

# A QUALITY MATRIX FOR CEFR USE: Examples of promising practices

## 1. OVERVIEW

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**Country:** Switzerland

**Institution:** fide Secretariat

**Type of context:** National

**Educational sector:** Adult immigrant (Linguistic integration of adult migrants = LIAM)

**Main focus of your project:** Planning; Teaching Practices; Teacher Training; Testing

### SUMMARY

**Name:** Scenario-based framework for adult migrants – FIDE

**Abstract:** *fide* is the Swiss national language programme for migrants, developed and implemented gradually over a 10-year period. *fide* stands for français, italiano, deutsch – the languages migrants have to learn in the different regions of Switzerland. The *fide* approach, based on the Rahmencurriculum (Outline curriculum), is action-oriented and scenario based, with real life situations and tasks linked to CEFR-based ‘Can-do’ descriptors. Course providers can obtain a *fide* quality label for courses taught according to the *fide* approach. Migrants can certify their language profile with a *fide* language test. After the *fide* language test, a language passport is issued. This is a document recognized as a proof of language competency when applying for residency or naturalization. As an alternative to the standardised *fide* test, the language passport can be obtained through other language tests corresponding to the ALTE Q-Mark standards. A portfolio-based assessment is also being tested.

**Stage:** Planning; Implementation; Evaluation

**Theme:** Curriculum; Teaching; Assessment; Teacher education

**CEFR aspects targeted:** Action-oriented approach, descriptors, levels, ELP

**Main features of this example:**

- Action-oriented curriculum: relevant themes >scenarios >tasks >descriptors >language
- Samples tasks and videos
- Portfolio-style dossier to document achievement
- Political, administrative and academic backing

**Quality principles demonstrated:** Relevance, Validity, Transparency, Coherence, Inclusiveness, Sustainability



## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Background:

Switzerland has three official languages and a large proportion of the population with a migration background: More than 23% of the Swiss population speak a language other than the language of their Swiss region at home and more than 24% also have a foreign passport (Swiss Federal Statistics, 2017). Switzerland has a long history of providing language classes for adult migrants, and was centrally involved in both the development of the German version of Threshold Level, *Kontaktschwelle* (originally intended as a specification of the needs of adult migrants) and in the development of the Council of Europe's concept of ongoing needs analysis for adult learners. The CEFR and European Language Portfolio (ELP) were both Swiss proposals; the research that developed the CEFR descriptors and the ELP took place in Switzerland.

One of the national responses to immigration in the 2000s was to review the linguistic integration of adult migrants. Successful social and work integration is regarded as linked to language levels corresponding to B1 spoken and A2 written; the *fide* system, therefore, covers levels A1 to B1. From 2018, permanent residence (available after 5 years), requires A2 spoken proficiency and A1 written proficiency, and naturalisation as a Swiss citizen (available after 10 years) requires B1 spoken and A2 written proficiency.

### Aims:

To provide a transparent and coherent national framework for the linguistic integration of adult migrants, ensuring the quality and efficacy of language courses throughout the country for adult migrants, and providing reliable tools to evaluate and certify their linguistic skills.

### Steps/stages:

#### 1. *Situation Analysis*

Survey and interviews were carried out to identify best practice in language teaching to migrants. Results suggested that the better language schools based their courses on the CEFR, so the CEFR was adopted for the *fide* scheme.

In 2007 the Swiss Federal Council ordered the development of a national framework for the linguistic integration of adult migrants.

#### 2. *Development of the Outline Curriculum (2009-2010)*

As a next step, the Swiss Confederation commissioned the Institute for Multilingualism (University of Fribourg) with the development of an Outline Curriculum for adult learners. The Outline Curriculum is a document for course designers rather than teachers, and needs to be operationalised for practitioners; it forms the basis for the *fide* framework.

#### 3. *Needs analysis and development of a scenario database (2010-2012)*

In consultation with different groups (cantonal administration dealing with migration, employment services, social service, professors and teachers, employers, etc.) frequent contact situations and related communicative challenges were identified. At the same time, interviews were held with migrants to identify their language learning needs.

