

COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES: LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT

Companion volume

**COMMON EUROPEAN
FRAMEWORK
OF REFERENCE
FOR LANGUAGES:**
LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT

Companion volume

This publication updates the CEFR 2001,
the conceptual framework of which remains valid.

www.coe.int/lang-cefr

Language Policy Programme
Education Policy Division
Education Department
Council of Europe

A preliminary version of this update to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* was published online in English and French in 2018 as “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment: Companion Volume with New Descriptors” and “Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues: apprendre, enseigner, évaluer : Volume complémentaire avec de nouveaux descripteurs”, respectively.

This volume presents the key messages of the CEFR in a user-friendly form and contains all CEFR illustrative descriptors. For pedagogical use of the CEFR for learning, teaching and assessment, teachers and teacher educators will find it easier to access the CEFR Companion volume as the updated framework. The Companion volume provides the links and references to also consult the chapters of the 2001 edition, where necessary. Researchers wishing to interrogate the underlying concepts and guidance in CEFR chapters about specific areas should access the 2001 edition, which remains valid.

French edition:

*Cadre européen commun de référence
pour les langues : apprendre, enseigner,
évaluer – Volume complémentaire*

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FOREWORD

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR)¹ is one of the best-known and most used Council of Europe policy instruments. Through the European Cultural Convention 50 European countries commit to encouraging “the study by its own nationals of the languages, history and civilisation” of other European countries. The CEFR has played and continues to play an important role in making this vision of Europe a reality.

Since its launch in 2001, the CEFR, together with its related instrument for learners, the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP),² has been a central feature of the Council of Europe’s intergovernmental programmes in the field of education, including their initiatives to promote the right to quality education for all. Language education contributes to Council of Europe’s core mission “to achieve a greater unity between its members” and is fundamental to the effective enjoyment of the right to education and other individual human rights and the rights of minorities as well as, more broadly, to developing and maintaining a culture of democracy.

The CEFR is intended to promote quality plurilingual education, facilitate greater social mobility and stimulate reflection and exchange between language professionals for curriculum development and in teacher education. Furthermore the CEFR provides a metalanguage for discussing the complexity of language proficiency for all citizens in a multilingual and intercultural Europe, and for education policy makers to reflect on learning objectives and outcomes that should be coherent and transparent. It has never been the intention that the CEFR should be used to justify a gate-keeping function of assessment instruments.

The Council of Europe hopes that the development in this publication of areas such as mediation, plurilingual/pluricultural competence and signing competences will contribute to quality inclusive education for all, and to the promotion of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković
Council of Europe
Director General for Democracy

1. www.coe.int/lang-cefr.

2. www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio.

PREFACE WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) was published in 2001 (the European Year of Languages) after a comprehensive process of drafting, piloting and consultation. The CEFR has contributed to the implementation of the Council of Europe's language education principles, including the promotion of reflective learning and learner autonomy.

A comprehensive set of resources has been developed around the CEFR since its publication in order to support implementation and, like the CEFR itself, these resources are presented on the Council of Europe's [CEFR website](#).³ Building on the success of the CEFR and other projects a number of policy documents and resources that further develop the underlying educational principles and objectives of the CEFR are also available, not only for foreign/second languages but also for the languages of schooling and the development of curricula to promote plurilingual and intercultural education. Many of these are available on the [Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education](#),⁴ for example:

- ▶ [Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education](#),⁵
- ▶ [A handbook for curriculum development and teacher education: the language dimension in all subjects](#),⁶
- ▶ "From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: guide for the development of language education policies in Europe",⁷

Others are available separately:

- ▶ [policy guidelines and resources for the linguistic integration of adult migrants](#),⁸
- ▶ [guidelines for intercultural education and an autobiography of intercultural encounters](#),⁹
- ▶ [Reference framework of competences for democratic culture](#).¹⁰

However, regardless of all this further material provided, the Council of Europe frequently received requests to continue to develop aspects of the CEFR, particularly the illustrative descriptors of second/foreign language proficiency. Requests were made asking the Council of Europe to complement the illustrative scales published in 2001 with descriptors for mediation, reactions to literature and online interaction, to produce versions for young learners and for signing competences, and to develop more detailed coverage in the descriptors for A1 and C levels.

Much work done by other institutions and professional bodies since the publication of the CEFR has confirmed the validity of the initial research conducted under a Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) research project by Brian North and Günther Schneider. To respond to the requests received and in keeping with the open, dynamic character of the CEFR, the Education Policy Division (Language Policy Programme) therefore resolved to build on the widespread adoption and use of the CEFR to produce an extended version of the illustrative descriptors that replaces the ones contained in the body of the CEFR 2001 text. For this purpose, validated and calibrated descriptors were generously offered to the Council of Europe by a number of institutions in the field of language education.

For mediation, an important concept introduced in the CEFR that has assumed even greater importance with the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of our societies, however, no validated and calibrated descriptors existed. The development of descriptors for mediation was, therefore, the longest and most complex part of the project. Descriptor scales are here provided for mediating a text, for mediating concepts and for mediating communication, as well as for the related mediation strategies and plurilingual/pluricultural competences.

3. www.coe.int/lang-cefr.

4. www.coe.int/lang-platform.

5. Beacco J.-C. et al. (2016a), *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16806ae621>.

6. Beacco J.-C. et al. (2016b), *A handbook for curriculum development and teacher education: the language dimension in all subjects*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16806af387>.

7. Beacco J.-C. and Byram M. (2007), "From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: guide for the development of language education policies in Europe", Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1c4>.

8. www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/officials-texts-and-guidelines.

9. www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_en.asp.

10. Council of Europe (2018), *Reference framework of competences for democratic culture*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at <https://go.coe.int/mWYUH>, accessed 6 March 2020.

As part of the process of further developing the descriptors, an effort was made to make them modality-inclusive. The adaptation of the descriptors in this way is informed by the ECML's pioneering [PRO-Sign project](#). In addition, illustrative descriptor scales specifically for signing competences are provided, again informed by SNSF research project No. 100015_156592.

First published online in 2018 as the "CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors", this update to the CEFR therefore represents another step in a process that has been pursued by the Council of Europe since 1964. In particular, the descriptors for new areas represent an enrichment of the original descriptive apparatus. Those responsible for curriculum planning for foreign languages and languages of schooling will find further guidance on promoting plurilingual and intercultural education in the guides mentioned above. In addition to the extended illustrative descriptors, this publication contains a user-friendly explanation of the aims and main principles of the CEFR, which the Council of Europe hopes will help increase awareness of the CEFR's messages, particularly in teacher education. For ease of consultation, this publication contains links and references to the 2001 edition, which remains a valid reference for its detailed chapters.

The fact that this edition of the CEFR descriptors takes them beyond the area of modern language learning to encompass aspects relevant to language education across the curriculum was overwhelmingly welcomed in the extensive consultation process undertaken in 2016-17. This reflects the increasing awareness of the need for an integrated approach to language education across the curriculum. Language teaching practitioners particularly welcomed descriptors concerned with online interaction, collaborative learning and mediating text. The consultation also confirmed the importance that policy makers attach to the provision of descriptors for plurilingualism/pluriculturalism. This is reflected in the Council of Europe's recent initiative to develop [competences for democratic culture](#),¹¹ such as valuing cultural diversity and openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, worldviews and practices.

This publication owes much to the contributions of members of the language teaching profession across Europe and beyond. It was authored by Brian North, Tim Goodier (Eurocentres Foundation) and Enrica Piccardo (University of Toronto/Université Grenoble-Alpes). The chapter on signing competences was produced by Jörg Keller (Zurich University of Applied Sciences).

Publication has been assisted by a project follow-up advisory group consisting of: Marisa Cavalli, Mirjam Egli Cuenat, Neus Figueras Casanovas, Francis Goullier, David Little, Günther Schneider and Joseph Sheils.

In order to ensure complete coherence and continuity with the CEFR scales published in 2001, the Council of Europe asked the Eurocentres Foundation to once again take on responsibility for co-ordinating the further development of the CEFR descriptors, with Brian North co-ordinating the work. The Council of Europe wishes to express its gratitude to Eurocentres for the professionalism and reliability with which the work has been carried out.

The entire process of updating and extending the illustrative descriptors took place in five stages or sub-projects:

Stage 1: Filling gaps in the illustrative descriptor scales published in 2001 with materials then available (2014-15)

Authoring Group: Brian North, Tunde Szabo, Tim Goodier (Eurocentres Foundation)

Sounding Board: Gilles Breton, Hanan Khalifa, Christine Tagliante, Sauli Takala

Consultants: Coreen Docherty, Daniela Fasoglio, Neil Jones, Peter Lenz, David Little, Enrica Piccardo, Günther Schneider, Barbara Spinelli, Maria Stathopoulou, Bertrand Vittecoq

Stage 2: Developing descriptor scales for areas missing in the 2001 set, in particular for mediation (2014-16)

Authoring Group: Brian North, Tim Goodier, Enrica Piccardo, Maria Stathopoulou

Sounding Board: Gilles Breton, Coreen Docherty, Hanan Khalifa, Ángeles Ortega, Christine Tagliante, Sauli Takala

Consultants (*at meetings in June 2014, June 2015 and/or June 2016*): Marisa Cavalli, Daniel Coste, Mirjam Egli Ceunat, Gudrun Erickson, Daniela Fasoglio, Vincent Folny, Manuela Ferreira Pinto, Glyn Jones, Neil Jones, Peter Lenz, David Little, Gerda Piribauer, Günther Schneider, Joseph Sheils, Belinda Steinhuber, Barbara Spinelli, Bertrand Vittecoq

11. <https://go.coe.int/mWYUH>

Consultants (*at a meeting in June 2016 only*): Sarah Breslin, Mike Byram, Michel Candelier, Neus Figueras Casanovas, Francis Goullier, Hanna Komorowska, Terry Lamb, Nick Saville, Maria Stoicheva, Luca Tomasi

Stage 3: Developing a new scale for phonological control (2015-16)

Authoring Group: Enrica Piccardo, Tim Goodier

Sounding Board: Brian North, Coreen Docherty

Consultants: Sophie Deabreu, Dan Frost, David Horner, Thalia Isaacs, Murray Munro

Stage 4: Developing descriptors for signing competences (2015-19)

Authoring Group: Jörg Keller, Petrea Bürgin, Aline Meili, Dawei Ni

Sounding Board: Brian North, Curtis Gautschi, Jean-Louis Brugeille, Kristin Snoddon

Consultants: Patty Shores, Tobias Haug, Lorraine Leeson, Christian Rathmann, Bepie van den Bogaerde

Stage 5: Collating descriptors for young learners (2014-16)

Authoring Group: Tunde Szabo (Eurocentres Foundation)

