



COUNCIL OF EUROPE    CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE  
Committee of Ministers  
Comité des Ministres

**Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7  
of the Committee of Ministers to member states  
on the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of  
Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 July 2008  
at the 1031st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity among its members and that this aim is to be pursued in particular by the adoption of common action in educational and cultural matters;

Having regard to Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention signed in Paris on 19 December 1954 (ETS No. 18);

Considering that the formulation and implementation of education and cultural policies in the language field may be facilitated through arrangements at European level for closer co-operation among member states and between their education authorities and institutions;

Acknowledging the right to quality language education as an essential part of the fundamental right to education;

Aware of the growing need to equip all Europeans for the challenges of intensified international mobility and closer co-operation not only in education, culture and science but also in trade, commerce and industry and indeed in all walks of life;

Emphasising the present and future political importance of developing specific actions and strategies to promote plurilingualism and to diversify and intensify language learning in a pan-European context;

Bearing in mind the benefits to member states of the Council of Europe's achievements in the field of language education;

Recognising the progress which member states have made in the implementation of previous recommendations concerning modern languages, most notably Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning modern languages, whose principles are today more important and more relevant than ever;

Considering:

- Recommendation 1383 (1998) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on "Linguistic diversification";
- the conclusions and recommendations of the 20th session of the Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education (Cracow, 2000), and specifically the Resolution on the European Language Portfolio;
- Recommendation 1539 (2001) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on "The European Year of Languages";
- the conclusions of the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 2005);

- the final Declaration of the 22nd session of the Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education (Istanbul, 2007) entitled “Building a more humane and inclusive Europe: role of education policies”;

Taking into account:

- the added value of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and of other related instruments elaborated by the Council of Europe for the development and implementation of language education policies in member states;
- the increasing significance of the CEFR as a European standard of reference for language education;
- the growing value of the CEFR as a reference instrument for the initiatives undertaken by the European Commission, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), Europass and the European Indicator of Language Competence;
- the needs expressed by the member states in a recent survey on the use of the CEFR conducted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe;
- the conclusions of the 2007 Intergovernmental Policy Forum entitled “The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities”, which was organised by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 6 to 8 February 2007,

Recommends that governments of member states:

- use every available means in accordance with their constitution, their national, regional or local circumstances and their education system to implement the measures set out in Appendix 1 to this recommendation with respect to the development of their language education policies;
- bring this recommendation, and the reference documents on which it is based and which are specified in Appendix 2, to the attention of the relevant public and private bodies in their country through the appropriate national channels;

Asks the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to bring this recommendation to the attention of those States Parties to the European Cultural Convention which are not members of the Council of Europe.

*Appendix 1 to Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7*

## **Measures to be implemented concerning the use of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism**

### **A. General principles and measures to be implemented by authorities responsible for language education at national, regional and local level**

National, regional and local education authorities are invited to:

1. create and/or maintain conditions favourable to the use of the CEFR as a tool for coherent, transparent and effective plurilingual education in such a way as to promote democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, in keeping with Council of Europe policy as reaffirmed by the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 2005);
2. create and/or maintain the necessary conditions for the use of the CEFR as a basic reference tool to:
  - 2.1. promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions within and between member states;
  - 2.2. provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of foreign/second language qualifications;

- 2.3. provide guidance for the diversification of language learning within educational systems in order to maintain and develop plurilingualism among citizens of Europe as a means of knowledge building and skills development, with a view to enhancing social cohesion and intercultural understanding;
- 2.4. encourage learners, teachers, teacher trainers, course designers, textbook authors, curriculum developers, examining bodies and education administrators to:
  - 2.4.1. adopt a learner-focused, action-oriented, competence-based approach;
  - 2.4.2. take into consideration the social and cultural dimensions of language learning;
  - 2.4.3. consider and treat each language in the curriculum not in isolation but as part of a coherent plurilingual education;
  - 2.4.4. take into consideration, in their analysis, the specific needs of the different groups of learners and of the general needs of modern European societies;
  - 2.4.5. situate their efforts concerning language teaching in relation to the CEFR in a transparent way;
  - 2.4.6. promote the use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which is based on the CEFR;
- 3. analyse the impact of Recommendation No. R (98) 6 with a view, as appropriate, to taking further steps towards its full implementation.

**B. Specific measures aimed at policy making, curriculum and textbook development, teacher training, and assessment**

- 4. The CEFR is a reference tool for the development and implementation of coherent and transparent language education policies; when national, regional and local education authorities decide to use it, they are invited to:
  - 4.1. promote co-operation and facilitate co-ordination between education institutions and other relevant agencies at all levels, be they public or private, with a view to the most appropriate and coherent use of the CEFR, taking into account all its functions and dimensions, and specifically with regard to the common reference levels of language proficiency (A1-C2);
  - 4.2. encourage language policy makers and education administrators at all levels to:
    - 4.2.1. ensure that language instruction is fully integrated within the core of the educational aims;<sup>1</sup>
    - 4.2.2. use a holistic approach, ensuring the coherence of objectives and attainments in all languages within a lifelong learning curriculum framework;
    - 4.2.3. promote the development of the awareness and understanding of language use and competences throughout the educational process in order to create an informed public opinion on language issues in society and as a basis for autonomous language learning throughout life;
  - 4.3. encourage all institutions responsible for pre-service and in-service education of language teachers to assist the latter in using the CEFR effectively through appropriate training programmes and support, and in particular to:
    - 4.3.1. familiarise them with the aims, principles and possible implementation of a plurilingual education;

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<sup>1</sup>. As also suggested by the Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe and as indicated in the various Language Education Policy Profiles (see Appendix II).

