
Transcript of the intervention by Kenia Puig, Teaching and Learning Manager at Post-Primary Languages Ireland and ECML ARPIDE Project Coordinator, on piloting the Reflection and Planning Survey Tool in Ireland

I would just say thank you everybody for having me here today to talk about our experience of piloting the tool.

Just to give you a bit of context of why we decided to accept when Sarah asked us to pilot the tool, there are two key things that are going on at the moment that made us see this as a great opportunity. One is that we have in Ireland Languages Connect, which is our first ever strategy for foreign languages in education, and that goes from 2017 to 2026. So, the strategy is coming to an end, and we are approaching its next phase. At the end of this year, towards next year, we are drafting what our new strategy for languages in education should look like. So, you can see how this tool came at a critical, crucial time for us.

The second thing is that at a personal level, I'm coordinating an ECML project which is "Using ECML resources for democratic culture" and the focus of that project is linking the Recommendation and bringing the policy into practice and supporting stakeholders in doing that. So, it almost goes hand in hand.

I'm just going to tell you a little bit of how we went about piloting the tool and what we learned in the process. As Sarah mentioned, it was important to have different stakeholders represented, so I convened a small group and we had curriculum developers, so we have a representative of our National Council for Curriculum and Assessment body. We had a representative from the inspectorates, language inspectors. We had an initial teacher education representative, and we had our continuous professional development kind of body in Ireland.

Now, what we did before we went into the tool, I actually had a look at the tool myself, and I thought it would be important to give them all the Word version so that they had time to look at it before we were all together, and everybody had time to look at it and make notes and reflect from where they were coming from, where they thought things were, what examples they had. etc. And when everybody had that, a few days later, then we all convened to go then through the tool. I think that really helps the discussion. When we move on to using the revised version of the tool, we will follow a similar pattern. I found the process really interesting and really, really useful. It was very clear that we needed time for some stakeholders to go back to the Recommendation, familiarise themselves with the Recommendation and what it meant and the implications for teaching and learning. So, once we had all done that, that created like a shared language and focus. We all had a common vocabulary, common understanding about pluralistic competences, intercultural competence. That made the discussion simpler because we all knew what we were talking about.

Everybody welcomed the opportunity to have the structural reflection. Going through all the measures and the indicators, we were moving from one thing to the next, covering all aspects,

in an orderly fashion, as Sarah said, covering different areas. So that was really good. It gave us an opportunity to take stock of national progress. It was a great diagnostic tool. One thing that I found really interesting listening to my colleagues' discussions was sometimes the different perspectives expressed while going through some of the measures. For example, teacher educators might say, "We are doing that." And then the inspectors might say, "Well, we don't see evidence of that in the classroom." to give you an example. All these gaps were coming up and some people would say, "We are doing this in schools, we see this every day in schools" and a teacher educator — might say "But it shouldn't be like this".

It does also allow to identify good practices nobody was aware of. So, in that regard, it was really useful. The discussions were really, really rich. And I think we came away thinking that Ireland made good progress when we had gone through the indicators, but still we had to do more work on implementing maybe certain aspects. And that was also, I suppose, for all involved, a very reassuring exercise as it helps recognising what you are doing well, for example recognising that some schools are doing things really well, like schools from disadvantaged areas that have more students from different mixed backgrounds. That was really encouraging. So, you could say that if these schools are doing it, then more schools can do it. It's also helped us to identify enough initiatives that were going well, what we were doing really well. I think everybody walked away feeling reassured, living in a positive light and seeing possibilities. It was really good taking stock but also seeing possibilities. For us, for me, in my role, that was great for building momentum for next steps. As I was saying, having done the piloting and seeing its potential, the first thing that we are going to use this for is now that we are starting the process of drafting our newer strategy. We'll certainly be using the tool in those discussions, first to reflect on the progress of the last 10 years, and the tool will allow us to do that, reflect, and then identify where do we want to go next and what do we need to do better, where we need to maybe build more synergies between different stakeholders, etc. That's has been our experiences, and if you have any questions, I'm very happy to answer.