

# Revisiting the CEFR Manual for Relating Exams with the CEFR Companion Volume

Neus Figueras

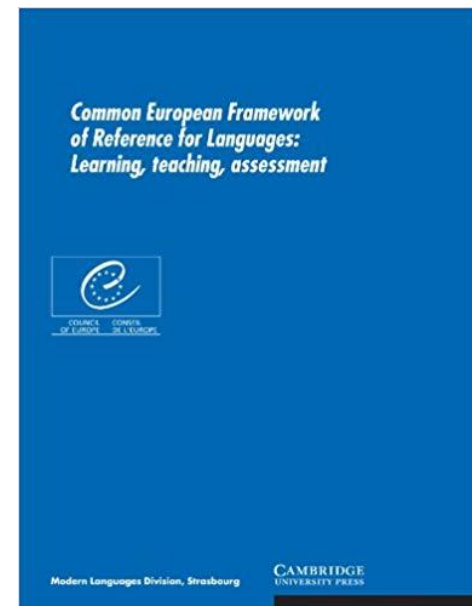
Jamie Dunlea


# Outline

The CEFR Companion Volume (CV): contextual clues, objectives and contents.

The CV and the Manual for Relating Examinations: work so far, issues and challenges

Summary and Outlook



  
COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**CEFR Companion  
Volume  
with extended illustrative  
descriptors**

**Education Department  
September 2017**



January 2009



COUNCIL OF EUROPE / CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)

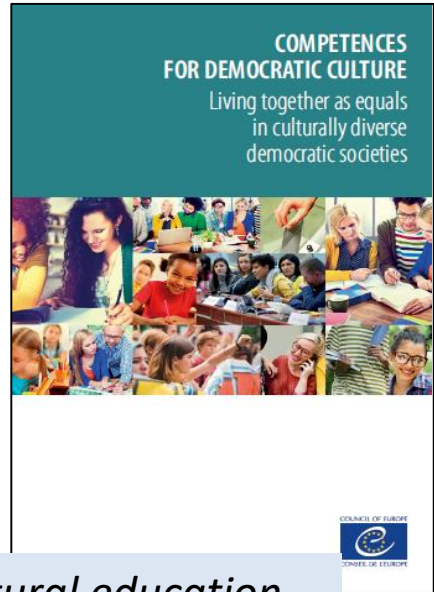
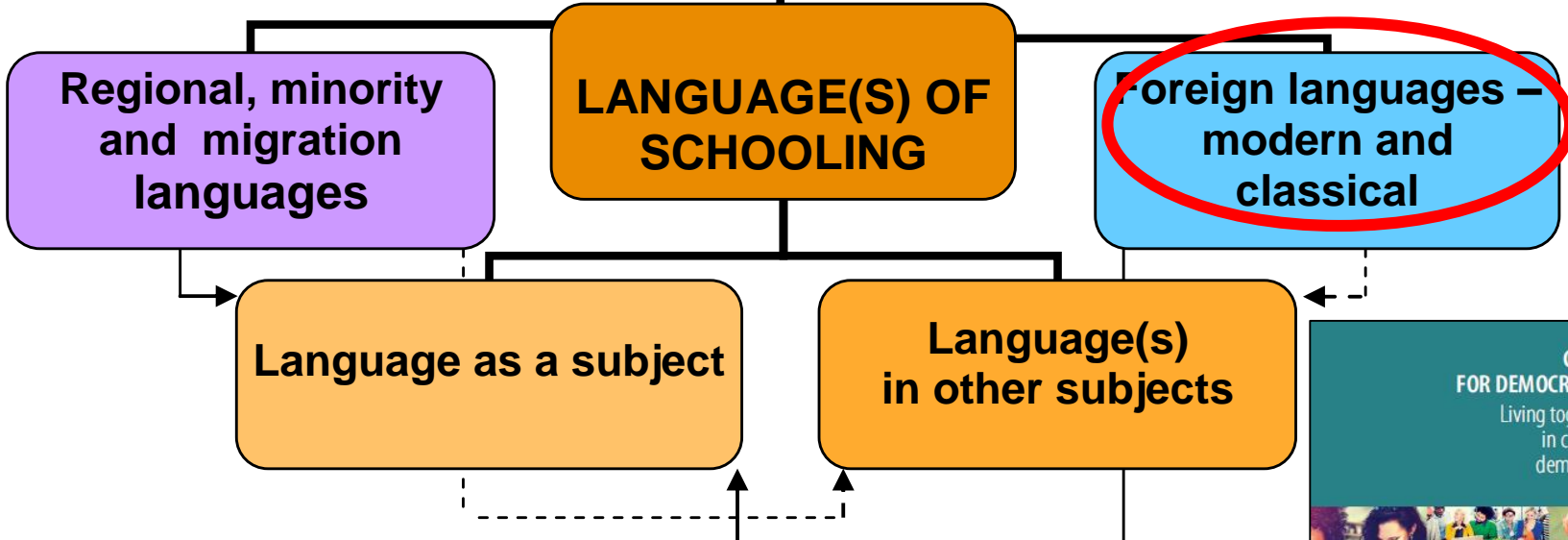
Language Policy Division

[www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang)

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>



**The learner and the languages present in school**



*The Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/platform-plurilingual-intercultural-language-education/>

# The Companion Volume (CV)

Preface with acknowledgements

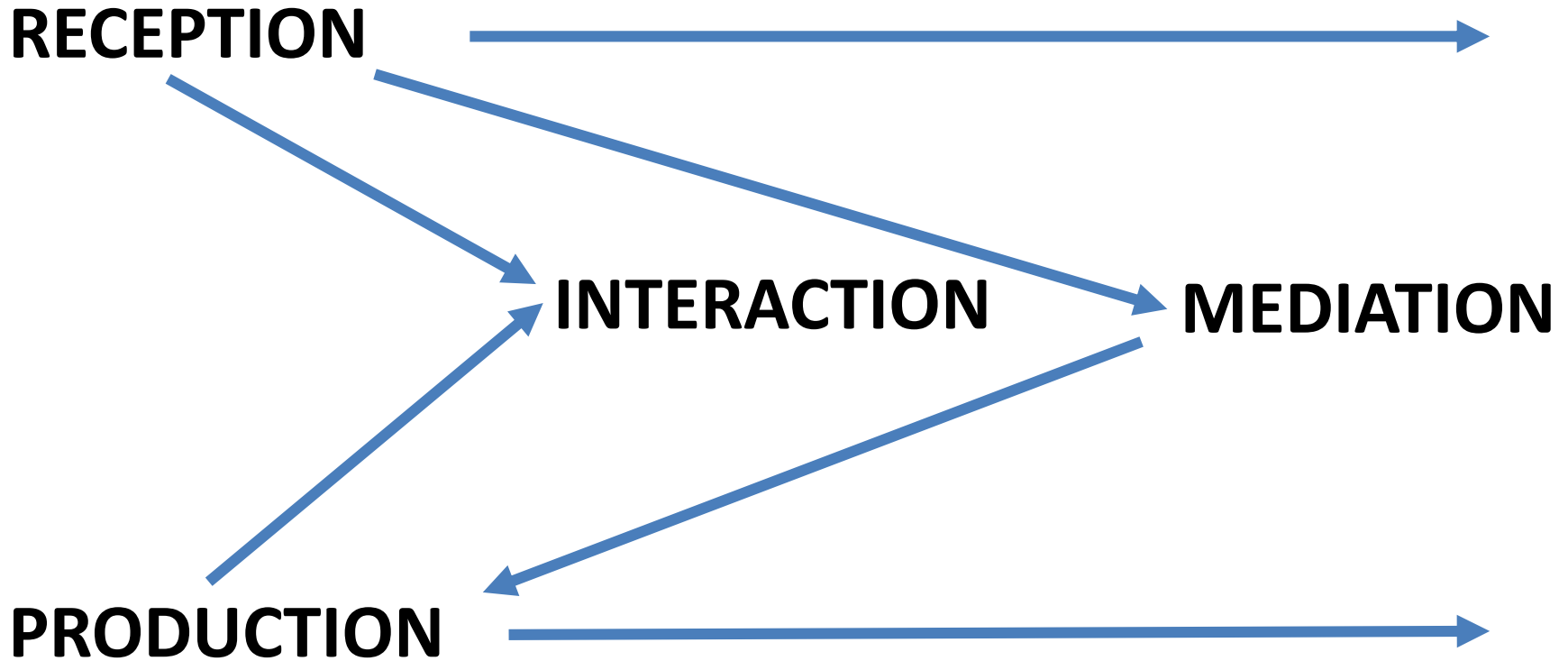
Foreword

Introduction to the CEFR Companion Volume

- Key aspects of the CEFR for teaching and learning
- The project to update and extend the CEFR illustrative descriptors
- The CEFR Illustrative Descriptor Scales

Appendices

(+ accompanying docs and reports)



‘In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of **mediation** make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason to communicate with each other directly. Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.’(CEFR Section 2.1.3)

# COLLATED REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES OF DESCRIPTORS OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCES DEVELOPED FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS

[www.coe.int/lang-cefr](http://www.coe.int/lang-cefr)

**Volume 1: Ages 7-10**  
**2018 Edition**

Collected by:  
**Tunde Szabo, Eurocentres**

Sounding board:  
**Coreen Docherty**  
**Brian North**  
**Tim Goodier**

Consultants:  
**Eli Moe**  
**Angela Hasselgreen**

Supervised by:  
**Tim Goodier, Eurocentres**

This document is developed  
through Eurocentres  
consultancy for the Council of  
Europe.

It is drawn from European  
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descriptors of the Common  
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Reference for Languages:  
Learning, teaching,  
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organised by CEFR level.



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**Volume 2: Ages 11-15**  
**2018 Edition**

Collected by:  
**Tunde Szabo, Eurocentres**

Sounding board:  
**Coreen Docherty**  
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COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK  
OF REFERENCE FOR LANGUAGES:  
LEARNING, TEACHING, ASSESSMENT

DEVELOPING ILLUSTRATIVE  
DESCRIPTORS OF ASPECTS OF  
MEDIATION FOR THE CEFR

Language Policy

Brian North  
Enrica Pioardo



Education, mobility, otherness  
The mediation functions of schools

Language Policy Unit  
DG2 - Directorate General of Democracy  
Council of Europe, 2015  
[www.coe.int/t/09/Linguage](http://www.coe.int/t/09/Linguage)

Language Policy

Enrica Pioardo





# New scales

Reading as a leisure activity

Sustained monologue: giving information

Using Telecommunications

Online conversation and discussion

Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration

Phonological control (Overall, Sound Articulation, Prosodic Features)

Mediation Activities

Mediating a text

Mediating concepts

Mediating communication

Mediation Strategies

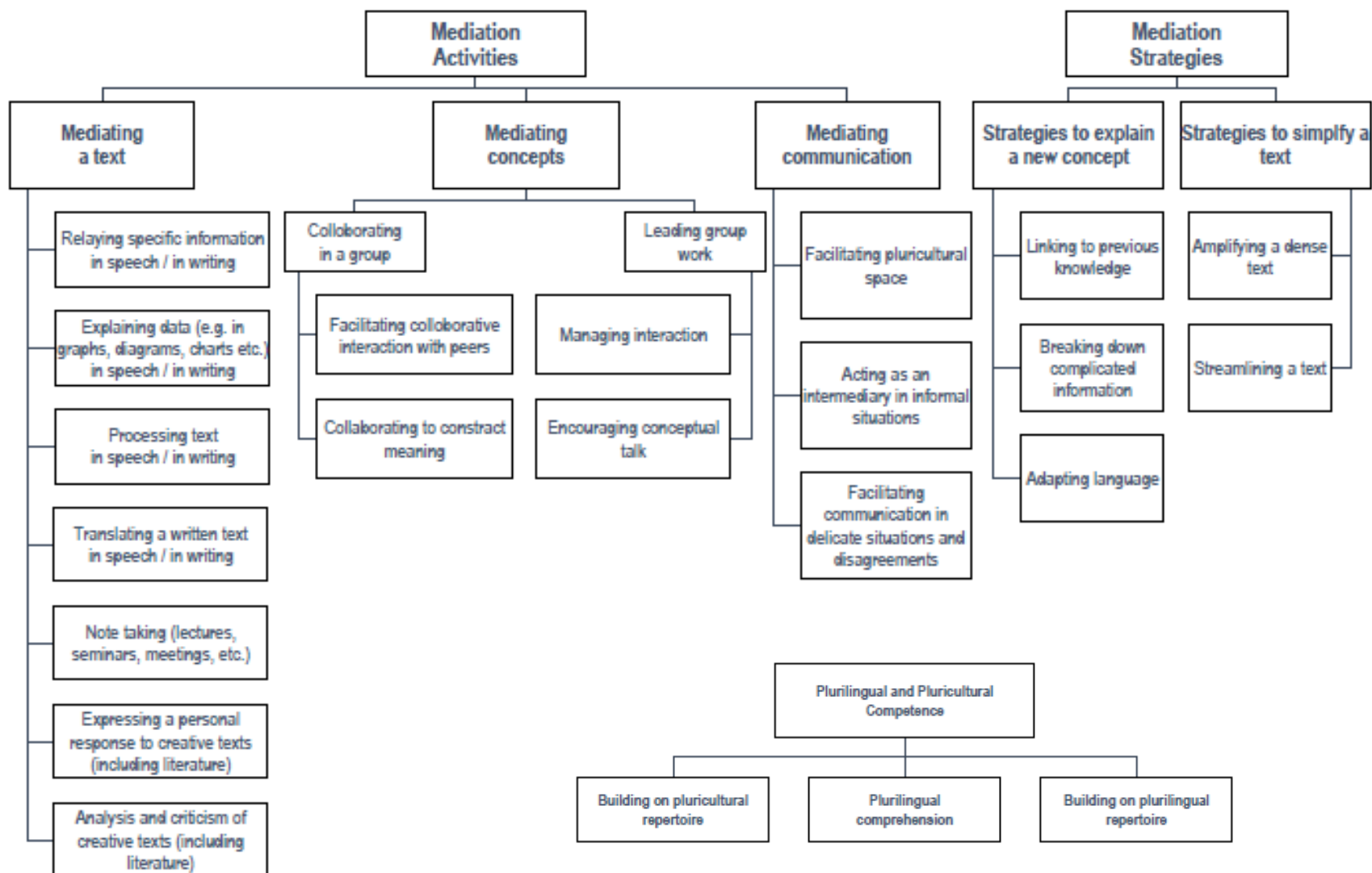
Plurilingual and pluricultural competence

Building on pluricultural repertoire

Plurilingual comprehension

Building on plurilingual repertoire

**A total of 35 scales  
( 24 for mediation)**



# Overall Mediation

## Mediating a Text

- Relaying specific information - S&W
- Explaining data (e.g. in graphs) - S&W
- Processing text - S&W
- Translating a written text - S&W
- Note-taking
- Expressing a personal response to artistic text (including literature)
- Analysis and criticism of creative text (including literature)

## Mediating communication

- Facilitating pluricultural space
- Facilitating communication in delicate situations & disagreements
- Acting as an intermediary in informal situations

## Mediating Concepts

### *Collaborating in a group*

- Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
- Collaborating to construct meaning

### *Leading group work*

- Managing interaction
- Encouraging conceptual thought

## Mediation strategies

### *Strategies to explain a new concept*

- Linking to previous knowledge
- Breaking down complicated information
- Adapting language

### *Strategies to simplify a text*

- Amplifying a dense text
- Streamlining a text

# Work so far (documented)

- Validation work ( 2015-2017)
- EALTA Dublin CEFR SIG - January 2018
- Council of Europe Webinar - January 2018
- MacMillan Webinars – March 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOSCty2fM2Q>

- EAQUALS Prague 2018 - May 2018

<https://es.slideshare.net/eaquals/tim-goodier-implementing-the-new-cefr-companion-volume>

- Council of Europe Launch Meeting - May 2018
- EALTA Bochum - May 2018
- EALTA webinar – November 2018



# Other reactions to the CV

General: Similar to those publication of the CEFR in 2001 : initial enthusiasm followed by requests for training

Testing organizations: More cautious than with the CEFR: analysing and exploring... but already using new descriptors in drafting and revising specifications, in task development (speaking), in standard setting,...

