



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Language Policy Division
Division des Politiques linguistiques

LANGUAGE POLICY DIVISION



The Language Policy Division in Strasbourg carries out intergovernmental co-operation programmes within the programme of the Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe. Its activities contribute to the promotion of human rights, democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue.

Projects are primarily concerned with the development of language education policy with a particular emphasis on plurilingualism, common European reference standards, and language education rights and responsibilities.

The Division has been a pioneer of international co-operation in language education since 1957 for the member states of the Council of Europe. Its programmes, focusing on the development of language education policy, continue to act as a catalyst for innovation and provide a unique pan-European forum in which to address the policy priorities of all member states. The results of the Division's programmes have led to a number of recommendations and resolutions of the Committee of Ministers and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which provide political support for its policy instruments and initiatives. The Language Policy Division organised the European Year of Languages 2001 with the European Commission, the aims of which continue to be promoted in the annual Day of Languages (www.coe.int/edl).

The Division's competence descriptions for modern languages, which are used throughout Europe and on other continents, have become a vital contribution to the establishment of a European education area, serving as benchmarks for national and international bodies and organisations, including the European Union.

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The Division, which is involved in education policies for national and minority languages as well as foreign languages, has recently launched a new project to assist member states in developing policies and competence standards for the languages of instruction in school, with a particular focus on policies for disadvantaged students and migrant children.

The Division assists member states in reviewing their language education policies with a view to promoting linguistic diversity and plurilingualism (*Language Education Policy Profiles*). It also provides expertise on the education of minorities.

In response to the priorities set by member states the activities of the Language Policy Division have an increasingly socio-political purpose and deal with all kinds of language use/learning – mother tongue/first language/ language(s) of education as well as modern, second, regional or minority languages.

www.coe.int/lang



The Division's programmes are complemented by those of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz (Austria), which was set up in 1994. The ECML has as its mission the implementation of language policies and the promotion of innovative approaches to the learning and teaching of modern languages. The strategic objectives of the Centre are to focus on the practice of modern language teaching and the training of multipliers, with programme-related networks and research projects [www.ecml.at].

Through its activities the Division also contributes to achieving the objectives of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages [www.coe.int/minlang].

The Council of Europe – www.coe.int

Founded on 5 May 1949, the Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation whose principal aims are to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law; promote awareness of Europe's cultural identity and diversity; seek solutions to problems facing European society; help consolidate democratic stability in Europe; and promote unity in diversity. Its permanent headquarters are in Strasbourg, France.

The Council of Europe now has 47 member states, including the 27 European Union states (August 2008).

POLICY INSTRUMENTS PROVIDING COMMON EUROPEAN REFERENCE STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION



Modern and second languages

The Language Policy Division has developed reference instruments providing standards in language education (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [CEFR] and *European Language Portfolio* [ELP]) that are used throughout Europe at all levels of education.

They are designed for use in planning and evaluating foreign and second language learning, to enhance quality through coherence and transparency in language education, and to support the development of intercultural competence.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR is an instrument to promote plurilingualism and the development of the linguistic repertoire of individuals. It provides common reference points and a common language for the elaboration of syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, teacher training programmes, and examinations, and for relating examinations to one another. It allows partners in different sectors of education systems to co-ordinate their efforts in planning and delivering language teaching and learning and in assessing language progress and proficiency.

The CEFR includes a scheme for the description of language use and learning and scales of proficiency for the different parameters of this scheme, which have been widely adopted. A Manual for relating examinations to the CEFR levels, designed to assist examiners in reaching a common understanding of the competences defining each level, is currently being piloted. The Manual is accompanied by sample material illustrating oral and written performance and reading/listening items calibrated to the CEFR levels for a number of languages.

The scaled descriptors of language competence in the CEFR have been adopted by the European Union for the development of the European Indicator of Language Competence (one of the eight indicators elaborated by the European Commission as part of the Lisbon Strategy).

The CEFR is a generic instrument and is not specific to the teaching of particular languages. It has been translated into over 30 languages. It is widely used in policy making and in ensuring coherence and transparency across different languages and through the different sectors or stages in language education.

The Language Policy Division is co-ordinating a number of projects using the Framework approach, such as the *Reference Level Descriptions* (RLD) which define the detailed linguistic and cultural elements for specific national or regional languages according to the six proficiency levels in the CEFR. RLDs are developed by international, national or regional teams.



European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The Language Policy Division has developed the European Language Portfolio as a complementary tool for the promotion of plurilingualism that relates the CEFR to learners' needs in a practical manner. It is a personal document for learners in which those who are learning or have learned a language – whether at school or outside school – can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences.

The positive, learner-centred and task-based approach, based on the standards of language competence taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, encourages learners to take responsibility for their lifelong learning process. The proficiency scales with descriptors for the different receptive and productive skills help them to establish their personal plurilingual profile and to develop it according to their needs over time. There are portfolio models for different stages – primary, secondary and adult education.



ELP models are submitted to the European Validation Committee in Strasbourg which grants accreditation to ELPs that are in conformity with the Principles and Guidelines established by the Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe.

www.coe.int/portfolio

The 'Language Passport' component of the *European Language Portfolio* is included in *Europass*, a European Union electronic platform launched in 2005 to facilitate mobility in Europe by making qualifications more transparent.

The *European CV*, one of the component documents of *Europass* (www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu/), invites citizens to assess their linguistic competences using the descriptions of language proficiency levels in the CEFR.

Each ELP model has three common parts:

- ◆ *Language Passport* which offers an internationally transparent overview of what the learner can do in different languages at any level;
- ◆ *Language Biography* in which learners can keep an ongoing personal record of their experiences and progress;
- ◆ *Dossier* which contains material to support and illustrate what is recorded in the Language Passport or Language Biography.

