language learning for personal development and as a necessary response to economic, social, and cultural changes. It was also intended to emphasise Europe's cultural richness and encourage closer collaboration amongst individuals, schools, and other institutions. Initiatives were planned in most European countries to mark the European Year of Languages. An ALTE Sub Group was set up to look at the possibility of holding a self-financing two-day international conference in 2001 to mark the initiative, with plenary sessions, workshops, poster sessions, a reception and conference dinner. Such international conferences were another way in which ALTE sought to open its doors to a wider constituency.

1st ALTE International Conference, 2001

ALTE therefore celebrated the European Year of Languages by holding its first large-scale international academic conference, at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, on 5–7 July 2001, with local organisation from the Generalitat de Catalunya. The aim was to bring together language testers from both Europe and the rest of the world to exchange ideas, present the results of research projects and develop their knowledge.

Above left: Jordi Vilajoana, Minister for Culture, Generalitat de Catalunya, speaks at the opening ceremony

Above right: Mike Milanovic at the opening ceremony

Left: John Trim in Barcelona

The event was on a hitherto unprecedented scale for ALTE. The conference was unique in being the largest one ever held in Europe on language testing. Over 350 delegates from more than 35 countries attended.

The official theme of the conference was *European Language Testing Issues in a Global Context.* This was chosen with the aim of examining the current state of language testing in Europe, its impact on and influences from the rest of the world. Certain sub-themes were regarded as particularly relevant: the assessment of younger learners; cultural considerations in language assessment; the relationship between new technology and testing, and innovations in testing using IT; the use of examinations within educational systems; and European projects such as the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio.

There were six plenary presentations: Joseph Sheils (Modern Languages Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg) gave the opening plenary on the language policy of the Council of Europe and the promotion of plurilingualism, mentioning various initiatives in connection with the European Year of Languages, especially the introduction of the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR. Raffaele Sanzo (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, Rome) presented on the Progetto Lingue 2000 in Italy, an example of how foreign language learning and testing was being dealt with within a national context. Anne Lazaraton (University of Minnesota, USA) spoke about qualitative research methods in language test development and validation.

The other plenaries were given by Wolfgang Mackiewicz of the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, who presented on higher education and language policy in the European Union, and how linguistic and cultural diversity can be supported; John Trim (Project Director for Modern Languages, Council of Europe, 1971–1997), who spoke about the CEFR and its implications for language testing; and Charles Alderson (Lancaster University, UK). Alderson's presentation dealt with the current state of language testing, and predicted future developments including areas where he felt change should be considered.

Other speakers included Antony Kunnan from California State University, USA, John Read from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and Elana Shohamy from Tel Aviv University, Israel.
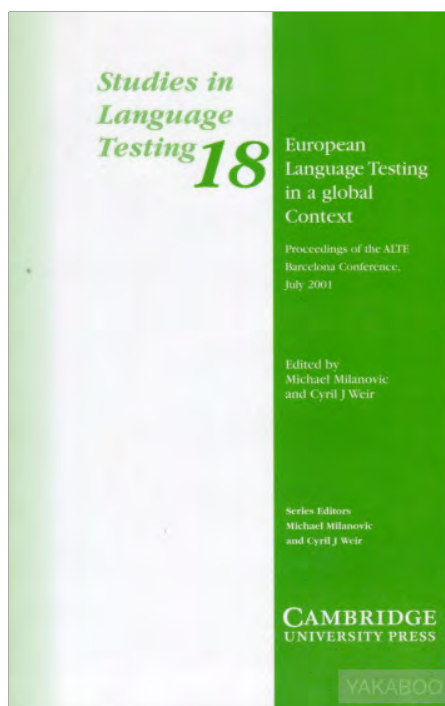
Selected papers from the conference were jointly published by UCLES and Cambridge University Press as SiLT volume 18 in 2004.

Overall, nearly 70 presentations (in the form of oral papers, poster sessions and workshops) were given at the conference, representing most of the languages which were then part of ALTE. Presentations relating to particular European projects included the ALTE Can Do project by Neil Jones, one on the EAQUALS-ALTE European Language Portfolio, a presentation on relating test scores to the CEFR by John de Jong of Language Testing Services, and various presentations on the DIALANG project. In the spirit of ALTE, the conference was multilingual with simultaneous translation of plenary addresses into English, French, Catalan and Spanish.

The Generalitat de Catalunya organised a conference dinner and an evening reception for conference delegates in the Palau de Generalitat, a historic building not normally open to the public.

Following the success of the 2001 event, ALTE members were in agreement that the international conference format was a useful forum for promoting the association to a wide audience and encouraging discussion and debate in language testing, and plans were swiftly made to hold another international conference in 2005, coinciding with the 15th anniversary of ALTE.

2nd ALTE International Conference

2005 was designated by the Council of Europe as the European Year of Citizenship through Education. One of the aims of the year was to support democratic citizenship and participation in order to promote social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and respect for diversity and human rights. It was marked by ALTE by its 2nd International Conference, held on May 19–21 2005 in Berlin, in support of the 50th Anniversary of the European Cultural Convention.

The Conference was hosted by the Goethe-Institut. It focused on the theme of *Language Assessment in a Multilingual Context.* The conference considered ways of describing and comparing language qualifications to establish common levels of proficiency, and offered a forum for the discussion of issues associated with quality, ethics and transparency in assessment. The Council of Europe's Language Policy Division and ALTE set up a joint forum at the conference, focusing on political and ethical issues involved in defining and assessing the language proficiency required for citizenship, and active participation of newcomers in social, occupational and democratic processes.

Plenary presentations were given by Professor Liz Hamp-Lyons from the University of Melbourne, Australia; Professor Antony Kunnan; Dr Brian North, Head of Academic Development and Franchise Schools at Eurocentres;

ALTE BERLIN 2005

Professor Elana Shohamy, Chair of the Language Education Programme at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University; and Professor Cyril Weir from the University of Bedfordshire.

The conference proceedings were published as SiLT volume 27.

*Cambridge was the venue for the
3rd International Conference in April 2008.*

3rd ALTE International Conference

The Cambridge conference formed part of the International Year Of Languages 2008, announced by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 and promoted by UNESCO (the United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture).

With over 180 papers fully reflecting the diversity of ALTE, the 3rd ALTE Conference became one of the largest and most comprehensive events of its kind at that point in time.

Plenary presenters were Micheline Chalhoub-Deville from the University of North Carolina; John A Hawkins from the University of Cambridge; Tim McNamara from the University of Melbourne; Brian North; James Purpura of Columbia University; and Lynda Taylor, Consultant to Cambridge ESOL.

570 delegates attended, representing 65 countries and 300 organisations. It was a multilingual event with papers being delivered in English, German, French, Italian and Spanish, on the theme of *The Social and Educational Impact of Language Assessment.* The theme was particularly topical in 2008 given the level of public debate around the use of language tests in the context of migration and citizenship, higher education and employment.

> *One of ALTE's main aims is to share ideas and know-how. Events such as the 2008 ALTE Conference in Cambridge provided an ideal opportunity for language teaching and testing professionals from around the world to meet and to pool expertise and to consider together how best to resolve some of the important challenges facing society today. (Weir and Milanovic 2009:xi)*

4th ALTE International Conference

The 4th ALTE International Conference was held in Kraków on 7–9 July 2011, hosted by the Jagiellonian University. Over 100 presenters contributed to the theme *The impact of language frameworks on assessment, learning and teaching.*

Some of the leading figures in the language testing field gave plenary and keynote presentations, including Professor Lyle Bachman, Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of California, and Professor Elana Shohamy, Chair of the Language Education Programme at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University. The other plenary presenters were Professor Giuliana Grego Bolli of CVCL, Dr Neil Jones from Cambridge ESOL, Dr Waldemar Martyniuk of the Jagiellonian University, and Dr Michaela Perlmann-Balme from the Goethe-Institut.

Professor Lyle Bachman gives his plenary presentation

Professor Elana Shohamy

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Changes to governance and structure

Establishment of the ALTE Executive Committee

It had been suggested in the 1990s that numbers attending the twice-yearly ALTE business meetings were growing to the point where the meetings were becoming too large and unwieldy, and that they could be streamlined by electing a certain number of representatives of the whole ALTE group to deal specifically with finances, new member applications, new projects, funding etc.

The other problem with ALTE business meetings was that large numbers of new observers (affiliates) were making presentations, which took up a lot of time. The need had arisen to find a more efficient format for the vetting of new observers/affiliates, so that more time could be devoted to business matters.

A Membership Committee was therefore set up in 2007 consisting of José Pascoal (University of Lisbon), Giuliana Grego Bolli (Università per Stranieri di Perugia), Steffi Steiner (Goethe-Institut), Emyr Davies (WJEC-CBAC), Jon Simon Gartzia (Basque Government) and Gilles Breton (CIEP). The committee's role was to deal with applications for affiliate status; in the light of development of the Quality Management System, applications for full membership would be passed on and dealt with by the Secretariat and the Standing Committee on the Code of Practice.

In Santiago de Compostela, in 2009 it was agreed to change the twice-yearly business meeting format. Martin Nuttall explains: "*We had felt that there were too many affiliates presenting at the business meeting, so instead of having two business meetings a year it was decided that ALTE would have an Annual General Meeting in April to look at finances, discuss issues, and to ratify ideas that were proposed by Secretariat, and in November we would have a Members' Update.*"

At this meeting there was a related important major change/innovation – the establishment of an Executive Committee as the highest decision-making body within ALTE. This Committee would take on the role of the Membership Committee but would also be responsible for approving annual accounts and annual membership subscription levels; approving new members and affiliates (specifically, vetting new affiliate applications in a process co-ordinated by the Secretariat and dealt with outside meetings); making amendments to categories of members or to the ALTE constitution; and supporting the activities of the Secretariat.

Members of this decision-making body would be elected by the ALTE membership. Elections took place and the first meeting was chaired by Berit Halvorsen from the University of Bergen, Norway. The final two places on the Executive Committee were filled in November 2009.

The ALTE Constitution

Once the new Executive Committee was in place, it was necessary to draw up a new ALTE Constitution to reflect changes to ALTE's governance and its membership admission procedures. The new Constitution formalised procedures for dealing with new applicants for full and associate membership, and provided for individual and institutional affiliation with ALTE. It also detailed the roles of the Executive Committee and Standing Committee.

The new constitution was ratified in Vilnius at the 34th meeting in November 2007. It was updated in 2012 and then again in 2018, the last update of ALTE as an EEIG.

The ALTE Framework and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

During the 2000s, the process of aligning the ALTE levels to the Council of Europe levels continued, with the Framework in a continuous process of development. Examinations produced by Associate Members needed to be assessed in preparation for their inclusion. There was also the question of the addition of (or separate frameworks for) examinations testing language in the workplace, and exams for young learners. In 2000, a Framework Sub Group was set up to consider these issues.

2001 was a significant year for ALTE – the CEFR was published by the Council of Europe, and included an appendix about the ALTE Can Do project. The equivalence of the levels on the ALTE Framework with the Council of Europe levels was clarified through labelling the ALTE Framework table with the Council of Europe Levels A1–C2. Subsequently, it was decided to use only the Council of Europe level names, which were increasingly in use as standard reference points, and to remove the ALTE level names, so as not to confuse users and to make it easier to understand how the ALTE framework fit with the CEFR.

The Breakthrough Sub Group continued the work initiated by the FINGS group, looking at the development of a set of Breakthrough level (A1) descriptors in more languages, in collaboration with the Council of Europe and Dr John Trim.

In 2004, the Council of Europe began work on the preliminary version of its *Manual for relating/aligning examinations to the CEFR*. Some ALTE members were interested in working with the Council of Europe by piloting or acting as case studies for the manual, and formed an authoring sub

group. This supported the linking of ALTE examinations to the CEFR, and several members became involved in the calibration and benchmarking activities, which were also a recommended part of the ALTE Quality Management System.

The Sub Group revised the Pilot Manual in 2007, and subsequently the group changed its name to the CEFR/Manual Special Interest Group to more accurately reflect its range of activities.

Continuing the Can Do Project

The link between the ALTE Framework and the Can Do Statements is one of the main achievements of ALTE. It is important because the Can Do Project is one of the main ways that levels on the ALTE Framework can be linked to levels of the CEFR. This was especially relevant in the light of the publication of the CEFR in 2001.

The Can Do Project continued into the 2000s with work being done to link the Can Do Statements to examinations on the ALTE Framework. Work had already been done on linking the UCLES exams on the ALTE Framework and the Can Do Statements – this was done by asking exam candidates to complete questionnaires to compare how they assessed their own ability with how they performed in the exams.

The next step was to do the same with some of the other ALTE member exams. 2000 was spent setting up questionnaires for more languages, ready to use for data collection. The questionnaires – shortened to make them easier for candidates to complete – were used to collect data for all member examinations to show more clearly the links between their exams and the CEFR levels.

After an extensive programme of validation there were 450 statements, on a scale from ALTE Level 1 to Level 5. The statements had been revised, with many being moved to lower levels, hence more statements at the top end had to be produced and validated.

In 2003, the Can Dos were put onto a searchable Access database on CD-ROM.

Further development of materials

ALTE partners continued to work on developing the Glossary and making it more comprehensive with regard to identifying testing terminology in more languages. Versions in the FINGS languages and Russian were produced in

2000, and in Polish, Slovenian and English as a result of LINGUA TiPS funding in 2004.

TiPS – Testing in Polish & Slovene – was a LINGUA 2 project within ALTE, with European Commission funding made available to cover development of language learning tools and materials. The partners were the Jagiellonian University, the University of Ljubljana, and the University of Athens, who acted as consultants.

Membership of ALTE, and access to LINGUA funding, were very significant for Slovene. Thanks to this funding the University of Ljubljana was able to produce much of the documentation essential to codifying the Slovene language so as to be able to teach it effectively to foreigners: item writer guidelines, checklists adapted for use in Slovenia, handbooks, the breakthrough level description, and a version of the Glossary. Ina Ferbežar from the University of Ljubljana emphasises that this was all quite an achievement: "This was all so important because that's how we developed a bit of infrastructure, we got all the basic literature for that."

The Basque Government produced a version of the Glossary in Basque and English in 2006. Similarly, under the Socrates-funded DevProTHELL project from 2001–2002, a group of ALTE partners produced materials in Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian and Lithuanian. These Associate Members had succeeded in bidding for LINGUA funding. The materials comprised a glossary of testing terms; Can Do statements; guidelines for test item writers; and checklists for test evaluation. A breakthrough level was also developed and extended into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, tailored to the specific needs of learners in those countries.

The Manual for Language Test Development and Examining

ALTE's collaboration with the Council of Europe had resulted in a number of documents being added to the 'toolkit' of how to operationalise the CEFR. In 2009, the Council of Europe had published the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR in order to address the alignment of tests to the CEFR. It set out a general approach and a number of options available, including standard setting. But it did not focus on how to develop tests and the items contained in the tests.

ALTE was therefore responsible for producing the *Manual for Language Test Development and Examining*, which was designed to be complementary to the *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*. This was published in 2011.
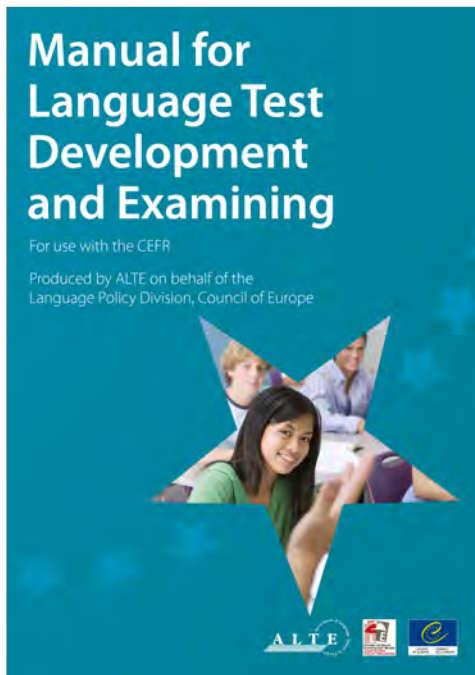
This manual was meant to be non-prescriptive and sought to highlight the main principles and approaches to test development and assessment, which the user can refer to when developing tests within their own contexts of use.

