



## International Language Examinations in the Tourism

Industry: **SLEST**

- A presentation -

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### Introduction

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEFR* of the European Council presents a variety of recommendations for language teachers and learners with the aim to be able to compare language acquisition, its application, and students' competences transparently in all of Europe. It divides in six grades the language levels to be accomplished, in order to make comparison on European level possible.

### The six levels

- A – elementary use of the language (A1 and A2)
- B – independent use of the language (B1 and B2)
- C – competent use of the language (C1 and C2, where the latter means nearly mother tongue competence)

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level	general description of the relevant SLEST levels
<b>A2</b>	<p>Is able to understand phrases and often used expressions which have to do with very practical things (i. e. information about oneself, ones family, shopping, work, personal surroundings). Is able to communicate in straightforward situations of everyday routine, in which one exchanges simply and directly information about familiar matters. Can describe with unpretentious means his/her personal background and training, the individual surroundings and things connected with basic needs.</p>
<b>B1</b>	<p>Can comprehend the main aspects when clear standard language is spoken and when the subjects regard known aspects as work, school, free time etc. Is able to manage most everyday situations when travelling. Can express him/herself in a basic but comprehensive way regarding known topics and personal interests. Can speak about experiences and events, describe dreams, hopes and personal aims and is able to give short reasons or statements for plans and intentions.</p>
<b>B2</b>	<p>Can comprehend the main aspects of complex texts regarding concrete or abstract topics; is able to understand in his/her own special subject also technical discussions. Can make him/herself understand in a spontaneous and fluent way, in order to have a normal talk without greater problems on both sides with native speakers. Is able to express him/herself clearly and exhaustively in many topics, can explain personal views regarding central questions and explain advantages and disadvantages of different options.</p>
<b>C1</b>	<p>Is able to comprehend a vast spectrum of long and demanding texts and can also understand implicit meanings. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without looking to often for words. Is able to use the foreign language effectively and flexibly in everyday life, on the job as well as at school and in training situations. Can express him/herself clearly, completely and in a planned way regarding complex topics; can use contemporarily constructed sentences in different ways.</p>

## **SLEST**

The language examinations (and the accompanying material) are the result of two Leonardo-da-Vinci projects<sup>1</sup>, and they constitute a complete and standardized offer for the main European languages in the field of Tourism (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish; and with the new TOI-project we will have to add Turkish); in addition to that there is a **language course on CD** for the first two levels, with which it is possible to prepare the students for the exams.

Following both the general indications of the **CEFR** and the results of two surveys on European level, the work study describes in a detailed way the language levels to be reached by the target groups as well as the connected tasks. In order to increase the transparency of the assignments to be fulfilled and to manage to reach a Europe wide comparability, the precise can-do indicators of the SLEST-Model have been prepared specifically for the field of Tourism for four professions (*waiter, tourist guide, employees in travel agencies and hotels*), separated in the **CEFR** – levels A2 and B1 and equally valid for the six languages concerned (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Turkish). It was also taken into consideration that in everyday work in the Tourism industry not all language skills are equally important for the professionals; a waiter for example will never be asked to write something in the foreign language, as a consequence this skill is not included in the Can-do-statements and the examination for this profession. Generally speaking, the language skills in Tourism show a clear predominance of oral interaction, which should have consequences for the lessons as well as for the exams.

Regarding levels three and four (basically B2 und C1), which have been defined following the results of the former project “SLEST“, the same indications as above are valid, but there is no division between professions; in this case, distinctions have been made between so called “topics“ and “tasks“. The reason for this decision was to increase the transparency of the foreign language performances on these levels and to make them comparable in all of Europe; they have been selected as always with the first two levels on the basis of interviews and research.

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<sup>1</sup> The following institutions took part in the different projects: University of Heilbronn; IHK Düsseldorf (D), Willy-Brandt-School in Duisburg, University Malaga (E); University Rome „Sapienza“, CESCOT Nazionale and UET in Rome and Milan (I); GRETA in Aix-en-Provence (F); ECMB (European College of Business and Management), (UK); NTA (National Tourist Association) in Slovenia and THR (Centre for Tourism, Hotel and Restaurant) in Romania.

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Furthermore it is important to mention that for these levels, because of practical reasons, a second differentiation has been applied. This has been made in answer to a need which has been already mentioned by the authors of the CEFR. In these cases, during the final examination, the candidates will not be asked to reach the same level of competence in the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), but a differentiation between primary and secondary skills is applied. Also this distinction has been made following the results of the inquiries: in general all professionals confirmed that in field of Tourism the most important skill is oral interaction.<sup>2</sup>

**Table**

	<b>SLEST (level I)</b>	<b>SLEST (level II)</b>	<b>SLEST (level III)</b>	<b>SLEST (level IV)</b>
<b>writing</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>
<b>reading</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1</b>
<b>talking</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1</b>
<b>listening</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C1</b>

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding the results of the surveys and interviews see the published articles of the former ESB-Group

## **Detailed description of the general Can-Do-Statements of the single skills regarding the SLEST levels**

### **level I (A2)**

#### **writing**

Is able to communicate in writing in his/her profession in routine situations, giving simple and direct information regarding standard and habitual circumstances.

