



Teacher Competences for Sign Languages in Education

The ProSign Team

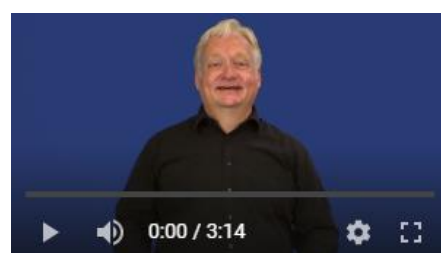
PROSIGN



Introduction

For the ECML project *ProSign 2: Promoting excellence in sign language instruction*, one of the defined outputs was to compile an overview of competences for sign language teachers. Since the ProSign 2 project is an associate partner to the ECML project [*Towards a CEFR for language teachers \(CEFRLT\)*](#) which has published its results under the title of *A guide to teacher compétences in language education*, we were able to collaborate closely with the project team and build our output on the work achieved through the Guide by adapting their content for the context of sign language teachers' education. While the intention of the Guide is to create a generic resource, the content of the present document is adapted for sign language teachers; the description of their competences is derived from the following sources:

1. Adapting parts of the Guide's main output *Teacher competences for languages in education: Conclusions of the project*,
2. Results from group work completed at the ProSign 2/efsli conference in Belgrade, Serbia in October 2018 with sign language teachers, linguists and members of different European Deaf communities on selected competences defined in the Guide, but related to sign language teachers' education, and
3. Competences from a Finnish research project (De Weerd et al., 2016), which were included in this document.



How to use this document OR what is this document for?

This document aims to serve as a starting point to define competences for developing curricula for sign language teachers' education. This document is a first attempt to combine the work and experiences from different sources in order to define basic competences. It is not intended that this document answers all questions that are relevant for sign language teacher (SLT) education, but it can be used as a basis for future discussions and developments.

We would like to direct the reader to the [original generic document](#) from the Guide website for the concepts, frameworks and methodology that informed the different domains of teachers' competences.



The basic taxonomy of the eight dimensions of teachers' competences

Bleichenbacher and colleagues define the teachers' competences in a taxonomy along eight domains (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: The eight dimensions of the taxonomy (from the document *Teacher competences for languages in education: Conclusions of the project*)

First, there is an overarching dimension containing professional values and principles as a basis and orientation for all individual teacher action and development (1). The next two dimensions, language and communicative competences (2), and information technology competences (3), are transversal, in that they feed into the subsequent four dimensions. As presented below, illustrative descriptors for dimensions (2) and (3) reappear embedded at the end of the dimensions 4-7. Dimensions 4-7 at the centre of the document contain metalinguistic, meta-discourse and metacultural competences (4), teaching competences (5), competences for cooperation (6), and competences for initial teacher education and professional development (7). The taxonomy concludes with a section containing descriptions of professional learning opportunities (8). These are not competences themselves, but rather activities and opportunities that are conducive to the further development of the competences described in previous sections.

In line with the distinction made between this document and a teacher portfolio or an instrument for assessment, there is no attempt whatsoever in the document to describe levels of competences or career stages. The Guide's authors' assumption is that such levels could be identified if graded competence descriptors for specific contexts of teaching are formulated and validated. Likewise, no suggestions are made in the document regarding which areas of competence are particularly important/relevant or should be prioritized at given points in a teacher's educational pathway (such as initial education, practical training, induction (beginning of career), career-long learning, etc.).

How are competences defined in the document?

The approach used in this document is based on the following definition from the recent publication *Competences for democratic culture* (2018 by the Council of Europe):

For the purposes of the current model, the term ‘competence’ is defined as ‘the ability to mobilize and deploy relevant values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and/or understanding in order to respond appropriately and effectively to the demands, challenges and opportunities that are presented by a given type of context (...)’.

The present model construes competence as a dynamic process. This is because competence involves the selection, activation, organization and co-ordination of relevant psychological resources which are then applied through behavior in such a way that the individual adapts appropriately and effectively to a given situation.

(*Competences for democratic culture*, Council of Europe 2018, vol. 1, p. 32; see also e.g., Weinert 2001)

In the illustrative descriptors below, there is no systematic distinction between the different psychological resources involved: the relative importance of different resources varies across the dimensions. For instance, values and attitudes predominate in dimension 1, knowledge and understanding are important in dimension 4, and the main focus of dimensions 5-7 is on teachers’ skills. With the exception of dimensions 1 and 8, the descriptors refer to relatively concrete contexts and types of teacher activities. Figure 2 below illustrates how the competence descriptors are organized in dimensions and sub-dimensions and are coupled with examples:

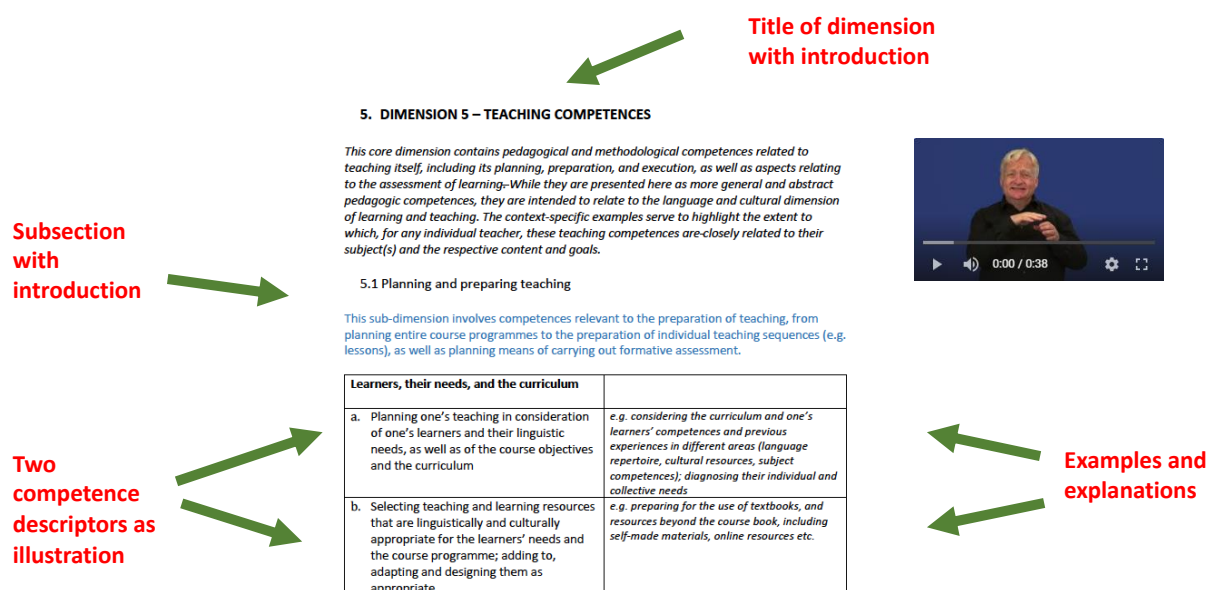


Figure 2: How the competence descriptors appear in the document

In the following you will see the eight dimensions in more detail, adapted for the purposes of sign language teacher education.