4.3.2. familiarise them with the full range of language use and language competences at progressive levels of proficiency as a basis for nurturing the language development of pupils and students across the entire curriculum;

4.3.3. familiarise them with the principles of good practice in language testing and assessment and the options regarding aims, types and methods, so as to inform their classroom practice and to enable them to support students in their learning process through formative assessment and to prepare them appropriately for formal examinations;

4.3.4. familiarise them with ways to transmit the CEFR-based concept of plurilingualism to learners, for example by using the European Language Portfolio, as recommended by the Committee of Ministers in its Recommendation No. R (98) 6 and by the 20th session of the Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education (Cracow, 2000);

4.4. encourage authors and publishers of language textbooks and other course materials, wherever appropriate (for example as a criterion for official recognition), to:

4.4.1. take full account of the aspects of language use and competences presented in the CEFR, and to situate them – in a reliable and transparent way – with reference to the common reference levels of language proficiency;

4.4.2. give due consideration to the development of the learners' plurilingual capacities;

4.5. ensure that all tests, examinations and assessment procedures leading to officially recognised language qualifications take full account of the relevant aspects of language use and language competences as set out in the CEFR, that they are conducted in accordance with internationally recognised principles of good practice and quality management, and that the procedures to relate these tests and examinations to the common reference levels (A1-C2) of the CEFR are carried out in a reliable and transparent manner;

4.6. ensure that full information regarding the procedures applied in all tests, examinations and assessment systems leading to officially recognised language qualifications, particularly those used to relate them to the common reference levels (A1-C2) of the CEFR, is published and made freely available and readily accessible to all the interested parties;

4.7. encourage all other bodies responsible for foreign/second language assessment and certification to adopt measures that guarantee the provision of fair, transparent, valid and reliable tests and examinations in conformity with the principles set out in paragraph 4.5 above and to publish their procedures, particularly those used to relate these tests and examinations to the CEFR common reference levels (A1-C2) as outlined in paragraph 4.6 above;

4.8. extend such recognition as is appropriate to language qualifications, including those certified in other member states, which satisfy the above criteria;

4.9. encourage all bodies, official and unofficial, responsible for foreign/second language assessment and certification to adopt measures that give special attention to:

4.9.1. the evaluation and recognition of receptive and productive competences, as appropriate to the needs of learners, in all languages and at all levels, in particular at lower levels, as contributions to each individual's developing plurilingual profile;

4.9.2. forms of assessment which value the plurilingual capacities of learners and recognise the full range of their plurilingual repertoire;

4.9.3. dimensions of language learning and use which go beyond proficiency itself ensuring that they are taken into consideration and recognised through adequate means of evaluation, such as portfolios.

**Some relevant Council of Europe documents:**

• **Language Policy Division – [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang):**

*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, 2001 (Cambridge University Press for the English version – ISBN 0-521-00531-0)

Also available on the Council of Europe website:

<http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Common%20European%20Framework%20hyperlinked.pdf>

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment:

– *Guide for Users*, Trim, J. (ed.), 2001

<http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/Guide-for-Users-April02.doc>

– *Case studies concerning the use of the CEFR*, Alderson, C. (ed.), 2002

[http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/case\\_studies\\_CEF.doc](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/case_studies_CEF.doc)

*Executive summary of results of a survey on the use of the CEFR at national level in the Council of Europe member states*, Martyniuk, W. & Noijons, J., 2006

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Survey\\_CEFR\\_2007\\_EN.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Survey_CEFR_2007_EN.doc)

*Intergovernmental Forum 2007: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the development of language policies: challenges and responsibilities*. Report, Goullier, F.).

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/SourceForum07/ForumFeb07\\_%20Report\\_0807\\_EN.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/SourceForum07/ForumFeb07_%20Report_0807_EN.doc)

*Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment: a Manual*, Figueras Casanovas, N., North, B. (dir.), Takala, S., Van Avermaet, P., Verhelst, N., 2008

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Manuel1\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Manuel1_EN.asp#TopOfPage)

European Language Portfolio (ELP) – [www.coe.int/portfolio](http://www.coe.int/portfolio):

– *Guide for Developers*, Lenz, P. & Schneider, G., 2001

[http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/documents\\_intro/developers.html](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/documents_intro/developers.html)

– *Guide for Teachers and Teacher Trainers*, Little, D & Perclovà, R., 2001

[http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/ELPguide\\_teacherstrainers.pdf](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/documents/ELPguide_teacherstrainers.pdf)

*From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe*, Beacco, J-C. & Byram, M., 2007

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Guide\\_niveau2\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Guide_niveau2_EN.asp)

Language education policy profiles of Council of Europe member states, regions or cities

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Profils\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Profils_EN.asp)

• **European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML)- [www.ecml.at](http://www.ecml.at) :**

IMPEL – ELP implementation support, Bosshard, H. U. (dir.), 2007

[http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/impel/html/IMPEL\\_E\\_Results.htm](http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/impel/html/IMPEL_E_Results.htm)

*Preparing teachers to use the European Language Portfolio – Arguments, materials and resources*, Little, D. (dir.), 2007