On the resulting basis, over 120 'scenarios', grouped into 11 'domains' were described in detail. The word 'domain' is used in a sense different to that in the CEFR; here the 'domains' are related to daily life: Living, Children, Work, Job-seeking, Authorities, Media & leisure, Transport, Shopping, Post/banks/insurance, Health, and Life-long learning. The structure of the materials in each domain is shown below, using 'Living' as an example:

- **Domains**, e.g. Living
  - **Scenarios**, e.g. Finding and renting an apartment
    - **Steps**, e.g. Asking the administration about available apartments
      - **Tasks**, e.g. Get detailed information about available apartments

- **Descriptors** for A1, A2, and B1 (if relevant)

The domain Living has 13 scenarios: Finding and renting an apartment, Getting repairs done, Giving notice, Meeting the neighbours, Understanding a message from the caretaker, Participating in a tenants' meeting, Complaining to the neighbours, Dealing with a complaint from the neighbours, Asking a neighbour for help, Offering a neighbour help, Joining a club, and First visit to the sports club.

The scenario *Finding and renting an apartment* has seven 'steps', of which the first is *Asking the administration about available apartments*. Each step in each scenario has between three and five 'tasks.'

The 'tasks' in this particular step are:

- Greet the contact person on the telephone and say what you want
- Get detailed information about available apartments
- Make a note of important points
- Thank and take leave of contact person

Each task comes with descriptors for A1, A2 and B1, since the scenarios are not linked to specific levels. For example, there are four descriptors specifying possible learning aims at levels A1-B1 with which to judge the performance in the second task *Get detailed information about available apartments*

- A1:** Can understand and pass on simple information based on numbers, e.g. rent or which floor.
- A2:** Can obtain simple information about the apartment, e.g. the type of flooring.
- A2:** Can understand relevant information given, e.g. on size, rent and deposit.
- B1:** Can ask for detailed information about the apartment, e.g. the age of the apartment, planned renovations.

The detailed scenario descriptions can be consulted on the *fide* website.

**Videos** have been produced to illustrate how learners at levels A1 – B2 perform in some of the described scenarios.

#### **4. Development of *fide* didactic standards and sample materials (2010-2012)**

The following principles constitute the core of the *fide* approach:

- Orienting teaching to the everyday Swiss context, applying an action-oriented and task-based approach to teaching > scenario-based teaching
- Developing learner autonomy by systematically recording and evaluating the learning process > portfolio approach
- Orienting teaching to the learners' needs > co-constructing the learning curriculum
- Efficiency of teaching approaches: appropriation of lexically organised 'chunks', grammar in context, differentiation according to different levels of education/schooling and/or learning needs, importance of strategies (communication strategies, compensation strategies, learning strategies)
- Intercultural approach

In order to illustrate the *fide* approach, some teaching resources such as sample materials, portfolio elements, descriptions of sample lessons etc. have been made available on the *fide* website in the official languages.

There is no set curriculum or prescribed syllabus. With the scenarios, the precise language to be learnt is not prescribed either – it's a matter of negotiation between teachers and learners: After the "visualisation" of a chosen scenario (through pictures, by enacting the scenario, drawing on the learners' or the teacher's experience), the specific learning aims are defined together with the learners, considering their language needs and their current language level.

#### **5. Setting up a teacher training scheme (2012-2014)**

Based on the analysis of the teacher profile required to put into practice the *fide* approach, a modular qualification system was developed, leading to a "Certificate in Teaching in the Integration Context". The modules were designed in a way to allow maximum flexibility, taking into account existing qualifications and establishing equivalences and possibilities for the validation of previously acquired knowledge and

practical competencies.

The modules are offered by training institutions that have to undergo a central accreditation procedure. The Certificate is delivered by the fide Secretariat.

## **6. Setting up the fide Secretariat (2015)**

As the other components of *fide*, the function of coordinating the system was also put out to tender. From 2015 the *fide* Secretariat had the tasks of ensuring quality in the teacher training system and informing about the *fide* system, mainly through the fide website.

From 2017 the responsibilities of the *fide* Secretariat were enlarged to include the quality framework as well as running the fide testing system.