Relationships with other European organisations in the early 21st century

During this time, ALTE maintained its existing close relationship with European and other institutions, and forged links with some new ones. Mike Milanovic continued to emphasise the need to strengthen ALTE's ties to European institutions: in September 2004, he sent a letter to the ALTE partners indicating the need to establish and build new relationships with EU officials. Progress was made through ALTE collaboration on projects like DIALANG (see Chapter 3).

The AEA

ALTE became a member of AEA Europe (the Association for Educational Assessment) which at the time consisted of 48 corporate members and 46 individual members from the EU, East and Mediterranean area. The Association "defines educational assessment in its broadest sense, by including academic, professional and vocational contexts and is equally concerned with both assessment processes and products". Marianne Hirtzel attended the

inaugural meeting in Prague in November 2000. ALTE remained a member until 2016.

EAQUALS

ALTE's relationship with EAQUALS was formalised by the signing of a memorandum of understanding with EAQUALS by Mike Milanovic and Brian North on 14 November 2008, signifying the two organisations' commitment to working together to find synergies, to exchange information and attend each other's meetings. The collaboration with the modern Eaquals continues in the present day. ALTE's 35th meeting (Lisbon, November 2008) included a Friday conference day held jointly with EAQUALS for the first time. The theme was *Quality and assessment for language learning.*

ALTE and EAQUALS began to work together on the European Language Portfolio (ELP) project in the late 1990s, and the ELP was officially launched at the opening ceremony for the European Year of Languages, in Lund, Sweden, on 18–20 Feb 2001.

Based on the language levels described in the CEFR, the EAQUALS-ALTE version of the ELP was validated by the Council of Europe in 2000 and published in December 2001 in English, French, German and Italian. The EAQUALS-ALTE Portfolio was designed to reflect the diversity and comparability of ALTE member examinations at different levels of achievement through clear links with the CEFR – a major strength, given that the CEFR was becoming the standard to which courses, materials and tests were linked all over Europe; hence the Portfolio, by referring to a recognised pan-European system, could slot into education systems throughout Europe.

Aimed at adult language learners, the Portfolio consisted of three parts:

- a Language Passport, where the student could record their experience and ability in up to six different languages (including their mother tongue), including formal qualifications and self-assessments, details of ALTE exams taken and courses attended at EAQUALS member schools

- a Language Biography, to record the student's language learning history and experiences

- a Dossier, containing samples of work, certificates etc., chosen by the student to support the Language Passport and Language Biography by illustrating their language skills, experiences and achievements.

ALTE and EAQUALS continued to work together on the electronic ELP, which in September 2005 was the first electronic portfolio to be validated by the Council of Europe Validation Committee.

Participating in European affairs

The Progetto Lingue 2000 Impact Study

In February 1999, the Italian Ministry of Education invited providers of international language certificates to a meeting in Rome where they were asked to provide details of their exams and how they could be used to provide appropriate assessment within the context of a project for language development in Italian middle schools. The project provided additional teaching of English, French, German and Spanish over a 3-year period and the opportunity to take an international language certificate at the end.

Schools could apply for funding from the Italian Ministry of Education to offer their students international certificates, as well as get the funding for extra language tuition, training and materials. By September 2000, the Ministry reported that 58,000 students of school age had taken external exams. Of these, 37,000 were taken with ALTE partners, 23,000 of these were taking an English exam, 12,000 were for French, German numbered 1,700, and Spanish nearly 250.

An ALTE Sub Group was established in 2000 specifically to support the project, and the ALTE partners arranged over 400 seminars explaining how the various exams worked, and how to prepare for them. The success of the ALTE exams can be attributed to the fact that they match so closely the defined standards of the CEFR, clearly seen in the direct correspondence of ALTE exam levels to those of the CEFR.

SurveyLang

The European Survey on Language Competences (SurveyLang) was a major initiative by the European Commission to support the development of language learning policies across Europe.

The idea for the initiative originated as part of a European Council strategy to teach at least two foreign languages from a very early age. The SurveyLang consortium, awarded the contract in February 2008 to carry out the survey, was made up of eight partners. Of these, seven were ALTE members, six of whom were responsible for producing test items in their native languages: CIEP (French), Goethe-Institut (German), Instituto Cervantes and Universidad de Salamanca (Spanish), Università per Stranieri di Perugia (Italian), and Cambridge ESOL (English). In addition, Cambridge ESOL was responsible for programme management and field operations, and Cito worked on questionnaires and data analysis. The other member of the consortium was Gallup Europe, responsible for sampling and computer-based software systems.

The survey tested the two most widely taught European languages (out of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish) in each country, from a representative sample of pupils in their final year of lower secondary education, and assessed their proficiency in listening, reading and writing in order to provide information on the general level of foreign language knowledge of pupils in the participating countries.

The results of the survey were published in 2012, and are influential in assisting policy makers, teachers and practitioners in improving foreign language teaching methods and hence improve the performance of pupils in foreign languages.

Council of Europe NGO status

In 2006 ALTE was awarded International NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) consultative status with the Council of Europe, having first become an International NGO with participatory status in 2003. 'Participatory status is granted to organisations which are particularly representative in their field of competence at a broader European level and are capable of contributing to and participating actively in Council of Europe deliberations and activities' (Barbara Stevens in *A Common Solution to a Common European Challenge: the Work of ALTE*, Research Notes 17, August 2004).

Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism

In 2009, ALTE was invited to participate in a new Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism established by the European Commission and consisting of 29 member organisations. The inaugural meeting took place in Brussels in October 2009.

The Civil Society Platform aspires to raise the awareness for multilingualism among policy makers, educationalists and parents throughout Europe. It advocates several key targets, including:

- plurilingual education should become the norm;
- measures should be taken to make language teaching and learning more effective throughout Europe;
- learning support to immigrants should be strengthened to foster cultural diversity and social inclusion.

At the launch meeting, Leonard Orban, the EU Commissioner for Multilingualism emphasised that multilingualism would contribute significantly to the

realisation of wider EU goals, such as bringing Europe closer to its citizens, and that there were strong existing links between multilingualism, language skills and the creation of new jobs. The work of Civil Society Platform resulted in Poliglotti4.eu, a project which promoted multilingualism in Europe.

ALTE continues to be a member of a reformed European Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism, sending representatives to its meetings.

The ALTE
Quality Management System

The development of the Code of Practice and subsequently the ALTE Quality Management System (QMS) was ongoing during the 2000s, and is regarded by ALTE members as *the* key milestone in the pursuit of ensuring quality in European language test development. It resulted in a quality audit system whereby members' tests can be awarded a quality mark (a 'Q-mark') to prove evidence of tests' quality.

The Code of Practice Group worked hard to develop and put into practice quality assurance mechanisms. The group stated that 'the aim of a quality management system should be to guarantee minimum quality standards for ALTE exams, based on the ALTE Code of Practice'.

> *"Right from the start, the ambition was to have a system which would allow you to compare exams, not just on the claim made about a level, but whether the exam system and the management of it was suitable for purpose. And we've seen that happen in the evolution from the Code of Practice to the Principles of Good Practice, quality management and auditing, and now the Q-mark. It has been a journey, and it has evolved directly from Mike Milanovic's original ambitions when he visited Salamanca University in 1989."*
>
> Nick Saville

The ALTE Code of Practice

ALTE members had decided early on in the history of ALTE that it was essential to adopt a formal Code of Practice which would define the common standards that all current and future members would strive to achieve in the production and administration of their examinations, and also to set out what test users could expect in the areas of examination development, interpretation of exam results, fairness, and information.

In 1994, this Code of Practice had been officially accepted by the ALTE membership, as is included in Appendix G. In the 1990s, it formed a set of

guiding principles only, rather than defining rules but has evolved into the present day ALTE QMS, which requires ALTE Members and Applicant Members to demonstrate that they have met the standards set out in the Code of Practice.

Putting the Code of Practice into action

"In the world of testing, 'setting standards' is generally considered to be very important. However, as we all know, putting our standards into practice can be complicated."

Piet van Avermaet, QMS and The Setting of Minimum Standards:
Issuesof Contextualisation Variation between The Testing Bodies, 2003.

Piet van Avermaet

ALTE had admitted many new organisations during the 1990s, and in 2000 in the light of this, it was decided to revisit the issue of standards, and specifically to look at mechanisms for monitoring adherence to the Code. A Working Group was set up, consisting of five ALTE members (Nick Saville, Piet van Avermaet, Henk Kuijper, Peter Villads Vedel and Ramon Parrondo) to lead the work on updating and developing the principles set out within the Code of Practice. The group's remit was to produce and improve procedures and documents (see sections below on the 17 Minimum Standards document, the Principles of Good Practice, and the Procedures for Auditing); to work on the content of the Code of Practice; and to look at how it was put into action in ALTE member organisations and the extent to which those organisations were following it.

"I see the start of the Code of Practice Group as a key moment in ALTE's history. From the beginning when we looked at all the different exams, there was variety of content but also of quality management, and we felt we had to address that somehow, and get everyone to the same level of quality."

Michaela Perlmann-Balme

Accountability, and the justification of ALTE's work to the outside world, were felt to be increasingly important. The aims were to raise awareness about the minimum acceptable standards, to establish best practice models, and for member organisations to move towards best practice through continuous improvement.

"From the start, the topic of quality management raised intense discussions – about the level of standards, how to achieve them, how to introduce procedures for data analysis, how to deal with the differences in size and resources of the ALTE partners. The Quality Management System was related to every aspect of language testing, from ethical principles to resources and financial aspects."

Henk Kuijper

17 Minimum Standards

A comprehensive set of Minimum Standards was developed by the Code of Practice Working Group, for establishing the quality of ALTE members' examinations. The standards covered five main areas: test construction; administration and logistics; marking and grading; test analysis; and communication with stakeholders. They were developed to ensure fairness throughout the entire examination process, from initial test development to final presentation of results. The 17 Minimum Standards are given in Appendix H.

"I still remember the meeting in Cambridge, trying to select and reformulate these 17 Minimum Standards which came from the Code of Practice. Just working on the Minimum Standards was a way of raising awareness about the strengths and weaknesses of our examination systems." Giuliana Grego Bolli

The Beginnings of a Quality Management Auditing Practice

While the Code of Practice in 1994 had outlined the standards aimed at, it did not provide any practical guidance to practitioners on how to implement them. A supplementary document entitled Principles of Good Practice for ALTE Examinations was drafted in 2001 by Mike Milanovic and Nick Saville,

intended to set out in more detail the principles which ALTE members should adopt in order to achieve their goals of high professional standards.

Each ALTE member was now tasked with considering how the Code of Practice applied to the work of their organisations and the tests they produced. Initially a system of star ratings was proposed, whereby each member would complete a questionnaire, and following group discussion and analysis, a star rating would be awarded to show how well the Code of Practice was being applied in each case. However the star rating system was rejected by ALTE members, perhaps because it was seen as a rather stark and potentially negative way of publicly 'scoring' how well an organisation was doing.

This was a major hurdle in implementing a quality system – people were reluctant to have their organisation's procedures scrutinised by, as it were, the 'ALTE police', and potentially criticised, particularly if setting right those perceived shortcomings (and hence retaining their ALTE membership) required resources and knowledge (e.g. in statistical analysis) which were simply not available to the organisation in question.

> *"They felt that they would fail to meet the standards set out by ALTE. So it took a lot of time and discussion before people became more supportive and less afraid … over the years people began to trust the system and I think it has improved exams enormously."*
>
> Henk Kuijper

> *"Now, there is a strong sense that QMS is important, being inspected is important. At first, everyone was lacking in confidence and very wary of having another organisation coming in and telling them they were doing things wrong. Hence the process took the better part of a decade to work on, but now it is well established and people see it as an opportunity, something positive rather than a threat."*
>
> Mike Milanovic

> *"The main issue was, would we accept other members coming to check on us, and what would happen if the check was negative? There was a lot of resistance initially to the idea and it took some time but we can see from the end result now that it did work."*
>
> Michaela Perlmann-Balme

In order to encourage confidence in the system, collaboration between organisations and the availability of help and support throughout had to be a key feature of the quality management process; and organisational differences had to be taken into account, with the principles being applied flexibly so that ALTE members would not all be made to conform to exactly the same models of assessment:
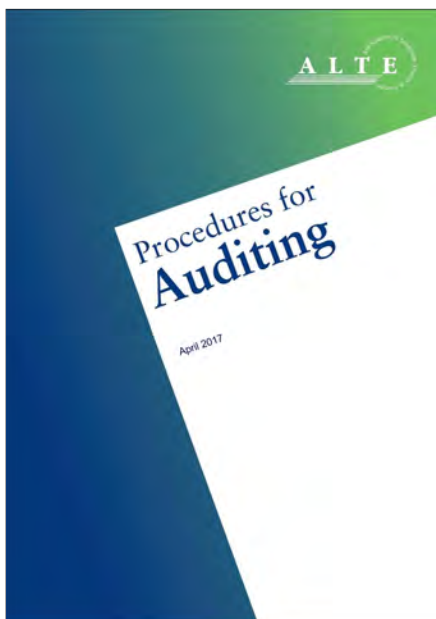
Cover of the Procedures for Auditing document (2017 version)

Different examinations are used in different contexts, by different groups of examination users, and there is no intention to impose a set of uniform quality standards across the ALTE Framework.

(from the ALTE Procedures for Auditing, November 2010).

Great care was taken to try to avoid a situation where all members had to conform to the same 'rules' in order to be said to have achieved quality standards:

"The differences between the ALTE members are large with respect to organisational, linguistic, educational and cultural contexts… There are also huge differences in knowledge and tradition with respect to all aspects of the examination cycle, including statistical and empirical issues like data gathering, data analysis, the equating of different examinations, and so on… Despite these differences, all the members of ALTE share a commonly felt need for fairness in their examination systems and recognise that sound principles must underpin their work."

Piet van Avermaet, QMS and the setting of minimum standards: issues of contextualisation and variation between the testing bodies, 2008.

"There was the fear that ALTE's work would end up making everything the same, a kind of imperialism, and we'd all have to change our exam systems to one model. Everyone was proud of their culturally loaded model that they'd developed themselves, so there was this fear of having to change to pre-set rules, but over the years it was realised that this was not the case. People bought into

the idea that it would be to their benefit if someone came to check, but you would check yourself first and try to make things better yourself. We all realised that quality control in language testing was a complex thing. And the goal was to retain your own system but to make it as good as it could be."

Michaela Perlmann-Balme

Attaining quality standards had to be seen as an achievable goal, and the process as beneficial.

"Introducing a system of quality assurance could be very threatening for some members who know for themselves that they do not meet standards ... particularly when compared with other members of the group. However, the QMS was designed to lower anxiety and is meant to be a supportive tool [ultimately helping organisations to] engage in negotiations with their senior management … to ensure that resources are made available to support ongoing improvements."

Henk Kuijper, QMS as a continuous process of self-evaluation and quality improvement for testing bodies, 2008.

Self-assessment and peer monitoring

In the wake of intense discussions surrounding the star rating system and its shortcomings (often continued heatedly in taxis and on trains on the way home from ALTE meetings), the Code of Practice Group had been investigating other quality management systems such as ISO 9001:2000, and the quality assurance schemes of other professional associations like EAQUALS. At the 23rd ALTE meeting (Budapest) in November 2001, the Code of Practice Group proposed a system similar to the EAQUALS model, whereby self-evaluation could be complemented by members helping each other to develop systems and procedures by monitoring and inspecting each other's organisations. Peer monitoring would allow the exchange of information and establish a common understanding of what the minimum standards should be in various circumstances, with the process based on the notion of 'auditing' (derived from ISO 9001:2000).

