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Preface

Task-based approaches to language teaching and learning have become more and more popular recently as they are seen as an effective way of improving the learners' communicative competence. Tasks are central to the learning activity as it is believed that students will learn more effectively when they are completing them. The tasks themselves exploit a wide range of language, rather than one structure or vocabulary, and students may also be required to use different communication skills in the task cycle. At the higher levels the teacher allows the students to work independently on the initial stages of the task and acts as an observer. Later, as the final product is completed, the teacher can evaluate the work and give feedback to the students. At the lower levels more 'help' may be required at each stage of the task cycle and more models of similar language may be needed for the learners to transfer information and skills effectively.

Language case studies and global simulations are seen as two means of presenting a task-based approach to language teaching and learning. Information and material available world-wide can be integrated into the teaching and learning activities using the Internet. Internet-based language case studies and global simulation projects allow us to embed the tasks and the learning material into a virtual learning environment (VLE) that can be used both in classroom-based teaching and learning, and in blended learning programmes.

Between October 2005 and March 2009 the EXPLICS Project produced a total of 33 products: 17 internet-based case studies and 16 global simulations in the following 11 languages:

- Czech: CEFR level A
- English: CEFR levels B and C
- Finnish: CEFR level A
- French: CEFR levels B and C
- German: CEFR levels B and C
- Italian: CEFR levels B and C
- Polish: CEFR level A
- Portuguese: CEFR levels A and B
- Slovak: CEFR level A
- Spanish: CEFR levels B and C
- Swedish: CEFR levels A and B

These teaching and learning products are now freely available online (www.uni-goettingen.de/explics) and university language teachers are invited to use them in their teaching.

These products show a wide range of materials and topics, and approaches to task-based language teaching and learning, as the EXPLICS Project brought together the expertise of academics from 17 partner institutions in 12 European countries. The following 17 partner institutions have contributed to the development of the EXPLICS products: