

1. 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-C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales, plus options for curriculum design promoting plurilingual and intercultural education, further elaborated in the *Guide* mentioned in the introduction.

2. **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.

3. 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' (CM/Rec(2008)7). 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 a considerable influence beyond Europe and this is an on-going process. 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**.

4. 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 Threshold Level*, the first functional/notional specification of language needs. The CEFR, and the related European Language Portfolio that accompanied it, were recommended by an inter-governmental Symposium held in Switzerland in 1991. As its title suggests, the CEFR is concerned principally with learning and teaching. It aims to facilitate transparency and coherence between curriculum, teaching and assessment *within* an institution and transparency and coherence *between* institutions, educational sectors, regions and countries. The CEFR was piloted in draft versions in 1996 and 1998 before being published in English (Cambridge University Press) and French (Hatier-Didier) in 2001 and has since been translated into 40 languages.

5. The aims of the CEFR

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: Section 1.4)

But besides these formal and institutional aims, the CEFR seeks to continue the impetus that Council of Europe projects have given to educational reform. 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.

6. The CEFR's **a_c_t_i_o_n_-o_r_i_e_n_t_e_d_a_p_p_r_o_a_c_h** 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 '**C_a_n_d_o'_d_e_s_c_r_i_p_t_o_r_s**' 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, organized around real-life tasks and accompanied by 'Can do' descriptors that communicate aims to learners.
7. 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 Chapters 4 and 5), plus associated content specifications published separately for different languages (= Reference Level Descriptions: RLDs) is intended to provide a basis for such planning.
8. To further promote and facilitate cooperation, the CEFR also provides **common reference levels A1 – C2**, defined by the illustrative descriptors. The Common Reference Levels are introduced in CEFR Chapter 3 and used for the descriptor scales distributed throughout CEFR Chapters 4 and 5. The provision of a common descriptive scheme, common reference levels, and illustrative descriptors defining aspects of the scheme at the different levels, is intended to **provide a common metalanguage for the language education profession in order to facilitate communication, networking, mobility and the recognition of courses taken and examinations passed**.

9. **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 emphasized yet again in the *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education*. However, at the same time, the Language Policy Forum underlined the need for responsible use of the CEFR levels, exploitation of the methodologies and resources provided for developing examinations and relating them to the CEFR. However, as the subtitle *learning, teaching, assessment* makes clear, **the CEFR is not just an assessment project**. CEFR Chapter 9 outlines many different approaches to assessment, most of which are alternatives to standardized 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.

10. The CEFR sets out to be *comprehensive*, in the sense that it is possible to find the main approaches to language education in it, and *neutral*, in the sense that it raises questions rather than answering them and does not prescribe any particular pedagogic approach. There is, for example, no suggestion that one should stop teaching grammar or literature. There is no 'right answer' given to the question of how best to assess a learner's progress. Nevertheless, the CEFR takes an innovative stance in seeing learners as language users and social agents, and thus seeing language as a vehicle for communication rather than as a subject to study. In so doing, it proposes the analysis of learners' needs and the use of 'Can do' descriptors and communicative tasks, on which there is a whole chapter: CEFR Chapter 7.

11. The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures. Thus, the criterion suggested for assessment is communicative ability in real life, in relation to a continuum of ability (Levels A1-C2). This is the original and fundamental meaning of 'criterion' in the expression 'criterion-referenced assessment'. Descriptors from CEFR Chapters 4 and 5 provide a basis for the transparent definition of curriculum aims and of standards and criteria for assessment, with Chapter 4 focussing on activities ('the WHAT') and Chapter 5 focussing on competences ('the HOW'). This is not educationally neutral. It implies that the teaching and learning process is driven by action, that it is action-oriented. It also clearly suggests planning backwards from learners' real life communicative needs, with consequent alignment between curriculum, teaching and assessment.