## **7. Developing and piloting a quality framework (2015-2017)**

Based on the 2010 Outline Curriculum and the didactic principles of fide, a comprehensive quality framework was developed and piloted between 2015 and 2017, involving 14 institutions in various Cantons. The framework proposes a set of standards on three levels:

- Standard D: Didactic standards concerning the teaching/learning process
- Standard O: Organizational standards concerning resource provision, teachers' support, course management, internal quality assurance processes
- Standard C: Coordination standards concerning the work of the cantonal authorities in relation to assessing the training needs and provision of language courses for migrants.

It is intended as a framework of reference for quality development. Schools with course offers that correspond to the standards can apply for a *fide*-label – fide being an open system this is, however, not obligatory. The certification process involves the submission of a dossier in which a course teacher describes their classroom practice and reflects on the approach adopted with reference to the standards D. The description is then commented on and complemented by the person in charge of teacher coordination. A trained expert assesses the dossier, observes one or several lessons and then holds interviews with teachers, teacher coordinator and the school direction. During this audit both the standards D and the standards O are evaluated.

## **8. Developing and piloting the fide testing system (2015-2017)**

The development of a test, in line with the fide teaching approach, was commissioned from a consortium including an international test provider after a procurement process. A test prototype was produced and piloted in 2016 with a group of 300 migrants in the 3 linguistic regions.

The development of a number of test versions was commissioned in 2017 from a Swiss test provider. A few changes were made to the original prototype, and the test format underwent another pilot phase.

The oral test includes speaking and listening comprehension (responses don't require any reading skills), the written test includes combined reading and writing activities. All test tasks are contextualised. In a short pre-test, the candidates are directed towards the A1-A2 or A2-B1 ranges (separately for oral and written). Within these ranges, the tests are progressive. The candidates cannot "fail" the test; according to their performance, they will receive level indications for the oral and the written part separately, ranging from <A1 to B1.

## 9. *The language passport*

After having passed the *fide* test, the participants receive a language passport stating the levels achieved in the oral and the written part of the test. The language passport is a valid proof of language proficiency when applying for residency or naturalisation.

The *fide* test is not the only way of obtaining a language passport. People having passed a language test that corresponds to the standards of the ALTE Q-Mark can send in their certificate to the *fide* Secretariat and they will also be issued a language passport.

Handing in a *fide* portfolio (modelled on the ESP) to be validated during an interview with an expert, should constitute a third way of obtaining the language passport. The exact procedure is still being developed.

## 10. “Going live” (2018)

The *fide* system has been developed and implemented step by step. As from 2018, the whole system, with all its components, is operational, with ongoing monitoring and feedback coordinated by the *fide* secretariat. The *fide* framework now consists of the following “operational” elements:

- Teacher training and certification
- Language test A1-B1
- *fide* quality framework and *fide* course label

In all development stages work was carried out and monitored by groups made up of migration experts, practitioners in the field of migration, researchers, teachers, quality experts administrators (e.g. directors of institutions, authorities) and the system was set up gradually. It was important to follow a multi-disciplinary approach involving all the actors for all the phases in order to get feedback from the field and support for the project.

### Timeline:

2007: Swiss Federal Council ordered the development of a national framework for the linguistic integration of adult migrants

2009-2010: Development of the Outline Curriculum

2010-2012: Detailed needs analysis, development of the scenario database and defining the *fide* approach, development of sample materials

2012 – 2014: Setting up a teacher training scheme

2015: Setting up institutional structures with a national *fide* Secretariat

2015-2017: Developing and piloting a quality framework and a language test

2018: The entire *fide* system is operational

### People/roles:

- project coordination by State Secretariat for Migration and external office
- scientific accompaniment (Institute for Multilingualism, University of Fribourg)
- development groups made up of migration experts, practitioners in the field of migration, researchers, teachers, quality assurance experts, administrators
- piloting of all system components with a large number of institutions in all linguistic regions

### Quality Assurance

The first development stages were accompanied by an international group of experts. In 2017 a *fide* Quality Commission has been installed, consisting of experts in the field of language teaching, testing, quality assurance as well as representatives of institutions and authorities, with the task of monitoring the system. All

normative documents (i.e. regulations and standards for the various qualification or certification procedures) need to be approved by the *fide* Quality Commission.

