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Language Policy Division
Division des politiques linguistiques
Strasbourg, France



Jagiellonian University
Kraków, Poland

“Towards a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of School Education?”

An international conference organised jointly by the Council of Europe, Language Policy Division, Strasbourg, France, and the Jagiellonian University

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Towards a common European framework of reference for language(s) of education? – a project in the context of the Council of Europe work on language education

INTRODUCTION

The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg has launched a project to examine the feasibility of producing a common European framework of reference for languages of school education.

This work builds upon the success of the *Common European Framework of Reference* for modern/foreign languages which is widely used in curriculum development, textbook writing, promoting new approaches to teaching and learning, examinations and so on. The main principle of the *CEFR* is to promote plurilingualism and this has recently led to the production of a *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* in which it is shown *inter alia* how the principle of plurilingualism includes the teaching and learning of the language(s) of education systems, which are often designated as ‘mother tongues’ or ‘national languages’. The new project focuses on these languages.

The project is in its initial stage. Three expert meetings have been held already, defining the scope of the project and suggesting the working methods. One of the outputs of the expert work so far has been to organise this international conference to examine the views on the topic as presented by the broader academic audience in Europe. It is anticipated that the conference will produce useful reflections on the relationship between terms, concepts, understandings and practices of the educational and academic fields in

question. For example, it is important to discuss the differences between concepts such as Mother Tongue Education, Standard Language Education, Key Language, Language of Instruction, First Language Education, Home Language, National Language, State Language Education, etc. Our aim is not to try to objectify definitions, but to try to understand the nature of the different national, cultural and academic perceptions of such terms when working internationally.

Another issue which the conference will address is that of specialisation in language education. It is not easy to find professionals who are work on the whole spectrum of languages in education, including foreign languages, second languages, minority and regional languages, state and national languages, languages and their regional or social varieties. All of which need to be taken into account in the education of young people in compulsory schooling . There is a trend to specialisation, with the result that there is a lack of contact between for example those dealing with foreign/second language education and those specialising in mother/first/official/national language – as well as between those specialising in teaching literature and those interested in teaching language itself.

Our goal is to look for convergences between these areas, since they all relate to the same area of reflection: language use and language users. In developing a new framework, we hope to counter further fragmentation and stimulate critical discussion and analysis, examining to which degree and in which ways more coherence in curricula is achievable both in practical, academic, and political terms.

In this introductory session we will trace the development of the *CEFR* and related documents and instruments and then outline what we hope will be the directions taken in the production of a new framework for the language(s) of education. This will include an explanation of the purpose and functions of such a document, the ways in which it might relate to the existing *CEFR*, the implications for convergences among the different types of language teaching and learning, and the vision of the language learner and user which might lie behind it.