[http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/Elp\\_tt/html/ELPTT\\_E\\_Results.htm](http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/Elp_tt/html/ELPTT_E_Results.htm)

**Some relevant European Commission documents:**

Europass: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu>

*Framework for the European survey on language competences* [COM (2007) 184 final]

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/com184\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/com184_en.pdf)

**Some international codes of practice in the field of language testing and assessment:**

ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) – INGO enjoying with participatory status with the Council of Europe

Code of Practice

[http://www.alte.org/quality\\_assurance/index.php](http://www.alte.org/quality_assurance/index.php)

Principles of Good Practice

[http://www.alte.org/quality\\_assurance/code/good\\_practice.pdf](http://www.alte.org/quality_assurance/code/good_practice.pdf)

Quality Management System

[http://www.alte.org/quality\\_assurance/quality.php](http://www.alte.org/quality_assurance/quality.php)

ILTA (International Language Testers' Association)

Code of Ethics

<http://www.iltaonline.com/code.pdf>

Code of Practice

<http://www.iltaonline.com/ILTA-COP-ver3-21Jun2006.pdf>

EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment)

Code of Practice

<http://www.ealta.eu.org/guidelines.htm>

General – not specific to language testing:

The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (1999)

Developed jointly by: American Educational Research Association (AERA); American Psychological Association (APA) ; National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME)

<http://www.apa.org/science/standards.html>

## **Explanatory Notes to Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning the use of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism**

### **Introduction**

The ***Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*** was developed by a Council of Europe international working party set up by the Language Policy Division with a view to promoting transparency and coherence in the learning and teaching of modern languages in Europe. After a pilot scheme involving extensive field consultation, the Framework was officially published in 2001, the European Year of Languages, and has since been translated into and published in almost 40 languages – in Europe and beyond.

The CEFR includes a descriptive scheme of language use and competences as well as scales of proficiency for the different parameters of this scheme. It also contains chapters on curriculum design, methodological options for language learning and teaching, and principles of language testing and assessment. The comprehensive, learner-focused descriptive scheme provides the reader with a tool for reflecting on what is involved not only in language use, but also in language learning, teaching and assessment. The CEFR thus provides a common basis and a common language for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, textbooks, teacher-training programmes, and for relating examinations and qualifications to one another. It allows the different partners involved in planning and delivering language provision and in assessing language progress and proficiency, to co-ordinate and situate their efforts.

The descriptive section of the CEFR is based on an action-oriented approach to language learning and use. It presents an analytic breakdown of what proficient language users have to do in order to achieve effective communication, together with the various kinds of knowledge and skill they have to call upon in order to do so. The section on curriculum development provides a rationale for language diversification in education and for plurilingual education, which has been further developed in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (see Appendix II) and illustrated since then in several *Language Education Policy Profiles* (see Appendix II) established for different countries, regions or cities.

The descriptive scheme of the CEFR includes a set of common reference levels providing six ascending levels of language proficiency (proficiency implying not only the knowledge of a language, but also the degree of skill in using it). Each level is characterised by a brief descriptive statement of what a learner can be expected to do with language at that stage. These descriptors were selected and scaled scientifically and cover both global proficiency and the ability to carry out specific communicative tasks. All together, they form a descriptor bank that can be added to, updated and edited to meet present and future needs and are intended to be adapted in response to specific educational goals and contents.

The CEFR is in effect a common reference tool across languages (the description is non-language specific) developed with the aim of promoting coherence in provision across different languages and ensuring coherence and transparency through the different stages of language learning in the various sectors of education. Many countries have used the opportunity of the appearance of the Framework to stimulate curriculum and examination reforms in language education.

A survey carried out by the Language Policy Division in May 2005 provided a general overview of the wide-ranging use of the CEFR – most specifically its common reference level system – at institutional level in Europe. The purpose of a second survey, conducted between May and September 2006, was to gather information about the use of the CEFR at national level in as many of the then 46 member states of the Council of Europe as possible. The results show that the CEFR has had a major impact on language education in Europe<sup>2</sup>. It is used – often as the exclusive neutral reference – in all educational sectors. Its value as a reference tool to co-ordinate the objectives of education at all levels is widely appreciated. Respondents indicate that the Framework is well known by the institutions in question and quite well accepted by the majority of professionals. In some countries the CEFR has helped to develop both strategic language policy documents and practical teaching materials. In

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<sup>2</sup> See the *Executive summary of results of a survey on the use of the CEFR at national level in the Council of Europe member States* listed in Appendix II

others, it is becoming the most reliable reference for curriculum planning. It is in widespread use as a basic instrument for both initial and in-service teacher education and training.

The intergovernmental Forum held in Strasbourg in February 2007 recorded this wide success and pointed out subsequent needs to be met either by the local, regional or national authorities or by initiatives of the Council of Europe, within the new European educational space and frame of which the CEFR has become an important component. The results of the Forum show that some dimensions of the CEFR, such as the importance given to the concept of plurilingual education and its implementation in curricula and assessment, had now to be more specifically enhanced, in order to meet the aims of intercultural dialogue and social inclusion (see below the sections “Challenges related to the use of the Council of Europe’s CEFR” and “Responsibilities related to the use of the Council of Europe’s CEFR”).