Dimension 1: Professional values and principles

The first dimension contains professional values and principles that are concerned with the contribution of teaching to quality education for all learners, including deaf¹ learners, and thus with upholding human rights, democracy, and of the rule of law for every citizen. These values and principles are based on the aims of language education, and education in general, as proposed by the Council of Europe, and are intended to support teachers by highlighting and affirming their roles in a broader societal and ethical context. Therefore, the principles described here are also relevant for sign language teachers, as well as perhaps for teachers of all other subjects in sign language. These values and principles are best understood in direct relation with the competences in the dimensions 2-8 below.



The sign language teacher regards the following principles as integral to his or her teaching role:	
a. Respect for learners' rights to quality education	<i>e.g. striving for equal opportunities and quality learning for each individual, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic background; in particular equal accessibility to all teaching for deaf learners on all levels; this also holds for L2 learners of a sign language, usually hearing but also deaf.</i>
b. The importance of language in and for educational success	<i>e.g. considering the linguistic dimension of all subjects; in particular the importance of a full L1 acquisition, often a sign language for deaf learners; e.g. attribute equal status to sign language in the educational institute and also, on other levels, e.g. SL as instruction language; acceptance of materials and submission on video in (typically written) assessments; acceptance of interpreter services to deaf students or teachers but for</i>



¹ We use 'deaf' here as an umbrella term for all degrees of deafness in people, including hard of hearing or deafblind individuals.

	<i>the benefit of all present; taking care that spoken language videos are at least subtitled (or with interpretation in local sign language inserted).</i>
c. The promotion of languages and cultural understanding as relevant, necessary and interesting phenomena for each citizen	<i>e.g. fostering learners' and colleagues' interest in linguistic and cultural practices; emphasizing equal status of all languages and cultures in education and society, embedded in majority culture.</i>
d. The value of each learner's personal resources	<i>e.g. considering the contribution of learners' linguistic and cultural resources to their learning; considering the educational needs of hearing parents of deaf children (socio-cultural-linguistic needs); considering deaf role models to deaf children and to L2 learners of local sign language.</i>
e. The value and richness of linguistic and cultural diversity in society and education	<i>e.g. accepting the value of different languages and different cultures; e.g. make room for variation in local/national sign language(s); do not impose choice of signs and give attention to variants (lexical, grammatical); accepting different forms of sign/speech switching or blending in deaf people (e.g. late learners or orally educated deaf).</i>
f. The pursuit of the success of each learner	<i>e.g. supporting learners in each possible way (for example through effective scaffolding); setting fair and adequate standards when testing learners with special attention to accessibility of test-language, and equality of teaching to deaf learners; acceptance of SL</i>



	<i>submissions (i.e. digital video recording) of test where possible.</i>
g. The development of learners' autonomy and critical awareness	<i>e.g. enabling learners to assume responsibility for their own learning, e.g. by using the ELP developed for sign language users. Supporting non-signing teachers in using signed self-reflections of students. Disseminating deaf cultural and SL linguistic knowledge among teaching team where possible. Asking for facilitation from school management and team.</i>
h. The fostering of a democratic culture, including mutual respect and equality of opportunities	<i>e.g. allowing others to talk, listening to them, fostering a spirit of exchange, of discussion and debating, and of joint decision-making; e.g. fair turn-taking policy in bimodal bilingual situations; educating fellow students, teachers, staff about sign language interaction; educating people in how to interact via an SL interpreter.</i>



For ‘a’. and ‘f’: These principles can guide SLTs in pre-primary and primary education, when considering the issue of integrating learners who have special needs, or who do not yet know the language(s) of schooling.

We wish to emphasize here, that there is considerable diversity in learners; L2M2 stands for learning a new language (L2) in a different modality (M2) from an L1, e.g. a hearing speaker of English (L1) learning British Sign Language (L2) which uses a different modality (M2)).

- Hearing learners (L2M2) with diverse motivations (e.g. parents of deaf children, professionals working with deaf people, language students, children in kindergartens/schools learning a sign language etc.)
- Heritage learners (L1M1) who are mostly hearing with Deaf parents; some might not have had sufficient sign language input

- Deaf and hearing learners (L2/M1), most of whom acquired a sign language as L1 in early childhood and are learning another sign language. Some of them are migrants
- New Deaf learners (L2/M2), most of whom grew up orally (i.e. with a spoken language) and want to acquire sign language
- Atypical deaf learners (L1/M1) – most of them either have a disability and/or have been language-deprived.

For ‘b’.: This principle can motivate an SLT in upper secondary level, to engage in projects involving physical or virtual mobility, where learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds cooperate on chosen subjects, e.g. geography or a foreign language, including the local sign language.

For ‘d’.: This principle can motivate an SLT at primary level to be aware of the linguistic and cultural resources that their deaf and hearing learners bring to school, and to what extent these resources may be relied on for learning, e.g. in a language class or maths class.

For ‘g’.: see also the [EPOSTL publication](#) of the ECML.

For ‘h’.: This principle can guide an SLT at secondary level, who teach, for example, *debating* as an aim, or as a means to approach a subject, e.g. in a language or history class.

Dimension 2: Language/communicative competence (transversal competence)

This dimension contains the language and communicative competences relevant for all contexts of teaching and for the teaching profession as a whole. By definition, these competences involve key aspects of sign language proficiency and language use in general. Depending on the context, they include:



Key aspects of language use and of communication	
- receptive, productive and interactive competences in the signed mode	<i>e.g. comprehending and producing sign language, interacting in sign language in person; comprehending and producing filmed sign language.</i>
- the use of paralinguistic and non-linguistic features	<i>e.g. gestures, facial expressions, body language not part of the relevant sign language.</i>

Sign languages are, by definition, not uniform, but used in different linguistic varieties (e.g. registers, regional variations, etc.), often in combination with other spoken/written or signed languages (e.g., in multilingual settings). This requires SL teachers to build up, as appropriate, plurilingual competences in areas such as intercomprehension (exploiting competences in one language to understand or produce messages in another), the appropriate choice of such varieties in different situations, including instances of code-switching / translanguaging (changing languages) or code-blending (simultaneous - sometimes sequential - use of spoken and signed features), and different kinds of mediation (e.g. interpreting or translating into another language, paraphrases e.g. explaining something using different signs, etc.). The written form of the local spoken language may also be used as a means of communication, and can be taken into consideration in the whole communicative context, as needed.



In this document, the dimension of language/communicative competences is transversal in relation to the other competence dimensions, since language competences are required in all of these domains. The competences enable SL teachers to enter the profession (e.g. as students in initial training), to interact with their learners, and to communicate with colleagues and other professionals in different contexts.



Depending on the linguistic repertoire and the professional context of any individual teacher, competences in a number of different languages may be required. These include at least the language(s) of schooling, which is/are often the dominant spoken/written language(s) used in the region where the school or institution is located, and the target sign language(s) of teaching, which may or may not be identical with the language of schooling. An important factor is the role of these languages in the repertoire of the teacher and the learners, e.g. whether teaching and learning takes place in a language that is a first, second, or foreign language for the teacher(s) and/or some or most learners.



There is a case to be made that any sign language teacher should acquire competences in, and/or experiences in learning at least one other language as part of their education. Such competences and experiences can contribute to a teacher's appreciation of key phenomena related to

language in education, e.g. to understand the positive experiences and difficulties experienced by learners with partial / beginners' competences in a language, especially when it is learnt and used in the context of formal education. The language could (preferably) be a sign language used in a nearby region or country, a world language (e.g. American Sign Language) or a contact form like International Sign (e.g. Whynot 2016; Rosenstock 2008).

It might also happen that a learner uses one sign language at home (say Italian Sign Language (LIS)), but is learning German Sign Language (DGS) in school. In this case the DGS teacher is encouraged to get somewhat acquainted with LIS.

By definition, there is also always a cultural aspect to communication, so communicative competences include pluricultural and intercultural competences. These competences are potentially relevant in any situation of a teacher's everyday professional life, and especially so in interactions characterized by cultural differences, as in the following examples:

Intercultural competences within and for communication	
a. Interacting in a variety of situations related to everyday life, as well as educational, professional and other contexts	<p><i>e.g. to respect, as appropriate, the cultural norms that characterize communication in a staff room or at a parent-teacher conference.</i></p> <p><i>e.g. with particular attention to the specific conditions of the local Deaf community (or, as the case may be, communities), to be included in learners' interactive / communicative learning and to be integrated in professional contacts.</i></p>
b. Interacting in situations characterized by cultural differences, taking different participants' cultural background into account	<p><i>e.g. to act appropriately to unforeseen challenges in a conversation when there is possibility that people misunderstand each other because of cultural differences.</i></p> <p><i>For example, preparing non-signing people to the presence and work of sign language interpreters and appropriate attitudes.</i></p>



A final aspect of communicative competences is the use of different modes of communication, as illustrated in the following descriptors.



Combining different modes (semiotic means) of communication	
a. Interpreting and producing meaning using non-linguistic and visual means	<i>e.g. to present content to learners in the form of sign language(s), diagrams or other visual content, and visual media. If spoken language is used in film, always provide subtitles or interpreting into SL.</i>
b. Creating multimodal messages using different semiotic means	<i>e.g. to create and edit a simple website for an online platform made available to one's learners; e.g. still and moving pictures; and discuss hidden and explicit messages. SL teachers often work with filmed materials, and should have filming and editing skills.</i>



Dimension 3: Information Technology (IT) competences (transversal dimension)

Competences in information technology are best seen as transversal, much like language and communicative competences of teachers. While many everyday and also educational uses of digital media are indeed essentially communicative, it is useful to describe them separately. Like language competences, information technology (IT) competences are relevant for acquiring subject competences, for teaching, for cooperation with other teachers and stakeholders and for the teachers' education and development.



Examples for both transversal competence dimensions are not illustrated separately, but are integrated and highlighted at the end of several competence areas below.

Dimension 4: Metalinguistic, meta-discourse, and metacultural competences

This dimension contains ‘meta’ competences, i.e. competences related to awareness and understanding of language and languages, of discourse (language use), and of culture and cultures. Since learners require, to varying extents, language and cultural competences in order to engage with the content of any subject, it is necessary for sign language teachers to be aware of these learner competences, and to be able to foster them through teaching. This dimension attempts to describe competences related to awareness and understanding of linguistic and cultural phenomena that are common to the teaching of all subjects, and which are specifically relevant to sign language teaching. Accordingly, the first section contains metalinguistic, meta-discourse and metacultural competences relevant for all teachers. The second section focuses exclusively on sign language teachers’ competences. The latter are simultaneously understood, by and large, to constitute their core subject matter or disciplinary competences.



4.1 Metalinguistic, meta-discourse, and metacultural competences of all teachers

This section is based on the assumption that if there is a language dimension to most or all forms of teaching and learning, a case can be made for every teacher to acquire competences related to analyzing and relating language(s), culture(s) and discourses to whatever their subject is and whatever the educational and other needs of their learners. An understanding of the role of language in shaping the discourses of one’s discipline can be seen as a factor of success in engaging with the subject in the first place. These discourse types can vary substantially across disciplines (e.g. sociology versus physical education, art versus biology). Yet the underlying assumption is that the competences involved also have a general side to them, which is what this section attempts to describe. These competences can also be seen as a prerequisite for engaging with the language dimension of the subject in one’s teaching, as described in dimension 5 (teaching competences) below.



General metalinguistic competences of all teachers	
a. Analyzing aspects of the use and structure of language, especially in the context of education, both with respect to individual languages and across different languages (multilingualism)	<i>e.g. to discuss what is typical about the sign language that is required of the SL learners in a subject; to be aware of some shared features and differences between languages used by SL learners.</i>



b. Reflecting on aspects of the acquisition of sign language(s) (first/second/foreign language) and literacy/ies (plurilingualism / pluri-literacies), especially with respect to language use in and for education	<i>e.g. to discuss aspects related to a migrant learner's acquisition of literacy in the language of schooling in different subjects; to consider code-switching (using more than one language when talking, signing or writing) or code-blending in educational contexts.</i>
General meta-discourse competences of all teachers	
c. Observing and analyzing instances of language use that are relevant for education	<i>e.g. to discuss differences between spoken and written language, or face-to-face signing and recorded signing; and between different text types/genres, as well as more or less formal registers (academic language, classroom language, colloquial language).</i>
d. Observing and analyzing discourse functions in educational or other relevant contexts	<i>e.g. to understand how teachers and learners use discourse functions, such as explaining, informing, evaluating, arguing in educational settings, or contexts (e.g. the workplace) that learners are being prepared for.</i>
General metacultural competences of all teachers	
e. Observing social and cultural phenomena across time and across different cultural contexts, including transcultural phenomena, especially in the context of education	<i>e.g. to understand differences regarding the role and interpretation of teachers or of specific subjects, across time and different cultures; e.g. to give attention to global developments in deaf communities, using European Union of the Deaf (EUD) and World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) information; e.g. discussing the ontology and etymology of Deafhood</i>



	<i>(see e.g. Kuster & De Meulder (2013)).</i>
f. Observing the development and effect of discourses and social views (including stereotypes) about language, culture and education	<i>e.g. folk discourses about specific languages, such as “sign language being too difficult to learn by hearing parents” or “International Sign is always based on ASL” that may interfere with learning; local misconceptions about the Deaf community and their sign language(s).</i>
Metalinguistic, meta-discourse and metacultural competences related to specific subjects	
g. Analyzing and discussing the language dimension of a particular subject	<i>e.g. to discuss, as a (future) maths teacher, how language is used in mathematics as an academic discipline; gain insights in how teaching in a sign language is the same or different from teaching in a spoken/written language or in a bimodal bilingual situation; SL teachers can support other teachers on lexical and didactic matters.</i>
h. Critically reflecting on the language dimension of the history, assumptions, content and method of the disciplines relevant for one’s teaching	<i>e.g. to discuss, as a (future) geography teacher, the advantages and drawbacks of the scientific terminology used over time in one’s discipline(s); share subject specific jargon.</i>



4.2 Metalinguistic, metacultural and discourse competences of sign language teachers

For teachers of sign language(s) as a subject, these competences are at the core of their work, whether they teach in sign language as the language of schooling, as a foreign language, or in support to learn other (spoken or signed) languages. In that sense they are similar to the competences under 4.1. above – which are all also valid for language teachers. However, they play a more central role in the preparation and teaching of content, **since the medium of instruction is at the same time its content.** Therefore, the sub-sections of section



4.1 are replicated, and complemented by a fourth subsection that sketches competences from a range of other disciplines for content-based sign language teaching.

Metalinguistic competences of sign language teachers	
a. Analyzing in some detail aspects of the use, structure, and acquisition or learning of a sign language, both with respect to individual sign languages and across different spoken and signed languages (multilingualism)	<i>e.g. to understand features of the pragmatics, vocabulary, grammar, phonology, etc., of the sign language(s) one teaches, and how they are acquired and learnt; cross-modal comparisons are useful; deaf sign language teachers should be aware similarities and differences in spoken language as well as signed language.</i>
b. Analyzing in some detail instances of sign language variation and change	<i>e.g. to understand how sign language users employ features of standard, regional, social, ethnic, gender-based and other linguistic varieties in various contexts. Since many sign languages/variants are not fully described, some flexibility and creativity is expected of the SLT; also seeking collaboration with other language teachers is encouraged to prevent over focus on SLs. See ENSLT (https://www.enslt.eu/).</i>
Meta-discourse competences of sign language teachers	
c. Analyzing and comparing relevant text types and genres in the target languages	<i>e.g. to compare and analyze texts representing relevant genres, such as literature (in primary and secondary sign language education), academic genres (in tertiary sign language education), workplace/professional genres (in upper secondary and adult sign language education), etc. Special attention should be given to this aspect when teaching hearing parents of deaf children, with a focus on</i>



	<i>narratives and book-reading/story telling.</i>
d. Observing, analyzing and comparing varieties of sign language that are relevant for the learning and teaching of sign languages	<i>e.g. to understand, in some detail, differences between relevant registers of the target sign language(s), and aspects such as the interlanguage or partial competences of learners. Translanguaging should be made explicit and not be discouraged.</i>
Metacultural competences of sign language teachers	
e. Observing, analyzing and comparing social and cultural aspects across time and across different cultural contexts, including transcultural phenomena	<i>e.g. to analyze, in some detail, cultural phenomena such as visual art or specific deaf events, especially in cultural contexts linked to the target sign language(s) of teaching.</i>
f. Observing, analyzing and comparing the development and effect of discourses and social views (including stereotypes) about signed and spoken language, culture and education	<i>e.g. to analyze, in some detail, how the target sign language(s) of teaching are represented in academic, folk and other discourses, within and outside different sign language communities, as well as in spoken language communities (majority language).</i>
Sign Language teachers' competences for content-based language teaching	
g. Analyzing and discussing phenomena from domains such as geography, history, sociology, politics/political science, psychology, and philosophy, as appropriate and relevant in view of one's sign language teaching	<i>e.g. to conduct a lesson about current affairs, comparing sociolinguistics circumstances of spoken and signed languages and their communities (majority/minority issues), in a cultural, linguistic and social context.</i>



The transversal **language and communicate competence** in this dimension include many instances of academic language use, such as the following:

a. Using signed language face-to-face and online (filmed) in teacher education / training contexts concerned with metalinguistic, discourse and metacultural phenomena	<i>e.g. to interact with peers in a training or professional development session; practice sign language in social media contexts.</i>
b. Understanding and producing academic texts relevant for one's subject-specific and pedagogic education	<i>e.g. to read textbooks for one's education, or to write/produce in sign language, reports related to one's profession; apply sign language conventions in signed texts; establish criteria for signed texts (e.g. CEFR language level; lexical choice, grammatical choices, informal vs formal texts, etc.).</i>



The transversal **IT competences** in this dimension include, for instance:

c. Using digital databases to retrieve and store information related to metalinguistic, discourse and metacultural phenomena	<i>e.g. to work with online catalogues, e-texts, sign language corpora and dictionaries; work with annotation programmes like ELAN or iLex.</i>
d. Using digital communication technology for exchanges related to metalinguistic, discourse and metacultural phenomena	<i>e.g. to engage in collaborative work on digital learning platforms, video-conferencing systems etc. e.g. to be able to use smartphone for short signed messages; social media skills .</i>



Dimension 5: Teaching competences

This core dimension contains pedagogical and methodological competences related to teaching itself, including its planning, preparation, and execution, as well as aspects relating to the assessment of learning. While these competences are presented here as more general and abstract pedagogic competences, they are intended to relate to the sign language and cultural dimension of learning and teaching. The context-specific examples serve to highlight the extent to which, for any individual teacher, these teaching competences are closely related to their subject(s) and the respective content and goals.



5.1 Planning and preparing teaching

This sub-dimension involves competences relevant to the preparation of teaching, from planning entire course programmes to the preparation of individual teaching sequences (e.g. lessons), as well as planning means of carrying out formative assessment.



Learners, their needs, and the curriculum	
a. Planning one's teaching in consideration of one's learners and their linguistic needs, as well as of the course objectives and the curriculum	<i>e.g. considering the curriculum and SL learners' competences and previous experiences in different areas (language repertoire, cultural resources, subject competences); diagnosing their individual and collective needs.</i>
b. Selecting teaching and learning resources that are linguistically and culturally appropriate for the learners' needs and the course programme; adding to, adapting and designing them as appropriate	<i>e.g. preparing for the use of textbooks or recorded materials, and resources beyond the course book, including self-made materials, online resources etc.</i>
Teaching content and activities	
c. Analyzing and selecting forms and features of sign language and communication, including language functions, that are	<i>e.g. identifying features of sign language that are important in a given subject (science, history, a foreign language, etc.) and specifying learning activities that develop</i>



relevant to the course programme and lesson objectives	<i>learners' ability to use the subject-related language effectively.</i>
d. Planning a coherent, varied and well-timed sequence of language-related teaching/learning activities for each lesson	<i>e.g. taking sign language progression and communicative aspects of each activity into account when deciding on the most effective sequence.</i>

5.2 Conducting teaching and managing student learning

These competences, which are relevant to the way in which teaching is conducted and learning is managed, include the organization of activities within a classroom, interaction with learners and the appropriate integration of different resources. We trust that teachers will be able to fully and meaningfully facilitate environmentally optimal conditions for sign language instruction, e.g. no back-light, sufficient lights, visual alarm system etc.).



Initiating, carrying out and concluding learning sequences	
a. Starting and ending lessons and activities in ways that are efficient, motivating, and conducive to language-related learning	<i>e.g. creating an atmosphere that is positive and reassuring for communication; clarifying the desired learning outcomes, and allowing time for conclusion and reflection at the end.</i>
b. Using lesson time in an efficient way taking account of the need for flexibility in responding to learners' language-related needs	<i>e.g. giving clear instructions; regularly monitoring learners' activity, intervening when necessary for individual or collective support.</i>
Using teaching methodology in a varied way that is suitable for the teaching context and focus of learning	
c. Giving learners equal opportunities to participate, to exchange ideas and opinions and to learn from one another	<i>e.g. running a variety of activities for individuals, for small groups and for the whole class, and moving smoothly from one activity to the next.</i>



d. Managing the selected media and devices to support language-related learning, including handouts, display boards, projectors, mobile devices, etc.	<i>e.g. offering appropriate media to provide inclusive opportunities that cater to different learning preferences or styles, and enable learners to further develop their own learning strategies.</i>
Managing the content of learning sequences and the resources needed	
e. Exploiting resources for learning, including digital resources and resources outside the school, and the related activities in order to motivate learners and maximize language-related learning	<i>e.g. relating the content and language of the resources to current topics, events and offers (e.g. museums), as well as the learners' individual resources and experiences, as appropriate.</i>
f. Explaining and organizing practice of language points related to lesson content in a way that is clear, effective and adapted to learners' needs	<i>e.g. helping learners to make connections between different languages (spoken and signed), and exploit strategies based on similarities of the structure of conversations and texts, vocabulary/terminology, etc.</i>
Learner management and the scaffolding of learning	
g. Eliciting and managing learners' interventions with use of appropriate communication strategies	<i>e.g. interacting with individual learners and the entire group, taking on different roles (e.g. supervisor, mediator, participant) when necessary.</i>
h. Engaging and maintaining learners' focus on, and interest in language-related learning	<i>e.g. ensuring that learners are not distracted from the learning activities; providing feedback and clarification as needed, controlling one's share of talking time.</i>



Organizing and giving learner support	
i. Catering for learners who have diverse educational needs and challenges; and helping each learner to obtain the support and learning resources they need to progress especially in terms of language	<i>e.g. considering to what extent a learner's difficulties and strengths are related to language, lesson activities, cultural or other factors; handling groups of learners with mixed abilities, from different cultural backgrounds, etc.</i>
j. Using appropriate monitoring, clarification and encouragement techniques when learners have difficulties with the language required for learning	<i>e.g. dealing constructively with learners' errors in a manner designed to aid learning; offering individual support where possible; helping learners to use suitable learning strategies; inviting learners' feedback on their activities.</i>
Working towards learner autonomy	
k. Getting learners to reflect on their language-related learning process, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning	<i>e.g. eliciting feedback from learners about how interesting and useful they find different kinds of learning activities, encouraging them to discuss what they have learned in terms of language competences after a series of activities</i>
l. Encouraging learners to set themselves achievable language-related goals, work autonomously, and help each other	<i>e.g. introducing learners to work with reflection/self-assessment portfolio instruments for their sign language competences.</i>
Supporting learners' sign language development	
m. Being aware of, and drawing learners' attention to the language requirements and language development goals when necessary	<i>e.g. asking questions to check understanding and by encouraging students to ask questions for clarification when they are in doubt.</i>



n. Providing students with language elements for academic language development (general academic words/signs and expressions, subject-specific terminology and set phrases) by integrating them into one's language performance as a teacher	<i>e.g. emphasising specific patterns, structures and linguistic means through intonation/facial and body expression, repeating or paraphrasing relevant language etc.</i>
Learning beyond the classroom	
o. Planning, assigning and explaining language-related tasks to be done autonomously at home which extend or complement work done in the classroom	<i>e.g. monitoring learners' 'homework' tasks, seeking and planning opportunities for group and individual project work.</i>
p. Where feasible, planning and managing opportunities for learner mobility, including virtual mobility, for language-related learning	<i>e.g. organizing networking through group or individual online exchanges with learners in different locations or/and different countries, in different languages and subjects, as appropriate.</i>



5.3 Assessment and evaluation of learners' progress and achievement

This section, which covers the teacher's competences for formative and summative assessment, includes competences related to the procedure, the content, and outcomes of assessment, and providing feedback on these outcomes.