Sounding Board: Coreen Docherty, Tim Goodier, Brian North

Consultants: Angela Hasselgreen, Eli Moe

The Council of Europe wishes to thank the following institutions and projects for kindly making their validated descriptors available:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▶ ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) | Can do statements |
| ▶ AMKKIA project (Finland) | Descriptors for grammar and vocabulary |
| ▶ Cambridge Assessment English | BULATS Summary of Typical Candidate Abilities |
| | Common Scales for Speaking and for Writing |
| | Assessment Scales for Speaking and for Writing |
| ▶ CEFR-J project | Descriptors for secondary school learners |
| ▶ Equals | Equals bank of CEFR-related descriptors |
| ▶ English Profile | Descriptors for the C level |
| ▶ Lingualevel/IEF (Swiss) project | Descriptors for secondary school learners |
| ▶ Pearson Education | Global Scale of English (GSE) |

The Council of Europe would also like to thank:

Pearson Education for kindly validating some 50 descriptors that were included from non-calibrated sources, principally from the Equals' bank and the late John Trim's translation of descriptors for the C levels in Profile Deutsch.

The Research Centre for Language Teaching, Testing and Assessment, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (RCeL) for making available descriptors from the Greek Integrated Foreign Languages Curriculum.

Cambridge Assessment English, in particular Coreen Docherty, for the logistical support offered over a period of six months to the project, without which large-scale data collection and analysis would not have been feasible. The Council of Europe also wishes to gratefully acknowledge the support from the institutions listed at the end of this section, who took part in the three phases of validation for the new descriptors, especially all those who also assisted with piloting them.

Cambridge Assessment English and the European Language Portfolio authors for making their descriptors available for the collation of descriptors for young learners.

The Swiss National Science Foundation and the Max Bircher Stiftung for funding the research and development of the descriptors for signing competences.¹²

12. SNSF research project 100015_156592: Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Gebärdensprachen: Empirie-basierte Grundlagen für grammatische, pragmatische und soziolinguistische Deskriptoren in Deutschschweizer Gebärdensprache, conducted at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW, Winterthur). The SNSF provided some €385 000 for this research into signing competences.

The PRO-Sign project team (European Centre for Modern Languages, ECML) for their assistance in finalising the descriptors for signing competences and in adapting the other descriptors for modality inclusiveness.¹³

The Department of Deaf Studies and Sign Language Interpreting at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin for undertaking the translation of the whole document, including all the illustrative descriptors, into International Sign.

The following readers, whose comments on an early version of the text on key aspects of the CEFR for learning, teaching and assessment greatly helped to structure it appropriately for readers with different degrees of familiarity with the CEFR: Sezen Arslan, Danielle Freitas, Angelica Galante, İsmail Hakkı Mirici, Nurdan Kavalki, Jean-Claude Lasnier, Laura Muresan, Funda Ölmez.

Organisations, in alphabetical order, that facilitated the recruitment of institutes for the validation of the descriptors for mediation, online interaction, reactions to literature and plurilingual/pluricultural competence:

- ▶ Cambridge Assessment English
- ▶ CERCLES: European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education
- ▶ CIEP: Centre international d'études pédagogiques
- ▶ EALTA: European Association for Language Testing and Assessment
- ▶ Equals: Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services
- ▶ FIPLV: International Federation of Language Teaching Associations
- ▶ Instituto Cervantes
- ▶ NILE (Norwich Institute for Language Education)
- ▶ UNICert

Institutes (organised in alphabetical order by country) that participated between February and November 2015 in the validation of the descriptors for mediation, online interaction, reactions to literature and plurilingual/pluricultural competence, and/or assisted in initial piloting. The Council of Europe also wishes to thank the many individual participants, all of whose institutes could not be included here.

Algeria

Institut Français d'Alger

Argentina

Academia Argüello, Córdoba

La Asociación de Ex Alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas Juan R. Fernández

National University of Córdoba

St Patrick's School, Córdoba

Universidad Nacional de La Plata, La Plata

Austria

BBS (Berufsbildende Schule), Rohrbach

BG/BRG (Bundesgymnasium/Bundesrealgymnasium), Hallein

CEBS (Center für berufsbezogene Sprachen des bmbf), Vienna

Federal Institute for Education Research (BIFIE), Vienna
HBLW Linz-Landwiedstraße

HLW (Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe)

Ferrarischule, Innsbruck

Institut Français d'Autriche-Vienne

International Language Centre of the University of Innsbruck

LTRGI (Language Testing Research Group Innsbruck),
School of Education, University of Innsbruck

Language Centre of the University of Salzburg
Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich

Bolivia

Alliance Française de La Paz

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Anglia V Language School, Bijeljina

Institut Français de Bosnie-Herzégovine

Brazil

Alliance Française

Alliance Française de Curitiba

Instituto Cervantes do Recife

Bulgaria

AVO Language and Examination Centre, Sofia

Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

13. See www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2012-2015/ProSign/tabid/1752/Default.aspx. Project team: Tobias Haug, Lorraine Leeson, Christian Rathmann, Bepie van den Bogaerde.