### **New situation in language education in Europe**

The wide dissemination of the CEFR and the speed with which it has come into common use in the member states have accompanied profound changes in the context in which languages are taught and learned in Europe:

- 1 A growing awareness at local, regional and national level, and in the various European bodies, of the importance of language skills has resulted in the acquisition of language competences being accorded a very high priority in education policy. The place given to modern languages in the European Union’s 2010 Education and Training Programme and the forthcoming European Indicator of Language Competence for young learners at the end of compulsory education, based on the CEFR, are two illustrations of this.
- 2 The desire of many education authorities and institutions to introduce explicit standards to increase the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching places the notion of competence at the heart of the debate. This often leads to modern languages being offered as an example or model for other disciplines.
- 3 The growing mobility of citizens, especially of workers and students, and the development of exchanges throughout Europe make it necessary to improve the transparency and portability of language qualifications.
- 4 The growing personal and professional trans-border contacts and the clear value of international co-operation give new importance to the development of linguistic and intercultural understanding between citizens on either side.
- 5 The rapid changes that have taken place in the social fabric of society in the member states have added a special focus on communication, involving both plurilingual and intercultural skills, as a key means of contributing to social cohesion and intercultural understanding – which are among the priorities set by the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe at their 3rd Summit in Warsaw (2005).
- 6 The reaffirmation of the need to recognise the value of the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe requires a re-examination of the role and place of the various languages (including national languages, regional or minority languages, languages of migrants), as well as of teaching objectives and the means of making plurilingualism accessible to every European.

### **The notion of plurilingualism**

The priority which the Council of Europe accords to education for citizenship and intercultural dialogue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is reflected in the educational goal of enabling citizens living in multilingual European societies to interact using a number of languages across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The language policies proposed and promoted by the Council attach particular importance to the development of **plurilingualism** – the lifelong expansion of the individual’s linguistic repertoire. Each individual plurilingual profile is made up of different languages and language varieties at different levels of proficiency in terms of various competences and skills. It is dynamic and changes in its composition throughout the life of an individual. What distinguishes the concept of **plurilingualism** from the more usual term '**multilingualism**' is that the languages and language varieties making up the linguistic repertoire of an individual are not seen as simply co-existing as completely separate

entities, but as interacting, modifying and enriching each other, so as to form one overall communicative competence, all or any part of which can be called upon at any time as the situation demands.

Three documents developed by the Council of Europe are of particular significance here: the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*; the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* and the *European Language Portfolio (ELP)*. They may be used as a set of instruments for the implementation of the proposed principles and measures with regard to language education. Member states, European organisations, public and private international bodies, local and national institutions, and language professionals clearly consider that the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* is a significant instrument in addressing the educational issues of today. However, the rapid adoption of the *Common European Framework of Reference* – in itself a determining factor in the situation outlined above – raises questions regarding the challenges and the responsibilities related to the use of this important Council of Europe instrument by the different stakeholders.

### **Challenges related to the use of the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)***

The Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* is rapidly becoming a powerful instrument for shaping language education policies in Europe and beyond. The task of relating language policies, language curricula, teacher education and training, textbook and course design and content, examinations and certification systems to the CEFR is currently being undertaken by a growing number of public and private stakeholders in all of the Council of Europe member states. Most of these stakeholders recognise the real reference value of the document and apply the principles on which it was based most appropriately. There are instances of use, however, that indicate that reference may be made to the CEFR as a Council of Europe document merely for the purpose of recognition on "the educational market" without real application of its basic values and concepts. In some other cases the CEFR may be referred to in an attempt to introduce one normative curriculum for a uniform language education in Europe – contradictory to the intention of the authoring team and to Council of Europe principles – and indeed to the very nature and content of the CEFR itself!

To ensure a coherent, realistic and responsible use of the CEFR the following principles need to be strongly underlined and taken into consideration:

- 1 The CEFR is purely descriptive – not prescriptive, nor normative;
- 2 The CEFR is language neutral – it needs to be applied and interpreted appropriately with regard to each specific language;
- 3 The CEFR is context neutral – it needs to be applied and interpreted with regard to each specific educational context in accordance with the needs and priorities specific to that context;
- 4 The CEFR attempts to be comprehensive, in that no aspects of language knowledge, skills and use are deliberately left out of consideration. It cannot, of course, claim to be exhaustive leaving no room for further elaboration and development, which are to be welcomed;
- 5 The CEFR offers a common language and point of reference as a basis for stakeholders to reflect upon and critically analyse their existing practice and to allow them to better "situate their efforts" in relation to one another;
- 6 The use of the CEFR should contribute to increased transparency of processes and procedures, improved quality of provision and comparability of outcomes;
- 7 The use of the CEFR should contribute to the promotion of the basic educational values for which the Council of Europe stands, such as social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, active democratic citizenship, language diversity, plurilingualism, learner autonomy and lifelong learning.

### **Responsibilities concerning the use of the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)***

The CEFR provides a valuable knowledge base for all those concerned with the planning of language use, learning, teaching and assessment, from the highest political authorities to the individual learner. The results of the Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum (Strasbourg, February 2007) show clearly and convincingly that in order to ensure coherent, realistic and responsible use of the CEFR, closer co-operation between

stakeholders at local, regional, national and international level is required. Networks of professionals and institutions need to be established for more efficient dissemination of the CEFR and related documents and tools, as well as for mutual support, exchange of expertise and peer reviews of efforts being undertaken. The role of the related units and bodies of the Council of Europe will remain to initiate, inform and co-ordinate the process.