12. At the classroom level, there are several implications of the implementation of the action-oriented approach. Seeing learners as social agents implies involving them in the learning process possibly with descriptors as a means of communication. It also implies recognising the social nature of language learning and language use, the interaction between the social and the individual in the process of learning. Seeing learners as language users implies extensive use of the target language in the classroom – learning to use the language rather than just learning about the language (as a subject). Seeing learners as plurilingual, pluricultural beings means allowing them to use all their linguistic resources when necessary, encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures. Above all, the action-oriented approach implies purposeful, collaborative tasks in the classroom, whose primary focus is not language. If the primary focus of a task is not language, then there must be some other product or outcome (e.g. planning an outing, making a poster, creating a blog, designing a festival, choosing a candidate, etc.). Descriptors can be used to help to design such tasks and also to observe, and if desired, (self-) assess the language use of learners during the task.

13. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence

The CEFR distinguishes between multilingualism (the coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level) and plurilingualism (the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner). Plurilingualism is presented in the CEFR as an uneven and changing competence, in which the user/learner's resources in one language or variety may be very different in nature to those in another. However, the fundamental point is that plurilinguals have a *single*, inter-related, repertoire that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks (CEFR Section 6.1.3.2).

14. Plurilingual competence as explained in the CEFR (Section 1.3) involves the ability to call flexibly upon an inter-related, uneven, plurilinguistic repertoire to:

- ▶ _switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another;
- ▶ _express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another;
- ▶ _call upon the knowledge of a number of languages (or dialects, or varieties) to make sense of a text;
- ▶ _recognise words from a common international store in a new guise;
- ▶ _mediate between individuals with no common language (or dialect, or variety), even with only a slight knowledge oneself;
- ▶ _bring the whole of one's linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression;
- ▶ _exploit paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.).

15. The linked concepts of plurilingualism / pluriculturalism and partial competences were introduced to language education for the first time in Draft 2 of the CEFR proposal in 1996. They were developed as a form of dynamic, creative process of 'linguaging' across the boundaries of language varieties, as a methodology and as language policy aims. The background to this development was a series of studies in bilingualism in the early 1990s at the research centre CREDIF in Paris. The curriculum examples given in what is now CEFR Chapter 8 consciously promoted the concepts of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. These two concepts appeared in a more elaborated form in the following year 1997 in the paper *Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence*.

16. At the time that the CEFR was published, the concepts discussed in this section, especially the idea of a holistic, inter-related plurilingual repertoire, were innovative. However, that idea has since been supported by psychological and neurological research in relation to both people who learn an additional language early in life and those who learn them later, with stronger integration for the former. Plurilingualism has also been shown to result in a number of cognitive advantages, due to an enhanced executive control system in the brain (i.e. the ability to divert attention from distractors in task performance).
By a curious coincidence, 1996 is also the year in which the term 'translanguaging' is recorded (in relation to bilingual teaching in Wales). Translanguaging is an action undertaken by plurilingual persons, where more than one language may be involved. A host of similar expressions now exist, but all are encompassed in the term plurilingualism. Plurilingualism can in fact be considered from various perspectives: as a sociological or historical fact, as a personal characteristic or ambition, as an educational philosophy or approach, or – fundamentally – as the socio-political aim of preserving linguistic diversity. All these perspectives are increasingly common across Europe.
17. In any communicative situation, **general competences** (e.g. knowledge of the world, socio-cultural competence, intercultural competence, professional experience if any: CEFR Section 5.1) are **always** combined with **communicative language competences** (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences: Section 5.2), and strategies (some general, some **communicative language strategies**) in order to complete a **task** (CEFR Chapter 7). Tasks often require some collaboration with others – hence the need for language. The example chosen in CEFR Chapter 2 to introduce this idea – moving – is one in which the use of language is only contingent on the task. In moving a wardrobe, some communication, preferably through language, is clearly advisable, but language is not the focus of the task. Similarly, tasks demanding greater sophistication of communication, such as agreeing on the preferred solution to an ethical problem, or holding a project meeting, focus on the task outcomes rather than the language used to achieve them.
18. The overall approach of the CEFR is summarised in a single paragraph in CEFR Chapter 2: Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving **language processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences'. (CEFR Section 2.1) Thus, in performing tasks, competences and strategies are mobilised in the performance and in turn further developed through that experience.
19. In an 'action-oriented approach,' which translates the CEFR descriptive scheme into practice, **some collaborative tasks in the language classroom are therefore essential**. This is why the CEFR includes a chapter on tasks. CEFR Chapter 7 discusses real-life tasks and pedagogic tasks, possibilities for compromise between the two, factors that make tasks simple or complex from a language point of view, conditions and constraints etc. The precise form that tasks in the classroom may take, and the dominance that they should have in the programme, is for users of the CEFR to decide. CEFR Chapter 6 surveys language teaching methodologies, pointing out that different approaches may be appropriate for different contexts. As a matter of fact, the CEFR scheme is highly compatible with several recent approaches to second language learning, including the task-based approach, the ecological approach and in general all approaches informed by sociocultural and socio-constructivist theories.

20. With its communicative language activities and strategies, the CEFR replaces the traditional model of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), which has increasingly proved inadequate to capture the complex reality of communication. Moreover, organisation by the four skills does not lend itself to any consideration of purpose or macro-function. The organisation proposed by the CEFR is closer to real-life language use, which is grounded in interaction in which meaning is co-constructed. Activities are presented under four modes of communication: **reception, production, interaction and mediation**.

21. One of the areas in which the CEFR has been most influential is in the recognition in course aims and in the structure of oral examinations of the fundamental distinction between production (= sustained monologue; long turns) and interaction (=conversational dialogue; short turns). When the CEFR was published, splitting writing in the same way by distinguishing between written production and written interaction did not meet with much public recognition. Indeed, the original version of CEFR Table 2 (self-assessment grid) was amended to merge written interaction and written production back into 'writing,' giving rise to the widely spread but false notion that the CEFR promotes a model of five skills.

22. The CEFR introduces the concept of mediation as follows:

'In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of **mediation** make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.'(CEFR Section 2.1.3)

23. CAN DO DESCRIPTORS AS COMPETENCE

The idea of scientifically calibrating 'Can do' descriptors to a scale of levels comes originally from the field of professional training for nurses. Tests were not very helpful in assessing a trainee nurse's competence; what was needed was a systematic, informed observation by an expert nurse, guided by short descriptions of typical nursing competence at different levels of achievement. This 'Can do' approach was transferred to language teaching and learning in the work of the Council of Europe in the late 1970s. This happened through three channels: (a) needs-based language training for the world of work; (b) an interest in teacher assessment based on defined, communicative criteria, and (c) experimentation with self-assessment using 'Can do' descriptors as a way of increasing learner reflection and motivation. Nowadays 'Can do' descriptors are being applied to more and more disciplines in many countries in what is often referred to as a competence-based approach.

24. The CEFR represents a departure from the traditional distinction made in applied linguistics between the Chomskyan concepts of (hidden) 'competence' and (visible) 'performance' – with 'proficiency' normally defined as the glimpse of someone's underlying competence derived from a specific performance. In the CEFR, 'proficiency' is a term encompassing the ability to perform communicative language activities (can do...), whilst drawing upon both **general and communicative language competences** (linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic), and activating appropriate **communicative strategies**.

25. The acquisition of proficiency is in fact seen as a circular process: by performing activities, the user/learner develops competences and acquires strategies. This approach embraces a view of competence as only existing when enacted in language use, reflecting both (a) the broader view of competence as action from applied psychology, particularly in relation to the world of work and professional training and (b) the view taken nowadays in the sociocultural approach to learning. *T_h_e_C_E_F_R_'C_a_n_d_o'_
_d_e_s_c_r_i_p_t_o_r_s_e_p_i_t_o_m_i_s_e_t_h_i_s_p_h_i_l_o_s_o_p_h_y_*
26. **Communicative language strategies** are thus seen in the CEFR as a kind of hinge between communicative language competence and communicative language activities and are attached to the latter in CEFR Section 4.4. The development of the descriptors for strategic competence was influenced by the model: plan, execute, monitor, and repair. However, as can be seen from Table 2 below, descriptor scales were not developed for all categories. The categories in *italic* were also considered at the time of developing the original CEFR descriptors, but no descriptors were produced. For mediation, a decision was taken to only develop descriptors for execution strategies.
27. Although the 2001 CEFR text does not develop the concept of mediation to its full potential, it emphasises the two key notions of co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning, mainly through its vision of the user/learner as a social agent. In addition, an emphasis on the mediator as an intermediary between interlocutors underlines the social vision of the CEFR. In this way, although it is not stated explicitly in the 2001 text, the CEFR descriptive scheme *de facto* gives mediation a key position in the action-oriented approach, similar to the role that other scholars now give it when they discuss the language learning process.
28. The approach taken to mediation in the project to extend the CEFR illustrative descriptors is thus wider than considering only cross-linguistic mediation. In addition to cross-linguistic mediation, it also encompasses mediation related to communication and learning as well as social and cultural mediation. This wider approach has been taken because of its relevance in increasingly diverse classrooms, in relation to the spread of CLIL, (Content and Language Integrated Learning), and because mediation is increasingly seen as a part of all learning, but especially of all language learning.
29. The CEFR has two axes: a horizontal axis of categories for describing different activities and aspects of competence, which were outlined above, and a vertical axis representing progress in proficiency in those categories. To facilitate the organisation of courses and to describe progress, the CEFR presents the six Common Reference Levels shown in Figure 3. This organisation provides a roadmap that allows user/learners to engage with relevant aspects of the descriptive scheme in a progressive way. However, the six levels are not intended to be absolute. Firstly, they can be grouped into three broad categories: Basic user (A1 & A2), Independent user (B1 & B2) and Proficient user (C1 & C2). Secondly, the six reference levels, which represent very broad bands of language proficiency, are very often subdivided.

30. It should be emphasised that the top level in the CEFR scheme, C2, has no relation whatsoever with what is sometimes referred to as the performance of an idealised 'native-speaker', or a 'well-educated native speaker' or a 'near-native speaker'. Such concepts were not taken as a point of reference during the development of the levels or the descriptors. C2, the top level in the CEFR scheme, is introduced in the CEFR as follows: 'L_e_v_e_l_C_2', whilst it has been termed 'M_a_s_t_e_r_y', is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence. What is intended is to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners.

31. BACKGROUND TO THE CEFR LEVELS

The six-level scheme is labelled from upwards from A to C precisely because C2 is not the highest imaginable level for proficiency in an additional language. In fact, a scheme including a *seventh* level had been proposed by David Wilkins at an intergovernmental Symposium held in 1977 to discuss a possible European unit credit scheme. The CEFR Working Party adopted Wilkins' first six levels because Wilkins' seventh level is beyond the scope of mainstream education. In the Swiss National Research Project that empirically confirmed the levels and developed the original CEFR illustrative descriptors, the existence of this seventh level was confirmed. There were user/learners studying interpretation and translation at the University of Lausanne who were clearly above C2. Indeed, simultaneous interpreters at European institutions and professional translators operate at a level well above C2. For instance, C2 is the third of five levels for literary translation recently produced in the PETRA project. In addition many plurilingual writers display Wilkins' seventh level of 'ambilingual proficiency' without being bilingual from birth.

32. Levels are a necessary simplification. We need levels in order to organise learning, to track progress and to answer questions like *How good is your French?* or *What proficiency should we require from candidates?* However, any simple answer like *B2* – or even *B2 receptive*, *B1 productive* – hides a complex profile. The reason the CEFR includes so many descriptor scales is to encourage users to develop differentiated profiles. Descriptor scales can be used firstly to identify which language activities are relevant for a particular group of learners and then secondly to establish which level those learners need to achieve in those activities in order to accomplish their goals.

33. The CEFR illustrative descriptors

The illustrative descriptors are presented in descriptor scales, a list of which is given in the second contents page. Each descriptor scale (both original and new) provides examples of typical language use in a particular area that have been calibrated at different levels. Each individual descriptor has been developed and calibrated separately from the other descriptors on the scale, so that each individual descriptor provides an independent, criterion statement that can be used on its own, out of the context of the scale. In fact, the descriptors are mainly used in that way: independently of the scale that presents them.