Cameroon

Alliance Française de Bamenda

Institut Français du Cameroun, Yaoundé

Canada

OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education), University of Toronto

Chile

Alliance Française de La Serena

China

Alliance Française de Chine

Heilongjiang University

China Language Assessment, Beijing Foreign Studies University

The Language Training and Testing Center, Taipei

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, School of Interpreting and Translation Studies

Tianjin Nankai University

Colombia

Alliance Française de Bogota

Universidad Surcolombiana

Croatia

University of Split

X. Gimnazija "Ivan Supek"

Croatian Defence Academy, Zagreb

Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

Cyprus

Cyprus University of Technology

University of Cyprus

Czech Republic

Charles University, Prague (Institute for Language and Preparatory Studies)

National Institute of Education

Masaryk University Language Centre, Brno

University of South Bohemia

Egypt

Institut Français d'Égypte

Istituto Cervantes de El Cairo

Estonia

Foundation Innove, Tallinn

Finland

Aalto University

Tampere University of Applied Sciences

Häme University of Applied Sciences

Turku University

Language Centre, University of Tampere

University of Eastern Finland

Matriculation Examination Board

University of Helsinki Language Centre

National Board of Education

University of Jyväskylä

France

Alliance Française

Crea-langues, France

Alliance Française de Nice

Eurocentres Paris

Alliance française Paris Ile-de-France

France Langue

British Council, Lyon

French in Normandy

CAVILAM (Centre d'Approches Vivantes des Langues et des Médias) – Alliance Française

ILCF (Institut de Langue et de Culture Françaises), Lyon

CIDEF (Centre international d'études françaises), Université catholique de l'Ouest

INFREP (Institute National Formation Recherche Education Permanente)

CIEP (Centre international d'études pédagogiques)

International House Nice

CLV (Centre de langues vivantes), Université Grenoble-Alpes

ISEFE (Institut Savoisien d'Études Françaises pour Étrangers)

Collège International de Cannes

Université de Franche-Comté

Germany

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Englisch an Gesamtschulen elc-European Language Competence, Frankfurt

Technische Hochschule Wildau

Frankfurt School of Finance & Management

Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig (Sprachzentrum)

Fremdsprachenzentrum der Hochschulen im Land Bremen, Bremen University

Technische Universität Darmstadt

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Zentrale Einrichtung für Sprachen und Schlüsselqualifikationen)

Technische Universität München (Sprachzentrum)

Goethe-Institut München

telc gGmbH Frankfurt

Institut français d'Allemagne

Universität Freiburg (Sprachlehrinstitut)

Language Centre, Neu-Ulm University of Applied Sciences (HNU)

Universität Hohenheim (Sprachzentrum)

Universität Leipzig (Sprachzentrum)

Instituto Cervantes de Munich	Universität Passau (Sprachzentrum)
Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Universität Regensburg (Zentrum für Sprache und Kommunikation)
Justus-Liebig Universität Giessen (Zentrum für fremdsprachliche und berufsfeldorientierte Kompetenzen)	Universität Rostock (Sprachzentrum)
Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg	Universität des Saarlandes (Sprachzentrum)
Pädagogische Hochschule Karlsruhe	University Language Centers in Berlin and Brandenburg
Ruhr-Universität Bochum, ZFA (Zentrum für Fremdsprachenausbildung)	VHS Siegburg
Sprachzentrum, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)	
Greece	
Bourtsoukli Language Centre	RCeL: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Hellenic American University in Athens	Vagionia Junior High School, Crete
Hungary	
ELTE ONYC	ECL Examinations, University of Pécs
Eötvös Lorand University	Tanárok Európai Egyesülete, AEDE
Euroexam	University of Debrecen
Budapest Business School	University of Pannonia
Budapest University of Technology and Economics	
India	
ELT Consultants	Fluency Center, Coimbatore
Ireland	
Alpha College, Dublin	NUI Galway
Galway Cultural Institute	Trinity College Dublin
Italy	
Accento, Martina Franca, Apulia	International House, Palermo
AISLi (Associazione Italiana Scuola di Lingue)	Istituto Comprensivo di Campi
Alliance Française	Istituto Monti, Asti
Bennett Languages, Civitavecchia	Liceo Scientifico "Giorgio Spezia", Domodossola
British School of Trieste	Padova University Language Centre
British School of Udine	Pisa University Language Centre
Centro Lingue Estere Arma dei Carabinieri	Servizio Linguistico di Ateneo, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano
Centro Linguistico di Ateneo – Università di Bologna	Università degli Studi Roma Tre
Centro Linguistico di Ateneo di Trieste	Università degli Studi di Napoli "Parthenope"/I.C. "Nino Cortese", Casoria, Naples
CVCL (Centro per la Valutazione e le Certificazioni linguistiche) – Università per Stranieri di Perugia	Università degli Studi di Parma
Free University of Bolzano, Language Study Unit	University of Bologna
Globally Speaking, Rome	Centro Linguistico di Ateneo, Università della Calabria
Institut Français de Milan	University of Brescia
Institute for Educational Research/LUMSA University, Rome	Università per Stranieri di Siena
Japan	
Alliance Française du Japon	Japan School of Foreign Studies, Osaka University
Institut Français du Japon	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan
Latvia	
Baltic International Academy, Department of Translation and Interpreting	University of Latvia
Lebanon	
Institut Français du Liban	
Lithuania	
Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences	Vilnius University
Ministry of Education and Science	
Luxembourg	
Ministry of Education, Children and Youth	University of Luxembourg
Mexico	
University of Guadalajara	

Morocco

Institut Français de Maroc

Netherlands

Institut Français des Pays-Bas
Cito

SLO (Netherlands Institute for curriculum development)
University of Groningen, Language Centre

New Zealand

LSI (Language Studies International)

Worldwide School of English

North Macedonia

AAB University
Elokventa Language Centre

Language Center, South East European University
MAQS (Macedonian Association for Quality Language Services), Queen Language School

Norway

Department of Teacher Education and School Research,
University of Oslo
University of Bergen

Vox – Norwegian Agency for Lifelong Learning

Peru

Alliance Française au Peru

USIL (Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola)