The role of Governments, to whom the Recommendation is addressed, will vary widely in accordance with their respective constitutions, their national political and administrative arrangements and their educational traditions and practices. It must remain the prerogative of each government to set its own policy aims, objectives and priorities, and to decide how best to deploy the means available to it in implementing those measures it considers to be in the national interest. Their response may include some or all of the following:

- to establish, if required, the legislative and administrative framework for implementing the Recommendation;
- to directly commission such research and development projects as are best conducted at national level;
- to inform regional and local authorities, major educational institutions and other significant stakeholders of the Recommendation and its contents, and to encourage and where appropriate support them in the implementation of measures within their respective competences.

In turn, regional and local authorities, acting according to their powers, resources and circumstances, should inform schools, colleges and other educational institutions within their constituency of relevant recommended measures and encourage and where appropriate support them in their implementation.

Other institutional stakeholders should circulate the Recommendation for internal information and discussion, with a view to taking appropriate steps to implement relevant measures within their competence and, if possible, making contact with similarly placed stakeholders in other member countries for the purpose of mutual information and co-operation.

The ultimate stakeholders are the language learners themselves. It is a basic tenet of the Council of Europe's approach to education that individual learners should be active participants rather than passive recipients. One of the most valuable functions of the CEFR can be to give individual learners enhanced self-awareness as language users and learners, able to take responsibility for their own progress as language learners, better skilled in the use of their national and local languages and better informed as citizens on language issues in society.

### **The scope of the recommended measures**

The proposed measures are addressing two groups of issues: those of a more general nature, related to the fundamental values and principles on which the CEFR is based and to its main purpose (Part A) – and those related to the more specific aspects of its use in the different domains and by the different groups of stakeholders (Part B).

### **General principles and measures**

**Part A** is aimed at authorities responsible for language education policies at national, regional and local level.

**Section 1** starts with a general recommendation to use the CEFR as a tool for language policy making within the overarching framework of Council of Europe's action plan to promote democratic citizenship, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, which are among the high-level priorities adopted recently by the Heads of State and Government of the member states. Coherent, transparent and effective plurilingual education plays an important role in pursuing these important goals as an increasing emphasis is nowadays placed on addressing the new challenges to social cohesion and integration brought about in the 1990s, a period that witnessed the rapid enlargement of the Council of Europe, and subsequently of the European Union. Language skills are seen as essential to enable individuals to benefit from opportunities in employment and mobility, but they are also necessary for active participation in the social and political life of the multilingual societies which make up today's Europe. Some explanatory notes may be helpful regarding some of the terms used in Section A 1:

**Democratic citizenship:** The strengthening of pluralist parliamentary democracy in its member states was the prime motivation for the foundation of the Council of Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. To replace authoritarian structures and attitudes by democratic structures and procedures remains one of

its fundamental concerns. This is not just a matter of governments being elected in free and fair elections, but also of developing a strong, well-informed public opinion exercised by a citizenry independent in thought and action, willing and able to take responsibility for their personal development and social roles. Citizenship implies that all citizens, women and men alike, should have full enjoyment of human rights and feel that they are protected by the democratic society. Citizenship also implies that everyone needs to get involved in matters that concern life in society and to act throughout their lives as active and responsible citizens respectful of the rights of others.

Accordingly, the work of the Council of Europe in the field of language learning, teaching and assessment has long promoted methods which strengthen these qualities in teachers and learners, informing their relations with each other, with parents and with authorities and the various support services as well as with the user interests (e.g. employers). The CEFR contributes to the democratisation of education by providing a knowledge base and a methodological tool for developing self-awareness, self-direction. By presenting options it raises awareness and understanding of differing values and approaches and a better understanding of language issues in society.

**Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue:** It is generally recognised that the maintenance and development of a minority community's language and culture is a fundamental human right. In respect of the established territorial minority languages in Europe this right is guaranteed by the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. However, the increasing mobility of individuals within and across national boundaries on a large scale, particularly as economic migrants or asylum seekers, is leading to the formation of new minority communities in urban centres. This process can be seen as divisive, arousing feelings of fear and resentment among members of both majority and minority communities. Such feelings, which can have dangerous consequences, are exacerbated by poor communication. Even where multilingualism and multiculturalism are recognised as rights, the concepts are often interpreted as the right of minorities to be tolerated but otherwise ignored by the majority, while the minority may regard their language and culture as their exclusive possession, to be jealously guarded and preserved from contamination by outsiders. Mutual exclusiveness and an absence of communication can then lead to mutual ignorance and stereotypical misunderstandings, open to political manipulation. A flexible plurilingual and pluricultural policy promotes language learning as a bridge across all boundaries, as a source of mutual understanding and enrichment beneficial to all those concerned. It encourages mutual respect, free communication and interaction between communities, and offers a positive contribution to social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, leading to the advancement of the objectives set by the third summit of the Heads of State and Government.

The Recommendation calls for education to be 'coherent, transparent and effective'. What is intended by this wording?

