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# Curriculum convergences for plurilingual and intercultural education

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REPORT  
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The seminar, held at the Council of Europe on 29 and 30 November 2011, was the first of a series of events aimed at driving forward the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* and allowing exchanges of views between member states and the Language Policy Division on the approaches set out in this document and the tools it makes available to those involved in language education policies.

This language policy document is a consequence of the Intergovernmental Forum held in Strasbourg in February 2007 on the implementation of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, which showed the need for clear guidelines to give material substance in school curricula to the plurilingualism concept and to intercultural education. A provisional version of this document was presented at a Language Policy Forum in Geneva in November 2010. At the invitation of the Language Policy Division, a network of individuals (nominated by the national delegates to the Steering Committee for Education) responsible for the development of curricula in member states was then set up, and members from ten countries belonging to this network were invited to participate in this first seminar on “Curriculum convergences for plurilingual and intercultural education”. Other seminars will be organised for the remaining member states in 2012/2013.

The seminar was attended by 16 representatives of the following member states: Austria (1 person), Bulgaria (1 person), Czech Republic (2 persons), France (2 persons), Luxembourg (1 person), Netherlands (2 persons), Slovakia (3 persons), Sweden (2 persons), Switzerland (1 person) and Spain (1 person). The co-ordination team was made up of a representative of the Language Policy Division, Ms Johanna Panthier, as well as Ms Darina De Jaegher, Ms Marisa Cavalli, Ms Mirjam Egli, Mr Jean-Claude Beacco and Mr Francis Goullier. The Graz-based European Centre for Modern Languages was also represented by several members of its Governing Board and Ms Cavalli, a consultant for some of the projects in the new 2012-2015 work programme.

The preparation of the seminar was based on replies from all the participating states to a questionnaire asking them to report on progress made in their education systems so as to:

- ensure that convergences between the modern languages taught are more effectively taken into account,
- foster active co-operation between teachers of the various languages to promote the co-ordinated development of pupils’ language and intercultural skills, and
- reflect on the role of the language(s) of schooling for plurilingual and intercultural education, especially in relation with the other languages taught or present within the school and in the classroom.

The study of the detailed replies to this questionnaire showed, firstly, that there were considerable differences between the situations of the countries present at this seminar, relating not only to the socio-linguistic situation and its consequences for the languages taught and their status but also to the operation of the education system itself. Secondly, and in particular, the replies showed the wealth of initiatives implemented in the different education systems.

This was clearly apparent from the number of questionnaire items with which the participating states could identify, at least partially, and to which they could associate an element of their own experience or a component of their language education policy. On average, ticks were placed against

- 71% of the items on convergences between modern languages;
- 57% of the items concerning the search for coherence between the various languages taught;
- 50% of the items illustrating how the teaching of modern languages can foster plurilingual and intercultural education;
- 35% of the items on how the key role of the language of schooling for plurilingual and intercultural education is taken into account.

That the teaching of modern languages has gained a head start in these matters is naturally confirmed. Inclusion of the language(s) of schooling in the reflection on plurilingual and intercultural education, as promoted by the Language Policy Division, is currently not very far advanced. However, overall, the experience accumulated by the countries participating in this seminar covers, at least in part, virtually all the fields explored in the Guide. This positive observation shows that the approaches set out in this document are consistent with current thinking and needs in Europe. It demonstrates, if there were any need to do so, that discussions and the pooling of experience among participants are indeed the most effective way of making progress in the desired directions, and also imbuing the European dimension with tangible reality and showing that the needs and concerns of those responsible for education systems can find relevant impetuses and responses therein.

In order to facilitate the discussions, the programme was organised around several topics:

- convergences between curricula for modern languages;
- convergences between curricula for the languages of schooling or between those for the languages of schooling and modern languages;
- intercultural education;
- the contribution made by the curriculum scenario, a tool proposed by the Guide, to the development of language education policies;
- means of fostering the effective implementation of innovations in teaching practices.

For the first two topics, examples of the experience amassed by various countries were cited. The third topic, also illustrated by a presentation of the curriculum implemented in one member state, mainly gave rise to an important clarification concerning the specific issues raised by intercultural education in language teaching. In addition to the presentation of examples from several countries, the last two topics were discussed in groups or in plenary.