34. The aim of the descriptors is to provide input for curriculum development. The descriptors are presented in levels for ease of use. Descriptors for the same level from several scales tend to be exploited in adapted form on checklists of descriptors for curriculum or module aims and for self-assessment (as in European Language Portfolios). However, the association of a descriptor with a specific level should not be seen as an exclusive or mandatory one. The descriptors appear at the first level at which a user/learner is most likely to be able to perform the task described. This is the level at which the descriptor is most likely to be relevant as a curriculum aim: it is the level at which it is reasonable to develop the ability to do what is described. That descriptor would be a challenging, but by no means impossible, aim for user/learners at the level below. Indeed, for some types of learners, with a particular talent, experience or motivation in the area described, it could well be a fully appropriate goal.
35. The scales of illustrative descriptors consist of **independent, stand-alone descriptors** and are not primarily intended for assessment. They are not assessment scales in the sense in which the term is generally used in language assessment. They do not attempt to cover each relevant aspect at every level in the way that assessment scales for assessing a performance conventionally do. They are illustrative, not just in the sense that they are presented as non-mandatory examples, but also in the sense that they provide only *illustrations* of competence in the area concerned at the different levels. They focus on **aspects that are new and salient**; they do not attempt to describe everything relevant in a comprehensive manner. They are **open-ended and incomplete**.
36. The descriptor scales are thus reference tools. They are not intended to be used as assessment instruments, though they can be a source for the development of such instruments. These might take the form of a checklist at one level, or a grid defining several categories at different levels. Users may find it helpful to refer to CEFR Section 9.2.2: *The criteria for the attainment of a learning objective*. Each descriptor scale included in this Companion Volume is accompanied by a short rationale, which highlights key concepts represented in the descriptors as one progresses up the scale. The scales do not always provide a descriptor for every level. The absence of a descriptor does not imply the impossibility of writing one. For example, at C2 the entry is sometimes: *'No descriptor available: see C1.'* In such cases, the user is invited to consider whether he/she can formulate for the context concerned a descriptor representing a more demanding version of the definition given for C1.
37. The descriptors are intended to provide a common metalanguage to facilitate networking and the development of communities of practice by groups of teachers. Users of the CEFR are invited to select the CEFR levels and illustrative descriptors that they consider to be appropriate for their learners' needs, to adapt the formulation of the latter, in order to better suit the specific context concerned, and to supplement them with their own descriptors where they deem it necessary. This is the way that descriptors have been adapted for ELPs.
38. As mentioned, the primary function of descriptors is to facilitate the provision of transparent and coherent alignment between curriculum, teaching and assessment, particularly teacher assessment, and above all between the 'language classroom world' and the real world. Real world needs will relate to the main domains

of language use: the public domain, the private domain, the occupational domain and the educational domain (CEFR Section 4.1.1; CEFR Table 5). These domains are illustrated in Appendix 6 with examples for the new scales for online and mediation activities.

39. As diversity has increased at both the social and educational level since the CEFR was published, it has become increasingly important to make space for this diversity. This calls for a broader view of mediation, as taken in the 2014–2017 project, together with a positive focus on user/learners' diverse linguistic and cultural repertoires. Classrooms can become a place for raising awareness of and further developing learners' plurilingual/pluricultural profiles. The Authoring Group very much hope that the provision of CEFR descriptors for mediating text, mediating concepts, mediating communication and for plurilingual/pluricultural competence will help to broaden the types of tasks carried out in language classrooms and to value *all* the developing language resources that user/learners bring.

40. **Updating 2001 Scales** The 2001 illustrative descriptor scales are one of the most widely exploited aspects of the CEFR and the relevance of the original descriptors has remained remarkably stable over time. Therefore, the approach taken was to supplement the 2001 set rather than change descriptors in it. There are, however, proposed changes to a small number of descriptors in the scales from CEFR Chapters 4 and 5. The amendment of a small number of 'absolute' statements at C2 is intended to better reflect that the CEFR illustrative descriptors do not take an idealised native speaker as a reference point for the competence of a user/learner. These small changes are included in the extended set of illustrative descriptors published here, and are listed in Appendix 7. The working method adopted began with a small authoring group from the Eurocentres Foundation who selected, incorporated and, where necessary, adapted relevant calibrated materials drawn from the sources cited in the Foreword. In a series of meetings with a small group of experts who acted as a sounding board, the resulting set of descriptors was refined before being submitted to a larger group of consultants for review.