**Coherence:** the functioning of any educational system depends on the interaction among many agencies, which may have different values, aims, objectives and methods. In a system in which decision-making is regarded as the prerogative of those in authority, uniformity may be imposed by central direction. In a pluralist democratic society, harmony is achieved by consensus and users are free to choose amongst the available alternative provisions. The problem then arises, how to accommodate diversity without leading to confusion and frustration. The CEFR does not attempt to impose uniformity, but rather provides the means for all its users to reflect on their current practice, take better informed and considered decisions, and communicate openly with other agencies whose decisions affect the learners concerned, so as to provide the possibility of coherent choices to be made from among the options available in a diversified system by all stakeholders.

**Transparency** means that the various agencies involved in language teaching and assessment are not secretive, but that full and explicit information is made freely available and readily accessible to all interested parties. Naturally, the requirement of transparency has to be compatible with concern for security and confidentiality, where they can be seen to be necessary. In such cases, it should be made clear which provisions are kept secret and the reasons for doing so should be openly stated.

**Effectiveness** requires that the objectives set are in fact shown to be actually achieved in practice and do not remain on the level of good intentions.

**Section 2.** It is being recommended in this context to use the CEFR in its principal functions: as a common European reference for co-operation between educational institutions, a tool to allow for the mutual recognition of language qualifications and a guide for the development and maintenance of plurilingualism as an asset among citizens of Europe, and, equally importantly, to place the efforts of all those involved in language education – from the learners themselves to the policy makers – in a common, coherent educational framework.

**2.1** By using the CEFR as a reference tool, institutions can compare in some detail their aims, objectives and methods with respect to language learning, teaching and assessment, identify areas of common concern and possibilities of co-operative action.

**2.2** Professional, vocational and educational mobility make the portability of qualifications across national boundaries a matter of increasing concern, especially where the possession of an appropriate officially recognised qualification is a requirement for employment or for entry into a profession or for admission to an educational establishment. Employers and admission authorities find themselves increasingly called upon to take decisions on the basis of qualifications, the status and value of which they have little or no reliable information on and are therefore unable to judge. As a result, candidates may either be given jobs or admitted to courses for which they are inadequately prepared, or else unjustly denied employment or admission to courses for which they are in fact well-qualified. By explicit, detailed and consistent calibrating using the common reference levels of the CEFR, mutual confidence and trust can be built up among the authorities issuing and using language qualifications. The warm reception afforded to the common reference levels since their publication indicates that the field is now ready to move forward in this respect.

**2.3** In adult education, where demand is more sensitive to the actual conditions of adult life, student demand for languages is strong and marked by great diversity. Viable courses are offered by most institutions at a range of levels for a wide variety of languages, including a number of those less widely spoken. In school systems, on the other hand, there are strong pressures in some contexts to reduce the number of modern foreign languages on offer to the minimum. Modern foreign languages may be reduced to one, which in many cases is English, seen as the 'hypercentral' language of global communication. Societal pressures for concentration on a high level of performance in one single language are reinforced by considerations of cost and availability of human and material resources, as well as competition for curricular space from other disciplines.

The maintenance, let alone the extension, of diversity in language provision has to contend with these adverse pressures and demands a strong conviction of its value from all parties. Gifted and well-motivated individuals are certainly able to reach a high level of attainment in a number of languages within the educational system and should be enabled and encouraged to do so. For the generality of learners under school conditions, careful consideration has to be given as to how to enlarge their experience of language and language learning in the light of their needs, motivations and resources.

Here, a plurilingual approach allows for greater flexibility, since not all languages to which the student is introduced have to be taught in the same way, to the same level in all skills. The careful analysis of the components of language use and language competences together with their separate calibration in the CEFR makes it possible for different options to be selected for different learners or learner groups according to their needs, motivations, resources and circumstances. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) then makes it possible for each option to be described and its achievement recorded and recognised as a contribution to the student's developing plurilingual communicative and intercultural competence. The ELP supports learners in reflecting on their objectives, learning process and achievements and in taking the responsibility for developing their plurilingual repertoire further throughout life.

**2.4** This recommendation recognises the fact that educational provision depends on the synergies of the various agents it identifies. It aims to assure coherence in their contributions by encouraging them to adopt a common approach.

**2.4.1** Stakeholders are asked to base their aims, objectives and methods on:

- the needs, motivations, resources and characteristics of learners, rather than on the disembodied properties of the language as such;
- what learners are to be enabled to *do* with the language they learn;
- what knowledge and skills they will need in order to be able to use the language in action.

**2.4.2** They should give careful consideration to ways in which language learning can not only make learners proficient language users, but also contribute to their broader social and cultural development, and to contribute to the development of their intercultural competence.

**2.4.3** It is common for those concerned with planning, supporting or actually conducting the teaching or assessment of one particular language to see their responsibilities as strictly limited to that language. This recommendation asks them to situate their work in a wider linguistic context and wherever possible to help learners to make connections with other languages experienced in that context, including their mother tongue, the official language(s) of the country and the language of instruction as the case may be.

**2.4.4** Whilst it may be generally agreed that language learning, teaching and assessment should be needs-based, the differing, even conflicting needs of different stakeholders have to be carefully considered, reconciled and harmonised in a positive way. Each individual learner has needs which, in detail, may be unique to that one person. So far as possible they should be met. However, education is a socially organised activity, learners are taught in groups and may be assessed and qualified in very large groups, so that provision is bound to concentrate on what members of the group have in common. Furthermore, it is part of the responsibility of educational authorities at all levels to ensure that the output of proficient language users matches the commercial, industrial, diplomatic, and other needs of the society concerned for international communication, bearing in mind that proficiency in a language brings with it responsibility not only for the direct use of the language but also its use to mediate communication between members of the communities concerned who lack the skills to communicate directly.

**2.4.5** This recommendation encourages all stakeholders to use the CEFR as a tool for reflection, planning, and discussion, communicating their ideas and decisions to other stakeholders in the field, using its descriptive apparatus to report their actions and procedures to each other openly and accessibly.

**3.** Reviewing the value and the impact of the principles and measures laid out in the Recommendation No. R (98) 6 concerning Modern Languages concludes the set of general principles and measures.

Recommendation No. R (98) 6 from the Committee of Ministers to the Member Governments of the Council of Europe resulted from an intensive 10-year programme of research and development involving numerous commissioned studies, international workshops, projects, and intergovernmental symposia, focusing on a number of issues identified by member governments as central to progress in the learning, teaching and assessment of modern languages. The CEFR and the ELP were among the most important products of this programme. The measures recommended were grouped under the following themes:

A. General:

A1, 1-3 : educational policy;

A2, 1-7 : the large-scale promotion of plurilingualism;

B. Specific:

B, 3-7 : the early learning of languages (up to 11 years of age);

C, 8-15 : secondary education;

D, 16-18 : vocationally-oriented language learning;

E, 19-21 : adult education;

F, 22-24 : bilingual education in bilingual or multilingual regions;

G, 25-30 : the specification of objectives and assessment of attainment;

H, 31-37 : teacher education and training.

In each of these areas several practical measures were proposed to improve provisions for language learning, teaching and assessment. In many cases, action has since been taken by educational institutions at all levels to implement the recommendations made, but the process of modernisation is still far from complete and member governments may well find it worth-while to take stock of the national situation in this respect, to establish what steps have been taken, what the results have been (both positive and negative experiences) and what remains to be done. The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe would be glad to receive reports on the findings of such reviews. It should be emphasised that the CEFR itself makes no such recommendations regarding aims, objectives and methods to be used. It simply presents the available options and provides stakeholders and decision-makers with a framework for reflection, calibration and communication.

## **Specific measures**

**Part B** lists measures to be implemented in order to ensure that the use of the CEFR by the different groups of stakeholders is appropriate, coherent and efficient.

**4.** National, regional and local education authorities where the CEFR is used as a reference are asked to ensure that the document is used in a valid way, in all its functions and dimensions.

**4.1** Here, authorities are asked to promote the use of the CEFR not only in those educational institutions which they directly control, but to take the lead in co-coordinating co-operative networks bringing them together with similar institutions elsewhere and also with other agencies with complementary roles.

**4.2** This section asks authorities to use their oversight to ensure that the teaching of individual languages is set in a wider context, covering all languages in the curriculum in a holistic approach, as they contribute together with other disciplines to achieving the overall educational aims of the school, college or university. Authorities are also reminded that education is a lifelong process and that what is being undertaken at any one stage builds on what came before (e.g. at the primary/secondary interface) and prepares for what follows (e.g. in developing a sound knowledge base and habits of independent learning, thinking and acting in preparation for adult life).

### **Teacher education and training**

**4.3** Institutions responsible for teacher education and training should be reminded by the authorities that using the CEFR as a reference means familiarising teachers with the concept of plurilingual education as well as with the full range of the parameters specifying language use and language proficiency and with the ways to mediate the CEFR-based concept to learners.

A strong programme of teacher education and training has long been recognised as the key to successful educational innovation. The CEFR is a valuable tool for this purpose. It gives a broad but systematic and detailed overview of what a language user has to do in order to communicate effectively and what kinds of knowledge and skill are needed to do so. It sets out options for methods of language learning, teaching and assessment as well as specifying the broad objectives for attainment at the major stages of the educational process. Whilst the CEFR is particularly aimed at teachers of foreign and second languages, an understanding of language use and competences is of value to all teachers concerned with developing pupils' command of spoken and written language across the curriculum. Authorities are asked to take action, direct or indirect as appropriate to the national educational system, to incorporate the study of the CEFR into pre-service training courses and into in-service courses for teachers.

### **Language textbooks and course materials**

**4.4** Wherever appropriate, authors and publishers of language textbooks and other course materials should be encouraged by the authorities to establish a reference to the CEFR in a comprehensive, reliable and transparent way.

Language textbooks and published course materials are commonly the central structuring element in language teaching, though teachers are encouraged to supplement them in various ways as experience shows to be necessary. It is important that they should be of high quality. In some countries, the textbooks and course materials used in schools are more closely controlled by educational authorities, choice being restricted to selection from an approved list. In others, choice is free, with publishers competing on the market. This may lead to their concentrating on attractive presentation and cost, since these factors are immediately apparent, without close analysis.

The use of the CEFR assists authors and publishers to plan, organise and transparently state the content of courses in terms of the language competences that are developed and the ways in which language is used, as well as the level at which the course is set. In this way, the educational value of textbooks and course materials can be better assessed, the process of recognition can be made more transparent, and the exercise of teacher choice better informed. In addition, here as elsewhere, authors and publishers are encouraged where possible to create opportunities for learners to relate what they are learning of the particular language being taught to their experience of other languages in their plurilingual repertoire.