All the examples cited - selected, on the basis of the replies to the questionnaire, for their representativeness of the policy directions pursued in the various participating countries or for their particularly innovative nature - provide material for case studies to be published on the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education* ([www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)).

## **1. Convergences in modern-language teaching and with the language of schooling**

The wealth of experience and the many initiatives undertaken at national level to foster convergences between the languages taught goes hand in hand with a considerable diversity of avenues explored, as shown by the list of measures described or mentioned in the responses to the questionnaire.

A search for convergences between the curricula for the various languages learnt at school is potentially implicit in the generalised adoption of the *Common European Framework of*

*Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and its scale of proficiency levels. However, to enable it to perform such a role in the context concerned, this tool may undergo various adaptations:

- development of intermediate levels (A1.1, A1.2, A2.1, A2.2, etc.) that more accurately reflect pupils' progress in each of the languages learnt;
- development of proficiency descriptors to contextualise those proposed by the CERF;
- goal differentiation by language activity (comprehension or expression, oral or written) or by language taught.

Apart from the adoption of the CEFR scale of proficiency levels for all modern language teaching, a number of initiatives, adapted to the specific educational context, help instil awareness in all those concerned that each instance of language teaching is part of the same education and training project:

- adoption of a single syllabus for all modern languages;
- development of a generic curriculum on which the syllabus for each language is based;
- grouping all language teaching in the same subject area (for example, “language and communication”);
- adoption of a common terminology for all language teaching;
- development of training standards, especially for assessment procedures, establishing principles common to all language teaching;
- recommendation of shared methodological approaches to create links between the languages learnt;
- inclusion in the syllabus for each language of cross-cutting skills to be developed, convergences to be utilised and cross-language transfer strategies to be taught.

Some of the teaching content set out in the curricula is by its very nature common to all languages. Indicating its importance among the objectives set for the teaching of each language reinforces convergence in learning experiences and in teaching practices. This content includes: reflection on the use of language, on communication strategies and on learning processes; learning self-assessment; learning the language activity of mediation or translation; development of plurilingual skills.

Some measures that foster an awareness of convergences between linguistic and cultural learning may result in the establishment of a better overall structure for the teaching of modern languages. These measures include the development of learning autonomy, especially with the help of the *European Language Portfolio*, and reflecting on the complementary aspects of language teaching by combining periods for the teaching of two languages or by setting up competence groups.

There seems to be a unanimous desire for enhanced convergence between languages taught, and some of the projects mentioned indicate how relevant this goal is:

- complete reorganisation of the principles on which language curricula are based so as to foster plurilingual and intercultural education;
- adoption of a plan, with a significant budget, to promote an overall approach to all language learning, including for the language of schooling.

The approaches employed naturally vary and the progress made very much depends on the context. This diversity is evident from a comparison of three situations described during the part of the seminar given over to these questions:

a) Differences in the form of the project itself

In Slovakia, significant progress has been made by including convergences in the curricula for the various languages. These curricula list all the general, cognitive, functional, life, social, citizenship and cultural skills that each language taught helps to develop in pupils. The content to be taught is presented in the same way, observing the same structural organisation for each language and stating for each competence level defined the approaches adopted to achieve the set objectives, as well as the language competences (grammar, lexis, functional statements) and the socio-cultural and cultural knowledge to be acquired. The systematic parallels between national curricula for the languages taught naturally bring about convergences between these teaching activities, which are, moreover, grouped together in the same unified structure. Furthermore, the introduction to these national curricula emphasises the importance of these convergences.

Switzerland's Conference of Public Education Directors has chosen a different path. It is running a particularly ambitious project of importance for a country in which multilingualism is an intrinsic part of national life and of the Confederation's functioning, where the language spoken within the family by 23% of pupils is different from the language of instruction of the school they attend. This project is part of a scheme to harmonise teaching in the different cantons that has been consistently implemented for a number of years and has resulted in the issuance of several legal or regulatory instruments since 2004. Its main object is didactic coherence between all the languages taught. As in Slovakia, the syllabuses for the different languages (in this case, the languages of schooling and foreign languages) are separate, despite having the same structure, but they explicitly include the acquisition of cross-cutting skills for dealing with language events and learning strategies. The competence models and national standards also relate to the linguistic activity of mediation and methodological and intercultural skills. The example of the *Passepartout* project for six German-speaking cantons shows how the recommended approach is able to build on a didactic of plurilingualism, language-awareness techniques, integrated language promotion and a terminology common to all languages taught. This strategy clearly places language learning in a plurilingual and intercultural context.