The term 'inspection' was rejected in favour of 'audit' as it was felt to have negative, judgemental connotations. The audit process was intended as a way in which members could enhance the quality of their own exams, ensure that they met the minimum quality standards, make them fairer to candidates, and be able to answer questions from stakeholders.

Another point to be taken into account during ALTE meetings was that members might feel they could not be honest about the situation regarding their exams if outsiders such as observers were taking part in discussions. Therefore, any Code of Practice Group work would be dealt with in the private business meetings, and any documentation which could reveal potential weaknesses in an organisation's exam system would be kept confidential.

Putting the Quality Management System into practice

The Code of Practice Group strongly felt that the objective of all ALTE members should be to raise standards over time, and to aim at best practice through a continuous process of development, identifying where improvements could be made and engaging in continual professional development. This – combined with the gradual process of gaining members' trust and support – made progress necessarily slow. A schedule was devised, spanning several years and showing ALTE's commitment to the process of change, with the ultimate aim of being able to respond to external pressure for guaranteed standards – a need keenly felt by ALTE members.

From checklists to the first audit

Checklists were produced in 2001 to help member organisations analyse their own practices, identify current strengths as well as those areas in need of improvement, and to devise action plans. The checklists covered exam design and construction, exam administration, exam processing including marking/grading, issuing of results, and analysis/post examination review. They could function as an awareness-raising tool; as a means of identifying current and future needs for development within organisations; as a way of pinpointing future priorities for ALTE workshops and training sessions; and to identify opportunities for future collaborative activities between ALTE members.

The checklists were piloted in early 2002 before being circulated to all members so that they could ascertain their current practice via self-evaluation. The Code of Practice Group reported on outcomes, stating: *"In setting professional standards it is important to agree acceptable minimum levels, i.e. whether and how the obligations in the Code of Practice are being achieved. Areas in need of improvement should be addressed as a matter of urgency, especially if there is a threat to the fairness of the exams. Measures, i.e. how to improve, should be decided on"*.

Next, the checklists were revised and changes began to be implemented

within organisations, with training and support provided by ALTE members to address areas in need of urgent improvement.

Throughout 2003, the use of the self-evaluation checklists was extended and good practice models were established. The process of peer monitoring and peer support began, continuing in 2004 with the setting up of more formal monitoring systems and an approach to auditing being agreed on by the Code of Practice Group:

> "The ALTE auditing process (will be) a form of self-regulation within ALTE; it is an extension of peer monitoring and will eventually involve all ALTE members; all ALTE members will be asked to nominate a member of staff to be trained as an ALTE auditor, but initially auditors will be volunteers from within the Code of Practice Sub Group." (Bilbao 2004)

A pilot of the peer monitoring process was carried out at CNaVT in Leuven with Henk Kuijper in September 2004, and a Guide for conducting audits was drafted. Using this document as a practical auditing tool, auditors could ascertain whether each standard was being met. Failure to meet a standard would result in an unsatisfactory outcome for that standard. Whether the standard was being met or not, auditors would offer recommendations for improvement so that an audited institution could work towards best practice. The emphasis was always on support and the promotion of improvement, with a post-audit report being prepared.

The Guide was piloted in 2004 with German, French and Danish language examinations being audited. After the changes being implemented from the pilot stages, all members agreed to be audited over the subsequent 18 months.

Welcoming and embracing the auditing process

Because of the commitment to developing the QMS, Jon Simon Gartzia from the Basque Government described this time as "the beginning of a new era in ALTE", and at the 31st ALTE meeting in Copenhagen (2006) he drew particular attention to publicly acknowledging the work carried out by the Code of Practice Group and urging ALTE members to embrace the proposed auditing system without trepidation or resistance:

> "The main reason for us joining ALTE was to improve our EGA test. We have been increasingly aware of being involved in a continuous improvement process over the last few months, and in my opinion, self-auditing and self-awareness are the first steps before getting involved in compulsory formal auditing.

This is a historic moment for ALTE. The coming auditing procedure should be something needed and wanted by all ALTE members … I feel that failing to get the ALTE Q-mark shouldn't be understood as a kind of invalidation, but as an impetus for improvement.

The commitment to create tests of the highest quality possible is at the heart of ALTE. Through the implementation of the auditing system, ALTE is about to enter on its golden era: an auditing process based on the 17 minimum

The development of the QMS led to changes in the way in which ALTE was set up and managed. The conceptualisation of the auditing system which began in the Code of Practice working group led to the establishment of the Standing Committee (now an elected body with ultimate responsibility for ensuring the success of the auditing system) as well as changes to membership admission criteria.

The Standing Committee

In May 2006 in Sèvres, the formation of a Standing Committee on Code of Practice and Quality Management was first proposed, in order to work on ensuring the quality and fairness of the ALTE QMS as it was put into practice and to facilitate any decisions which needed to be made. Committee meetings were held from 2007 onwards. Initially the Code of Practice Group took on the role of temporary provisional Standing Committee with Piet van Avermaet as the first Chair. A Standing Committee consisting of and elected by ALTE members was subsequently formed; Michaela Perlmann-Balme took on the role of Chair.

Its functions are to:

- review each audit and request further evidence and information from an auditee or auditor where necessary
- identify issues which need further action and communicate them to the auditee so that an action plan can be drawn up
- adjudicate in disputes between auditees and auditors
- present a summary of the committee's work to ALTE members on appropriate occasions
- oversee auditor and auditee orientation, training and standardisation
- advise on any other Quality Assurance issues, as appropriate.

Michaela Perlmann-Balme

Below: Elected members of the Standing Committee at their meeting in Salamanca, November 2018.
From Left to Right: Julia Todorinova, Bart Deygers, Cecilie Hamnes Carlsen, Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Vincent Folny, Jose Pascoal, Lorenzo Rocca, Ina Ferbežar, Annika Spolin, Beate Zeidler, Waldemar Martyniuk.

Members felt it was important in democratic terms to have these functions managed by an elected body, as opposed to the Code of Practice Group which was open to anyone interested to join, and whose remit was more in the area of continuing to develop and improve the QMS.

The Quality Management System and eligibility for ALTE membership

The introduction of the QMS also led to a change in the ALTE statutes for membership conditions. From 2007 onwards, any new applicant for membership had to undergo an audit, with the newly formed Standing Committee vetting the audits and the process managed centrally by the Secretariat.

The auditing process

ALTE formally laid out the details of how the proposed auditing system would work in the 'Procedures for Auditing' document (2007) which has been updated appropriately since.

The auditing process is meticulous and can take from several months to a period of years. As may be seen below, it requires commitment from organisations who wish to have membership of ALTE, in terms of time, resources and financially (as the audited organisation must pay the auditor's fee and expenses).

- An initial application for an audit is made. An auditor is appointed, as well as an auditee nominated from the organisation being audited, to represent it.

- Pre-auditing activity takes place (in which the auditee collates and submits various documents including a validity argument for the exam in question, for scrutiny by the auditor).

- The auditor produces a preliminary report detailing the strong and weak points of the validity argument so that the auditee can work on these prior to the auditor's visit.

- The auditor's visit takes place (with the audited organisation covering the auditor's fee, travel costs and expenses).

- After the visit, the auditor prepares a report with sections corresponding to the 17 Minimum Standards. The auditee has a month to correspond with the auditor in order to query any issues raised.

- The auditor submits a final report to the Secretariat and the Standing Committee, which reviews it and takes a vote to either reject or ratify the report's findings.

- The Standing Committee's decision is reported to the auditee via a formal outcome letter.

- Three outcomes for each of the Minimum Standards are possible:
    Standard met: good practice
    Standard met: satisfactory with recommendations for improvement
    Standard not met: in need of improvement

- For the audit as a whole there is one of two outcomes:
    Resolved: all Minimum Standards are met

Unresolved: an Action Plan for improvement is raised by the Standing Committee with all actions being suggested by the auditee themselves.

- Any actions mentioned in the Action Plan must be completed within one to three years, after which the audit outcome is changed from unresolved to resolved.

The Auditors

Auditors were selected with the appropriate language skills to perform the audit, and were expected to be impartial regardless of whether or not they were acquainted with the auditee. They are usually employees or former employees of member organisations. The Secretariat manages the process centrally and retains all the documentation. It is important to remember that all auditors are representatives of ALTE and so 'ALTE members are the ultimate arbiters of decisions arising from the auditing process' (Procedures for Auditing, November 2010:3).

Auditor selection and training

If the auditing system was to work effectively and be fair, it was essential that those performing the audits had adequate training, and that they were working in a standardised and consistent manner.

In 2005 the Code of Practice Group began to think about a system to ensure that all auditors would undergo a standardised process of recruitment, training and co-ordination, and that their work would be monitored and evaluated. The aim was also to offer guidance and support for auditors and ensure that there was a consensus on how audit reports should be written – initially there were vast discrepancies in the length of reports and Henk Kuijper remembers some of the reports the Standing Committee had to work through being 70 pages long! The first workshop for auditors was held during the meeting in Sofia in November 2006.

> *"In the first round, the auditing reports differed in content and size, some of them having the size of literary novels, but in later rounds more standardisation for the reports was realised, and this work on standardisation is still continuing."*　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Henk Kuijper

At the 33rd meeting in Sèvres (April 2007), the first auditee training session was also offered.

It was an orientation session aimed at introducing new applicants and interested observers to the ALTE QMS and auditing procedures. The session was run concurrently with the Business Meeting (which observers were not permitted to attend anyway).

In 2010, ALTE initiated a new auditor training system.

"In the run up to the November 2010 meeting we decided to implement a proper auditor training session, so that all auditors would undergo the same training, and additionally all organisations planning an audit would also at least attend an orientation, so that auditees and auditors would come in from the same place." Martin Nuttall

In addition to auditor and auditee training sessions which have been run since 2010, standardisation sessions for existing auditors have also been introduced with the first one being run in Munich in 2012.

Orientation sessions aimed at informing members of ALTE who might go through an audit have been running annually ever since, as well as compulsory performance standardisation sessions for auditors who have already attended training. Auditors are more practised and more experienced, but standardisation sessions are a validation procedure, in order to be as confident as possible that ALTE audits are consistent and fair.

Sibylle Bolton and Gilles Breton have been active in this area, leading many of these sessions, and worked with Henk Kuijper to produce illustrative samples for the auditors to refer to.

The introduction of the ALTE Q-mark

Practical problems, cost and logistics made it impossible to ensure that every test on the ALTE framework was audited, but it was agreed that all members should have firm proposals in place for at least one test/testing system to be audited by mid-2007. This resolution implied a major step

The ALTE Q-mark

towards establishing an ALTE Q-mark as a guarantee that a test had a quality profile appropriate to its particular context and audience. This period was spent clarifying the steps members needed to take in order to be ready for this.

By 2008, the first actual audits were underway, and from this point ALTE members' exams were officially subject to formalised scrutiny from other members.

> *"The activities carried out so far have led to a growing awareness by ALTE members of the strong and weak points in their own examinations. This awareness is far from being imposed from outside but is engaged with by the members themselves."*
>
> Henk Kuijper, QMS as a continuous process of self-evaluation
> and quality improvement for testing bodies, 2008.

The concept of the Q-mark is the result of ALTE's work on the development of a QMS throughout this period and was finally achieved in 2012. It is a quality indicator which member organisations can use to show that their exams have passed a rigorous audit and meet all 17 minimum quality standards. It allows test users to be confident that an exam is backed by appropriate processes, criteria and standards.

> *"This point has taken us a decade to get to, but the ambition was stated almost from the first day – the idea that you would have a Q-mark or some sort of differentiator, and that ALTE membership would be based on the achievement of quality and not be simply a 'club'. It certainly took a long time, but it was very much in the participatory spirit of ALTE that you couldn't proceed faster than your membership was prepared to go. Quality issues are all very well, and if you've done the theory you can recognise what needs to be done, but it's often very difficult to actually make the changes needed to bring about quality improvements. One of the strengths of ALTE's approach is that it recognises that change management and the introduction of improvements need to be worked at hard over time, and not simply declared as having happened because you have joined the 'club'."* Nick Saville

The Q-mark indicates that ALTE has audited the quality profile of an exam or suite of exams and the outcome is 'resolved', i.e. the exam(s) audited meet(s) all 17 Minimum Standards.

The Q-mark remains valid for five years, or until there is a significant change to the examination(s). It is awarded to the audited exam, not to the organisation as a whole. However, if the organisation has further exams

successfully audited, the same Q-mark (with a reference number unique to that organisation) is used. From 2018, a physical and digital certificate is also presented to the member organisation who receives a 'Resolved' status in an audit.

The new ALTE Framework

From July 2012, all satisfactorily audited exams appeared on the new ALTE Framework, which is updated after every change in audit status. The Framework, which shows member organisations and their examinations that have been awarded the Q-mark, and those in the process of being audited, may be found on ALTE's website, www.alte.org.

> *"Beyond doubt I see the introduction of the QMS as the key moment in ALTE's history. From the onset of the system it was the stimulus to convert the theoretical notions of quality of examination into practical action. Membership of ALTE means that members now have to continuously show the quality of the examinations, reflect on their work and introduce changes in their organisations to enhance the quality of their examinations to meet the Minimum Standards. And in the area of statistics and psychometrics, people are aware that they have to put in some kind of empirical check on what they do.*
>
> *And for some institutions (where testing was just a part of the institution's activities and there were only two or three people in the department), it has helped management to become aware that testing is more than just laying a bundle of questions on the table in front of a candidate, and there are very important things that also have to be done to ensure that every aspect of the testing process is valid and able to be shown to the outer world, and to make your claim that your decisions are sound."*
>
> Henk Kuijper

As well as having positive impact, the auditing system can also be a source of organisational change (e.g. to ensure that resources are made available to support ongoing improvements).

> *"I think ALTE nowadays is more effective than before with more influence over the work the members do back at their own institutions. Now, members have to be influenced by the work of ALTE because of the audit system, and people can use the audit system to engage in negotiations with their senior management and say 'these are the problems we have and we need more money', or 'we need*

*to hire new people because we want to meet these standards'. I think managers
are always sensitive to these kinds of incentives in order to be recognised as a
good organisation – and I think that's very helpful."*   Henk Kuijper

ALTE membership can be an impetus for change in the attitudes of organi-
sations towards testing:

> *"Membership of ALTE helped us to increase the standing of test development
> and administration within our institution. The Goethe-Institut is a
> cultural institute and before we joined ALTE, tests were not seen as being very
> important – they were more or less just an 'add-on' for the language courses.
> Through our membership of ALTE, our superiors and other colleagues at
> Headquarters have become aware of quality standards in testing."*
>
> <div align="right">Sabine Schulz</div>

Ongoing improvements to the Quality Management System

ALTE is striving to improve the QMS to optimise fairness to the smaller
testing organisations.

While the auditing process has actually enabled smaller testing organisations
to become more confident that they are producing tests of a high quality, they
may struggle to meet some of the minimum standards due to lack of resources.

For example, one of the issues that smaller organisations may face is that they
have insufficient candidates to perform proper pre-testing. So, other ways
of doing validation are being considered – for example, qualitative as well as
quantitative data analysis; or recommending that they carry out pre-testing
with schools that may or may not be entering candidates in order to estimate
the difficulty of an item; as well as item banking once an item has been
pre-tested.

> *"We don't expect every testing body to get best practice, and even if they did it's
> about continuous improvement, but they do need to meet the Minimum
> Standards, so where problems are identified, the process seeks to work with the
> organisation to find solutions. It's a learning curve – but hopefully
> organisations come out of the process better than when they went in".*
>
> <div align="right">Martin Nuttall</div>

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ALTE Present and Future (2012-2020 and beyond)

Today, ALTE has become a well-established and internationally respected organisation which is looking to the future as it welcomes more affiliates and members, and its programme of events, training courses and projects continues and develops.