41. Pre-A1 represents a 'milestone' half way towards Level A1, a band of proficiency at which the learner has not yet acquired a generative capacity, but relies upon a repertoire of words and formulaic expressions. The existence of a band of proficiency below A1 is referred to at the beginning of CEFR Section 3.5. A short list of descriptors is given that had been calibrated below A1 in the Swiss National Research Project. A fuller description of the competences of learners at A1 and the inclusion of a level below A1 was important for users as evidenced by the number of descriptor projects which focused on these lower levels. Therefore, a band of proficiency labelled Pre-A1 is included in the majority of the scales.

42. **Plurilingual comprehension and level** Plurilingual comprehension usually involves activities like exploiting one's receptive ability in one language (however partial) to deduce the meaning of texts written in another language. Again, it is the minimum functional level needed in each of the languages concerned to perform these activities that the descriptor scaling refers to. Proximity of languages naturally helps. Therefore, again, in any specific context, users are advised to specify the languages concerned as part of the adaptation of the descriptor for practical use.

43. Reception involves receiving and processing input, activating what are thought to be appropriate *schemata* in order to build up a representation of the meaning being expressed and a hypothesis as to the communicative intention behind it. Incoming co-textual and contextual cues are checked to see if they 'fit' the activated schema – or suggest that an alternative hypothesis is necessary. In **aural reception (one-way listening)** activities, the language user receives and processes a spoken input produced by one or more speakers. In **visual reception (reading)** activities the user receives and processes as input written texts produced by one or more writers. In **audio-visual reception**, for which one scale (watching TV and film) is provided, the user watches TV, video, or a film and uses multi-media, with or without subtitles and voiceovers.

44. *Listening as a member of a live-audience* concerns listening to a speaker addressing an audience, for example in a meeting or seminar, at a conference or lecture, on a guided tour, at a wedding or other celebration. Understanding the speaker as a member of an audience is in fact usually easier than *Understanding conversation between other speakers*, even though the user/learner is even further away from being a participant in the talk. This is firstly because the more structured nature of a monologue means that it is easier to bridge over sections that one doesn't understand and pick up the thread again. Secondly, the speaker is more likely to be using a neutral register and projecting his/her voice to maximize the ability of the audience to follow.
45. Reading comprehension The categories for reading are a mixture between reading purpose and reading particular genres with specific functions. In terms of reading purpose, there is a fundamental difference between Reading for orientation and Reading for information / argument. The former is sometimes called search reading and mainly takes two forms: firstly, reading a text 'diagonally' at speed in order to decide whether to read (parts of) it properly (= 'skimming'), and secondly, looking quickly through a text searching for something specific – usually a piece of information (= 'scanning'). The latter is the way one reads artefacts like bus or train timetables, but sometimes one searches through a long prose text looking for something in particular.
46. There is a fundamental difference between Reading for information/argument and Reading as a leisure activity. The latter may well involve non-fiction, but not necessarily literature. It will also encompass magazines and newspapers, blogs, biographies etc. – and possibly even texts another person would read only for work or study purposes, depending on one's interests. Finally, there are texts that one reads in a particular way – like Reading instructions, a specialized form of reading for information. Reading correspondence is different again, and this is offered first since the scales start in each category with interpersonal language use.
47. **Production** Production includes both speaking and writing activities. Spoken production is a 'long turn,' which may involve a short description or anecdote, or may imply a longer, more formal presentation. Productive activities, spoken and written, have an important function in many academic and professional fields (oral presentations, written studies and reports) and particular social value is attached to them. Judgements are made of what has been submitted in writing or of the fluency and articulateness in speaking, especially when addressing an audience. Ability in this more formal production is not acquired naturally; it is a product of literacy learnt through education and experience. It involves learning the expectations and conventions of the genre concerned. Production strategies are employed to improve the quality of both informal and formal production. *Planning* is obviously more associated with formal genres, but *Monitoring* and *Compensating* for gaps in vocabulary or terminology are also a quasi-automated process in natural speech.