Poland

British Council, Warsaw

Jagiellonian Language Center, Jagiellonian University,
Kraków

Educational Research Institute, Warsaw

LANG LTC Teacher Training Centre, Warsaw

Gama College, Kraków

Poznan University of Technology, Poland

Instituto Cervantes, Kraków

SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Poland

Portugal

British Council, Lisbon
Camões, Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua

IPG (Instituto Politécnico da Guarda)
ISCAP – Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e
Administração do Porto, Instituto Politécnico do Porto
University of Aveiro

FCSH, NOVA University of Lisbon

Romania

ASE (Academia de Studii Economice din Bucuresti)
Institut Français de Roumanie
LINGUA Language Centre of Babeş-Bolyai,
University Cluj-Napoca

Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti
Universitatea Aurel Vlaicu din Arad

Russia

Globus International Language Centres
Lomonosov Moscow State University
MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations)
National Research University Higher Schools of
Economics, Moscow

Nizhny Novgorod Linguistics University
Samara State University
St Petersburg State University

Saudi Arabia

ELC (English Language Center), Taibah University,
Madinah

National Center for Assessment in Higher Education,
Riyadh

Senegal

Institut Français de Dakar

Serbia

Centre Jules Verne
Institut Français de Belgrade

University of Belgrade

Slovakia

Trnava University

Slovenia

Državni izpitni center

Spain

Alliance Française en Espagne
British Council, Madrid
British Institute of Seville
Centro de Lenguas, Universitat Politècnica de València
Consejería de Educación de la Junta de Andalucía

EOI de Villanueva-Don Benito, Extremadura
ILM (Instituto de Lenguas Modernas), Caceres
Institut Français d'Espagne
Instituto Británico de Sevilla S.A.
Instituto de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de
Extremadura

Departament d'Ensenyament- Generalitat de Catalunya

Lacunza International House, San Sebastián

EOI de Albacete	Net Languages, Barcelona
EOI de Badajoz, Extremadura	Universidad Antonio de Nebrija
EOI de Catalunya	Universidad Europea de Madrid
EOI de Granada	Universidad Internacional de La Rioja
EOI de La Coruña, Galicia	Universidad Católica de València
EOI de Málaga, Málaga	Universidad de Cantabria
EOI de Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Universidad de Jaén
EOI de Santander	Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla
EOI de Santiago de Compostela, Galicia	Universidad Ramon Llull, Barcelona
EOI (Escola Oficial de Idiomas) de Vigo	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Sweden	
Instituto Cervantes Stockholm	University of Gothenburg
Switzerland	
Bell Switzerland	
	UNIL (Université de Lausanne), EPFL (École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne)
Eurocentres Lausanne	Universität Fribourg
Sprachenzentrum der Universität Basel	ZHAW (Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften), Winterthu
TLC (The Language Company) Internationa House Zurich-Baden	
Thailand	
Alliance Française Bangkok	
Turkey	
Çağ University, Mersin	ID Bilkent University, Ankara
Ege University	Middle East Technical University, Ankara
Hacettepe University, Ankara	Sabancı University, Istanbul
Uganda	
Alliance Française de Kampala	
Ukraine	
Institute of Philology, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	Sumy State University, Institute for Business Technologies
Odessa National Mechnikov University	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv
United Arab Emirates	
Higher Colleges of Technology	
United Kingdom	
Anglia Examinations, Chichester College	Pearson Education
Cambridge Assessment English	School of Modern Languages and Culture, University of Warwick
	Southampton Solent University, School of Business and Law
Eurocentres, Bournemouth	St Giles International London Central
	Trinity College London
Eurocentres, Brighton	University of Exeter
Eurocentres, London	University of Hull
Experience English	University of Liverpool
Instituto Cervantes de Mánchester	
International Study and Language Institute, University of Reading	University of Westminster
Kaplan International College, London	Westminster Professional Language Centre
NILE (Norwich Institute for Language Education)	
United States of America	
Alliance Française de Porto Rico	ETS (Educational Testing Service)
Cambridge Michigan Language Assessments	Purdue University
Columbia University, New York	University of Michigan
Eastern Michigan University	
Uruguay	
Centro Educativo Rowan, Montevideo	

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR)¹⁴ is part of the Council of Europe's continuing work to ensure quality inclusive education as a right of all citizens. This update to the CEFR, first published online in 2018 in English and French as the "CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors", updates and extends the CEFR, which was published as a book in 2001 and which is available in 40 languages at the time of writing. With this new, user-friendly version, the Council of Europe responds to the many comments that the 2001 edition was a very complex document that many language professionals found difficult to access. The key aspects of the CEFR vision are therefore explained in Chapter 2, which elaborates the key notions of the CEFR as a vehicle for promoting quality in second/foreign language teaching and learning as well as in plurilingual and intercultural education. The updated and extended version of the CEFR illustrative descriptors contained in this publication replaces the 2001 version of them.

Teacher educators and researchers will find it worthwhile to follow links and/or references given in Chapter 2 "Key aspects of the CEFR for teaching and learning" in order to also consult the chapters of the 2001 edition on, for example, full details of the descriptive scheme (CEFR 2001, Chapters 4 and 5). The updated and extended illustrative descriptors include all those from the CEFR 2001. The descriptor scales are organised according to the categories of the CEFR descriptive scheme. It is important to note that the changes and additions in this publication do not affect the construct described in the CEFR, or its Common Reference Levels.

The CEFR in fact consists of far more than a set of common reference levels. As explained in Chapter 2, the CEFR broadens the perspective of language education in a number of ways, not least by its vision of the user/learner as a social agent, co-constructing meaning in interaction, and by the notions of mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competences. The CEFR has proved successful precisely because it encompasses educational values, a clear model of language-related competences and language use, and practical tools, in the form of illustrative descriptors, to facilitate the development of curricula and orientation of teaching and learning.

14. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (2001), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, available at <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>.

This publication is the product of a project of the Education Policy Division of the Council of Europe. The focus in that project was to update the CEFR's illustrative descriptors by:

- ▶ highlighting certain innovative areas of the CEFR for which no descriptor scales had been provided in the set of descriptors published in 2001, but which have become increasingly relevant over the past 20 years, especially mediation and plurilingual/pluricultural competence;
- ▶ building on the successful implementation and further development of the CEFR, for example by more fully defining “plus levels” and a new “Pre-A1” level;
- ▶ responding to demands for more elaborate descriptions of listening and reading in existing scales, and for descriptors for other communicative activities such as online interaction, using telecommunications, and expressing reactions to creative texts (including literature);
- ▶ enriching description at A1, and at the C levels, particularly C2;
- ▶ adapting the descriptors to make them gender-neutral and “modality-inclusive” (and so applicable also to sign languages), sometimes by changing verbs and sometimes by offering the alternatives “speaker/signer”.

In relation to the final point above, the term “oral” is generally understood by the deaf community to include signing. However, it is important to acknowledge that signing can transmit text that is closer to written than oral text in many scenarios. Therefore, users of the CEFR are invited to make use of the descriptors for written reception, production and interaction also for sign languages, as appropriate. And for this reason, the full set of illustrative descriptors has been adapted with modality-inclusive formulations.

There are plans to make the full set of illustrative descriptors available in International Sign. Meanwhile, the ECML's PRO-Sign project¹⁵ makes available videos in International Sign of many of the descriptors published in 2001.

This CEFR Companion volume presents an extended version of the illustrative descriptors:

- ▶ newly developed illustrative descriptor scales are introduced alongside existing ones;
- ▶ schematic tables are provided, which group together scales belonging to the same category (communicative language activities or aspects of competence);
- ▶ a short rationale is presented for each scale, explaining the thinking behind the categorisation;
- ▶ descriptors that were developed and validated in the project, but not subsequently included in the illustrative descriptors, are presented in Appendix 8.

Small changes to formulations have been made to the descriptors to ensure that they are gender-neutral and modality-inclusive. Any substantive changes made to descriptors published in 2001 are listed in Appendix 7. The 2001 scales have been expanded with a selection of validated, calibrated descriptors from the institutions listed in the preface and by descriptors developed, validated, calibrated and piloted during a 2014-17 project to develop descriptors for mediation. The approach taken – both to the update of the descriptors published in 2001 and in the mediation project – is described in Appendix 6. Examples of contexts of use for the new illustrative descriptors for online interaction and for mediation activities, for the public, personal, occupational and educational domains, are provided in Appendix 5.

In addition to the descriptors in this publication, a new collation of descriptors relevant for young learners,¹⁶ put together by the Eurocentres Foundation, is also available to assist with course planning and self-assessment. Here, a different approach was adopted: descriptors in the extended illustrative descriptors that are relevant for two age groups (7-10¹⁷ and 11-15¹⁸) were selected. Then a collation was made of the adaptations of these descriptors relevant to young learners, descriptors that appeared in the ELPs, complemented by assessment descriptors for young learners generously offered by Cambridge Assessment English.

The relationship between the CEFR descriptive scheme, the illustrative descriptors published in 2001 and the updates and additions provided in this publication is shown in Table 1. As can be seen, the descriptor scales for reception are presented before those for production, although the latter appear first in the 2001 CEFR text.

15. www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2012-2015/ProSign/tabid/1752/Default.aspx. PRO-Sign adaptations of CEFR descriptors are available in Czech, English, Estonian, German, Icelandic and Slovenian.

16. Bank of supplementary descriptors, available at www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/bank-of-supplementary-descriptors.

17. Goodier T. (ed.) (2018), “Collated representative samples of descriptors of language competences developed for young learners – Resource for educators, Volume 1: Ages 7-10”, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16808b1688>.

18. Goodier T. (ed.) (2018), “Collated representative samples of descriptors of language competences developed for young learners – Resource for educators, Volume 2: Ages 11-15”, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16808b1689>.

Table 1 – The CEFR descriptive scheme and illustrative descriptors: updates and additions

	In the 2001 descriptive scheme	In the 2001 descriptor scales	Descriptor scales updated in this publication	Descriptor scales added in this publication
Communicative language activities				
Reception				
Oral comprehension	√	√	√	
Reading comprehension	√	√	√	
Production				
Oral production	√	√	√	
Written production	√	√	√	
Interaction				
Oral interaction	√	√	√	
Written interaction	√	√	√	
Online interaction				√
Mediation				
Mediating a text	√			√
Mediating concepts	√			√
Mediating communication	√			√
Communicative language strategies				
Reception	√	√	√	
Production	√	√	√	
Interaction	√	√	√	
Mediation				√
Plurilingual and pluricultural competence				
Building on pluricultural repertoire	√			√
Plurilingual comprehension	√			√
Building on plurilingual repertoire	√			√
Communicative language competences				
Linguistic competence	√	√	√	√ (Phonology)
Sociolinguistic competence	√	√	√	
Pragmatic competence	√	√	√	
Signing competences				
Linguistic competence				√
Sociolinguistic competence				√
Pragmatic competence				√