b) Differences in the status of these initiatives

The last example described above is a key element of the education reform and harmonisation being undertaken in Switzerland through the cross-cantonal agreement known as the Harnos Concordat. This project entailed complex, careful planning involving a large number of stakeholders and generally covers all the aspects of a consistent and gradual implementation. For example, the following have been developed simultaneously: competence models and national standards, syllabuses for the various linguistic regions, teaching aids, co-operation with the national agency for linguistic and intercultural exchanges, and the distribution of *European Language Portfolio* models for the various age groups.

The plurilingual and intercultural education project carried out in Austria for its part takes the form of a series of approaches and activities proposed to language teachers with a view to enabling them, on the basis of existing language curricula, to innovate and introduce a plurilingual and intercultural approach into their teaching practices by making consistent use



of the convergences between languages and between learning experiences and by fostering acquisition of the language of education. Drawn up under the auspices of the Austrian Centre for Language Competence and co-ordinated by Professor H.-J. Krumm, this plurilingual curriculum (“Curriculum Mehrsprachigkeit”) is specifically targeted at all levels and includes classroom practices and the use of new media. It encourages language awareness, reflection on language and the use of different languages in different communication situations as well as the acquisition of the ability to compare languages with one another, of learning strategies, of personal confidence in one’s own language skills and of learning autonomy. It has met with a very positive reception among the experts consulted, but its implementation principally depends on how it is received by the stakeholders concerned.

c) Differences in the languages concerned

Generally speaking, the replies to the questionnaire concerning progress towards improved convergence in the learning of different languages state that the situations differ depending on the languages concerned. However, they clearly indicate that the teaching of minority or regional languages or languages spoken by pupils with a migrant background is a particularly favourable and useful terrain for exploiting the potential for convergences between the languages known or being learnt.

While the three projects described above apply in the same way to all languages taught, some specific educational situations and the teaching of certain languages provide opportunities for making significant progress. The presentation made by France highlighted two examples of this type.

All languages taught have a single curriculum based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, which potentially facilitates convergences in their teaching. However, the introduction of the simultaneous learning of two foreign languages (in most cases, German and English) from the first class in lower secondary school (ISCED 2) creates a strong incentive for educational convergence (grouping together language teaching periods, a common exercise book for learning the two languages, teaching sessions run jointly by the teachers of the two languages, the targeted utilisation of the resource that linguistic proximity between the two languages constitutes, and proactive implementation of coherent approaches in coaching pupils to acquire learning strategies and strategies for handling communication tasks, etc).

Another very important example is provided by the teaching of Arabic. On one hand, the fact that a large number of pupils attending these classes speak different dialects at home has led to a very original teaching strategy: teachers of Arabic teach their pupils an approach that fosters consideration of the internal diversity of languages and is akin to a form of cross-comprehension. The pupils concerned are in fact invited and aided to seek to express themselves in a form of standard or “median” Arabic that all their fellow-pupils can understand and their ability to do so is subsequently assessed in the test corresponding to the secondary school leaving exam (baccalaureate). On the other hand, the desire to associate this language, which is still perceived as a language of immigration, with paths of excellence intended to bring about a considerable enhancement of its educational status has led, inter alia, to the introduction of specific courses utilising the convergences between the teaching of Arabic and the languages and cultures of Antiquity. In these “sections for Mediterranean languages and cultures”, the link between these languages is central to the educational project. The aim is to foster comparisons between these language systems that differ greatly from one another but share certain common characteristics (such as their declination system or

etymological roots) so as to shed light on the diverse nature of the links that have emerged through time in a movement of reconstruction and reappropriation. In this connection, it should be noted that one course session per week aims to make use of these links.

## **2. Convergences between modern languages and the language of schooling**

The replies to the questionnaire contain fewer examples of convergences between modern (foreign) languages and the language of schooling within curricula than those concerning modern languages alone. Among these examples, practices born of socio-linguistic developments and of initiatives to embrace the challenges these transformations pose for the education system, as is the case for example in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, need to be distinguished from innovations introduced into curricula in the context of an overall reflection on the teaching of language and teaching in languages, as in the case of the examples presented by Bulgaria and Sweden.

In the case of the Luxembourg school system, it is difficult to qualify the status of the languages taught and used. The term “language of schooling” (*langue de scolarisation/Einschulungssprache*) is employed for Luxembourgish (*Lëtzebuergesch/luxembourgeois*), which is the language in which children are taught at the early and preschool levels, and German, which is subsequently used as the language of literacy education. On the other hand, the term “language of instruction” (*langue d’enseignement/Unterrichtssprache*) is preferred for German and French in the rest of the school curriculum since the various disciplines are taught in both these languages either simultaneously or in turn. For the vast majority of pupils, at least one, if not both, of these languages “of instruction” is a foreign language. This naturally has the effect of facilitating convergences between these languages. At primary level (ISCED 1), classes are taught by a single teacher, who has to speak the country’s three official languages. This should guarantee that, as school subjects, German and French are learnt interchangeably. In the teaching of the various disciplines, especially at secondary level (ISCED 2 and 3), the country’s educational traditions mean that explanations are often given in two or three languages (German to facilitate familiarisation with a French concept and sometimes Luxembourgish to reassure pupils). Translation is frequent in some subjects, such as mathematics, which are taught in German and then in French. Lastly, there are bilingual German/French textbooks for some disciplines, such as history and geography. These practices foster an awareness of convergences but the curricula currently in force do not provide for the learning of cross-disciplinary skills. Initiatives in this direction are taken by individual schools on the basis of co-operation between their teachers.

Mention is nonetheless made of the fact that the curricula for some subjects take better account of their language dimension. Moreover, the socio-linguistic composition of their classes increasingly requires teachers to differentiate more and to encourage inter-pupil emulation, since some pupils have a better command of one or other of the languages used in lessons because it is related to the language they speak at home.

The situations described for Bulgaria and Sweden naturally differ considerably. In these very different contexts, real progress in taking account of the convergences between the language of schooling and foreign languages can also be noted in the case of the curricula in force in these countries.

In the case of Bulgaria, the educational standards make explicit reference to relations between learning a modern language and the development and enrichment of knowledge and skills in

Bulgarian. The standards laid down for learning the language of schooling list knowledge, skills and attitudes to be developed, including the ability to translate from a foreign language into Bulgarian while respecting semantic correspondence or the ability to identify similarities and differences between the grammar of Bulgarian and that of the modern language being learnt. The curricula also contain a specific column for interdisciplinary links, which contains statements like “knowledge and skills in Bulgarian aid the acquisition of proficiencies needed to ensure a better grasp of the specific features of the systems of the modern languages taught” or “knowledge and skills in Bulgarian aid the acquisition of proficiencies needed to identify and use grammatical categories and structures, types of text and literary genres, as well as the ability to communicate and the acquisition of sociocultural skills”.

Similarly, but in different ways, Sweden’s curricula pursue a comprehensive approach to teaching languages, whether the language of schooling, another language that may be spoken in the family environment, English or other languages learnt by some pupils. These learning activities are considered to constitute as many contributions to the development of a personal ability to express oneself, participate fully in social life in different contexts, play a role in the world of work and benefit from opportunities to study abroad.

Several aspects of these curricula constitute further examples of definite progress towards plurilingual and intercultural education. There indeed seems to be general agreement on the importance of taking account of the language dimension in all disciplines, even though there continues to be a high demand for training in this area. The list of skills to be imparted to pupils includes a knowledge of minority languages present in Sweden, variations in the Swedish language and similarities to and differences from languages close to Swedish. It should also be noted in this connection that CLIL/EMILE type approaches offer prime opportunities for joint discussion among teachers concerning these convergences.

### **3. The intercultural dimension in curricula**

As the name indicates, plurilingual and intercultural education is about the development of plurilingual skills, but it is just as much about their inseparable intercultural dimension. Even though this term is very often employed in curricula, it must be said that modern-language curricula are much more explicit concerning convergences in language learning than on the approaches to be adopted to develop the knowledge and attitudes characteristic of intercultural education. Intercultural education is often interpreted in terms of a “comparison” between societies but without any in-depth discussion of the educational approaches to be preferred.

It transpires, for example, that the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* is not yet widely disseminated, that “language awareness” activities are carried out at the primary level but are then no longer part of the curriculum, that intercultural education is considered to be one outcome of the (CLIL-EMILE type) teaching of subjects in a foreign language, although the benefits are not specified, and that only some curricula include awareness-raising regarding the internal diversity of languages.

The replies to the questionnaire provide a few examples, such as that cited by the Czech Republic. The cross-cutting objectives covered by the content of basic education (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2) include several items that play a part in intercultural education: personal and social education, democratic citizenship, the ability to find one's bearings in European and global contexts and “multicultural education”. The latter concerns all areas of the educational curriculum. A very similar pattern has been adopted for higher secondary education (ISCED

3). The definition of “multicultural education” provided distinguishes between knowledge (information on the different ethnic and cultural groups in Europe and the Czech Republic), skills and abilities (finding one’s bearings in a pluralistic society and taking advantage of intercultural contacts in order to enrich oneself and others), on one hand, and attitudes and values (tolerance and respect, awareness of one’s own identity and cultural background, the fact that intolerance cannot be reconciled with democratic principles, and active citizenship requiring a personal commitment, while combating intolerance, xenophobia, discrimination and racism), on the other hand.

In order to promote the implementation of these educational approaches, a number of initiatives have been launched at national level, including the development of an electronic *European Language Portfolio*, accompanied by a teacher’s guide containing recommendations on capitalising on intercultural experiences. It quickly became apparent during the preparation and running of the seminar that this notion, although very much present in the *Guide*, needed further clarification so that more precise information would be provided in the curricula. This clarification was given in a keynote paper delivered by Professor Jean-Claude Beacco, the text<sup>1</sup> of which will be made available on the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*. The following paragraphs are an attempt to summarise some of his responses to the questions raised.

As Professor Beacco said in his presentation, the goal of plurilingual and intercultural education is to extend the humanistic traditions of language teaching to the sphere of personal development while adapting them to today's world and the class's context. As a result of increased opportunities for contacts with other people, it is true that humanism should now no longer be conceived in terms of works or writings, but also includes a "humanism of personal encounters", both real and virtual.

The key issue, however, is the place of intercultural education in language learning. It is inextricably linked to teaching since the experience of learning an unknown language constitutes a discovery of the other and is based on a simulation of otherness, particularly with regard to language. Learning a language also entails entering a different discursive universe. However, it is hard for this intercultural dimension to become established. Either its cultural or intercultural components are used exclusively to support language learning and are not really taken seriously, or the intercultural dimension even encounters forms of resistance, with intercultural education then being perceived as a “foreign body” or as at risk of replacing the transmission of specific knowledge on the countries associated with the target languages.

Like the changes made to the development of language skills, the originality of intercultural education lies in the fact that it puts the learner at the heart of educational concerns as a social subject, so that the focus is no longer solely on the transmission of knowledge or social or cultural skills. The aim is to lead pupils towards forms of curiosity and tolerance of differences and to bring them to view these differences as one of the possible contributions to personal development. Intercultural education is accordingly “a means ... of developing, in the context of language teaching, open and proactive, reflective and critical attitudes in order to learn how to address all forms of contact with otherness in a positive way and profitably manage them”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The cultural and intercultural dimensions of language teaching: current practice and prospects*, Jean-Claude Beacco, University of Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle, November 2011.

The challenge for language teaching is accordingly to:

- organise the moments of encounters with other cultures, which constitute as many opportunities for discovery and for the supply of knowledge and information;
- encourage verbal responses to these discoveries;
- manage the learners’ responses to these discoveries so that they evolve from being spontaneous to being controlled and reflective.

The question naturally arises as to the language in which these responses and interactions concerning them should be expressed. The target language may, of course, be used, but it should also be noted that, in the context of intercultural education, there are advantages in separating training in use of the target language from discussion of the responses triggered by these encounters with “otherness”. This is because at certain levels of linguistic proficiency, approximately up to B1 level, the exclusive use of the target language may result in pupils no longer trying to express what they feel or “think”. The conclusion of this brief discussion has also been borrowed from J-C. Beacco: “In short, plurilingual and intercultural education should lead teachers not only to concern themselves with “getting their pupils to speak” (in order to have them “speak” better in the foreign language) but also to give serious consideration to what they are saying.”<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. Implementation in schools and in classroom practices of the guidelines and measures in support of plurilingual and intercultural education**

The seminar also provided an opportunity to discuss the relevance of two tools contained in the *Guide* with a view to helping member states and the stakeholders involved to take stock of their language curricula and improve certain aspects of them where they consider it desirable: the curriculum scenario and a particular curriculum design. The element common to these two tools is that they help to implement language education policies as consistently and effectively as possible.