Languages of Education



The Language Policy Division has launched a project on all the Languages of Education. The focus is on policies for and competences in the language(s) of instruction, which are crucial for successful learning across the whole curriculum. The language(s) of instruction in school is (are) most often the national or official language(s) and also the mother tongue of the majority of students, but for some learners this language is their second language.

The project locates the language(s) of instruction within the wider concept of plurilingualism and respect for linguistic diversity; it addresses the needs of all learners, and in particular vulnerable groups whose degree of competence in the language(s) of instruction may place them at risk.

The aim of the project is to develop an interactive and dynamic framework of reference for the language(s) of instruction.

The project has a focus on

- the language(s) as a school subject;
- the language(s) as a medium of teaching and learning across the curriculum (history, maths, sciences ...);
- possible convergences between these language(s) and modern ('foreign') languages and any other languages that learners may have.

The languages of instruction are thus an essential part of the project "Languages of Education", which encompasses all the languages present in schools, i.e. taught or used in any other way: language(s) of instruction, foreign language(s), regional or minority language(s) and any other language of the learners' plurilingual repertoires.

The project takes a global or holistic approach to language education policy aimed at promoting a coherent approach to the development of learners' plurilingual repertoires.

A plurilingual person has:

- a repertoire of languages and language varieties
- competences of different kinds and levels within the repertoire.

Plurilingual education promotes:

- an awareness of why and how one learns the languages one has chosen
- an awareness of and the ability to use transferable skills in language learning
- a respect for the plurilingualism of others and the value of languages and varieties irrespective of their perceived status in society
- a respect for the cultures embodied in languages and the cultural identities of others
- an ability to perceive and mediate the relationships which exist among languages and cultures
- a global integrated approach to language education in the curriculum.



Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters

The Division is developing an Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters to promote intercultural dialogue. It is a personal document which encourages users to think about and learn from the intercultural encounters that have made a strong impression or had a long-lasting effect on them. Two versions are to be published: i) a version for younger learners, up to around age 11, including those who are not yet able to read and write and ii) a version suitable for other users in schools and beyond.

The Autobiography is designed to be used across the curriculum in school or any other educational context. Intercultural experiences can be analysed within disciplines as diverse as foreign language learning, history, geography, religion, citizenship education, etc. It can also be used as a self-study tool.



Minorities

The Division provides expert assistance in carrying out reviews of education policy for minorities in regional or bilateral co-operation programmes, and has been involved with policy development for the education of minorities in different regions.

It has provided expert guidance on education to the Advisory Committee for the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts for the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The Division developed a *Common Curriculum Framework for teaching Romani* (in consultation with the European Roma and Travellers Forum) which will be disseminated in all the countries concerned after a piloting phase.



Adult Migrants

An increasing number of member states require adult migrants to demonstrate proficiency in the language of the host country before granting residence or work permits or citizenship. The level of proficiency required is usually based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and a language test may be obligatory. The approach to testing varies and there is a considerable difference in the levels of proficiency required.

The Division is developing policy guidelines and tools to assist member states in addressing the key issues relating to language proficiency for integration. An intergovernmental seminar was organised in 2008 on the linguistic integration of adult migrants. Thematic studies and case studies have been developed.

PROMOTING A COHERENT, HOLISTIC APPROACH TO LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY

From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*

The Language Policy Division has prepared a *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* which can serve as a reference document for the formulation or reorganisation of language teaching in member states.

The *Guide* is a response to the need to develop language policies to promote plurilingualism and diversification in a planned manner so that decisions are coherently linked. It is intended for those who influence, formulate and implement language education policy at any level, for example in ministries of education or at the level of school principal.

It presents approaches to the development of policies rather than policies as such by offering ways of identifying and analysing the factors required for the formulation of language education policies, and providing an inventory of possible forms of organisation of language education.

The *Guide* is accompanied by a series of separately published Reference Studies on key policy issues which provide in-depth analysis of policy dimensions covered in the Main Version.

A revised edition of the *Main Version* and of the *Executive Version* was published in 2007 after a piloting phase.

Language Education Policy Profiles


The Language Policy Division offers an expertise to member states wishing to carry out an evaluation of their current policies at national or local level and intending to develop new policies and strategies for plurilingualism, diversity and social cohesion.

This policy activity is a response to the request from member states for Council of Europe assistance with the development of inclusive, coherent policies embracing *all* languages - the national/official languages, foreign languages and languages of minorities and migrants. The process does not involve external evaluation, but offers assistance with a self-evaluation leading to a forward looking 'Profile' that helps to set the policy agenda for the country, province/region or city concerned.

The process involves a number of related steps: the preparation of a Country Report by the authorities; a study visit by a Council of Europe expert group followed by the elaboration of an Experts' Report; a Round Table based on this Report leads to the elaboration of the *Language Education Policy Profile* jointly prepared by the Council of Europe expert group and the authorities.

The *Guide* exists in two versions:

- the "*Main Version*" is the reference version, intended for those who design language education in detail, and provides the scientific and professional arguments and evidence for different approaches
- the "*Executive Version*" is written for policy deciders involved in language education policies but who may have no specific knowledge of matters in language education.

 The *Guide* and *Reference Studies* are available online: www.coe.int/lang

LANGUAGE POLICIES FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (2006–2009)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY AIMS TO PROMOTE:

PLURILINGUALISM:

All are entitled to develop a reasonable degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime in accordance with their needs

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY:

Europe is multilingual and all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity; the right to use and to learn one's language(s) is protected in Council of Europe Conventions

SOCIAL COHESION:

Equality of opportunity for personal development, education, employment, mobility, access to information and cultural enrichment depends on access to language learning throughout life

DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP:

Participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING:

The opportunity to learn other languages is an essential condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences