

Attitudes and beliefs about plurilingual and intercultural education

Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec 2022)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture

Measure

c. ii. (on teacher education): Challenging attitudes, beliefs and preconceptions about language, language learning, plurilingualism, culture and intercultural learning.

What is it about?

Plurilingual and intercultural education depends not only on teachers' skills but also on their attitudes and beliefs about linguistic and cultural diversity. Teachers need support to recognise the educational value of diversity, understand how it shapes classroom learning, and reflect on how their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds influence their practice. Without this awareness, learning activities risk remaining superficial, and the full potential of plurilingual and intercultural education cannot be realised.

Why is this important, and what can be done?

Understanding the historical, social, and democratic value of linguistic and cultural diversity helps teachers, learners, and citizens rethink assumptions about language hierarchies, tolerance, international understanding, and communication practices.

Changes in attitudes can be supported through:

- clear political guidance and leadership,
- teacher education that includes direct experience with linguistic and cultural diversity,
- professional reflection within schools, and
- positive examples and visible learning outcomes.

Such measures help teachers develop not only competence but also the openness, awareness and personal conviction needed to make plurilingual and intercultural education meaningful and sustainable.

Council of Europe resources for policy/ decision makers

Resource 1: [From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education. A guide to educational policy making in Europe](#)

The *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* supports Member States in creating inclusive language policies that promote linguistic diversity, plurilingualism, social cohesion, and equal access to language learning. It offers practical guidance for well-designed language education, which is based on clear principles and democratic values, with a focus on effective implementation through broad social acceptance.

See especially the following sections:

1.3 *linguistic ideologies*, on the dangers of stereotypes, especially concerning the relative importance of different languages.

5.3 *Disseminating plurilingualism, creating social consensus* – here the case is made for formal actions and campaigns to create a widespread positive attitude to plurilingualism.

5.4 *Preparing education systems for plurilingualism* – a practical approach to developing readiness: “*Disseminating a culture of plurilingualism is a precondition for the success of the technical changes by which plurilingualism will be implemented in education systems.*” (page 76).

Resource 2: [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#)

This resource is for use by “*education systems to equip young people with all of the competences that are needed to participate effectively in a culture of democracy, and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies*”. It contains lists and descriptors of competences, and guidance on their inclusion in curricula and in teaching and learning.

Based on a model of the competences required in democratic cultures and for intercultural dialogue outlined in chapter 6 of [volume 1](#), chapter 1 of [volume 2](#) lists key descriptors designed to be used by those developing curricula for school education. These also provide useful reference material for adult and teacher education. The competences are divided into four main groups: ‘values’, ‘attitudes’, ‘skills’ and ‘knowledge’. Several of the values and attitudes are relevant to plurilingual and intercultural education. One of the groups of values includes “Valuing cultural diversity”, for example “*Argues that intercultural dialogue should be used to help us recognise our different identities and cultural affiliations*” (p.16). A relevant group under ‘attitudes’ is “openness to cultural otherness”, e.g. “*Seeks contact with other people in order to learn about their culture*” (p.17). These are followed by relevant groups of ‘skills’ such as ‘*Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills*’, and ‘knowledge’, including ‘*Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication*’.

Council of Europe resources for teacher educators/ pedagogical advisors

Resource 1: [Supporting multilingual classrooms](#)

This ECML resource developed various ‘teaching units’ listed [here](#) that can be used in teacher education and staff training. A relevant example is [Challenging preconceptions](#)

Resource 2: [Promoting plurilingualism - Majority language in multilingual settings \(MARILLE\)](#)

Section 4 (pages 31-36) focuses on ‘Teachers’ knowledge, understanding and skills for promoting plurilingualism’ and contains useful discussion of this knowledge, understanding and skills, followed by a tabular summary. Related to this, pages 65-72 contain useful lists of questions for reflection for teachers, teacher educators, and school heads.

Resource 3: [Section 3 of the ECML's CoEduMigrant Moodle course](#)

This ECML resource explores ways of challenging language teachers’ attitudes by using a problem-based learning approach.

Resource 4: [European portfolio for pre-primary educators: the plurilingual and intercultural dimension](#) (PEPELINO)

This ECML resource is designed to be used as a practical tool by pre-school teachers during their work. It explores the knowledge, attitudes and skills related to language and culture needed by pre-primary teachers. For example, pages 36-37 of section II encourage reflection on attitudes as well as on pedagogical skills that are important when responding positively to the linguistic and cultural diversity of children.