The curriculum scenario, the principle of which had already been described in *the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (chapter 8), calls for a forward-looking approach to simulate, prior to any implementation, curriculum pathways from pre-elementary (ISCED 0) to the end of secondary education (ISCED 3). The aim with this tool is to:

- determine the language and (inter)cultural competence profiles to be attained, some elements of which are specific to each language while others are cross-cutting;
- establish longitudinal coherence, both continuous and discontinuous, between all the stages of this pathway;
- create foundations for horizontal coherence between the various languages (and other subjects) taught, including by taking into account the benefits of staggered or parallel learning;
- introduce into the modes of organisation within the curriculum an element of variability regarding the objectives set, the time-scales chosen and the use of the entire language teaching timetable;
- identify the types of experiences to which learners should have been exposed in order to pursue their curriculum pathway under favourable conditions;
- co-ordinate the requirements of this dual horizontal/longitudinal coherence.

The seminar participants were invited to examine their own curriculum, comparing it with one of those proposed in the *Guide* to illustrate the situation most commonly encountered in

European education systems (introduction of a first modern language at ISCED 1 level and a second at ISCED 2). The subsequent discussions showed that the participants concurred that

- this tool is particularly useful for encouraging new ways of thinking and initiatives or for spelling out certain characteristics of curricula that are sometimes not very conspicuous;
- the potential targets for such scenarios are not just decision-makers, for whom they may provide a general overview of language teaching, but also head teachers, who can make use of them together with their teaching staff to determine language education policies appropriate to their own school or carry out a self-assessment of the practices implemented at this level.

The discussions also showed that a proper understanding of the use of this tool

- would be facilitated by a more accessible graphical presentation than the one provided in the *Guide*;
- might involve introducing an additional distinction between the objectives pursued and the methods employed;
- would benefit from the provision of examples of good practices for different components presented in the proposed scenario.

The suggestions and reactions show that the status of the scenarios proposed in the *Guide* needs to be better explained. They constitute reference frameworks that should not be confused with the instruments utilised in the various situations. The construction of these scenarios has to be put into context. For example, the strict separation between ISCED 0, ISCED 1 and ISCED 2 may not be appropriate in all circumstances, and a greater flexibility between the levels would doubtless reflect the reality of some curricula. Similarly, upon analysis it can be seen that the components of these scenarios correspond to different operational levels: some are the responsibility of the national authorities, others are contingent upon the choices made in schools and yet others correspond to the methods and approaches adopted by teachers.

This last point was discussed at length during the seminar and resulted in some very productive group work. The *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* adopts a particular curriculum design that draws heavily on the work of the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO). With this design, the curriculum goes well beyond the mere notion of a course programme, study plan or syllabus so as to encompass everything that contributes to pupils' education and training. The components of this curriculum are not confined to the teachings dispensed in a school context but also include pupils' experiences in and outside school. The “educational” curriculum on which the seminar proceedings focused is accordingly just one part of a broader curriculum.

This way of conceiving the curriculum also clearly distinguishes between the different operational levels that help to determine the learner's pathway, drawing a distinction between international bodies, the national/regional level and the local level of the school or even the class and its teacher, not forgetting the areas falling within the teacher's responsibility and individual experience. Each of these levels exerts a more or less dominant influence on key aspects of the teaching and learning situation.

This distinction between the operational levels was broadly confirmed by the replies to the questionnaire and the discussions that took place during the seminar. There can be no hope of implementing major innovations in approaches to language teaching, such as plurilingual and intercultural education, without considering the most effective ways of gaining the support of the stakeholders operating at these different levels. Many of the replies also drew attention to the considerable gap that may exist between decisions taken at the national level as sometimes reflected in study programmes or syllabuses (the macro level) and practices observed at local level (the meso or micro levels).