### **Language assessment and certification**

**4.5** The authorities are invited to take responsibility for the appropriate use of the CEFR as a reference in officially recognised language qualifications systems. Most specifically they are asked to ensure that procedures

for relating official language examinations to the principles and reference levels of the CEFR are carried out in a reliable and transparent manner. This means that authorities need to be able to account for the quality of their assessment procedures and qualification with reference to the principle of good practice which exist in the field of language assessment in general and as set out in internationally recognised Codes of Practice (Appendix II to this Recommendation). The procedures for accounting for the validity of the examinations and their relationship to the CEFR should be made available to all interested parties.

All institutions responsible for language assessment and certifications should be reminded by the authorities that using the CEFR as a reference means adopting measures that guarantee comprehensibility, quality and transparency of actions. Language qualifications which satisfy these criteria should be given appropriate recognition in all member states.

Increasing educational, vocational and professional mobility make the portability of qualifications a matter of increasing urgency. Portability is only possible if the user institutions have confidence in the reliability and validity of the qualification a candidate for employment or admission to a college or university brings from his or her country of origin. Since it is not feasible for each particular institution or individual employer to research the value of each qualification offered, they are likely to take a cautious view. This may well result in well-qualified candidates being rejected, which then acts as an obstacle to freedom of movement. There is thus a strong demand for a reliable method of establishing and making readily available to all interested parties the actual value of qualifications across national boundaries. It is therefore not at all surprising that it should be in the area of the assessment of language proficiency that the CEFR has aroused the greatest interest. Examining bodies and educational institutions, as well as individuals working in the field have shown themselves willing to work together in a serious way to link the examinations with which they are concerned to the common reference levels of the CEFR in a valid and reliable manner. Their cooperation has led to the production of a Manual for helping examination providers to relate their examinations to the CEFR (see point 5 of Appendix II). This Manual covers a range of procedures which can be used in *building an argument* supported by evidence and explanations to account for the extent to which an examination or examination system is aligned to the principles and levels of the CEFR. It has a reference supplement which includes technical information and is also supported by examples of test tasks for reading and listening comprehension and samples of written and spoken performance to illustrate language proficiency at the successive reference levels of the CEFR. The exemplar tasks, the spoken samples (which are available on CD-ROMs and DVDs) and written samples (available online) do not represent prototypes or models to be copied but are intended to be used as reference material in test development or benchmarking exercises.

As in the case of the CEFR itself, the Manual is not intended to be prescriptive or to suggest that a single set of procedures needs to be followed to account for the relationship between an examination and the CEFR. It provides an accessible knowledge base to help policy makers and practitioners to achieve their own goals in a coherent and transparent way and to situate and explain their own efforts in relation to others.

A substantial number of case studies have been reported, which show that, if undertaken with due care, examinations can be linked to the common reference levels in a valid and reliable way. The case studies also made it clear that linking procedures need to be reviewed periodically, as examinations evolve over time. Authorities are therefore invited, in the interests of portability, to see that the language qualifications they award are linked to the common reference levels of the CEFR in a fully responsible manner, taking international experience fully into account. In this way, it is intended that sufficient mutual trust and confidence can be built up to justify the reciprocal recognition of language qualifications across national boundaries.

**4.6** Clearly, the mere statement that an examination or a qualification is set at a particular level will not of itself carry conviction. Unsupported and uncorroborated claims can too easily lead to all claims being discredited. For this reason, the Council of Europe regards it of primary importance that all such claims should be fully supported by proper documentation which is made publicly available. It is, of course, recognised that transparency is limited by the requirements of secrecy in the case of certain technical processes and of confidentiality in the case of some information in respect of individual candidates. However, secrecy should be kept to a minimum necessary, and the fact that some information is withheld should itself be openly stated and reasons given.

**4.7** Sections 4.5 and 4.6 relate to examinations and qualifications directly under the control of public authorities. This section extends the same criteria of good practice, reliability, validity and transparency to those conducted by independent bodies.

**4.8** In view of the considerable advantages of the portability of qualifications, governments are invited to extend such official recognition as appropriate to those not directly under their control, provided that they meet the

stringent criteria set out in 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. In the absence of a common decision by member governments to set up a mechanism for officially linking language qualifications to the common reference levels of the CEFR as a basis for pan-European recognition, any form of recognition is regarded as the prerogative of the member governments themselves. The progress of portability depends entirely on the responsibility with which that prerogative is exercised.

**4.9** In this section, authorities are invited to take specific steps to develop the plurilingual repertoire of learners in accordance with their needs, motivations, characteristics and resources. This may mean, for example, moving away from setting the same objectives in all four 'skills': speaking, listening, writing and reading for each language in the curriculum. Under school conditions, for instance, it may not be possible to set a high level of proficiency in all four skills to allow the same effectiveness of communication in all languages on offer. The development of plurilingual curricula is a new challenge that has been highlighted during the above mentioned Intergovernmental Policy Forum on the CEFR, and initiatives in this area are now underway by the Council of Europe. It is also an important challenge to assessment methodology to find ways of evaluating the plurilingual competence that is developed in this flexible way.

Authorities are also asked to take account of the role of language teaching in developing such qualities in learners as intercultural understanding, respect for otherness and social awareness, which result from bringing them into contact with other ways of thinking and acting, different from those they have come to take for granted in their own day-to-day experience within their own social group, thus widening their horizons. Attention is drawn to the value of the European Language Portfolio in making it possible to record and recognise educational progress in such respects and in helping the learners to reflect on their intercultural experiences.