

**The Council of Europe's Recommendation on
*The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural
Education for Democratic Culture*
(Recommendation CM/Rec (2022) 1).**

A FAMILIARISATION TOOL

This Familiarisation Tool has the following purposes:

- 1. It provides initial orientation to all those involved in preparing a national response to the lower secondary module of the Reflection and Planning Survey Tool, which focuses on the Measures in the above Recommendation.*
- 2. It explores the purposes and key contents of the Recommendation itself and asks you to reflect on certain key questions. If you wish to look through the Recommendation, it is suggested that you focus on the Appendix (pages 11-18) and relevant section of the Explanatory Memorandum (pages 19-39).*

a. What is a Council of Europe Recommendation?

The Committee of Ministers comprises the foreign ministers or ambassadors of all member states and is the Council of Europe's main decision-making body. The Committee of Ministers draws up recommendations for the member states of the Council of Europe on matters concerning human rights, democracy or the rule of law. A recommendation is not binding but it provides a policy framework and proposals or measures that governments of member states are encouraged to implement at national level.

The Recommendation on *The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture* ([Recommendation CM/Rec \(2022\) 1](#)) was approved unanimously by the 46 Council of Europe member states in 2022.

b. What is 'plurilingual and intercultural education'?

The Appendix is the core part of the Recommendation. Like other recommendations, the Appendix to the 2022 Recommendation on The Importance of Plurilingual and Intercultural Education for Democratic Culture includes definitions of key concepts, including this overview of plurilingual and intercultural education:

"Plurilingual and intercultural education is a holistic concept that has an impact on all areas of education policy and practice. Setting out to foster the development of integrated linguistic repertoires in which languages interrelate and interact, it takes explicit account of and seeks to bring into interaction with one another:

- i. the languages and cultures that learners bring with them, including sign, minority and migrant languages and cultures;*
- ii. the language/s of schooling, which vary in genre and terminology according to the different subjects taught and differ in significant ways from the language of informal everyday communication;*
- iii. regional, minority and other languages and cultures that are part of the curriculum;*
- iv. foreign languages (modern and classical);*
- v. other languages and cultures that are not present in school and not part of the official curriculum.*

The learning of at least two languages in addition to the language/s of schooling is often considered an essential element of plurilingual and intercultural education."

(pages 13-14 – underlining added to highlight key aspects).

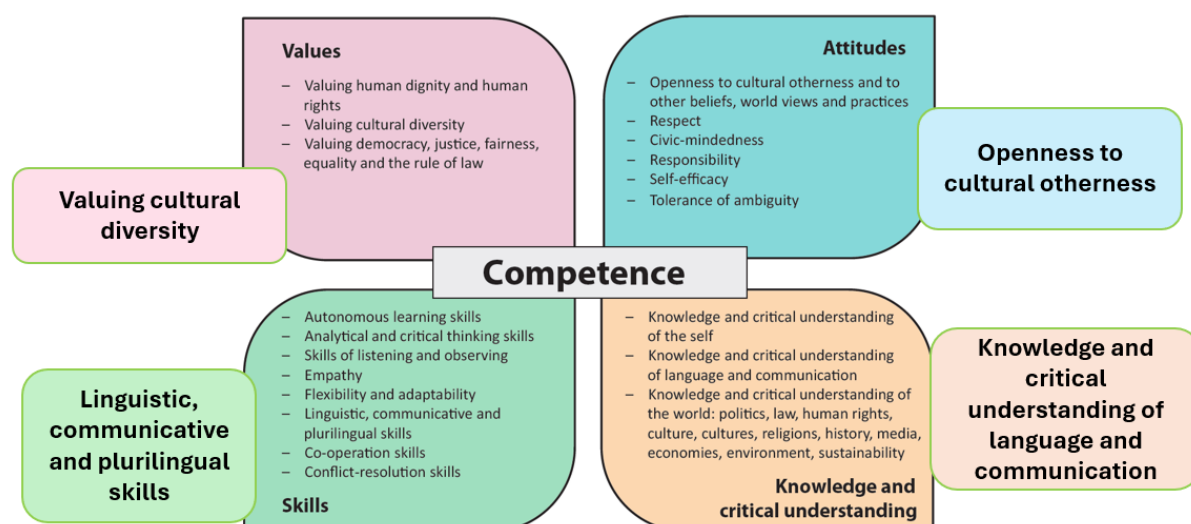
Questions for reflection

The definition above raises a few questions about plurilingual and intercultural education (or PIE for short). With your national educational context in mind, especially lower secondary level, please reflect on the following questions:

- ‘...all areas of educational policy and practice’ implies that all teachers, whatever their subject (not just language teachers), address language and culture in their teaching and foster their learners’ knowledge and awareness of relevant aspects.
 - **Is this true of school curricula and teacher education at lower secondary level in your context?**
- ‘Plurilingual repertoires’ are defined as “the different languages an individual is able to use”, for example in the home, through social contact, at school, etc., and they may be used for different purposes. (p.12.)
 - **Do staff in lower secondary schools take account of the various languages that students from different backgrounds can use, including those of migrants, of students who use minority languages, etc.? Can you think of examples of how is this done?**
 - **How do teachers of different subjects in lower secondary schools deal with the special ways in which the language of schooling is used in their subject?**
- The learning of at least two languages in addition to the language/s of schooling is often considered an essential element of PIE.
 - **Do lower secondary students have the opportunity to learn two additional languages? If so, which languages can they learn?**

c. What is ‘Democratic Culture’?

This key aspect of the Recommendation and its title is the subject of the *Council of Europe’s Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (or RFCDC). It comprises three volumes which are described and can be consulted [here](#). The 20 competences identified in the Framework are summarised in the annotated graphic below, which shows how key features of PIE relate to the Framework.



(adapted from RFCDC volume 1, page 38)

d. What is the purpose of the Recommendation?

This is outlined at the beginning of the Appendix:

“This recommendation aims to give fresh impetus to the promotion, development, and implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education, recognising its importance for personal and professional development, equity, societal integration, the exercise of human rights and participation in democratic culture.” (p. 11).

The Recommendation addresses two specific issues which are of concern to the Council of Europe, exemplified in the following:

- *“... a tendency on the part of public authorities and civil society to think that proficiency in one additional language is enough as long as that language is English”*
- *“... the populist notion that proficiency in minority or migrant languages, widespread in today's increasingly diverse societies, is harmful to societal cohesion.” (p. 19)*

These both relate to a major concern for the Council of Europe – the backsliding of democracy.

Questions for reflection

- **Do you agree that PIE and its power to engage students with the linguistic and cultural diversity, which is a feature of society in today's world, is important for societal integration, as well as respect for human rights and people's readiness to participate in democratic culture? If so, can you briefly explain why you believe it is important in these areas?**
- **Can you think of specific examples of ways in which individual citizens' engagement with linguistic and culture diversity can support their active participation in democracy and democratic culture?**
- **Do you agree that it is not sufficient for students at lower secondary level only to learn English as an additional language? If so, why is it not sufficient, and how should other additional languages be chosen?**

e. The 'scope' of the Recommendation

This part of the Appendix (pages 11-12) lists all the various actors at the level of policy and practice in education for whom the Recommendation is intended. It makes it clear that all levels of education, teacher education and research are included, and not only those concerned specifically with language education and the language of schooling.

f. The Principles

The Appendix lists seven key principles, the first two of which are discussed under d. above:

“Plurilingual and intercultural education

- is essential to education for democratic culture;*
- respects and values linguistic and cultural diversity;*
- promotes language awareness and language sensitivity across the curriculum;*
- encourages critical reflection on cultural diversity;*
- helps to foster critical digital literacy and digital citizenship;*
- encourages learner autonomy and values the learner's voice;*

vii. *supports the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised learners on an equal footing with other learners.*" (page 14).

Question for reflection

- **Which of these Principles, and which others, do you consider to be key priorities at lower secondary level education in your context?**

g. The Measures

These are the specific actions which the Recommendation encourages public authorities to take (pages 14-16). They cover the whole spectrum of education. There are 19 that focus on policy and practice as regards PIE and nine that specifically concern teacher education. In the Reflection and Planning Survey Tool for lower secondary education the Measures are each linked directly to 'indicators'. When using the Reflection and Planning Tool you are asked to react to and comment on these indicators with your own context in mind.