Secretariat and staffing changes

Martin Nuttall left as European Projects Manager, with responsibility for managing the ALTE Secretariat, in 2014. He was replaced by Esther Gutierrez Eugenio, who officially took on the title of European Projects Manager. In 2017, Graham Seed took over, who had previously been representing Cambridge Assessment English at ALTE events.

The Evaluation Unit became the Validation Unit, and Michael Corrigan was replaced by Jane Lloyd in 2013, who developed the role by running many of ALTE's courses.

The Audit Co-ordinator role was originally fulfilled by internal staff of Cambridge English, but in a restructure in 2015, this role was then covered by freelance language testing experts working for the Secretariat. The first of which was Francesca Parizzi, who had previously worked at Università per Stranieri di Perugia. She was replaced by Helen Garside in 2018.

The ALTE Secretariat was also supported by administration support, the longest serving member of staff being Mariangela Marulli, who has been the ALTE Secretariat Co-ordinator since 2012.

Governance

Continuing to make ALTE more participatory and democratic has been something to which the ALTE Secretary-General, Secretariat and members have given much thought over the years, and efforts are continuing to ensure that

Esther Gutierrez Eugenio

Graham Seed

Jane Lloyd

Mariangela Marulli

opportunities for participation in ALTE, and interaction between members, are maximised. We have seen how the Executive Committee was established as the highest body with authority within ALTE, and a new Constitution developed. Involvement from member organisations large and small – not just by the Executive Committee members or the larger testing bodies within ALTE – continues to be encouraged, with all members – particularly the smaller ones – being given the opportunity to represent ALTE and ensure that their voices are heard.

Secretary-General

Upon Mike Milanovic's retirement as CEO of Cambridge English, he also retired as Manager of ALTE. An election was then held for the position, and the results were announced on 4th February 2014, with Nick Saville being announced as the new Manager. The post was renamed 'Secretary-General', though he remained the legal Manager of ALTE EEIG until the end of that status's existence. Saville remained Secretary-General beginning a second term in 2019, and then being elected in the same post in the new legal status in November 2019.

Executive Committee

After Berit Halvorsen's short tenure as the first Chair of the Executive Committee, Emyr Davies of WJEC–CBAC took over, and tried to encourage representation from the bigger and smaller member organisations equally to expand ownership and transparency and to make ALTE more interactive and more participative.

Members of the Executive Committee were elected to serve terms of three years, which could be extended for a further term before needing to face election again. The election in November 2017 was notable as a number of members' terms had finished, and some, including the chair Emyr Davies, decided to step down. At the first meeting of the Executive Committee following this election, in Maynooth in January 2018, Waldemar Martyniuk, from the Jagellonian University in Kraków, Poland, was elected as Chair. His term primarily concerned the strategic review of ALTE and its transition to its

Emyr Davies

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The Executive Committee during the Salamanca Meeting in November 2018. From left to right: Waldemar Martyniuk (Jagellonian University, Kraków), Anne Gallagher (National University of Ireland Maynooth), Bart Deygers (CNaVT), Richard Bueno Hudson (Instituto Cervantes), Julia Todorinova (Sofia University), Jose Pascoal (CAPLE), Annika Spolin (Stockholm University), Michaela Perlmann-Balme (Goethe-Institut), Lorenzo Rocca (University of Foreigners Perugia) and Nick Saville (Cambridge Assessment English).

new legal status, where the Executive Committee became the Board of Trustees. The section below on the strategic review covers more information about the changes.

Membership and affiliation expansion

The full membership of ALTE continued to expand from 2012 to 2019, including the first member from Austria (ÖSD in 2013), and a further member representing the Basque language, this time from the Spanish region of Navarre (Nafarroako Gobernua in 2014).

In early 2014, Vox (The Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning) replaced the University of Bergen as the Member representing Norwegian, with the university becoming an ALTE Institutional Affiliate. Vox was later renamed Skills Norway.

In 2017, the first member was admitted from Romania, a consortium between Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and the Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest. Another consortium, this time the Interuniversity

Testing Consortium, of four universities in Flemish-speaking Belgium, also became a member that year.

It was decided that a consortium of members could become one ALTE Full Member, where each part of the consortium worked together on creating a language test of one language. The European Consortium for the Certificate of Attainment in Modern Languages is a consortium of a number of testing organisations based in different countries testing different languages. Its headquarters are in Pécs, Hungary and its Foreign Language Centre at the University of Pécs, responsible for tests of Hungarian, became a member in 2018.

In addition, the number of Insitutional Affiliate organisations grew rapidly, and many of these look to attaining full membership of ALTE. At the time of writing, two organisations from Russia, and one each from Germany, Italy and Turkey are at different points along the process to become a member. All are undergoing a quality audit.

Meetings, Conferences and International Conferences

Regular meetings and conferences continued to take place during this time, one in April (or May) and one in November, with an additional meeting of the SIGs taking place in January or February, and (until 2013) in September.

The format of the meetings and conferences was tweaked but generally included meetings of the Executive and Standing Committees on the Wednesday; SIGs, workshops and the AGM on the Thursday; and a conference day open to the public on the Friday. A conference, or 'gala', dinner was held on the Thursday evening, and local hosts often chose interesting or quirky venues and entertainment for the evening, including the Globe Theatre in London in November 2014, a restaurant converted from a prison in Helsinki in November 2016, and the Vasa maritime museum in Stockholm in April 2016. The Stockholm meeting and conference also included a reception dinner at Stockholm City Hall, the same venue of the Nobel Prize banquet. Other hosts often took the opportunity to provide a city walking tour, or a tasting evening of a local food or drink speciality.

From 2018, a conference bibliography and the presentation slides of the plenary speakers and workshops were made available on the ALTE website, where possible.

In addition, the International Conferences continue to take place every three years.

5th ALTE International Conference

The 5th ALTE International Conference took place in Paris on 10–11 April 2014 at the Maison Internationale, part of the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, and was co-organised by CIEP (Centre international d'études pédagogiques, now France Éducation International).

The theme – *Language Assessment and Multilingualism: promoting linguistic diversity and intercultural communication* – built on work that was being done by the European Commission's Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism, and the Poliglotti project. It also focused on developments that were going on in many countries, for example in the area of content integrated language learning (i.e. using another language as the medium for learning something). It had a number of sub-strands within the topics of mobility, diversity, intercultural communication, and fairness and quality.

At the time, Martin Nuttall from the ALTE Secretariat gave this view on why the conference theme was particularly relevant:

> "*The theme of multilingualism underpins a number of current issues of global relevance. For example, there is concern that the growing dominance of English may squeeze out less widely taught national languages, an issue at the heart of the multilingualism debate. There is also the drive to increase multilinguistic competences, embodied in initiatives such as the Barcelona Agreement – the EU goal that every EU citizen should be able to speak at least two foreign*

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languages. Last but not least, it is ALTE's mission to promote multilingualism by encouraging language teaching, not only for economic or academic improvement, but also for personal enrichment and lifelong learning."

Two plenaries were given in French with English interpretation. The full list of plenary speakers and titles were: Lid King on *The Diverse Cosmopolis, Babel and the Multicultural City*; Jessica Wu on *Ensuring Quality and Fairness in the Asian EFL Context: Challenges and Opportunities*; Bruno Mègre on *Démarche qualité en évaluation des compétences langagières et mobilité internationale: le cas du français*; Anne Gallagher on *Le plurilinguisme et la lingua franca: le rôle de l'évaluation pour restaurer l'équilibre*; and David Graddol on *The changing status of English in the Pearl River Delta, China.*

6th ALTE International Conference

The 6th ALTE International Conference took place in Bologna, Italy, on 3–5 May 2017. The theme was *Learning and Assessment: Making the connections.*

The conference specifically broadened out the focus from assessment to include teaching and learning, and divided the strands of teaching, learning and assessment into those in a globalised economy, those in a multilingual world, and those in the digital era. Delegates, including researchers, teachers, testing specialists and policy-makers discussed new challenges and opportunities in language education, how language assessment could better support language learning and teaching, how advances in technology were affecting language education and assessment, and how governments and institutions could respond to the fast-changing demands for language skills.

The event took place in the beautiful, four-star Savoia Regency Hotel, located just outside Bologna.

Esther Gutierrez Eugenio addresses the ALTE 6th International Conference

As well as paper and poster presentations, the conference also featured workshops and panel discussions, one of which was notably about sign language testing. It also gave a chance for researchers to present work in progress in an informal way.

Plenary sessions were given by Joseph Lo Bianco (*Language policy and social cohesion: What links between social environment and regimes of learning and assessment?*); Jin Yan (*Construct and content in context: Implications for language learning, teaching and assessment in China*); Kristina Cunningham from the European Commission (*Connecting policy and practice at European level*); Helen Yannakoudakis and Ardeshir Geranpayeh (*Making the connections: digital innovation and diagnostic feedback*) and Kathleen Bailey, president of the International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) (*Language testing washback and impact in our globalized world*).

The conference proceedings of the 6th International Conference were not collated into one SiLT volume, but instead pulled together as a freely available conference proceedings document. This also was a catalyst in making all previous conference proceedings SiLT volumes freely available on the ALTE website.

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Looking ahead to the 7th ALTE International Conference

The 7th ALTE International Conference takes place in Madrid, Spain, on 22–24 April 2020. The theme is *Safeguarding the Future of Multilingual Assessment* and will consider how we can safeguard fair, valid and ethical practices in the light of new developments and innovations in the field of language testing, and encourages contributions from all those involved in language assessment and language education in general, both across Europe and around the world. The conference was co-organised with Instituto Cervantes, and expects to use their premises for an evening reception.

The theme is divided into four strands, with a plenary speaker taking one of the strands as a focus for their presentation. The themes, with the expected plenary speakers, are: *Defining the construct of multilingualism in language assessment* (Prof Elana Shohamy); *Innovations in Language Assessment* (Prof Paula Buttery); *Fair and Valid Language Testing and Assessment* (Prof Barry O'Sullivan); and *Considerations of Ethics and Justice in the Multilingual Context of Assessment* (Prof Bart Deygers).

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Working Groups

ALTE has various groups for members and affiliates with interest in specific areas of language testing. They work on a specific task, produce documents for publication, and carry out research. Some meet regularly at ALTE events, and others meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss and learn more about a particular aspect of language assessment. Any member or affiliate with a shared interest in the area is welcome to attend. SIGs have a Chair, who coordinates the work

of the group. The following is a list of those that were particularly active in the 2012–2019 period.

CEFR (previously the CEFR Manual SIG)

The CEFR SIG investigates and discusses real-world CEFR use. It offers a platform for test developers and researchers to present their ideas and practices concerning the CEFR, and to discuss them with peers.

Continuing the work of the *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*, the group produced content analysis grids in 2014 for Speaking and Writing, and these were made available on both the Council of Europe and ALTE websites.

The group stays updated on new CEFR developments and conducts research into the use and usability of the CEFR in specific contexts. Beate Zeidler, Bart Deygers and Cecilie Hamnes Carlsen were all previous Chairs of the SIG in this period, and Carmen Peresich has recently taken over as SIG Chair.

Teacher Training (TT)

In February 2012, the Teacher Training SIG was re-started after having been inactive for some time. There is a synergy here as ALTE members consider how the professional development programme for teachers can be further developed. It also worked with the LAMI group on a survey for teaching needs for migrants. This group was initially led by Michaela Perlmann-Balme, who then handed over to Annika Spolin in 2018.

Quality Management System Working Group (QMS)

In 2012, the Code of Practice Working Group was renamed the QMS Working Group, and Julia Todorinova took over as co-ordinator. When she retired in 2018, Vincent Folny became co-ordinator. The group is particularly aimed at members and affiliates who regularly work on or with audit documentation, and ALTE auditors.

Young Learners (YAL)

During this period, the SIG especially worked with the LAMI group on the survey for needs of young migrant learners of the language of the host country. Jose Pascoal has been the Chair for this SIG.
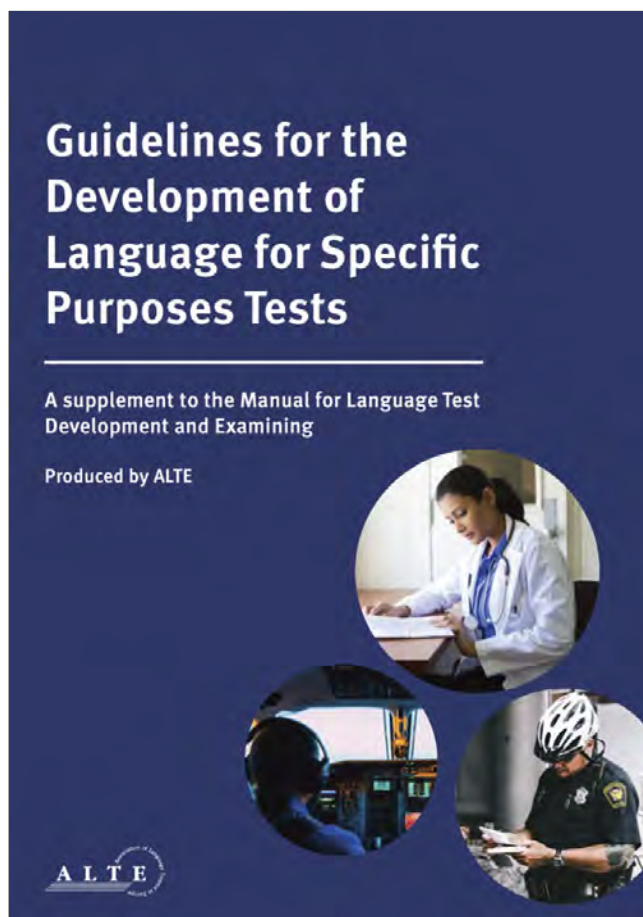
Cover for the Guidelines for the Development of Language for Specific Purposes Tests

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)

The group, chaired by Koen van Gorp until he moved to the USA, and Dina Vilcu from Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania, worked primarily on a supplement to the Manual for Language Test Development and Examining, called the *Guidelines for the Development of Language for Specific Purposes Tests.* The document was officially launched at the April 2018 meeting and conference, which was held at the Babeş-Bolyai University.

Special Requirements and Circumstances (SRC)

This SIG was set up at the London meeting in November 2014 and has continued to flourish under its Chair Florian Nimmrichter. Emily Davis-James took over from Hanne Lauvik in 2017 as the co-chair. The group is collecting examples of good practice in this area, and plans to publish a set of guidelines on this. They are also preparing a detailed overview of requirements and accommodations, as well as their implications for the test and the test-taking environment.

Technology

The SIG on Technology was formed at the Helsinki meeting in November 2016 and is chaired by Dominique Casanova and Vincent Folny. The SIG focuses on the use of technology for development, analysis and improvement of the quality of examinations (reliability, validity, feasibility and security). The group aims to improve the digital literacy applied to language testing and the mastery of these new skills. It will help language testers to make informed choices. This SIG is working on consequences of the use of new technologies, opportunities and limits.

In 2019, the SIG on Technology used a webinar tool to launch a series of online webinars on different themes of technology in language assessment.

Principles of Good Practice (POGP) Working Group

This working group was set up at the November 2015 meeting in Perugia to develop the Code of Practice into a document detailing ALTE's Principles of Good Practice. Over the next few years, it expanded its scope resulting in a consultation with members during the November 2018 meeting in Salamanca. The group published its document ready for the 7th International Conference in 2020.

Language Assessment for Migrants' Integration

One of the most active SIGs in the last decade has been the LAMI SIG, chaired by Lorenzo Rocca.

LAMI means Language Assessment for Migrants' Integration: it is a Special Interest Group that has been central to the discussion ALTE has been engaged in to consider the growing prominence of language testing in European migration policy.

In the past, language testing was generally used to ensure that an individual had the necessary language skills to work or study in another country. However, increasing migration has led to more and more countries placing a greater emphasis on language ability for those wishing to apply for citizenship, or as a requirement for obtaining a visa to first enter a country to study, work or for family reasons. These developments have important ethical and political implications, and so it is vital that any test used is fair and fit for purpose.