Current quality assurance procedures include:

- Institutions offering teacher training modules must be accredited by the *fide* Secretariat. Teacher trainers and institutional representatives meet regularly.
- A quality framework defining principles and standards at different levels serves as a reference for teaching institutions as well as funding and evaluating bodies. Course offers can obtain the *fide* label after an auditing procedure.
- The *fide* test is developed to ALTE procedures with the ALTE Q mark. Institutions running the test must be accredited by the *fide* Secretariat. Examiners must follow two training seminars and obtain a licence; candidates are assessed by two examiners to reduce subjectivity.

#### **Publications that have been used or produced related to this example:**

Schleiss, M. & Hagenow-Caprez, M. (2017). *fide* – On the way to a coherent framework. In Beacco, J-C, Krumm, H-J / Little, D. & Thalgot, P. (Eds.) *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants / L'intégration linguistique des migrants adultes* (pp. 169–174). Berlin: De Gruyter.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **What was achieved:**

A national approach to the linguistic integration of migrants, with backing across the political spectrum, sufficient funding and support from the various stakeholders has been established. A network of professionals in the teaching sector and in various other fields concerned with migration has been established. Numerous tools, guidelines and materials illustrating the system and the teaching approach have been provided.

*fide* now comprises:

- a website (<http://www.fide-info.ch>) on which all information and materials are freely available for download;
- an inventory of scenarios;
- videos and texts illustrating the performance of migrants at different levels of proficiency in L2 in various scenarios;
- a placement tool and recommendations to course organizers;
- guidelines for teachers and sample materials illustrating the teaching approach;
- a qualification profile for teachers as well as a training and qualification system;
- procedures for language competence assessment;
- a quality development system;
- a national secretariat as a reference point.

#### **Impact:**

Since the system as a whole only went live at the beginning of 2018, it is too early to really talk of impact. There have been teething problems with teachers used to following a more grammatically structured syllabus with coursebooks (see Schleiss & Hagenow 2017) but in general feedback has been positive.

Co-construction is at the core of the *fide* approach, but unfortunately goes against the firm and fundamental convictions of many teachers. As Schleiss & Hagenow put it:

It contradicts what they believe to be their role and responsibility. It is also against the beliefs of many learners as regards the role of the teacher. Often, the teachers' resistance is also, explicitly or implicitly, backed up by school administrators, who see their careful planning jeopardized when the learning

content of courses becomes less predictable. On the basis of the data obtained, it seems clear that the key element of co-construction will need to be reinforced both in teacher training and in communicating information about *fide*. The changing role it involves for teachers will have to be explained and illustrated, e.g. with experiences like the following: “My learners are much more motivated since they know that the course is modelled on their expressed needs.” Schleiss & Hagenow (2017: 173–4)

Another issue, in common with the experience in secondary schools in Switzerland over the last 15 years, has been the reluctance of teachers to implement a portfolio approach, which is perceived as “cumbersome” and “taking away time from learning.” However, one could say that the portfolio approach has been successful indirectly, since it leads teachers to put more emphasis on working towards “useful” learning outcomes and to include both formal and informal evaluation in the learning process.

**Resources on this theme:**

See the *fide* website and the Council of Europe LIAM website (where a toolkit has been published)

## **4 ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNT:**

- Don't work alone: it is important to have a multidisciplinary approach, and to work with experts in the different fields, including:
  - o people who bring practical, field experience
  - o people from academia who bring the scientific aspect
  - o the administration
- A project like this needs a LOT of time. However, that is good because you need to involve lots of people.
- It is important to have political support in this area, to provide objective information and win support from the government, and from parties across the political spectrum.
- It is also important to involve and have support from both the scientific side and the field.
- Pilot with lots of people.
- Don't be afraid to go back and redo some things (e.g.: aural comprehension in the *fide* test was originally based on written multiple choice answers, but in order to make the oral part of the test – speaking and listening comprehension – accessible also to people with no or little schooling, it has been changed).