48. **Interaction** Interaction, which involves two or more parties co-constructing discourse, is central in the CEFR scheme of language use summarised at the start of this document. Spoken interaction is considered to be the origin of language, with interpersonal, collaborative and transactional functions. Production in the form of storytelling can be considered as a further development in oracy and eventually literacy. Interaction is also fundamental in learning. The CEFR scales for interaction strategies reflect this with scales for turn-taking, cooperating (= collaborative strategies) and asking for clarification.
49. Interaction is also fundamental in learning. The CEFR scales for interaction strategies reflect this with scales for turn-taking, cooperating (= collaborative strategies) and asking for clarification. These basic interaction strategies are as important in collaborative learning as they are in real world communication. The majority of the scales for interaction concern spoken interaction. When the CEFR was developed, the notion of written interaction did not meet with universal recognition and was not greatly developed as a result. With hindsight, one can see that written interaction (= writing much as you would speak, in a slowed down dialogue) has taken a more and more significant role over the past 20 years. Rather than further develop that category, however, the extended descriptors develop the new category of online interaction.
50. Online Interaction Online communication is always mediated through a machine, which implies that it is unlikely ever to be exactly the same as face-to-face interaction. There are emergent properties of group interaction online that are almost impossible to capture in traditional competence scales focusing on the individual's behaviour in speech or in writing. For instance, there is an availability of resources shared in real time. On the other hand, there may be misunderstandings which are not spotted (and corrected) immediately, as is often easier with face-to-face communication. Some requirements for successful communication are:
- ▶ _the need for more redundancy in messages;
 - ▶ _the need to check that the message has been correctly understood;
 - ▶ _ability to reformulate in order to help comprehension, deal with misunderstanding;
 - ▶ _ability to handle emotional reactions.
51. Interaction Strategies Three descriptor scales are offered for *Taking the floor (Turntaking)*, for *Cooperating* and for *Asking for clarification*. *Taking the floor (Turntaking)*, is in fact repeated in the section on Pragmatic *competence*, since it is a crucial part of discourse competence. This is the only instance in which a scale in the CEFR is repeated. In the scale for Cooperating, there are two aspects: *cognitive strategies*: framing, planning and organising the ideational content of talk, and *collaborative strategies*: handling interpersonal, relational, aspects. In the project to develop scales for mediation, these two aspects are further developed in new scales for cognitive strategies (*Collaborating to construct meaning*) and collaborative strategies (*Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers*). In many respects, these two scale represent a further development of the original scale for *Cooperating*. However, since they go considerably further than the more discourse-focused approach of the *Cooperating* scale, it was decided to keep them under conceptual mediation.

52. In mediation, the user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The focus is on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form. The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional.

53. **Mediation activities** There are many different aspects of mediation, but all share certain characteristics. For example, in mediation, one is less concerned with one's own needs, ideas or expression, than with those of the party or parties for whom one is mediating. A person who engages in mediation activity needs to have a well-developed emotional intelligence, or an openness to develop it, in order to have sufficient empathy for the viewpoints and emotional states of other participants in the communicative situation. The term mediation is also used to describe a *social and cultural process* of creating conditions for communication and cooperation, facing and hopefully defusing any delicate situations and tensions that may arise.

54. *Mediating communication*: The aim of mediating communication is to facilitate understanding and to shape successful communication between users/learners who may have individual, sociocultural, sociolinguistic or intellectual differences in standpoint. The mediator tries to have a positive influence on aspects of the dynamic relationship between all the participants, including the relationship with him or herself. Often, the context of the mediation will be an activity in which participants have shared communicative objectives, but this need not necessarily be the case. The skills involved are relevant to diplomacy, negotiation, pedagogy and dispute resolution, but also to everyday social and/or workplace interactions. Mediating communication is thus primarily concerned with personal encounters, and so descriptor scales are only provided for spoken communicative activities. This is not a closed list – users may well be able to think of other types of relational activity not included here.