Regarding his/her profession, can inform about him/herself as well as describe his/her needs and requirements with simple linguistic means.

#### **reading**

Can understand short texts as well as frequent expressions and information directly related with his/her profession or private life (i.e. indications regarding his/her person, the own work, the direct environment etc.).

Can find concrete and foreseeable information in a general text or in a simple text regarding his/her work.

#### **speaking/listening**

Is able to understand simple, routine utterances as well as often used expressions which are linked directly to his/her work, and can have a simple talk in corresponding situations, without taking the initiative.

Can master situations in which he/she exchanges simply and directly information regarding familiar topics.

## **level II (B1)**

### **writing**

Is able to write relatively simple texts without complex details regarding known topics; can write or answer to normal official letters and other standard documents for his/her profession; can employ the grammatical structures and the usual terminology for his/her profession.

### **reading**

Can understand the main topics when clear standard language is used and when the discussed issues are known.

Is able to understand the often used vocabulary in everyday documents and find the correspondend information..

### **speaking/listening**

Is able to understand the main topics in professional discussions, lectures etc. when clear standard language is spoken and the issues are known.

Can manage most routine situations when travelling in a country of the target language.

Can talk simply but coherent about common topics and issues of personal interest.

Is able to speak about experiences and events and can give short statements or explanations regarding personal plans and opinions.

### **level III (B1/B2)**

#### **writing (B1)**

Can write relatively straightforward texts about common topics without complex details; is able to write or answer to usual commercial letters; can use grammatical structures and the common terminology for his/her profession.

#### **reading (B2)**

Is able to understand longer texts following more complex facts if the topic is known. Mistakes which lead to misunderstanding might occur now and then, but they can be autonomously corrected when not understanding is signalled.

#### **speaking/listening (B2)**

Can understand the most important topics of a complex dialogue with concrete as well as abstract facts; can follow a business talk and lead a formal telephone talk. His/her grammatical skill is nearly perfect. Can take part actively in discussions and lead or introduce to talks. The pronunciation is clear and comprehensible.

## **level IV (B2/C1)**

### **writing (B2)**

Is able to write a detailed text of medium length with the help of a dictionary regarding known topics or non complicated documents regarding not known issues; can write a formal letter. Minor errors in grammar and vocabulary might occur but effect only slightly the comprehensibility; the terminology of Tourism is known.

### **reading (C1)**

Is able to understand longer and challenging texts and can recognize implicit meanings regarding topics of Tourism, even if the issue is unknown. Mistakes should only occur rarely; the terminology is present on a high level.

### **speaking/listening (C1)**

Can understand long and challenging utterances and recognize implicit meanings. Is able to follow longer discussions even if not clearly structured. Can express him/herself in a spontaneous and fluent way, using grammatical structures, idiomatic expressions, and the terminology of Tourism on a high level and without problems. Mistakes or not frequent and normally do not effect comprehension.

## Further explanations regarding the can-do-statements

The professional activities to be dealt with in a foreign language are equal for all six languages and are described in the form of two types of so called can-do-statements: firstly in a more general way (global to-do-statements following the CEFR/PROFILE<sup>3</sup>), and secondly in a specialised way (detailed can-do-statements, following “Profile”). All of this is completed by examples for examinations tasks and types of texts which can be used during language lessons as well as examinations. In this way the authors give also explicitly or implicitly indications regarding the topics of the communication on the first two levels, and furthermore hints about who communicates in which way and in which situation. What is missing instead are indications regarding the linguistic utterances itself, that is in which way they have to be realised. These include aspects as pronunciation, fluidity of the speech (number and duration of pauses), appropriateness of an expression, number of errors etc. We thought that it would be very difficult to include these kinds of indications in the present tables as well as impossible to describe them in a factual way in a list.

The can-do-indications refer to the contents of the communication. Their formal aspects have been formulated in an introduction to each list, following the first two levels of competence, otherwise they are included in the examples for the examination. Inevitably in some cases in the lists are included unavoidable repetitions or overlapping, because it happened every now and then that single general can-do-statements have been assigned to similar but not equal topics; this was unavoidable because of utmost precision and clarity. Furthermore and for formal reasons we divided linguistic activities in the foreign language which normally are linked directly with each other, in order to be able to divide the skills which are linked to them in their individual lists. In this way it was possible to create the “classical“ division in *speaking, listening, reading, and writing*. During language lessons or an examination it will be often possible to eliminate this division with the help of appropriate tasks (for example between *reading* and *writing*).

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<sup>3</sup> Glaboniat/Müller/Rusch/Schmitz/Wertenschlag: Profile Deutsch. Berlin-München 2002 (Langenscheidt)

## Final note

One of the main objectives of the IMVOLS project was to eliminate the hitherto existing separation between ESB (the first Leonardo-da-Vinci project) and SLEST (the second project), and to replace it as explained above with one single complete offer of language examinations and material for the Tourism industry. For this reason and in order to facilitate things we will speak from now on only of *SLEST*.

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For further information please contact [www.imvols.org](http://www.imvols.org) where you can also find the addresses of the international partners which participate in this project.