



Whole-school approach

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

Measure

b. xv. The relevant authorities should encourage the adoption of inclusive whole-school/institution-wide approaches to linguistic and intercultural policy and practice.

What is it about?

A whole-school approach is a holistic way of creating language-aware schools and learning environments in which languages play a central role across all aspects of school life. Through the creation of coherent curricular policies and environments, all members of the school community work together to realise the vision of plurilingual and intercultural education.

Why is this important and what can be done?

Plurilingual and intercultural education embraces all curriculum subjects and disciplines. Therefore, attention should be paid to language and culture at all levels of education and within the whole school system. This entails emphasising welcome and inclusion; fostering a safe environment where all languages are respected and encouraged; implementing the Principles contained in the Recommendation in teaching, learning, assessment, the extracurricular life of the institution and relations with the wider community. Institutional policy documents should also valorise and indicate ways of benefiting from the plurilingual competences of teachers/lecturers and other staff as well as pupils and students who can play the role of language ambassadors for the school/ institution.

See also Toolbox Entry on [Home languages](#).

Resource 1: [From linguistic diversity to plurilingual education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe](#)

This guide supports Member States in creating inclusive language policies that promote linguistic diversity, plurilingualism, social cohesion, and equal access to language learning. It provides reflections and practical guidance to achieve well-designed and coherent language policies based on clear principles, thorough analysis, and democratic values, with a focus on effective implementation through broad social acceptance.

See especially chapter 5 on Creating a culture of plurilingualism, and chapter 6 about the organisation of plurilingual education.

Resource 2 [Reference framework of competences for democratic culture. Volume 1. Context, concepts and model](#)

This publication provides a clear understanding of key principles and common goals in citizenship education to enhance participation in, and promotion of democratic society. The first volume provides a model of key competences, divided into four areas: values, attitudes, skills & knowledge, and critical understanding. Language is an essential part of any subject competence. The acquisition of competences for democratic cultures is thus also dependent on language competences.

[Chapter 6 \(pp. 37-58\)](#) provides a visualisation of the competence model and a clear description of the content of the different areas included.

School leaders and other decision makers can use this framework as a reference point in describing the school vision and mission, and in guiding pedagogies and assessment policies.

The framework can also provide guidance for discussions between curriculum developers, teachers, teacher trainers, material developers and other stakeholders.

Resource 3: [Plur Clur: Towards whole-school language curricula](#)

This ECML resource seeks to encourage a global approach to all the languages learnt and used in schools. These include the language of schooling, home languages, foreign languages learnt as subjects in the school, as well as the languages used to teach different subject areas. The website offers a range of tools designed to support the clarification, development, and implementation of plurilingual, intercultural, and inclusive whole-school policies across diverse contexts in ECML member states.

When designing a whole-school policy, it is useful to be inspired by practical examples visualising possibilities in concrete terms.

Resource 1: [Learning environments where modern languages flourish](#)

This ECML resource offers tools for the development of whole-school language projects to support and strengthen cooperation and professional development of all actors involved. EOL presents a vision of a language-friendly environment and encourages a strategic approach to language teaching and learning. The starting point for such a global approach to language education is a widespread awareness of the role of languages for the promotion of democratic citizenship and social cohesion and the development of a school [language policy](#).

Resource 2: [A roadmap for schools to support the language\(s\) of schooling](#)

This ECML resource provides a self-assessment tool linked to a database of promising practices for the development of a tailor-made whole-school strategy to support students' competences in the language/s of schooling.

The tool helps different stakeholders (from school leaders to students and parents) to discuss and reflect on the way the language (or languages) of schooling is effectively taken into account in the whole school curriculum. It encourages them to consider different aspects, such as awareness of the language dimension in all subjects, attitudes towards languages, the role of language in learning, or language resources at school.

Resource 3: [Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. Companion volume](#)

The CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR-CV) updates and extends the 2001 CEFR, which provided a common basis for developing language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks, supporting the alignment of curriculum, teaching, and assessment. It includes the complete set of updated and extended CEFR descriptors, replacing those from 2001. These now also cover areas such as mediation, online interaction, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and sign language competences. The CEFR-CV offers a vision of language learning and use in which learners are viewed as active, responsible participants in society, using language to achieve real-life goals and engage meaningfully with others.

For the embedding of a broad vision of language in a whole-school approach it can be very useful to read the chapter on [Mediation](#) (pp. 90-122).

In addition, the CEFR [website page on mediation](#) offers practical introductions, including videos and ideas for implementation. The concept of mediation focuses on the role of language in constructing and conveying meaning, either within or across languages and language varieties. It plays a crucial role in all subjects and helps all students develop linguistic and cultural awareness. Therefore, it deserves a visible place in whole-school approaches.