A. Formative assessment/ assessment for learning	
<p>Assessment for learning involves creating opportunities for obtaining evidence about learning which is then used to provide feedback to help learners to progress. Learners become more involved in the learning process and gain confidence in what they are expected to learn and to what standard. It implies organizing learning activities that enable the teacher to assess different aspects of learners' knowledge and use of sign language in order to be able to provide useful feedback.</p>	
Procedures of formative assessment	Examples
a. Regularly monitoring learners' sign language-related progress during teaching, and identifying their strengths, as well as areas where improvement is needed	<i>e.g. using criteria from relevant instruments (where available) that describe sign language-related competences in the language of schooling, a foreign language, etc.</i>
b. Using a range of activities with relevant criteria to assess learners' sign language-related progress in a valid and helpful way; including forms of self-assessment (e.g. portfolios) and peer feedback	<i>e.g. using ways of giving feedback which are clear to learners and consistent; ensuring that learners understand the assessment activities and criteria being used.</i>
Focus of formative assessment	
c. In sign language teaching, focusing on the learners' sign language, cultural/intercultural, and plurilingual competences when required	<i>e.g. competences in reception and production of sign language; intercultural knowledge, attitudes, or skills; intercomprehension or mediating between languages.</i>
d. In subject teaching, focusing on each learner's competence in the relevant subject-related sign language and cultural competences, when required	<i>e.g. the sign language competences required to understand or produce subject-related texts.</i>



Outcomes of formative assessment	
e. Offering assessment experiences that aid learning, enhance self-confidence, motivation and engagement, and help learners with their further sign language-related learning	<i>e.g. offering positive and constructive ways of acknowledging learners' strengths and handling their difficulties and errors, and recommendations for learning strategies at school or at home.</i>
f. Using the information and insights from assessment activities when planning future teaching and future methods and means of assessment for sign language-related learning	<i>e.g. reconsidering the procedure and focus of one's assessment activities with respect to the sign language(-related) competences assessed.</i>
B. Summative assessment/assessment of learning <p>Generally, institutions have their own policy and procedures for summative assessment, including placement tests and periodic assessment of achievement. Teacher involvement in this kind of assessment depends on the institution's policy and procedures. In many contexts, their role is mainly to administer tests or other forms of evaluation specified by the institution, to participate in assessment of sign language production, and to be involved in marking tests and recording results. In some contexts, teachers may be asked to contribute to test development as well and/or to provide subjective summative assessments of progress and achievement based on their own ongoing work with learners.</p>	
Procedures of summative assessment and evaluation	
a. Informing learners about the type of sign language-related test or other assessment procedures that will be used and, where necessary, providing some training in these	<i>e.g. describing the test and requirements, including those related to sign language, in detail; offering mock test exercises.</i>
b. Administering, marking and grading sign language-related tests and other assessment activities to	<i>e.g. administering tests, recording the results, grading them using relevant scales and descriptors, also for the</i>



groups of learners as required by the institution; and according to the agreed criteria; (co-)creating such tests if required	<i>assessment of learners' sign language (-related) skills.</i>
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Focus of summative assessment/ evaluation	
c. In sign language teaching, focusing on the learners' sign language, cultural/intercultural, and plurilingual competences when required	<i>e.g. competences in receptive SL skills (comprehension) and productive SL skills (signing); intercultural knowledge, attitudes, or skills; intercomprehension or mediating between languages (spoken and signed).</i>
d. In subject teaching, focusing on each learner's competence in the relevant subject-related sign language and cultural competences when required	<i>e.g. the sign language competences required to understand or produce subject-related texts.</i>
Outcomes of summative assessment and evaluation	
e. Providing information for each learner, on their progress towards and/or achievement of the intended sign language-related learning outcomes specified in the course programme	<i>e.g. to give feedback to learners on areas of strength and required improvement, on whether or not a learner is ready to proceed to the next course, can be awarded a certificate, can enter a higher-level programme, can be appointed to an employment position, etc.</i>
f. Providing information about the results of sign language-related assessment to other teachers, the institution, and other stakeholders, as appropriate	<i>e.g. informing other stakeholders about the future potential and learning needs of each learner, as appropriate; when necessary assisting the organization in providing certification of the level of achievement attained in relation to the various aims.</i>



The transversal **language and communicative competences** in this dimension are typically characterized by a complex pattern of accommodating linguistically to one's learners, often (and especially with younger learners) by simplifying one's level of language while retaining appropriate elements of complexity for learning to be possible. The examples below reflect many of the pedagogic competences already illustrated above. They are listed separately here to highlight how strongly their successful activation depends on the teachers' competences in the language(s) they are using, rather than 'only' on their pedagogic and methodological skills.



Use of sign language for preparing resources	
a. Processing texts (video clips, textbooks, excerpts from the media, literature, internet pages, etc.) in the sign language of schooling, and analyzing them in order to decide whether they are linguistically and culturally suitable for the lesson	<i>e.g. identifying examples of sign language in signed texts which illustrate language and communication points that are focused on in the lesson.</i>
b. Preparing video recordings in the language of schooling or relevant sign language	<i>e.g. adapting or extending texts in learning resources, and creating new texts.</i>
Use of sign language for classroom management	
c. Using the relevant sign language (or languages) to organize lessons	<i>e.g. greeting learners and explaining lesson objectives; giving instructions during the lesson, and bringing activities or lessons to a close.</i>
d. Dealing efficiently, using appropriate sign language, with unexpected events such as interruptions from outside the classroom, late arrivals, learners not feeling well, or disciplinary problems	<i>e.g. intervening using very clear signals, instructions, body language and facial expressions to impose order or silence, to maintain learners' attention, or deal with a dispute between learners.</i>



Use of sign language as a linguistic model	
e. Depending on the activity, providing very clear and appropriate models of the sign language being focused on, and, in the case of new language, eliciting repetition of the models and parallel examples from learners	<i>e.g. knowing how to explain to learners or invite and comment on their interpretation of signs, phrases and other features in the signed texts selected.</i>
f. In whole class role-plays, simulations, discussions or debates, using appropriate sign language to moderate and support the flow of communication without unnecessary interruption or untimely correction	<i>e.g. creating communicative conditions that enable learners to regularly have the opportunity to sign, ask questions, express an opinion etc.</i>
Use of sign language for the learning of content	
g. Using and allowing for questions of different kinds to stimulate genuine learner participation, to elicit opinions and information, as well as to aid comprehension and learning	<i>e.g. asking open questions; answering learners' questions with simple and clear explanations, and, when necessary, providing clear further examples.</i>
h. Exploiting sign language and other means to scaffold learning	<i>e.g. using mime, diagrams and other visual support, and/or another language that learners know for clarification.</i>
Use of sign language for formative and summative assessment	
i. Understanding and analyzing sign language (or written products) produced by one's learners in	<i>e.g. to grade signed coursework or written texts at different levels, including those produced by very gifted learners.</i>



	order to assess it for their benefit	
j.	Providing genuine feedback in sign language concerned using various expressions of praise and encouragement when appropriate	<i>e.g. using questions and other forms of interaction to elicit suggestions from learners and their peers when learners' errors occur.</i>