"The LAMI work we did with ALTE was interesting as we all felt that the stakes were high, there were ethical questions involved, it was a mixture of finding a

political stance as well as trying to develop the best possible examination, and this continues to be a hot issue in our field."   Michaela Perlmann-Balme

"When we first joined ALTE, language testing for citizenship was very important – the very first tests in Slovene were established, in the 1990s, because of testing for citizenship. And now these tests are very important to everyone."   Ina Ferbežar

The LAMI group was set up in Salamanca in 2002 in the hope to represent a platform for language testers to support their attempts to ensure issues of test fairness within the migration context, according to the ALTE mission of sustaining diversity and maximising impact. Its output in the last decade are as follows:

LAMI posters (2014)

Through 18 presentation posters related to nine countries, LAMI took a snapshot focused on specific contexts collecting detailed information with regard to: migrants' population, policies, courses and tests, in terms of providers and users.

   The posters have been a useful instrument over the years, not only to obtain a picture, but also to identify emerging trends.

LAMI questionnaire (2015)

The questionnaire was intended for adult migrants who have attended a language course and/or taken a language test.

   LAMI collected 1,550 samples with regard to the users' profile and their feedback about the host society, the second languages, the attended course and/or the taken test.

   The questionnaire was provided in six different languages, with a dedicated website.

LAMI Survey (2016)

An online survey involved teachers and volunteers in 14 countries as a joint initiative of three ALTE SIGs: LAMI, Teacher Training, and Young Learners. Its aim was to collect data in relation to the profiles of teachers and volunteers engaged in formal and informal linguistic support to migrants.

   In addition, LAMI asked about their didactic needs and their perception of critical aspects in tuition.

Cover for Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policy makers

LAMI Position Paper (2016)

The LAMI position paper is the Booklet *Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policy makers*, available in three languages.

In 53 pages, LAMI takes into account ethical and technical concerns, as the ones represented by these key questions:

1. How test results should be used, for what purposes?
2. What will be the impact of using tests on making decisions for the migrant?
3. What unintended or negative consequences may occur?
4. Are there any vulnerable groups of test takers that may be discriminated against, such as those with limited literacy?

Council of Europe and ALTE-LAMI Survey (2018–2019)

Language policies and language requirements for migrants: a European survey was organised by the Council of Europe in close co-operation with ALTE, as part of the 2018–2019 education programme *Inclusive approaches in education – language education for migrant/refugee children and adults*.

The survey was embedded in the Council of Europe contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development, namely Goal number 4: 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all'.

The survey aimed to: update data, tracing changes in integration policies and language/Knowledge of Society (KoS) requirements over time, as well as giving more details concerning the test format and the learning opportunities in order to allow the formulation of evidence-based policy recommendations.

In terms of investigated areas, the survey is composed of three main sections:

1. Legislation and its impact

2. Language and KoS training provided

3. Language and KoS requirements for:
   - ✓ Pre-entry clearance
   - ✓ Temporary residence permit
   - ✓ Permanent residence permit
   - ✓ Citizenship

The preliminary results of the survey were presented at the ALTE Meeting in Ghent in April 2019, and were officially presented by the Council of Europe in a special day event on 16 October 2019 by ALTE representatives Lorenzo Rocca, Bart Deygers and Cecilie Hamnes Carlsen.

The LAMI forum

The LAMI forum, first held in Kraków in 2011, continued discussions about Language Assessment for Migrants' Integration in which ALTE had been engaged for some years. Participants considered the growing prominence of language testing in European migration policy. Another forum was held during the 2014 Paris International Conference.

 In Bologna in 2017, the LAMI forum became a separate event, held in the afternoon of Friday 5th May, after the main conference had closed at lunchtime. This allowed delegates from the main conference to attend for free, but also allowed participates to attend the LAMI forum only, especially given that the topic was at that time of particular importance in the Italian context.

The forum aimed to implement the connection between learning and assessment in the context of European migration. It discussed issues of learning-oriented approaches from multiple perspectives, both at European and national level: from the general overview of LIAM, a Council of Europe project, to the outline for policymakers suggested by ALTE; from the challenge of *translanguaging,* to the needs of teachers and volunteers, as discovered by the LAMI-TT-YAL survey.
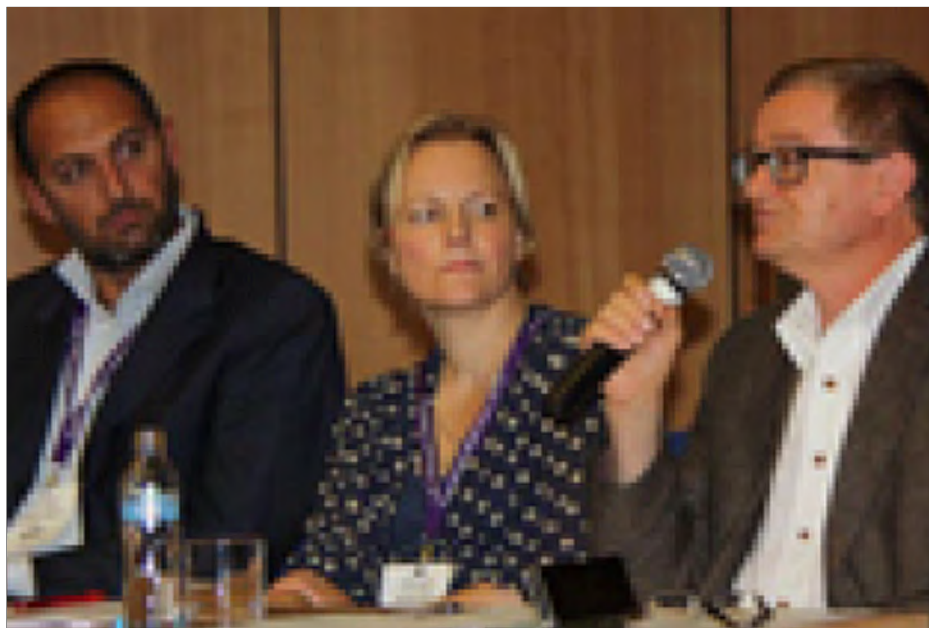
Lorenzo Rocca of CVCL, Szilvia Papp of Cambridge English and Waldemar Martyniuk from the Jagiellonian University and Executive Director of ECML, take part in a panel discussion and Q&A session at the LAMI Forum in 2014

Specific vulnerable groups of learners were also carefully taken into account, such as adult migrants with low literacy profiles, asylum seekers, refugees and young migrants.

The next LAMI forum will be held within the next ALTE International Conference, in Madrid in April 2020. The theme, mindful of the Spanish context, will be *Mediation: from theoretical concepts to evaluation practices within the migration context.* The session will look at this theme in three areas – concepts and scenario, featuring an opening plenary talk by Brian North; mediation in practice with vulnerable groups, formative assessment, and standardized tests; and monitoring mediation at national level.

Improving assessment literacy – expanding the professional development programme

ALTE has long realised the importance of augmenting assessment literacy in relation to teachers, administrators and people who use tests such as government bodies and employers, and with the introduction of its professional development programme (which began in Munich in September 2005 with the running of the first Introductory Course in Language Testing) ALTE has

endeavoured to provide professional development opportunities for these groups of people.

The late Cyril Weir was instrumental in setting up and delivering the courses, and despite his passing in 2018, will be forever remembered by ALTE colleagues as a kind, fun and extremely intelligent language testing expert who was willing to share his knowledge with others, most notably through the ALTE courses. He ran the Introductory Course in Language Testing for several years, first with Barry O'Sullivan and then with Lynda Taylor.

With Cyril's health unfortunately deteriorating, the running of the course passed to Tony Green, also at CRELLA (the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment at the University of Bedfordshire, UK), where Cyril had been working. Jane Lloyd, ALTE's Validation Officer, joined Tony to co-present the course. She also developed a number of one-day courses, either open to the general public or bespoke to certain testing contexts.

The Summer Course programme also included week-long courses on more specific areas of the profession, and a list of all the public courses run in ALTE's lifetime (to 2019) can be found in Appendices D and E.

Above left: Cyril Weir
Above right: Lynda Taylor
Left: Tony Green

ALTE continues to offer courses loosely based around this three-tier system of professional development:

Tier 1: Foundation Short foundation courses on the basics of assessment, ideal for new ALTE members/affiliates, or teachers and other language professionals with little or no experience and limited technical knowledge of assessment.

Tier 2: Development More detailed introductory courses for those wishing to develop a professional/academic understanding of assessment at a deeper level.

Tier 3: Extended Learning Courses featuring more specialised content, and developing new areas of professional knowledge and skills for experienced and knowledgeable participants.

Partnerships with European institutions

"We share ALTE's vision on the need to make the connections between learning and assessment – and between research, policy and practice."

Tibor Navracsics, EU Commissioner for Education,

Culture, Youth and Sport

ALTE promotes and facilitates platforms where synergies can emerge and develop over time – synergies between language learning, teaching and assessment, but also between research, policy and practice, and across geographical territories and fields of expertise.

By bringing together the different actors in language education, ALTE encourages a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing current issues. In turn, this approach helps connect experts and fields that would otherwise remain isolated, and maximises the impact of their work around the world.

ALTE has a long track record facilitating dialogue between policy-makers, researchers and practitioners.

Council of Europe

ALTE has been collaborating with the Council of Europe and its Language Policy Unit since the 1990s, and contributed importantly towards the development of the CEFR. In 2003, ALTE gained Participatory Status as an

International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) with the Council of Europe, and it has developed several publications on behalf of the Council of Europe, such as the *Manual for Language Test Development and Examining* and the *Language tests for access, integration and citizenship.* Collaboration is still very active, particularly on issues related to assessing migrants' language competencies, as was evidenced by the LAMI SIG's co-operation on the survey about language policies and language requirements for migrants.

European Parliament and Commission

ALTE has also been a key player in the EU's strategy to promote multi-lingualism. In 2012, a consortium of ALTE members delivered the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) for the European Commission, which measured 15-year-olds' competences in foreign languages across Europe. ALTE was also a member of the European Commission's Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism, and regularly participates in meetings and conferences where ALTE experts work with decision-makers from across the EU to help inform further policy developments in language education, such as the European Commission's 2018 Council Recommendation on a Comprehensive Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Languages.

ALTE engages with MEPs and other stakeholders at its European Day of Languages Event, held most years at the European Parliament on 26th September. The European Commission has also contributed greatly to ALTE events, including the address that Tibor Navracsics, the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, gave at ALTE's 2016 European Day of Languages event on the importance of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe.

European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)

ALTE also signed a Memorandum of understanding with ECML (the European Centre for Modern Languages – a Council of Europe institution devoted to reforming the teaching and learning of languages, based in Graz, Austria) in 2009, to ensure creative synergies at institutional level in pursuit of common goals. In 2010, it joined the newly-created Professional Network Forum.

Dr Waldemar Martyniuk, the then Executive Director of ECML, was invited to the Lisbon conference in April 2012, and attendees heard him report on ECML's programme of activities for the next three years.

Dr Waldemar Martyniuk

Happily for ALTE, after leaving the ECML, Waldemar Martyniuk became the representative from the Jagiellonian University, and in 2018 became the Chair of ALTE's Executive Committee.

Sarah Breslin is the current ECML Executive Director and ALTE continues to enjoy good relations with the ECML, and attends a meeting of the forum every year in Graz.

Strategic review and change of legal status

At the Perugia meeting in November 2015, a group to strategically review the future of ALTE was set up, chaired by Vincent Folny. This resulted in a survey of members in December 2017. The conclusions of the survey showed that different ALTE members had different needs, and therefore how important it was for ALTE to be flexible to respond to these.

In the meantime, the legal status of EEIG was also being revisited due to its limitations in terms of membership to EU/EEA, and also because of the liability that members shared. The result of the 2016 referendum in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union proved a catalyst to speeding up a more detailed review of ALTE, its legal status and its future direction.

With the backing of the Executive Committee, the Secretary-General, Nick Saville, therefore asked the members to back the formation of a Commission to review the future of ALTE, and this was approved during the meeting in Cluj-Napoca in April 2018.

Along with the Secretary-General, and the Chairs of the Executive and Standing Committees, Waldemar Martyniuk and Michaela Perlmann-Balme, volunteers to join the Commission were sought and Richard Bueno Hudson

from Insituto Cervantes, Vincent Folny from CIEP, Henna Tossavainen from the University of Jyväskylä and Sibylle Plassmann from telc became part of the group. Graham Seed as Secretariat Manager assisted.

The group met over the course of summer 2018 in online and face-to-face meetings and agreed that the first phase of future developments should be the transition to a new legal structure where membership was not geographically limited and members did not carry liability. In order to keep the transition as smooth as possible, and in keeping the Secretariat based in the UK, a legal structure in that country was considered important, though other options had been explored.

In keeping with ALTE's not-for-profit mission, it was recommended that ALTE re-form as a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' (CIO), registered with the Charities Commission in England. Assets and liabilities from the EEIG would be transferred to the new body, and the existing EEIG should be dissolved and liquidated in accordance with the legal necessities it was bound by.

The proposal was accepted by the members at the November 2018 meeting in Salamanca, and the Executive Committee agreed to become the founding Charity Trustees of the CIO. These trustees submitted their application to become a CIO in 2019 and received confirmation from the Charities Commission that the application was successful in August of that year. Many of the legal procedures needed to process the transfer of assets to the CIO and the dissolution of the EEIG happened during the November 2019 meeting in Ljubljana.

The Commission continued to meet during 2019 to flesh out proposals of a second phase of developments, including expansion of the auditing system and doing away with some of the inflexible requirements surrounding membership. The benefits of flexibility to, and expansion of, members were noted.

The spirit of the principles of ALTE have not changed, though the wording of the CIO's objects is different to the original 1990 wording. The 2019 constitution of the CIO states that:

The objects of the CIO are to advance the education of the public in general, and particularly among those with an interest in language assessment, language qualifications and language education, in Europe and elsewhere, in particular by:

- promoting knowledge and raising standards in language assessment, language qualifications and language education

- setting language examination and qualification standards

- undertaking academic research and publishing the results online and/or in peer-reviewed journal articles

- accrediting language assessment, language qualifications and language education
- running courses, running conferences and providing consultancy relating to language assessment, language qualifications and language education.

Conclusion and impact

The Association of Language Testers in Europe has grown from the seed of an idea, originated in Cambridge and Salamanca in 1989 and driven forward by a small but resolute core of individuals, to a pan-European organisation whose membership spans many countries and represents many European languages, the less widely spoken as well as the major languages, and which has affiliates all over the world.

The organisations making up ALTE are responsible for testing millions of language learners worldwide (although primarily in Europe) and their influence stretches far afield with stakeholders (from staff working in the ALTE member institutions themselves, item writers and examiners, to teachers, test takers, test users and government bodies) all being able to benefit, directly or indirectly, from the work of the organisation over the last thirty years.

ALTE is a respected body which has made its mark in the world of language testing, and which is not static but full of plans and ideas for the future.

ALTE has come a long way, and we can see from the comments from the various representatives of ALTE members in this chapter, that it has expanded and become self-perpetuating but retains a participatory spirit, and all involved are keen to conserve its vitality and to build on its achievements thus far to drive the work of ALTE forward.

The changes in legal status and direction of 2019 help ALTE look back at the past 30 years, and look forward to the next 30 years, seeking to continue to be fit for purpose, not just in an ever-changing Europe, but in a changing world, politically, linguistically and educationally.

It is only fitting that the concluding words of this history be contributed by the members themselves; those individuals who have worked tirelessly, shaped what ALTE has become and whose professional (and indeed personal) lives have been changed and enhanced because of ALTE.

Here, they share their reflections on what ALTE has achieved, the impact that ALTE has made, and the benefits of being involved, both to their organisations and to themselves.

What do members think has been the impact of ALTE, both for the organisations involved, and for language testing in general?