Numerous initiatives seeking to overcome this difficulty were mentioned. They can be divided into four broad categories:

- teacher training;
- assistance given to teachers, either at the initiative of the national authorities (for example, provision of educational materials) or by encouraging the sharing of work practices (dissemination of good practices, network creation);
- incentives for schools and teachers (organisation of competitions, modern-language tests at national level necessitating the preparation of pupils in accordance with the school's expectations, experimental projects, widespread use of the *European Language Portfolio*, recommendation to set up “modern language” subject groups in schools, etc);
- forms of institutional “pressure” on schools and teachers (role of inspectorates; obligation for schools to draw up an action plan setting out the arrangements for providing support for languages or ensuring coherence between the different courses taught; obligation for teachers to work together to develop the school curriculum and draw up the criteria for final examinations; encouragement to organise language groups on the basis of joint assessments and by harmonising progression from one proficiency level to another, combining language teaching periods; creation in schools of methodological units grouping together language teachers).

Among this range of measures, a number of particularly important points were highlighted. It can be seen that a particularly effective approach is to plan all the stages necessary for implementing the measures envisaged, thereby making it possible to involve from the outset everyone affected by the desired changes (political decision-makers at different levels, head teachers, teachers, textbook authors and the public, through the press). A lack of consultation and coherence between the different decision-making levels may lead to inaction.

Teacher training and the development of educational resources are essential. It is also very important to involve teachers in certain stages of decision-making processes, as was the case in one of the participating countries: during the process to adopt the new curriculum, the draft text was published on the Internet for consultation by all the teachers, who were thus able to comment on it and familiarise themselves with it. There is often an expectation that specific tools, as well as good practice examples, will be provided, such as means of performing diagnostic, formative or summative assessments suited to the changes to be brought about.

In this context, two original initiatives taken in Spain and the Netherlands were described during the seminar. The Spanish Ministry of Education makes a training webcast ([www.leer.es](http://www.leer.es)) available to teachers in which they will find resources, good practice examples and testimonies by other teachers, pupils or other stakeholders. They can also participate in a network for discussion and sharing of information and experience. In the Netherlands, the SLO (Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development) offers support to volunteer schools

in dealing with the consequences of adopting the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and certain principles of plurilingual intercultural education. This support is devised to take account of all aspects of the curriculum and address all the questions it raises. Another original feature concerns the ways in which all players are involved in the development process: choice of topics, experimenting with tools and materials, teacher feedback (including on teaching materials relating to other languages), statements and interviews made available on line, experimenting with certain pages of the website, formative assessment tool made available on the portal, etc.

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The above brief report on the proceedings shows the variety and scope of the work done during these two days. The evaluation forms filled in by the participants reflect their satisfaction regarding the contributions made by the seminar. On a scale from 1 to 5 (the most positive assessment), the average score for the seminar's general organisation is 4.8, while the average for the topics dealt with is 4.6. The content met the institutions' needs, was relevant to the participants' work and corresponded to the issues linked to implementation of the curriculum guidelines which the institutions represented wished to see addressed (4.2 and 4.3). The participants appear to have greatly appreciated the alternation between contributions by the experts present and descriptions of the curricula and initiatives adopted in various countries.

The few negative comments made at the end of the seminar confirm these findings. The participants would have liked to have had more opportunity to discuss the various presentations and interact with one another, for example through group work.

Lastly, the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*, which was presented during the seminar, was welcomed as a discussion and information tool. The case studies presented during the two days should be added to it.

For the organisation of future seminars on the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*, it is important that several lessons be drawn from this initial experience:

- It should be possible for participants to be guided in their preparation of any presentations they are asked to make by the provision of information on the balance to be struck between description of the specific context and developments on the particular subject of the presentation. In addition, other participants should be provided with a summary of the presentation in advance to enable them to engage in a more in-depth discussion. Finally, there was a very clear call for each presentation to be illustrated by precise examples or descriptions of good practices.
- This kind of seminar would be more effective if more time were allowed for discussions between participants and if the discussions on presentations were structured, for example around the differences between the situations described in several presentations.
- Closer attention should be paid to the key issue of implementation within schools, especially by devoting more time to this or by illustrating it with examples of good practices.