The transversal **IT competences** in this dimension include, for instance:

k.	Setting up and conducting digital learning opportunities for one's learners' individual work	<i>e.g. integrating the use of digital learning applications (learning apps, digital coursebooks, online dictionaries and thesauri, etc.) into one's teaching.</i>
l.	Setting up collaborative and communicative digital learning activities, while considering aspects related to the safe use of digital communication (internet security)	<i>e.g. fostering the efficient, informed, and critical use of instruments such as digital forums, wikis, collaborative writing, creating and sharing text, audio, and video files via chat, e-mail, videophone, etc.</i>



Dimension 6: Competence for cooperation

This dimension contains competences related to cooperating with different stakeholders in the educational context. The notion of cooperation is especially important in the context of this document, with its aim to describe competences common to different teachers.



6.1. Cooperating with other teachers, staff members and stakeholders

These competences concern different aspects of cooperation with colleagues at one's own or, as appropriate, other institutions.



Cooperating with, and engaging in teamwork and exchanges with other members of one's institution, where appropriate	
a. Liaising with teachers of the same subject and/or other subjects (linguistic or other) for sign language-related exchange and possible learning partnerships or joint and cross-curricular activities or projects	<i>e.g. discussing how similar language-related activities and topics (e.g. oral presentations, strategies for reading/viewing complex texts) are treated by different teachers and in different subjects. Please note: in some countries sign language teachers work alone; please see websites from e.g. EUD, WFD, ENSLT, ECML PRO-SIGN² for further information on support.</i>
b. Cooperating with various members of staff, including special needs experts, mediators, psychologists, nurses, etc., as appropriate for signed and spoken language-related learning and issues	<i>e.g. to discuss the sign language requirements of a subject with a teacher in mainstream education, a special needs teacher, or other relevant educators/carers.</i>
Cooperating with peers, experts and other stakeholders outside of one's institution where appropriate	
c. Cooperating with experts and other stakeholders for sign language-related aspects of one's teaching	<i>e.g. contacting experts on sign language education for a talk at one's institution; for adult education; liaising with representatives of the learners' workplaces or of organizations dealing with migrant/refugee sign language courses etc.</i>



² EUD: European Union of the Deaf; WFD – World Federation of the Deaf; ENSLT- European Network of Sign Language Teachers; ECML – European Centre for Modern Languages.

d. Participating, as appropriate, developing partnerships with institutions in local, national or international contexts, for sign language-related learning	<i>e.g. organizing an exchange programme with a partner institution or via EUD/WFD/ENSLT or other global institutions. Consult the local Deaf community.</i>
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6.2. Cooperating with educational authorities and managers of educational institutions

These competences complement those described in the previous subsection and reflect a variety of responsibilities towards authorities and hierarchical superiors.



a. Complying with standards (international, national, regional) and the institutional code of conduct and carrying out administrative duties related to one's sign language-related teaching, while respecting the principles and values outlined above	<i>e.g. avoiding 'hidden curricula' that are likely to compromise sign language-related learning; keeping authorities/employers informed about relevant aspects of one's teaching practice.</i>
b. Contributing to a whole school language policy or related developments concerning curricula for more than one language, where appropriate	<i>e.g. participating in development projects or quality assurance measures for sign language-related teaching and learning.</i>

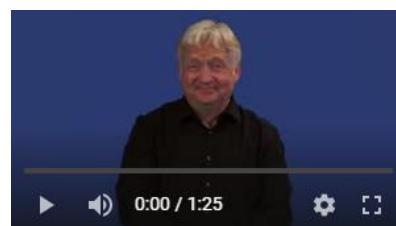


6.3. Interacting with parents

These competences, which obviously apply only if the learners are children or adolescents, apply to interactions with the learners' parents and/or guardians, and are aimed at treating them as partners in their children's education progress.



a. Informing parents about– and listening to their reactions to – the aims and methods used for their children’s sign language(-related) learning, or the learners’ progress and difficulties	<i>e.g. elaborating on differences between current teaching methodologies and those experienced by parents.</i>
b. Encouraging parents to take an active role, as appropriate and feasible, to support their children’s sign language-related learning	<i>e.g. advising parents on how to foster fluency and literacy in the (signed and spoken) language(s) at home; encouraging them to take part in a sign language / culture fair at school or in the region/country.</i>



The **language and communicative competences** in this dimension include, for example:

c. Using appropriate language to communicate with colleagues at one’s institution or a partner institution	<i>e.g. discussing insights from a cross-curricular development project at a staff meeting. Please use interpreters if there is no shared language between sign language teachers and colleagues.</i>
d. Using appropriate language to discuss the future school career of an adolescent learner with his/her parents	<i>e.g. describing the learners’ strengths, weaknesses and options in precise terms, dealing politely and efficiently with potential areas of discord.</i>



The **IT competences** in this dimension include, for example:

e. Using digital resources related to institutional responsibilities	<i>e.g. contributing to databases that contain information about students or organizational matters such as timetables; contributing, as appropriate, to the institution’s website. e.g. using technologies that have been developed specifically to support sign language teaching and learning (e.g. GoReact); developing competence in</i>
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	<i>leveraging digital corpora for pedagogical purposes.</i>
f. Using appropriate digital resources for communication with colleagues and stakeholders	<i>e.g. using e-mail or chat groups, or (e.g. facetime) for professional purposes.</i>



Dimension 7: Competence for initial education and career-long development

This dimension contains competences related to all stages of a teacher's professional career, from initial education to career-long development. The competences outlined in this dimension are best considered in interrelation with the catalogue of professional learning opportunities listed below.