1.1. SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE ILLUSTRATIVE DESCRIPTORS

Table 2 summarises the changes to the CEFR illustrative descriptors and also the rationale for these changes. A short description of the development project is given in Appendix 6, with a more complete version available in the paper by Brian North and Enrica Piccardo: “Developing illustrative descriptors of aspects of mediation for the CEFR”.¹⁹

Table 2 – Summary of changes to the illustrative descriptors

What is addressed in this publication	Comments
Pre-A1	Descriptors for this band of proficiency that is halfway to A1, mentioned at the beginning of CEFR 2001 Section 3.5, are provided for many scales, including for online interaction.
Changes to descriptors published in 2001	A list of substantive changes to existing descriptors appearing in CEFR 2001 Chapter 4 for communicative language activities and strategies, and in CEFR 2001 Chapter 5 for aspects of communicative language, is provided in Appendix 7. Various other small changes to formulations have been made in order to ensure that the descriptors are gender-neutral and modality-inclusive.
Changes to C2 descriptors	Many of the changes proposed in the list in Appendix 7 concern C2 descriptors included in the 2001 set. Some instances of highly absolute statements have been adjusted to better reflect the competence of C2 user/learners.
Changes to A1-C1 descriptors	A few changes are proposed to other descriptors. It was decided not to “update” descriptors merely because of changes in technology (e.g. references to postcards or public telephones). The scale for “Phonological control” has been replaced (see below). The main changes result from making the descriptors modality-inclusive, to make them equally applicable to sign languages. Changes are also proposed to certain descriptors that refer to linguistic accommodation (or not) by “native speakers”, because this term has become controversial since the CEFR was first published.
Plus levels	The description for plus levels (e.g. = B1+, B1.2) has been strengthened. Please see Appendix 1 and CEFR 2001 Sections 3.5 and 3.6 for discussion of the plus levels.
Phonology	The scale for “Phonological control” has been redeveloped, with a focus on “Sound articulation” and “Prosodic features”.
Mediation	The approach taken to mediation is broader than that presented in the CEFR 2001. In addition to a focus on activities to mediate a text, scales are provided for mediating concepts and for mediating communication, giving a total of 19 scales for mediation activities. Mediation strategies (5 scales) are concerned with strategies employed during the mediation process, rather than in preparation for it.
Pluricultural	The scale “Building on pluricultural repertoire” describes the use of pluricultural competences in a communicative situation. Thus, it is skills rather than knowledge or attitudes that are the focus. The scale shows a high degree of coherence with the existing CEFR 2001 scale “Sociolinguistic appropriateness”, although it was developed independently.
Plurilingual	The level of each descriptor in the scale “Building on plurilingual repertoire” is the functional level of the weaker language in the combination. Users may wish to indicate explicitly which languages are involved.
Specification of languages involved	It is recommended that, as part of the adaptation of the descriptors for practical use in a particular context, the relevant languages should be specified in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cross-linguistic mediation (particularly scales for mediating a text); - plurilingual comprehension; - building on plurilingual repertoire.

19. North B. and Piccardo E (2016), “Developing illustrative descriptors of aspects of mediation for the CEFR”, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at <https://rm.coe.int/168073ff31>.

What is addressed in this publication	Comments
Literature	<p>There are three new scales relevant to creative text and literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reading as a leisure activity (the purely receptive process; descriptors taken from other sets of CEFR-based descriptors); - expressing a personal response to creative texts (less intellectual, lower levels); - analysis and criticism of creative texts (more intellectual, higher levels).
Online	<p>There are two new scales for the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - online conversation and discussion; - goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration. <p>Both these scales concern the multimodal activity typical of web use, including just checking or exchanging responses, spoken interaction and longer production in live link-ups, using chat (written spoken language), longer blogging or written contributions to discussion, and embedding other media.</p>
Other new descriptor scales	<p>New scales are provided for the following categories that were missing in the 2001 set, with descriptors taken from other sets of CEFR-based descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - using telecommunications; - giving information.
New descriptors are calibrated to the CEFR levels	<p>The new descriptor scales have been formally validated and calibrated to the mathematical scale from the original research that underlies the CEFR levels and descriptor scales.</p>
Sign languages	<p>Descriptors have been rendered modality-inclusive. In addition, 14 scales specifically for signing competence are included. These were developed in a research project conducted in Switzerland.</p>
Parallel project	
Young learners	<p>Two collations of descriptors for young learners from the European Language Portfolios (ELPs) are provided: for the 7-10 and 11-15 age groups respectively. At the moment, no young learner descriptors have been related to descriptors on the new scales, but the relevance for young learners is indicated.</p>

In addition to Chapter 2 “Key aspects of the CEFR for teaching and learning”, and the extended illustrative descriptors included in this publication, users may wish to consult the following two fundamental policy documents related to plurilingual, intercultural and inclusive education:

- ▶ *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco et al. 2016a), which constitutes an operationalisation and further development of CEFR 2001 Chapter 8 on language diversification and the curriculum;
- ▶ *Reference framework of competences for democratic culture* (Council of Europe 2018), the sources for which inspired some of the new descriptors for mediation included in this publication.

Users concerned with school education may also wish to consult the paper “*Education, mobility, otherness – The mediation functions of schools*”,²⁰ which helped the conceptualisation of mediation in the descriptor development project.

20. Coste D. and Cavalli M. (2015) “Education, mobility, otherness – The mediation functions of schools”, Language Policy Unit, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, available at <https://rm.coe.int/16807367ee>.

Chapter 2

KEY ASPECTS OF THE CEFR FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) presents a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency and a set of Common Reference Levels (A1 to C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales, plus options for curriculum design promoting plurilingual and intercultural education, further elaborated in the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco et al. 2016a).

One of the main principles of the CEFR is the promotion of the positive formulation of educational aims and outcomes at all levels. Its “can do” definition of aspects of proficiency provides a clear, shared roadmap for learning, and a far more nuanced instrument to gauge progress than an exclusive focus on scores in tests and examinations. This principle is based on the CEFR view of language as a vehicle for opportunity and success in social, educational and professional domains. This key feature contributes to the Council of Europe’s goal of quality inclusive education as a right of all citizens. The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers recommends 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”²¹.

As well as being used as a reference tool by almost all member states of the Council of Europe and the European Union, the CEFR has also had – and continues to have – considerable influence beyond Europe. In fact, the CEFR is being used not only to provide transparency and clear reference points for assessment purposes but also, increasingly, to inform curriculum reform and pedagogy. This development reflects the forward-looking conceptual underpinning of the CEFR and has paved the way for a new phase of work around the CEFR, leading to the extension of the illustrative descriptors published in this edition. Before presenting the illustrative descriptors, however, a reminder of the purpose and nature of the CEFR is outlined. First, we consider the aims of the CEFR, its descriptive scheme and the action-oriented approach, then the Common Reference Levels and creation of profiles in relation to them, plus the illustrative descriptors themselves, and finally the concepts of plurilingualism/pluriculturalism and mediation that were introduced to language education by the CEFR.

Background to the CEFR

The CEFR was developed as a continuation of the Council of Europe’s work in language education during the 1970s and 1980s. The CEFR “action-oriented approach” builds on and goes beyond the communicative approach proposed in the mid-1970s in the publication “The Threshold Level”, the first functional/notional specification of language needs.

The CEFR and the related European Language Portfolio (ELP) that accompanied it were recommended by an intergovernmental symposium held in Switzerland in 1991. As its subtitle suggests, the CEFR is concerned principally with learning and teaching. It aims to facilitate transparency and coherence between the curriculum, teaching and assessment within an institution and transparency and coherence between institutions, educational sectors, regions and countries.

The CEFR was piloted in provisional versions in 1996 and 1998 before being published in English (Cambridge University Press).

21. Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7 of the Committee of Ministers on the use of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism, available at https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805d2fb1.

2.1. AIMS OF THE CEFR

The CEFR seeks to continue the impetus that Council of Europe projects have given to educational reform. The CEFR aims to help language professionals further improve the quality and effectiveness of language learning and teaching. The CEFR is not focused on assessment, as the word order in its subtitle – *Learning, teaching, assessment* – makes clear.

In addition to promoting the teaching and learning of languages as a means of communication, the CEFR brings a new, empowering vision of the learner. The CEFR presents the language user/learner as a “social agent”, acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process. This implies a real paradigm shift in both course planning and teaching by promoting learner engagement and autonomy.

The CEFR’s action-oriented approach represents a shift away from syllabuses based on a linear progression through language structures, or a pre-determined set of notions and functions, towards syllabuses based on needs analysis, oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions. This promotes a “proficiency” perspective guided by “can do” descriptors rather than a “deficiency” perspective focusing on what the learners have not yet acquired. The idea is to design curricula and courses based on real-world communicative needs, organised around real-life tasks and accompanied by “can do” descriptors that communicate aims to learners. Fundamentally, the CEFR is a tool to assist the planning of curricula, courses and examinations by working backwards from what the users/learners need to be able to do in the language. The provision of a comprehensive descriptive scheme containing illustrative “can do” descriptor scales for as many aspects of the scheme as proves feasible (CEFR 2001 Chapters 4 and 5), plus associated content specifications published separately for different languages ([Reference Level Descriptions – RLDs](#))²² is intended to provide a basis for such planning.

These aims were expressed in the CEFR 2001 as follows:

The stated aims of the CEFR are to:

- ▶ promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries;
- ▶ provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;
- ▶ assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts.

(CEFR 2001 Section 1.4)

To further promote and facilitate co-operation, the CEFR also provides Common Reference Levels A1 to C2, defined by the illustrative descriptors. The Common Reference Levels were introduced in CEFR 2001 Chapter 3 and used for the descriptor scales distributed throughout CEFR 2001 Chapters 4 and 5. The provision of a common descriptive scheme, Common Reference Levels, and illustrative descriptors defining aspects of the scheme at

Priorities of the CEFR

The provision of common reference points is subsidiary to the CEFR’s main aim of facilitating quality in language education and promoting a Europe of open-minded plurilingual citizens. This was clearly confirmed at the Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum that reviewed progress with the CEFR in 2007, as well as in several recommendations from the Committee of Ministers. This main focus is emphasised yet again in the [Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education](#) (Beacco et al. 2016a). However, the Language Policy Forum also underlined the need for responsible use of the CEFR levels and exploitation of the methodologies and resources provided for developing examinations, and then relating them to the CEFR.

As the subtitle “learning, teaching, assessment” makes clear, the CEFR is not just an assessment project. CEFR 2001 Chapter 9 outlines many different approaches to assessment, most of which are alternatives to standardised tests. It explains ways in which the CEFR in general, and its illustrative descriptors in particular, can be helpful to the teacher in the assessment process, but there is no focus on language testing and no mention at all of test items.

In general, the Language Policy Forum emphasised the need for international networking and exchange of expertise in relation to the CEFR through bodies such as the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) (www.alte.org), the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA) (www.ealta.eu.org) and Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services (Eaquals) (www.eaquals.org).

22. www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/reference-level-descriptions.