Providing opportunities for networking and sharing experiences

"ALTE is a forum for professional discussion that is always enriching and helpful on our way to continuously improve our work. But above that, ALTE is a wonderful opportunity to meet colleagues from many countries, get to know different perspectives and experiences in our field of work."

<div align="right">Beate Zeidler, telc gGmbH, Germany</div>

The dissemination of knowledge and expertise throughout organisations

"A major impact has been the diffusion of knowledge, not only within a scientific/academic community but also at the level of people working in the area of language testing daily. You don't only need theoretical competence to run a business in language certification, you need expertise in different areas: administration, security, marking, grading, communication with stakeholders, all the different aspects involved in professional work, and all these areas have been addressed within ALTE." Giuliana Grego Bolli, CVCL, Italy

Raising standards, and professionalising language testing as a discipline

"ALTE has had a big impact on the "testing scene" in Germany. Its opinion carries weight and it is recognised as a competent professional body by all the bigger testing institutions and by the ministries. ALTE has helped considerably to improve the quality of examinations in German as a foreign language, not only those of the Goethe-Institut but also those of other German organisations. It has also helped considerably to raise awareness in Germany about quality standards in testing." Sibylle Bolton, Goethe-Institut, Germany

"I think the direct impact of ALTE on its members' examinations is that the awareness of quality demands leads to improvement of the examinations and a growth in expertise for the test developers working on those examinations. Just by offering this international platform ALTE members learn from each other and cooperate in issues of test development using knowledge and experience of each other. In summary, professionalisation of language test providers is to my opinion a very important impact." Henk Kuijper, Cito, Netherlands

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"One of the main ways that ALTE has an impact is in professionalising the work of all members that attend regularly and raising the awareness of what quality exams really mean."

Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Goethe-Institut, Germany

Increasing visibility for the less widely spoken languages

"I think it is very significant, very important, that organisations representing less widely spoken languages are accepted as ALTE members."

Julia Todorinova, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

Maintaining influential links with European bodies

"I think a major benefit of ALTE has been that we have been able to have representative power in projects with the Council of Europe; also good links across Europe and between organisations who wouldn't otherwise have known about each other or worked together; and the opportunity to join in EU projects."

Nick Saville, Cambridge Assessment English, UK

"I hope that ALTE's continuing cooperation with institutions like the Council of Europe will raise the awareness of policymakers of the nature and (mis)use of language tests. Joint publications between ALTE and the Council of Europe, like the 'Manual for language test development and Examining' can be of use here."

Henk Kuijper, Cito, Netherlands

"Thinking about the links with the Council of Europe, I would like to mention the ECML in Graz which does quite an important work related to assessement, thanks to the Relang project where I was an active member. My ALTE experience helped to give more weight to some of the projects."

Gilles Breton, CIEP

How do members think their own organisations have benefited through membership of ALTE?

Developing and improving procedures within the organisation

"ALTE helped to improve our procedures in all aspects of the test development and administration cycle. And because the Goethe-Institut saw in ALTE an

important professional body almost from the beginning, ALTE membership has helped me to carry through necessary improvements. Without this "backing" from ALTE, it would have been far more difficult to do this."

Sibylle Bolton, Goethe-Institut, Germany

"The impact of ALTE has been enormous. Our involvement in ALTE was absolutely crucial to the development of our examination system. We were able to refer to the Bachman model of communicative language ability, purely because we knew about it because of ALTE. ALTE was fundamental in providing the toolkit and knowledge for implementing the CEFR. Then we arrived at the QMS, and the process of continuous improvement and self-assessment that was made possible purely because of ALTE."

Giuliana Grego Bolli, CVCL, Italy

The achievement of quality standards

"A wish to participate in projects carried out by outstanding organisations in the field of language test development in Europe led us to join ALTE. In fact, we wanted the certificate of Basque, EGA, to be recognised at the highest professional level and for it to be a reference and a landmark for our work. Our initial expectations were soon fulfilled, and they are confirmed every day. In short, to be a full member of ALTE and to have achieved the Q-mark is the best recognition of the quality of our examination system."

Gemma Macho Aguillo, Department of Education,
Language Policy and Culture, Basque Country

"The impact ALTE has had on developing and assuring quality in Danish language tests for adult foreigners in Denmark is of the highest importance and invaluable because of three things: the education part (courses and conferences of highest quality); the work to promote and guarantee quality through the audit system; and of course the European team work across borders."

Gitte Østergaard Nielsen, Ministeriet for Børn og Undervisning, Denmark

"Our involvement in ALTE activities coincided with the development of a testing system for Lithuanian as a foreign language from scratch in the independent Lithuania. Joining ALTE created conditions to lay a solid foundation in testing Lithuanian as a foreign language. Participating in ALTE activities helped us go deep into testing theory, get familiar with the practices of

other countries, and set University examinations of Lithuanian as a foreign language administered by the Department of Lithuanian Studies as well as national examinations close to the ALTE standards."

Joana Pribusauskaite, Department of Lithuanian Studies,
Vilnius University, Lithuania

Opportunities for discussion, co-operation and developing good practice

"In the decade that CBAC-WJEC has been a member of ALTE, our exams have benefitted greatly from access to world-leading expertise in the ALTE meetings, and from the detailed feedback given as part of the audit system. The opportunity to meet and discuss issues with colleagues from different countries and different language backgrounds has been very rewarding."

Emyr Davies, CBAC, Wales

"How enlightening it has been to have had the opportunity to share experiences with peers and colleagues from other analogous academic institutions. It has prompted us to carry out in-depth introspective analyses of our working methodology and perform a critical scrutiny of the results of our work. It has also allowed us to value the social function of our mission and to put the evaluation and the accreditation side of our work into perspective and give it the deserved amount of attention."

Richard Bueno Hudson, Instituto Cervantes, Spain

"My organisation has benefited in various ways from being an ALTE member. Being in ALTE gives us opportunity to participate in projects. Such experiences have been extremely valuable and fruitful. We learned a lot, especially from the practices of large and reputable institutions like Cambridge ESOL, the Goethe-Institut, CIEP and CVCL.

Thanks to our participation in ALTE activities we have implemented processes to improve the validation and administration procedures for our Standardized Test in Bulgarian as a Foreign Language. Working with ALTE we have introduced Minimum Standards that a language test must meet to be valid and reliable.

We have also worked on language tests for migration and special purposes. Other institutions in Bulgaria dealing with language testing now seek and appreciate our expertise."

Julia Todorinova, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

Receiving professional support

 "Language assessment is a small professional field in Norway, and therefore ALTE has been of paramount importance yielding important input on assessment practice, offering an arena for discussion of practical as well as ethical challenges, representing a standard of quality in assessment, and last but not least, offering a network of professionals working within our field - something which is of great importance, professionally as well as socially."

Cecilie Hamnes Carlsen, Norway

Opportunities to keep pace with and contribute to developments in the language testing field

"Being an ALTE member has enabled us to attend specialised conferences, meetings, and workshops on language testing, keep up with the latest developments in the field, exchange experience and, last but not least, has offered the opportunity to contribute to further development through various special interest groups. The ALTE audits provide a high-quality independent professional analysis of the examinations as well as suggestions for improvements."   Pavel Pečený, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic

Raising the profile of institutions

"One of the benefits of being part of ALTE is in raising the image of my own institution and showing other specialists what we do."

Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Goethe-Institut, Germany

What impact has ALTE membership had on members personally and on their own work?

Exchanging experiences with peers

"The way that I was looking at an examination changed dramatically after I had attended a few meetings. I realised that every organisation was struggling with the same professional issues and questions. They were not only theoretical questions but practical ones concerning the administration of language tests such as security, number of sessions per year, qualification of raters for clerical marking, etc. The good thing about ALTE is that we were all doing the same

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thing – large scale testing not just for one University or for a private company but for our country – so it was an opportunity to exchange ideas with other organisations with the same specialised issues.”

Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Goethe-Institut, Germany

Professional development

“For me personally, being fully engaged in the work of ALTE is extremely valuable and significant for my professional development. I was fortunate to meet and work with such outstanding professionals as my colleagues from ALTE. The Standardised Test in Bulgarian as a Foreign Language, B2-level examination has recently been awarded the ALTE Q-mark, and I am very proud and extremely happy that this probably happened because of my active involvement in ALTE. My colleagues and I have learned a lot and try to work along the lines of large and reputable institutions who are members of ALTE.”

Julia Todorinova, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

“ALTE has always supported the work that I was doing back in my day job. My particular interests were determined by my work: when the Goethe-Institut started to develop tests for young learners, I joined the Young Learners group. When the Goethe-Institut decided to align their tests with the Council of Europe's framework, I joined the Manual working group, and when the COP group was established, I joined because quality management was very important to my work.”
Sibylle Bolton, Goethe-Institut, Germany

“For me ALTE as an international forum of language testers and providers has greatly expanded my personal as well as professional horizon. Working together with so many people from all over Europe, from different educational and testing traditions, gave me the opportunity to build up a network of colleagues and friends across Europe, and provided me with new ideas, to put the local issues I was confronted with in my work into a much broader perspective. For example, thanks to the work and discussions taking place in ALTE, I could develop my vision on my responsibility as a language tester for developing tests in the area of migration and integration in a much better way than without this input. At the same time, because colleagues were also involved in ALTE, this helped my organisation to take a position in this issue. In a similar way ALTE was a forum for dealing with the CEFR in language testing, through discussions, workshops, presentations and creating a Special Interest Group to explore the meaning of the CEFR theoretically and practically. This had a very

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positive effect on my work. The quintessence of the impact of ALTE on my work is 'looking further than my boundaries'."   Henk Kuijper, Cito, Netherlands

"When I first started to attend ALTE meetings, there was so much information on how we should do things, all these guidelines, and all these groups I could get involved in. I met fantastic people who are friends, and I know that I can always write to them and they can send me information and literature, and we can exchange expertise and information."

Ina Ferbežar, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Finally, how do members hope to see ALTE developing in future years?

"This association will continue to promote and support multilingualism across Europe and worldwide, maintain diversity and assure the quality of language assessment in the future."

Julia Todorinova, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

"A process that will continue in the future is the quality management system and we will see that things get better all the time – we'll make it as good as it can be."   Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Goethe-Institut, Germany

Beate Zeidler sums up the essence of ALTE very succinctly:
"ALTE is an example of European co-operation at its best."

APPENDICES

ALTE member institutions with dates of joining

Members at the dissolution of the EEIG

| 1990 | **Generalitat de Catalunya** | Catalan |

The Generalitat de Catalunya has, amongst their language policy objectives, a system of testing and certification in the Catalan language by means of examinations. It implements its examination policy through two official bodies: the General Directorate for Language Policy, as part of Ministry of Culture within Catalonia, and the Institut Ramon Llull outside the Catalan-speaking area. The General Directorate is also responsible for developing programmes of Catalan courses for adults and establishing appropriate tools for the learning and use of Catalan. The Institut Ramon Llull, in turn, is a consortium, the major member of which is the Generalitat de Catalunya, which promotes the study and teaching of the Catalan language in universities and other learning centres around the world. The Institute is responsible for assessing and providing certification of students' knowledge of Catalan outside the Catalan-speaking area.

| 1990 | **Goethe-Institut** | German |

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution. Our purpose is to promote the study of German as a foreign language and to encourage international cultural exchange. Our examinations correspond to the levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and range from A1 for beginners to C2 for language skills at the highest level. Approximately 435,000 persons per year take part in these examinations in more than 500 centres around the world. They are accepted as proof of German language skills by employers and further education institutions in many countries throughout the world. They are used for assessing German language competence in the context of migration and integration, family reunion and citizenship application.

1990 **University of Cambridge Local Examinations**   English
Syndicate (UCLES), now **Cambridge Assessment English**

Part of the University of Cambridge, Cambridge Assessment English helps millions of people learn English and prove their skills to the world. Learning English is more than just exams and grades, it's about having the confidence to communicate and access a lifetime of enriching experiences and opportunities. With the right support, learning a language is an exhilarating journey. Cambridge Assessment English is there with learners, every step of the way.

   They provide the world's leading range of qualifications and tests for learners and teachers of English: Cambridge English Qualifications, Linguaskill, IELTS, Cambridge English Teaching. The qualifications and tests are globally recognised and provide the English language skills to communicate and succeed in the real world.

1990 **Università per Stranieri di Perugia**   Italian

The Faculty of Italian Language and Culture of the Università per Stranieri di Perugia offers a wide range of courses in Italian language and culture, including specialized, refresher, undergraduate degree and postgraduate courses. The Certification Unit of the University has developed a five level examination system in order to assess learners of Italian as a Foreign Language. One of the main responsibilities of the Unit is the design and development of proficiency tests, and it is also in charge of the implementation of assessment programmes and the advancement of both applied and theoretical research.

1990 **Universidade de Lisboa – Centro de Avaliação e Certificação**   Portuguese
de Português Língua Estrangeira (CAPLE-ULisboa)

Portuguese was represented in ALTE by the the University of Lisbon's Department of Portuguese Language and Culture from 1990 to 1997. In 1998, CAPLE-ULisboa was founded in the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. CAPLE-ULisboa is involved in the production and delivery of the CEFR six-level examinations and for the validation of the candidates' performances. CAPLE-ULisboa runs a net of examination centres located in various organizations. Portuguese exams are administered in three international sessions and the A2 exam is administered several times during the year.

1990	**Universidad de Salamanca**	Spanish

Cursos Internacionales de la Universidad de Salamanca collaborates with the Instituto Cervantes in the development and production of test materials needed for the Diploma of Spanish as a Foreign Language (DELE), and is also responsible for the overall evaluation of all DELE tests and examinations performed worldwide.

In 2015, the University of Salamanca developed the International Spanish Language Evaluation Service (SIELE), an electronic certification system of level mastery in Spanish. It participates in this project with the Instituto Cervantes, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and the Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Cursos Internacionales developed also the LanguageCert USAL esPro test, a Spanish certification to determine the level of Spanish proficiency for professional purposes, which is administered worldwide by its technological partner PeopleCert, through its affiliated partner LanguageCert.

1991	**Instituto Cervantes**	Spanish

The Diplomas in Spanish (DELE), created in 1988 by the Ministry of Education (RD 826/88), are official qualifications certifying the degree of competence and mastery of Spanish, granted by Instituto Cervantes on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain. Instituto Cervantes holds, by Royal Decree (RD 1137/2002), the academic, administrative and financial management of the DELE. Instituto Cervantes is a state organization which promotes the Spanish language and culture abroad, and is responsible for the administration of the DELE exams worldwide.

The DELE examinations have been designed following the guidelines of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR of the Council of Europe.

1993	**The Danish Language Testing Consortium,** now **The Danish Teaching and Testing Unit**	Danish

The Danish Teaching and Testing Unit sits within the Ministry for Foreigners and Integration and is in charge of the development and administration of the Danish language and citizenship tests nationwide. We develop Danish language tests that measure at the CEFR levels A1 to C1 and citizenship tests that are compulsory requirements for obtaining e.g. non-limited residence permit or citizenship. We also supervise language teachers of Danish as a second language, language centres, municipalities conducting test administration and other external stakeholders.

1995   **Deutscher Volkschochschul-Verband (DVV)** now **telc gGmbH**   German

As a competent and experienced partner for standardised assessment methods, telc gGmbH offers high-quality language examinations. telc language tests are aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). We offer a wide range of more than 80 tests in 10 languages.
telc language tests are available for different domains:
- General use: For those who use the foreign language primarily in their lives
- Education: For schools and universities
- Job: Job-related and specialized LSP certificates for those who need the language for their work and career
- Migration: Second language certificates as a legal requirement for visa, residency and citizenship

telc gGmbH is a subsidiary of the German Adult Education Association (DVV).

1995   **Centre des Langues,** now **Institut National des Langues**   Luxembourgish

The Institut National des Langues (INL), established by the Ministry of Education, promotes both the national and foreign languages through the organisation of courses for adults and young adults. In order to meet the demand for language instruction in Luxembourg, where nearly a third of the population comes from abroad, the INL provides language teaching for general and vocational purposes, and is responsible for the organisation of examinations and the certification of communicative competence in Luxembourgish.