As far as the *Guide* itself is concerned, the opinions expressed by the participants and their reactions to some of the presentations show that the considerations on curriculum scenarios,



which all the participants deemed to be a useful tool, should definitely be made more accessible by either simplifying their content or modifying their structure. It also seems that additional explanations on the curriculum scenario's exact status and role are necessary. The same doubtless applies to the considerations on intercultural education, which should be supplemented with the seminar's input.

The content of the *Guide* did not give rise to any particular comments by participants, but the opinions expressed on the seminar indicate that it would no doubt be a good idea to consider including good practice examples in it, such as those described during the various seminars.

Finally, the replies to the questionnaire utilised to prepare the seminar and the discussions that took place during it show, in general, that plurilingual and intercultural education is not a pipedream but is making progress in different forms and at different speeds depending on the context. Each step in this direction is a step towards quality education.



## Appendix 1: Programme

### Tuesday 29 November

<b>09.00 – 09.30</b>	<b>Registration (<i>Room G04</i>)</b>
Chair: Johanna Panthier	<b>OFFICIAL OPENING</b>
9.30 - 10.10	<p><b>Opening</b> The objectives of the seminar in relation to the <i>Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education</i> and other tools of the Language Policy Division - Johanna Panthier</p> <p><b>Introductions</b></p> <p>Summary of data collected through the questionnaire : Francis Goullier, <i>General Rapporteur</i></p>
Chair: Mirjam Egli	<b>BLOC A: CONVERGENCES BETWEEN CURRICULA FOR MODERN LANGUAGES</b>
10.10 - 10.20	Introduction : Overview of current convergences in this domain in the countries represented ; main thrusts and themes to be studied - <b>Mirjam Egli</b>
10.20 - 11.00	Case study on “Making better use of convergences between the modern languages taught”: <b>Switzerland</b> (presentation and discussion)
11.00 - 11.30	<i>Break</i>
11.30 - 12.30	Case studies on “Making better use of convergences between the modern languages taught”: <b>Austria and Slovak Republic</b> (presentations and discussion)
12.30 - 13.00	Case study on “Convergences between the modern languages and home languages taught” : <b>France</b> (presentation and discussion)
13.00 - 14.30	<i>Lunch</i>
Chair : Francis Goullier	<b>BLOC B: PROMOTING INNOVATIONS : PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS</b>
14.30 - 14.40	Introduction
14.40 - 15.10	Case study on “Practical implementations that foster convergences between modern languages”: <b>The Netherlands</b> (presentation and discussion)
15.10 - 15.40	Case study on “Tools to support learning the languages of schooling as a means for learning”: <b>Spain</b> (presentation and discussion)
15.40 - 18.00	Group work

**Wednesday 30 November** (room G 05)

09.00 - 09.30 Reports on group work

**Chair:**  
Jean-Claude Beacco

**BLOC C: INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

9.30 - 9.55 The place of intercultural education in the curricula - **Jean-Claude Beacco**

9.55 - 10.25 Case study on “The place of intercultural education in the curriculum”:  
**Czech Republic** (presentation and discussion)

10.25 - 10.50 Break

**Chair:**  
Jean-Claude Beacco

**BLOC D:**  
- **CONVERGENCES BETWEEN LANGUAGES OF SCHOOLING**  
- **CONVERGENCES BETWEEN MODERN LANGUAGES AND LANGUAGE(S) OF SCHOOLING**

10.50 - 11.00 Introduction - **Jean-Claude Beacco**

11.00 - 11.30 Case study on “Convergences between languages of schooling”: **Luxembourg**  
(presentation and discussion)

11.30 - 12.30 Case studies on “Convergences between modern languages and language(s)  
of schooling”: **Bulgaria, Sweden** (presentations and discussion)

12.30 - 14.00 Lunch

14.00 - 14.15 *The Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural  
education* - **Johanna Panthier**

**Chair:**  
Marisa Cavalli

**BLOC E: LONGITUDINAL CONVERGENCES: CURRICULUM SCENARIOS**

14.15 - 14.25 Introduction to work on basic curriculum scenarios for prototypical case 1 :  
Introduction of a first modern language in ISCED 1 and of a second one in  
ISCED 2 - **Marisa Cavalli**

14.25 - 15.30 Peer and plenary discussions

15.30 - 16.15 **Close :**  
Summary of main points discussed at the seminar - **Francis Goullier**  
Next steps - **Johanna Panthier**