7.1 Awareness and development of one's own signed and spoken/written language competences

These competences point to the development of the language and communicative competences described in the pertaining transversal dimension.



a. Seeking and exploiting opportunities to develop one's language and intercultural competences related to the sign languages taught and used in class, as well as in other languages, as appropriate	<i>e.g. making creative use of learning resources in one's environment, different forms of autonomous or organized professional learning and development.</i>
b. Keeping up to date with recent developments related to linguistic and cultural aspects of one's subject(s) and the language(s) used to teach it	<i>e.g. becoming aware of new expressions used in a sign language(s) being taught (in).</i>



7.2 Development of one's teaching competences for sign language education

These competences involve teachers taking responsibility for their pedagogic professional development in the domain of sign language education, i.e. mainly the competence areas described in dimension 5 above.

a. Reflecting on one's sign language-related practices as a teacher; assessing their effectiveness and considering opportunities for further development	<i>e.g. exploiting opportunities such as self- and peer observation, compiling feedback from one's learners.</i>
b. Finding out about innovations in the domain of sign language education, and updating and enhancing one's competences in line with developments in relevant areas	<i>e.g. reading about current relevant research in sign language education, and engaging, as appropriate, in exploratory or action research activities related to the language dimension of one's teaching. If reading is a barrier, professional groups of sign language teachers could gather and discuss relevant issues, and find other ways to professionalize.</i>



7.3 Considering and acting upon the well-being of all stakeholders in education

The well-being of teachers and learners is now recognized to be an important factor in education. While this insight is not limited to the language dimension of learning and teaching, it is likely to be of specific importance because learners, but also teachers, use language in ways that can be particularly challenging, but also comforting.

a. Using strategies to enhance one's emotional and mental well-being as a teacher, also and especially for and during communication with one's learners	<i>e.g. by savouring and building on positive experiences; and coping with negative ones such as stress; using self-regulation strategies e.g. Sheridan (2019).</i>
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b. Considering, as appropriate, the well-being of one's learners through one's approach to sign language-related teaching and interaction with them; and referring them to professionals when necessary	<i>e.g. by avoiding an unnecessarily negative attitude towards one's learners, especially when they are struggling with respect to their sign language competences.</i>
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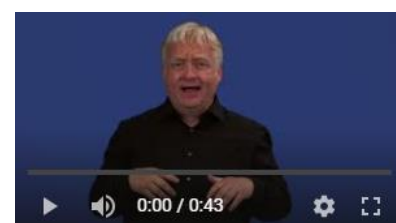
The **language and communicative competences** in this dimension include, for example, the following:

c. Using appropriate language to communicate with peers in the context of a professional development session	<i>e.g. contributing to a discussion of the sign language-related opportunities and challenges of new teaching material to be used in one's subject(s).</i>
d. Using appropriate language to give and receive work-related advice among colleagues	<i>e.g. discussing strategies for coping with job-related stress, expressing one's needs and asking for others' experience.</i>



The **IT competences** in this dimension include, for example, the following:

e. Surveying digital tools for one's own sign language and cultural learning	<i>e.g. considering the pros and cons of digital translation applications; analyzing the representation and construction of cultural phenomena on websites or in social media.</i>
f. Using digital resources in professional learning contexts	<i>e.g. contributing to, and commenting submissions to an online course on a sign language education topic.</i>



Dimension 8: The “professional learning opportunities” dimension

In addition to specifying the various competence dimensions of teachers (dimensions 1-7 above), this document also contains a list of typical professional learning opportunities that enable teachers to further develop their competences as required over time. The opportunities are predominantly conceived for the career-long professional development, but could be developed



further for other contexts, and specific competence dimensions.

	As individual teachers	As groups of colleagues
Within an institution	ORGANISED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
	Doing/being involved in microteaching Attending talks Participating in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions/workshops Being mentored Observing a colleague (linked to discussion) Being observed (linked to discussion) Being videoed (linked to discussion) Self-assessment (linked to discussion) Producing a dossier (linked to appraisal) Participating in yearly appraisal meetings Deciding on yearly development aims Doing guided reading on an area	Planning lessons/modules with someone Reading up or gather visual information on an area with group discussion Moderating a seminar with someone. Developing simulations, case studies with someone Pooling lessons ideas Peer observation Community of practice action research Mentoring a colleague Offering teacher development sessions Comparing teacher development plans
	OTHER KINDS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES	
	Teaching a new level or age-group Teaching in a new geographic, institutional, social, curricular etc. context Using new resources (films, textbooks, ICT devices)	Team-teaching a class (or a lesson) Co-assessing learners' progress Collective development of resources, tests Collective piloting of an innovation



	Organizing and supervising learner projects Involvement in parents' community events Individual project (e.g. produce a test) Individual piloting (e.g. a new course book or video) Individual responsibility (e.g. the teachers' library)	Taking on a supervisory role in addition to teaching Participating in institutional planning Liaison with other departments
Outside the institution	ORGANISED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
	Visiting another school / teaching institute Working as sign language assistant Doing teaching practice in a school Taking online development modules or a MOOC (massive open online course) Collecting authentic materials	Co-planning an innovation within a group of schools Co-writing a proposal to administration Inter-school development project Funded inter-school community of practice School or class twinning project
	OTHER KINDS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES	
	Staying in a region where the sign language being learned is used Joining an association Subscribing to and reading a journal, or online sources Attending a conference Presenting at a conference Becoming an examiner External training course	Participating in an association's Special Interest Group Participating in a teachers' network (e.g. EFSLT) Being part of an external community of practice or action research group Planning and delivering a workshop with someone Co-authoring materials Co-authoring an article



Final comments

The compilation of sign language teacher competence descriptions in various domains of sign language education that has shaped this document has resulted in a selective list that could be developed further in various ways. Pending further validation beyond the 2016-2019 project, a case can be made for commonalities in most important competence dimensions. The original authors (of the [generic document](#)) and the authors of this SL version, assume that SL teachers benefit from engaging with principles and values related to language education (dimension 1), from an appreciation of the language dimension of their subject (dimension 4), and from teaching competences that foster language, linguistic and cultural learning in different subjects (dimension 5). Most likely, there is also a language aspect to their cooperation with other stakeholders (dimension 6) and their own professional career (7). Moreover, sign language teachers are also likely to need language, intercultural and IT competences in all these professional areas (transversal dimensions 2-3). The sub-dimension which the authors have found most challenging to propose as a common competence dimension are the metalinguistic, discourse and metacultural competences of (sign) language teachers, which appear as a separate sub-dimension (4.2) above.

Future research and development endeavours will be needed to complement and further systematize this document with more detailed competence descriptors. The most urgent further development would be to describe illustrative competence descriptors for specific contexts (e.g. sign language as a foreign language, as opposed to the sign language of schooling as a subject, or for a subject like geography taught in sign language as opposed to spoken language with a sign language interpreter present), across ISCED levels (e.g. primary as opposed to tertiary), and for different target audiences (e.g. student teachers/interpreters of sign language as opposed to educators or administrators or parents), and to systematically describe the different psychological resources involved. In that sense, at least as much work would still be ahead as has been covered so far.

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The Sign Language version was authored by Beppie van den Bogaerde, Tobias Haug, Christian Rathmann and Lorraine Leeson, ECML ProSign 2 project team

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