1995   **Stockholm University**   Swedish

Swedish as a Foreign/Second Language has been taught at Stockholm University since 1947, at the Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism.
In addition, The Centre for Research on Bilingualism runs the National Test of Swedish for Adult Immigrants (Sfi-provet) since 1996 on behalf of the National Agency for Education. The Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism is responsible for producing, analysing and developing Tisus (Test in Swedish for university studies).

1996   **Jyväskylä University and Finnish National Agency for Education**   Finnish

Yleiset kielitutkinnot – the National Certificate of Language Proficiency – is an examination system for adults which comprises tests in several languages, including Finnish. The test in Finnish as a Second Language has been developed in response to the need to assess the Finnish skills of an increasing number of immigrants and refugees. The development of the National Certificate is a joint non-profit project between the University of Jyväskylä and the Finnish National Board of Education, which supplies educational development, evaluation and information services to policy makers, teachers, owners and managers of schools.

1997   **Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal**   Dutch

The Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal (CNaVT), or Certificate of Dutch as a Foreign Language, is a project commissioned by the Taalunie (the Dutch Language Union). The CNaVT exams are developed at the Centre for Language and Education of KU Leuven, the University of Leuven.

CNaVT operates under the auspices of the Nederlandse Taalunie. This intergovernmental organisation aims to strengthen the international position of the Dutch language by creating an infrastructure for a joint language policy, and by integrating the Dutch speaking people in the Netherlands and Suriname with the Dutch speaking (Flemish) community in Belgium.

The CNaVT designs and develops proficiency tests in Dutch as a foreign language, develops and maintains a databank of tests and test tasks for use by teachers of Dutch as a foreign language, and conducts research to provide these tests with a scientific basis.

1998   **The National Examination and Qualifications Centre (NEQC)**,   Estonian
(2004)*   now **Foundation Innove**

The Foundation Innove offers Estonian language examinations designed for candidates who have graduated from non-Estonian General Schools and who wish to work in Estonia or gain Estonian citizenship. Four levels of language examination are offered free of charge.

1998   **Lituanistinių studijų katedra, Vilniaus universitetas**   Lithuanian
(2004)*

The Department of Lithuanian Studies at Vilnius University offers study programmes in Lithuanian as a second or foreign language, and Lithuanian culture, to local and international students. The Department focuses on methodology development, syllabus design and textbook writing, and its testing group designs tests and is involved in the teaching and testing of Lithuanian as a foreign language within the ALTE framework, also training item writers and test administrators, and providing in-service teacher training courses.

* denotes date of conversion from Associate Member to full member
In some cases, particularly in the first 20 years, the date of signing a deed of adherence was a year or two after the date of original membership, which is shown here.

| 1998 | **Idegennyelvi Továbbképző Központ (ITK)**, | Hungarian |
| (2005)* | now **ELTE Origó Language Centre** | |

Origó Language Centre is a profit-oriented institution of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). It focuses on the administration of examinations and language teaching. The Budapest-based institution operates a nationwide network which administers examinations in the largest universities of the country and in other educational institutions as well. One of the institute's key tasks is to standardize the assessment of the Hungarian language within the framework of a modern system of examinations.

| 1999 | **Eusko Jaurlaritza** | Basque |

HABE (Institute for the Teaching of Basque and Basque Language Literacy to Adults), part of the Basque Government, is responsible for a number of programmes designed to teach the Basque language in the Basque Country autonomous community for all people aged 16 and above, through in-service retraining of teachers of Basque and by awarding grants for the creation of Basque language teaching materials. HABE manages the international general Basque language examinations from A1 to C2 within the CEFR.

| 2000 | **Uniwersytet Jagiellonski , Kraków** | Polish |
| (2004)* | | |

The Center for Polish Language and Culture in the World of the Jagiellonian University offers academic programmes in teaching Polish as a foreign language to students at the Faculty of Polish Studies as well as courses in Polish language and culture for foreign students. The Centre was deeply involved in the early development of the examination system for Polish as a foreign language, commissioned by the Polish Ministry of National Education and Sports, which is now offered at three levels of proficiency.

| 2000 | **The Examinations Centre, Centre for Slovene** | Slovene |
| (2004)* | **as a Second/Foreign Language, University of Ljubljana** | |

The Centre for Slovene as a Second/Foreign Language is part of the Department of Slovene Studies of the Faculty of Arts, at the University of Ljubljana. The Centre offers five programmes which encourage international research, promotes Slovene language, literature and culture abroad, and develops the methodology of teaching Slovene as second/foreign language. The Centre administers tests of Slovene and issues official Certificates of Slovene as a Foreign/Second Language, which are required, among other things, for Slovene citizenship, obtaining a work permit, or enrolment in Slovene universities and colleges.

The Centre also designs teaching programmes, regulates standards and organises examiner and assessor training.

| 2001 | **Cyd-bwyllgor Addysg Cymru (WJEC-CBAC)** | Welsh |

WJEC-CBAC is now the main provider of educational services in Wales, including examinations for schools, teacher/tutor training, and the production of Welsh language learning/teaching materials. WJEC-CBAC provides four qualifications specifically for adults who are learning Welsh as a second language, in a series called 'Defnyddio'r Gymraeg' or 'Using Welsh'.

| 2002 | **Centre international d'études pédagogiques** now **France Éducation International** | French |

The Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP) is part of the French Ministry of Education and offers French language training courses for teachers and teacher trainers in French as a foreign language. It also helps in the development of educator's websites and portals; offers DELF and DALF, two official diplomas for foreigners in French as a foreign language; and offers TCF, a standardised test, open to all candidates, designed to evaluate their current skills in French. CIEP has expertise in the design of training courses for foreign educational administrators, supports foreign language teaching and international and bilingual classes in France, and organises exchange and language assistants programmes.

| 2003 (2007)* | **Department of Language Testing, University of Sofia "St Kliment Ohridski"** | Bulgarian |

The Department for Language Teaching and International Students (DLTIS) at Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski provides courses in Bulgarian language and culture for foreign students residing in the country or applying for Bulgarian citizenship, and also provides courses for translators. DLTIS offers three types of tests in Bulgarian: the Standard Test of Bulgarian as a Foreign Language; the Test of Business Bulgarian; and Tests of Bulgarian for Foreign Students.

| 2005 | **TestDaF-Institut** | German |

The TestDaF-Institut belongs to g.a.s.t. (Society for Academic Study Preparation and Test Development), a registered non-profit association, and is affiliated to the University of Hagen and the Ruhr-University Bochum. Core tasks of the TestDaF-Institut include the development, implementation and evaluation of the TestDaF (Test of German as a Foreign Language). The TestDaF is used for admissions purposes at institutions of higher education in Germany; it is part of the exam suite of the Goethe-Institut. Approximately 45,000 candidates per year take the TestDaF in order to provide evidence of their language skills. Further tests offered by g.a.s.t. are the onSET, an internet-delivered test system for measuring the level of general language proficiency (German, English) and the TestAS (Test for Academic Studies), a scholastic aptitude test used by universities to assess the suitability of candidates for studies of higher education in specific subjects.

| 2005 | **The Centre for Irish Language, Research, Teaching and Testing, National University of Ireland Maynooth** | Irish |

The Centre for Irish Language, Research, Teaching and Testing at the National University of Ireland (NUI) Maynooth conducts research in language testing, the teaching of Irish, language policy, multilingualism and corpus linguistics. It provides Irish-language tuition at university level and for the wider community, both nationally and internationally and offers a number of Irish-language programmes leading to NUI qualifications. It operates and manages the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (teg) examination system.

| 2005 | **Xunta de Galicia** | Galician |

The Secretaría Xeral de Política Lingüística (SXPL), a department of the Xunta de Galicia (the autonomous government of Galicia), encourages the use of the Galician language throughout Galicia, and creates legislation to promote the Galician language. A system of testing exams for adults has been created in order to assess communicative skills and linguistic competence in Galician. These exams are known as CELGA (Certificado de Lingua Galega, or 'Certificate of Galician Language') and are divided into five levels of increasing difficulty.

| 2009 | **Charles University** | Czech |

Within Charles University, Prague, the Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies (ILPS) provides Czech language instruction and testing for foreigners through language courses, distance learning, research, and professional activities such as writing textbooks and teacher training. The Czech Language Certificate Exam, provided by ILPS, is designed not only for Charles University students, but also for all foreigners age 16 and over who want or need to prove their level of competence in the Czech language, and is recognized by most Czech and foreign employers and by some universities and colleges.

| 2009 | **Trinity College London** | English |

Trinity College London is a registered charity offering examinations and teaching qualifications in ESOL and TESOL, and also in music, speech and drama within the United Kingdom, across Europe and worldwide.

| 2010 | **Chambre de commerce (CCI) et d'industrie de région Paris Ile-de-France** | French |

The Centre de langue Française focuses on professional communication skills for foreigners who use French in their activities and for French companies established abroad which require French speaking personnel. The Centre de langue Française offers general French language skills assessment via the Test d'Évaluation de Français (TEF), along with business and professional French skills development and assessment through a selective range of customized training programmes and a set of eleven diplomas, the Diplômes de Français Professionnel (DFP).

| 2013 | **ÖSD (Österreichisches Sprachdiplom Deutsch)** | German |

ÖSD (Österreichisches Sprachdiplom Deutsch) was founded in 1994 on the initiative of responsible governmental departments in Austria. It is an internationally recognised examination and assessment system for German as a Foreign Language / German as a Second Language. At present, ÖSD exams are held in more than 400 ÖSD examination centres all over the world.

ÖSD exams are offered at levels A1–C2 in accordance with the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" (CEFR). ÖSD sees itself as a communicative-oriented examination system which aims to assess foreign language competence in real-life situations.

Due to the pluricentric constitution of German, ÖSD takes account of the standard varieties of German as spoken in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. This means that the receptive tasks in particular (reading and listening skills) are based on texts from all three German-speaking countries.

| 2014 | **Nafarroako Gobernua** | Basque |

The Basque Language Service is part of the Department of Education in the Government of Navarre. It promotes Basque language and culture in the educational environment, and has been responsible for the administration of the tests in Navarre since 1985, as well as for the production of Basque language learning materials and teacher training courses. EGA Official Committee is in charge of the certification of communicative competence. It approves the procedures to be followed for the test construction, administration, marking, and communication, publishes materials and answers users' questions.

| 2014 | **VOX**, now **Skills Norway** | Norwegian |

Skills Norway belongs to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. Skills Norway's main goal is to contribute to supporting active citizenship, improving employability and increasing participation in education. Skills Norway is in charge of curricular and pedagogical issues related to the teaching of Norwegian as a second language and socio-cultural orientation to adult immigrants. Skills Norway is responsible for developing Norskprøven, "The Norwegian language test". The test measures at the CEFR levels A1, A2, B1, and B2.

| 2017 | **Romanian Language Testing Consortium** **(Babeș-Bolyai University/Romanian Cultural Institute)** | Romanian |

The Department of Romanian language, culture and civilization is part of the Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and it has educated and assessed students in Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) for more than 40 years. The Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest serves, through its numerous centres, as a true ambassador of our language and culture.

The two institutions have created the BBU-RCI Consortium for Testing Romanian as a Foreign Language, offering examinations in the levels A1, A2, B1 and B2, linked to the CEFR. They test oral and written receptive and productive abilities, including also a component of elements of communication construction (grammar and vocabulary).

| 2017 | **Interuniversity Testing Consortium (IUTC)** | Dutch |

The Interuniversity Testing Consortium (IUTC) is composed of 5 university language centres in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. IUTC develops, administers and assesses exams linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and has created a course-independent examination system for tests of English and Dutch.

One of the IUTC-tests is the ITNA (Interuniversity Test of Dutch as a Second Language). It was issued and developed as a high-stakes admission test for the B2 and C1 levels required for higher education in Flanders.

| 2018 | **The Foreign Language Centre, University of Pécs** | Hungarian |

The Foreign Language Centre at the University of Pécs, Hungary, constructs the ECL tests in Hungarian language and organises the administration of the exams worldwide. The exam measures general written and oral language ability used in everyday discourse based on the achievement of communicative goals at varying degrees of complexity, in line with the scopes and topics recommended by the CEFR. The FLC offers the ECL exams at four levels (CEFR A2, B1, B2, C1).

The Centre is responsible for assessing and providing certification of students' knowledge of Hungarian. The official certificates of Hungarian as a foreign language are valid for enrolment in Hungarian universities and colleges. Among the examination sites there are universities, Hungarian Culture Centres, heritage language schools and other educational institutions. The Foreign Language Centre is involved in conducting research in Hungarian as a foreign language, training item writers and oral assessors, and providing in-service teacher training courses.

Former members

1990–1991	Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia	Spanish
1990–2015	Alliance Française, now Alliance Française Paris Ile-de-France	French
1991–2014	Cito	Dutch
1994–2002	Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITE)	Irish
1996–2014	The Inter-Departmental Programme for Greek as a Foreign Language, University of Athens	Greek
1996–2014	Norsk Språktest, University of Bergen	Norwegian
1997–2012	The Russian Language Testing Consortium (RLTC)	Russian
1998–2009	The Latvian Naturalisation Board	Latvian

APPENDIX B

ALTE International Conferences

No.	Date	Venue	Theme
1	July 2001	Barcelona, Spain	European Language Testing in a Global Context
2	May 2005	Berlin, Germany	Multilingualism and Assessment: Achieving transparency, assuring quality, sustaining diversity
3	April 2008	Cambridge, UK	Language Testing Matters: Investigating the wider social and educational impact of assessment
4	July 2011	Kraków, Poland	Exploring Language Frameworks
5	April 2014	Paris, France	Language Assessment for Multilingualism
6	May 2017	Bologna, Italy	Learning and Assessment: Making the connections
7	April 2020	Madrid, Spain	Safeguarding the Future of Multilingual Assessment

APPENDIX C

ALTE Meetings and Conferences

Biannual Meetings and Conferences are numbered; Meetings of the SIGs are labelled as 'SIG'.