55. **Mediating a text** . For all the descriptors in the scales in this section, *Language A* and *Language B* may be two different languages, two varieties of the same language, two registers of the same variety, or any combination of the above. However, they may also be identical: the CEFR is clear that mediation may be in one language. Users may thus wish to specify the languages/varieties involved when adapting the descriptors to their context. It is also important to underline that the illustrative descriptors offered in this section are not intended to describe the competences of professional interpreters and translators. Firstly, the descriptors focus on language competences, thinking of what a user/learner can do in this area in informal, everyday situations. Translation and interpretation competences and strategies are an entirely different field. As mentioned in the introduction, the

language competence of professional interpreters and translators is usually considerably above CEFR Level C2.

56. *Processing text* involves understanding the information and/or arguments included in the source text and then transferring these to another text, usually in a more condensed form, in a way that is appropriate to the context of situation. In other words, the outcome represents a condensing and/or reformulating of the original information and arguments, focusing on the main points and ideas in the source text. The key word of the processing information scales in both speaking and writing is 'summarising'. Whereas in *Relaying specific information* the user/learner will almost certainly not read the whole text (unless the information required is well hidden!), in *Processing text*, he/she has first to fully understand all the main points in the source text. *Processing text* is thus related to *Reading for information and argument* (sometimes called reading for detail, or careful reading), although the information concerned may have been given orally in a presentation or lecture. The user/learner may then choose to present the information to the recipient in a completely different order, depending on the goal of the communicative encounter.
57. Mediating concepts - It is recognised in education that language is a tool used to think about a subject and to talk about that thinking in a dynamic co-constructive process. A key component of the development of mediation scales, therefore, is to capture this function. How can the user/learner facilitate access to knowledge and concepts through language? There are two main ways in which this occurs: one is in the context of collaborative work and the other is when someone has the official or unofficial role of facilitator, teacher or trainer. In either context, it is virtually impossible to develop concepts without preparing the ground for it by managing the relational issues concerned. For this reason two scales are presented for collaborating in a group, and for leading group work. In each case the first scale, presented on the left in the chart, concerns establishing the conditions for effective work (= relational mediation).
58. Mediating communication. Despite the brevity of the presentation of mediation in the 2001 CEFR text, the social aspect is underlined. Mediation concerns a language user who plays the role of intermediary between different interlocutors, engaged in activities that 'occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.' (CEFR Section 2.1.3). Language is of course not the only reason why people sometimes have difficulty understanding one another. Even if one thinks of mediation in terms of rendering a text comprehensible, the comprehension difficulty may well be due to a lack of familiarity with the area or field concerned. Understanding the other requires an effort of translation from one's own perspective to the other, keeping both perspectives in mind; sometimes people need a third person or a third space in order to achieve this. Sometimes there are delicate situations, tensions or even disagreements that need to be faced in order to create the conditions for any understanding and hence any communication.

59. **Communicative language competences** The view of competence in the CEFR does not come solely from applied linguistics but also applied psychology and socio-political approaches. However, the different competence models developed in applied linguistics since the early 1980s did influence the CEFR. Although they organised them in different ways, in general these models shared four main aspects: strategic competence; linguistic competence; pragmatic competence (comprising both discourse and functional/actional competence), and socio-cultural competence (including socio-linguistic) competence. Since strategic competence is dealt with in relation to activities, the CEFR presents descriptor scales for aspects of communicative language competence in CEFR Section 5.2 under three headings: *Linguistic competence*, *Pragmatic competence* and *Sociolinguistic competence*. These aspects, or parameters of description, are always intertwined in any language use; they are not separate 'components' and cannot be isolated from each other.
60. **Plurilingual and pluricultural competence** The notions of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism presented in the CEFR Sections 1.3, 1.4, and 6.1.3) were the starting point for the development of descriptors in this area. The plurilingual vision associated with the CEFR gives value to cultural and linguistic diversity at the level of the individual. It promotes the need for learners as 'social agents' to draw upon all of their linguistic and cultural resources and experiences in order to fully participate in social and educational contexts, achieving mutual understanding, gaining access to knowledge and in turn further developing their linguistic and cultural repertoire.
61. As the CEFR states: the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact.

F. to La Commissione