No.	Date	Venue	Theme (from 2004)
1	Nov 1990	Barcelona, Spain	
2	April 1991	Perugia, Italy	
3	Nov 1991	Cambridge, UK	
4	April 1992	Lisbon, Portugal	
5	Nov 1992	Alcalá de Henares, Spain	
6	April 1993	Paris, France	
7	Nov 1993	Munich, Germany	
8	April 1994	Arnhem, Netherlands	
9	Nov 1994	Salamanca, Spain	
10	April 1995	Copenhagen, Denmark	
11	Nov 1995	Dublin, Ireland	
12	April 1996	Frankfurt, Germany	
13	Nov 1996	Luxembourg, Luxembourg	
14	April 1997	Stockholm, Sweden	
15	Nov 1997	Athens, Greece	
16	April 1998	Bergen, Norway	
17	Nov 1998	Leuven, Belgium	
18	April 1999	Jyväskylä, Finland	
19	Nov 1999	Barcelona, Spain	
20	May 2000	Paris, France	(First Conference Day)

No.	Date	Venue	Theme (from 2004)
21	Nov 2000	Lisbon, Portugal	
22	April 2001	Perugia, Italy	
23	Nov 2001	Budapest, Hungary	
24	April 2002	St Petersburg, Russia	
25	Nov 2002	Salamanca, Spain	
26	April 2003	Ljubljana, Slovenia	
27	Nov 2003	Athens, Greece	*(No themes before 2004)*
28	April 2004	Kraków, Poland	Quality and Language Testing in Europe – Between Standardisation and Diversity
29	Nov 2004	Bilbao, Spain	Testing the Less Widely Spoken Languages
30	Nov 2005	Cardiff, UK	Language Assessment for Lifelong Learning
31	April 2006	Copenhagen, Denmark	Aligning Examinations to the CEFR
32	Nov 2006	Sofia, Bulgaria	Codes of Practice in Language Testing
SIG	Feb 2007	Lisbon, Portugal	
33	April 2007	Sèvres, France	The CEFR: from Plurilingualism to Intercultural Competences
SIG	May 2007	Munich, Germany	
34	Nov 2007	Vilnius, Lithuania	Language Testing in National Educational Systems: Communicating the Code of Practice to stakeholder groups
SIG	Feb 2008	Perugia, Italy	
SIG	Sep 2008	Sèvres, France	
35	Nov 2008	Lisbon, Portugal	Quality and Assessment for Language Learning *(joint with EAQUALS)*
SIG	Feb 2009	Alcalá de Henares, Spain	
36	April 2009	Santiago de Compostela, Spain	Providing Standards, Sustaining Diversity
SIG	Sep 2009	Berlin, Germany	
37	Nov 2009	Maynooth, Ireland	Testing Less Widely Spoken Languages in a Multilingual Context
SIG	Feb 2010	Luxembourg, Luxembourg	

No.	Date	Venue	Theme (from 2004)
38	May 2010	Rome, Italy	Reference Level Descriptions and Assessment
SIG	Sep 2010	Frankfurt, Germany	
39	Nov 2010	Prague, Czech Republic	Fairness and Quality Management in Language Testing
SIG	Feb 2011	Perugia, Italy	
40	Nov 2011	Bochum, Germany	Achieving Context Validity
SIG	Feb 2012	Copenhagen, Denmark	
41	April 2012	Lisbon, Portugal	The Impact of Language Testing on Learning and Teaching
SIG	Sep 2012	Sofia, Bulgaria	
42	Nov 2012	Munich, Germany	Developing and Implementing Language Tests for Younger Learners
SIG	Feb 2013	Sèvres, France	
43	April 2013	Salamanca, Spain	Language Assessment for Adults in the Context of Lifelong Learning
SIG	Sep 2013	Cambridge, UK	
44	Nov 2013	Barcelona, Spain	Language Assessment to Support Migration and Integration: Different Approaches to a common issue
SIG	Feb 2014	Frankfurt, Germany	
45	Nov 2014	London, UK	Innovation in Language Testing
SIG	Feb 2015	Arnhem, Netherlands	
46	May 2015	Bergen, Norway	The B2/C1 Levels and Language Tests for Academic Purposes
47	Nov 2015	Perugia, Italy	The Concept of Quality in Language Assessment
SIG	Feb 2016	Vilnius, Lithuania	
48	April 2016	Stockholm, Sweden	Language Assessment: Purpose and Usefulness
49	Nov 2016	Helsinki, Finland	The Future of Digital Assessment
SIG	Feb 2017	Cardiff, UK	
50	Sep 2017	Leuven, Belgium	The Impact of Language Tests on Education, Migration and Society

No.	Date	Venue	Theme (from 2004)
SIG	Jan 2018	Maynooth, Ireland	
51	April 2018	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	Multilingualism and Using Language for Specific Purposes – The Role of Assessment
52	Nov 2018	Salamanca, Spain	The Roles of Test Takers and Users in Striving for Fairness
SIG	Feb 2019	Klagenfurt, Austria	
53	April 2019	Ghent, Belgium	Multilingual Access to Education
54	Nov 2019	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Monolingual Testing in a Multilingual Reality? Language Ideologies and their Influence on Language Testing
SIG	Feb 2020	Munich, Germany	
55	Nov 2020	Istanbul, Turkey	Pluriculturalism: Implications for Language Learning and Assessment
SIG	Feb 2021	Budapest, Hungary	
56	May 2021	Perugia, Italy	TBD
57	Nov 2021	Prague, Czech Republic	TBD

APPENDIX D

ALTE Week-long Summer Courses

Date	Venue	Courses
Sep 2005	Munich, Germany	Language Testing
Sep 2006	Perugia, Italy	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Testing Reading
Sep 2007	Valencia, Spain	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Testing Speaking
Sep 2008	Prague, Czech Republic	Introduction to Language Testing; Testing Writing
Sep 2009	Venice, Italy	Introduction to Language Testing; Testing Listening
Sep 2010	Bilbao, Spain	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Testing Reading
Sep 2011	Copenhagen, Denmark	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Language Testing Research
Sep 2012	Cambridge, UK	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Understanding the C-Levels to Assess Language for the Professions
Sep 2013	Sofia, Bulgaria	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Statistics for Language Testing
Sep 2014	Sèvres, France	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Productive Skills
Sep 2015	Cambridge, UK	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Managing Examinations for Language Testing Institutions

Date	Venue	Courses
Sep 2016	Cambridge, UK	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Technology in Language Testing Production and Validation
Sep 2017	Leuven, Belgium	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Managing Examinations for Language Testing Organisations
Sep 2018	Cambridge, UK	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Technology in Language Test Production and Validation
Sep 2019	Lisbon, Portugal	Introductory Course in Language Testing; Assessing Speaking in the Digital Age
	Cambridge, UK	Introductory Course in Language Testing

APPENDIX E

Other Public ALTE Courses

Date	Venue	Course (d = number of days)
April 2009	Santiago de Compostela, Spain	Testing Language for Specific Purposes (2d)
May 2010	Rome, Italy	Assessing Writing (2d), Foundation Course (1d)
July 2011	Kraków, Poland	Application of Structural Equation Modelling in Language Testing Research (3d)
Nov 2011	Bochum, Germany	Foundation Course (1d), Assessing Speaking (2d)
April 2012	Lisbon, Portugal	Foundation Course (1d), Basic Statistics for Language Testing (2d)
May 2012	Maynooth, Ireland	Foundation Course (3d)
Oct 2012	Copenhagen, Denmark	Basic Statistics for Language Testing (2d)
Nov 2012	Munich, Germany	Foundation Course (1d), Introductory Course in Assessing Young Learners (2d)
April 2013	Salamanca, Spain	Foundation Course (1d)
June 2013	Malaga, Spain	Foundation Course (3d)
Nov 2013	Barcelona, Spain	Foundation Course (1d), Introductory Course in Assessing Speaking (2d)
April 2014	Sèvres, France	Foundation Course (1d), Validating Examinations with Fewer Candidates (2d)
Nov 2014	London, UK	Foundation Course (1d), Validating Examinations with Fewer Candidates (2d)
May 2015	Bergen, Norway	Foundation Course (1d), Excel for Assessment Professionals (1d), Introduction to Facets Analysis (1d), Assessing Language for Academic Purposes (2d)

Date	Venue	Course (d = number of days)
Nov 2015	Perugia, Italy	Foundation Course (1d), Excel for Assessment Professionals (1d), Practical Facets Analysis (1d), Introduction to Facets Analysis (1d)
April 2016	Stockholm, Sweden	Foundation Course (1d), Assessing Listening Skills (2d), Assessing Writing Skills (1d), The Usefulness of Statistics in Language Assessment (1d)
Nov 2016	Helsinki, Finland	Foundation Course (1d), Learning Oriented Language Assessment (2d)
Nov 2018	Salamanca, Spain	Item Writing (1d)
Apr 2019	Ghent, Belgium	Raters and Rating (1d)
Nov 2019	Ljubljana, Slovenia	Introductory Course in Statistics for Language Testing (1d)

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List of Roles

Manager/Secretary-General

1990–2013	Mike Milanovic, UK
2013–present	Nick Saville, UK

Chair of Executive Committee (now Board of Trustees)

2009–2010	Berit Halvorsen, Norway
2010–2017	Emyr Davies, Wales
2018–present	Waldemar Martyniuk, Poland

Chair of Standing Committee

2008–present	Michaela Perlmann-Balme, Germany

Secretariat Manager

1992–1993	Patrick Cronin
1993–1997	Rosalie Kerr
1997–2002	Marianne Hirtzel
2002–2008	Barbara Stevens
2008–2014	Martin Nuttall
2014–2017	Esther Gutierrez Eugenio
2017–present	Graham Seed

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Code of Practice (1994)

The Code of Practice can also be found on the ALTE Website in Bulgarian, Catalan, Welsh, Danish, German, Spanish, Estonian, Basque, Finnish, French, Irish, Galician, Italian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Slovene and Swedish.

In 1994 the members of ALTE decided that it was essential to adopt a formal Code of Practice which would both define the standards that current and future members would agree to aim to meet in producing their examinations and serve as a statement to consumers of those examinations of what they should expect.

The Code of Practice was devised with the principal objectives as stated in the Introduction to this document very much in mind; in order to establish common levels of proficiency, tests must be comparable in terms of quality as well as level, and common standards need, therefore, to be applied in their production. The Code of Practice sets out these standards and states the responsibilities of both producers and users of language examinations.

THE ALTE CODE OF PRACTICE

As providers of language examinations, the members of ALTE wish to adopt a Code of Practice in order to make explicit the standards they aim to meet, and to acknowledge the obligations under which they operate.

In formulating and adhering to a Code of Practice, it is necessary to distinguish between the various roles of those who have an interest in the issue of setting and maintaining standards in language examinations. These are: examination developers, examination users and examination takers.

Examination developers are people who actually construct and administer examinations as well as those who set policies for particular testing programmes.

Examination users may select examinations, commission examination development services or make decisions which affect the educational possibilities and careers of others on the basis of examination results.

Examination takers, or candidates, are those who, either by choice or because they are required to do so by examination users, take examinations.

The roles of examination developers and users may of course overlap, as when a state education agency commissions examination development services, sets policies that control the development process, and makes decisions on the basis of the results. Members of ALTE are primarily concerned with the development and administration of examinations. As such, they have a duty towards examination users and ultimately to examination takers. The decisions made by examination users have a direct effect on examination takers or candidates; for that reason, the obligations of examination users are also dealt with in this Code of Practice.

Members of ALTE undertake to safeguard the rights of examination takers by striving to meet the standards of the Code of Practice in four areas:

- Developing Examinations;
- Interpreting Examination Results;
- Striving for Fairness;
- Informing Examination Takers.

The Code of Practice is divided into two parts. Part One focuses on the responsibilities of ALTE members and Part Two on the responsibilities of examination users.

PART ONE – RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALTE MEMBERS

DEVELOPING EXAMINATIONS

Members of ALTE undertake to provide the information that examination users and takers need in order to select appropriate examinations.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following, for the examinations described in this book:

1. Define what each examination assesses and what it should be used for. Describe the population(s) for which it is appropriate.

2. Explain relevant measurement concepts as necessary for clarity at the level of detail that is appropriate for the intended audience(s).

3. Describe the process of examination development.

4. Explain how the content and skills to be tested are selected.

5. Provide either representative samples or complete copies of examination tasks, instructions, answer sheets, manuals and reports of results to users.

6. Describe the procedures used to ensure the appropriateness of each examination for the groups of different ethnic or linguistic backgrounds who are likely to be tested.

7. Identify and publish the conditions and skills needed to administer each examination.

INTERPRETING EXAMINATION RESULTS

Members of ALTE undertake to help examination users and takers interpret results correctly.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

8. Provide prompt and easily understood reports of examination results that describe candidate performance clearly and accurately.

9. Describe the procedures used to establish pass marks and/or grades.

10. If no pass mark is set, then provide information that will help users follow reasonable procedures for setting pass marks when it is appropriate to do so.

11. Warn users to avoid specific, reasonably anticipated misuses of examination results.

STRIVING FOR FAIRNESS

Members of ALTE undertake to make their examinations as fair as possible for candidates of different backgrounds (e.g. race, gender, ethnic origin, handicapping conditions, etc.).

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

12. Review and revise examination tasks and related materials to avoid potentially insensitive content or language.

13. Enact procedures that help to ensure that differences in performance are related primarily to the skills under assessment rather than to irrelevant factors such as race, gender and ethnic origin.

14. When feasible, make appropriately modified forms of examinations or administration procedures available for candidates with handicapping conditions.

INFORMING EXAMINATION TAKERS

Members of ALTE undertake to provide examination users and takers with the information described below.

In practice, this means that members of ALTE will guarantee to do the following:

15. Provide examination users and takers with information to help them judge whether a particular examination should be taken, or if an available examination at a higher or lower level should be used.

16. Provide candidates with the information they need in order to be familiar with the coverage of the examination, the types of task formats, the rubrics and other instructions and appropriate examination-taking strategies. Strive to make such information equally available to all candidates.

17. Provide information about the rights which candidates may or may not have to obtain copies of papers and completed answer sheets, to retake papers, have papers re-marked or results checked.

18. Provide information about how long results will be kept on file and indicate to whom and under what circumstances examination results will or will not be released.

PART TWO – RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXAMINATION USERS

Examination users are in a position to get information about examinations from examination developers, and a Code of Practice for them concerns the appropriate use of this information. Like examination developers, they have a duty towards candidates, and are under an obligation to set and maintain high standards of fair behaviour. These responsibilities are described below under the following four headings: Selecting Appropriate Examinations, Interpreting Examination Results, Striving for Fairness, Informing Examination Takers.

- **Selecting Appropriate Examinations**
  Examination users should select examinations that meet the purpose for which they are to be used and that are appropriate for the intended candidate populations.

- **Interpreting Examination Results**
  Examination users should interpret scores correctly.

- **Striving for Fairness**
  Examination users should select examinations that have been developed in ways that attempt to make them as fair as possible for candidates of different backgrounds (e.g. race, gender, ethnic origin, handicapping conditions, etc.).

- **Informing Examination Takers**
  In cases where the examination user has direct communication with candidates, they should regard themselves as having many of the obligations set out for members of ALTE under the section in Part One entitled Informing Examination Takers.

Acknowledgement is made to The Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education produced by the Washington D.C. Joint Committee on Testing Practices.

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17 Minimum Standards

The Minimum Standards are also available on the ALTE Website in Bulgarian, Catalan, Welsh, Czech, German, Dutch, Spanish, Estonian, Basque, French, Finnish, Galician, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Slovene, Swedish and Irish.

Minimum standards for establishing quality profiles in ALTE examinations

TEST CONSTRUCTION

1. You can describe the purpose and context of use of the examination, and the population for which the examination is appropriate.

2. The examination is based on a theoretical construct, e.g. on a model of communicative competence.

3. You provide criteria for selection and training of constructors, expert judges and consultants in test development and construction.

4. Parallel examinations are comparable across different administrations in terms of content, stability, consistency and grade boundaries.

5. If you make a claim that the examination is linked to an external reference system (e.g. Common European Framework), then you can provide evidence of alignment to this system.

ADMINISTRATION & LOGISTICS

6. All centres are selected to administer your examination according to clear, transparent, established procedures, and have access to regulations about how to do so.

7. Examination papers are delivered in excellent condition and by secure means of transport to the authorized examination centres, your examination administration system provides for secure and traceable handling of all examination documents, and confidentiality of all system procedures can be guaranteed.

8. The examination administration system has appropriate support systems (e.g. phone hotline, web services etc).

⑨ You adequately protect the security and confidentiality of results and certificates, and data relating to them, in line with current data protection legislation, and candidates are informed of their rights to access this data.

⑩ The examination system provides support for candidates with special needs.

MARKING & GRADING

⑪ Marking is sufficiently accurate and reliable for purpose and type of examination.

⑫ You can document and explain how reliability is estimated for rating, and how data regarding achievement of raters of writing and speaking performances is collected and analysed.

TEST ANALYSIS

⑬ You collect and analyse data on an adequate and representative sample of candidates and can be confident that their achievement is a result of the skills measured in the examination and not influenced by factors like L1, country of origin, gender, age and ethnic origin.

⑭ Item-level and task-level data (e.g. for computing the difficulty, discrimination, reliability and standard errors of measurement of the examination) is collected from an adequate sample of candidates and analysed.

COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

⑮ The examination administration system communicates the results of the examinations to candidates and to examination centres (e.g. schools) promptly and clearly.

⑯ You provide information to stakeholders on the appropriate context, purpose and use of the examination, on its content, and on the overall reliability of the results of the examination.

⑰ You provide suitable information to stakeholders to help them interpret results and use them appropriately.

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