Government authorities: Fast adoption, as with the CEFR!! (Spain, UK,..).  
Confusion between curriculum development, teaching methodologies, assessment and standardised testing.

Individuals : exploring, worrying, panicking

***The CEFR Companion Volume with new descriptors: Uses and Implications for Language Testing and Assessment – January.*** Report available at  
<http://www.ealta.eu.org/events/Report%20on%20Vlth%20EALTA%20CEFR%20SIG%20rev%2023.02.18.pdf>

## Updates to the CEFR (changes to descriptors, new descriptors, new scales for literature, phonology, online...)

John de Jong, (Language Testing Services)

Respondents: Elif Kantarcioglu (U. of Bilkent), Armin Berger (U. of Vienna), Tony Green (U. of Bedfordshire)

## Mediation

Barry O’Sullivan (British Council)

Respondents: Dina Tzagari (Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences) and Spiros Papageorgiou (Educational Testing Service)

## Plurilingual and Pluricultural

Vincent Folny (CIEP)

Respondents: Gudrun Erickson (U. of Gothenburg) and Jamie Dunlea (British Council)

# Mediation – Why?

- What score based-decisions need to be made that require mediation tasks?
- Is mediation relevant to the target language use domain?
- What is the actual use of the test?

# Mediation – How?

- The inclusion of different languages is likely to be problematic in that the relationship between the two languages will not always be the same.
- Applying the mediation scales is going to be more complex than initially envisaged.
- Are educational systems and teachers ready to employ and sustain mediation?
- What kind of accommodations and conditions need to be in place for mediation scale descriptors to be implemented successfully?

# Mediation – If?

- Does cross-linguistic mediation raise fairness concerns?  
content comparability across forms - assessing non-linguistic competence
- Is within-language mediation sufficiently operationalized in task design?  
situational authenticity v. interactional authenticity of test tasks

# Plurilingual and Pluricultural

Very difficult to apply in standardized examinations. Mainly, we **measure** language competence. We take decisions about people in high stakes contexts so we need **reliability**.

Measuring plurilingual competence is a real challenge not resolved. The challenge is in the use of our examinations in the development of a plurilingual competence. We really want to encourage that but we still do not know how to test it.

Plurilingual scales may be very useful in bilingual/clil programmes, for vocational purposes for airports, hospitals...

The topic “pluricultural” is sensitive as it is not consensual in all European countries.

The word “culture” is used 52 times in the CEFR and 25 in the CV. It is associated with “shared”, “communication” and “democratic”. But, **there is no strong definition of culture**...





# The launch: CEFR CV – Strasbourg

**"Building Inclusive Societies through Enriching Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education"**

*Mediation on its own will not allow to solve the challenges of linguistic diversity, a plurilingual vision and not a restricted view of multilingualism will.*

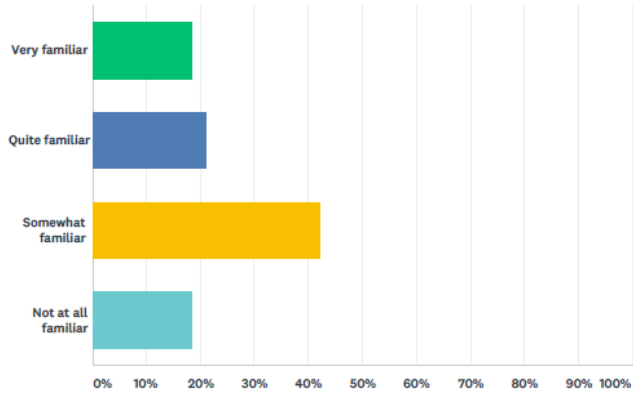
*In relation to regional challenges, it would be useful to consider as an « introduction » the formalisation of mediation for certain language groups (French/Flemish; Japanese/Chinese/Korean; French/Arabic dialects; Italian/Albanian; French/African languages,...)*

*From the point of view of measurement of competences in standardised tests, it is advisable to be cautious and to accept that mediation challenges the limits of language measurement.*

*However, the above should not stop or slow down the introduction of mediation in language teaching and learning.*

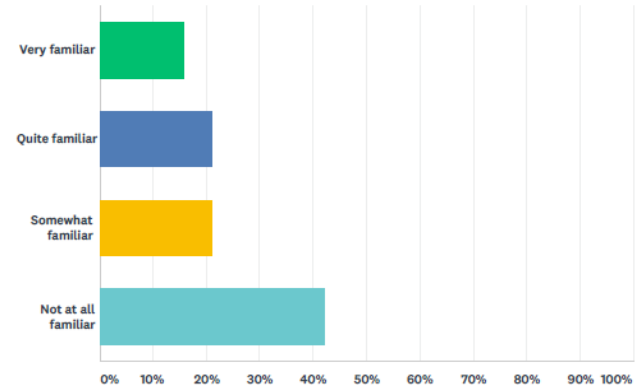
#### Q4 How familiar were you with the Companion Volume updates before the webinar?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0



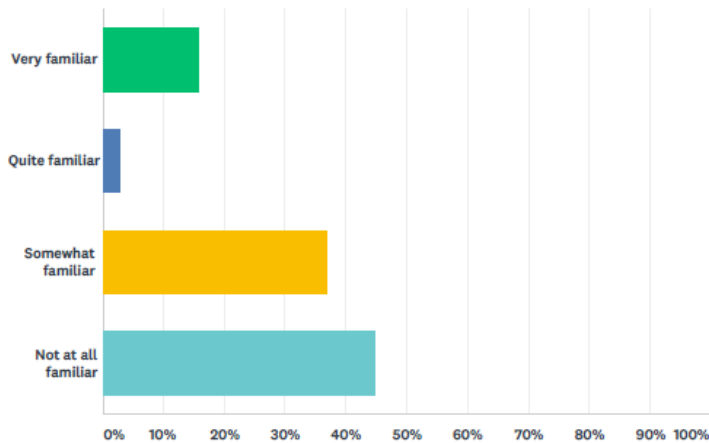
#### Q5 How familiar were you with the Companion Volume mediation scales before the webinar?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0



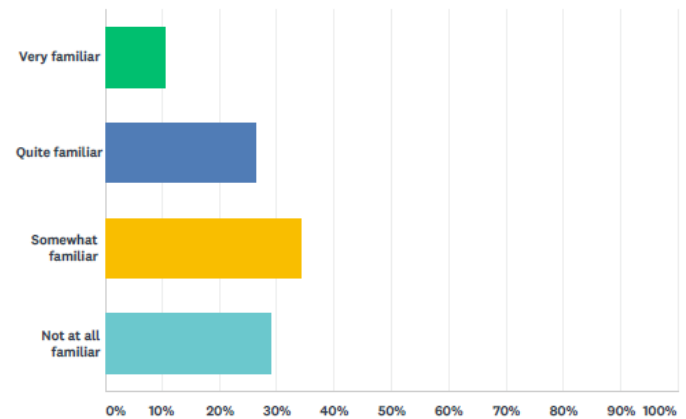
#### Q6 How familiar were you with the Companion Volume plurilingual/pluricultural scales before the webinar?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0



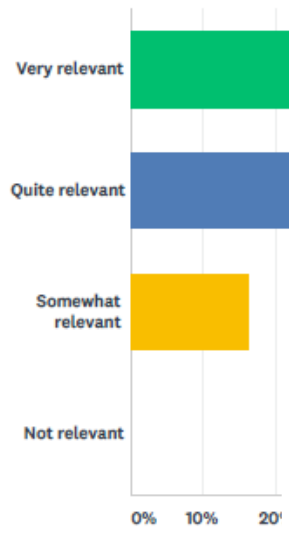
#### Q7 How familiar were you with the Companion Volume text and scales before the webinar?

Answered: 38 Skipped: 0



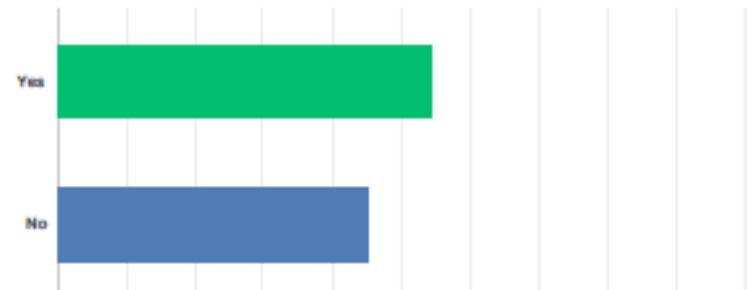
### Q9 Do you find the Companion Volume relevant for language testers?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 1



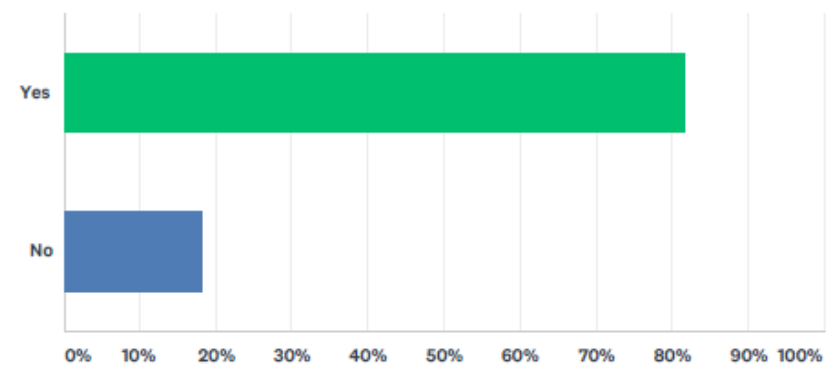
### Q11 If yes, did you find the existing support materials for linking to the CEFR (Manual, examples, etc.) adequate?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 16



### Q12 Do you plan to use any of the new descriptors in existing scales or new scales in standard setting activities in the future?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 5



# Suggestions from participants

More seminars, talks, guidance (for testers and test developers!)

One document only (CEFR blue book + CV)

Research data on new descriptors

Revise/Update the Manual

# Issues & Challenges

What is the status of the document. Provisional? Final?

Will the CV reverse unintended consequence(s) of the CEFR (focus on exams,...)?

Is there a need for accompanying “training” documentation (framed reminders, notes for users,... as in CEFR 2001 and in Manual 2009)?

The CV opens up ways of assessing beyond the 4 skills.

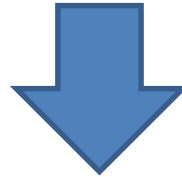
The CV asks for a re conceptualization of language tests and how to test....what is the construct?

Testers need to decide on what aspects in the CV are worth exploring, why and how.

# Dimensions

- Immediately useful – Less immediately useful  
e.g. changes, additions (phonology), new descriptors,...  
Improving existing tests and marking schemes.
- Relevant – Less relevant  
e.g. -A1 descriptors, new descriptors,...  
Better defining what was not possible to define (e.g. integrated tasks)

Evidences



Consequences

- Straightforward – Less Straightforward implementation(s)  
(e.g. change in the test and/or in the specs + a change in linking procedures + a change in the completion of Manual Forms/ the need for a new Form)
- Local relevance → Common understanding → Transparency

# Using the 2009 Manual with the 2017 CV

- How to go about familiarisation, standardisation and benchmarking?
- How to use the Forms?

Should the 2009 Manual be [revisited](#)?

Translating a written text in speech  
 Relaying specific information in speech  
 Explaining data in speech  
 Processing text in speech  
 Expressing a personal response to creative texts  
 Analysis and criticism of creative texts  
 Strategies to explain a new concept  
 Strategies to simplify a text

What combinations of skills occur in the text?  
 Indicate in Form A15 and then

Integrated Skills Combinations		
1 Listening and Note-taking		
2 Listening and Spoken Production		
3 Listening and Written Production		
4 Reading and Note-taking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5 Reading and Spoken Production	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6 Reading and Written Production	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7 Listening and Reading, plus Note-taking	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8 Listening and Reading, plus Spoken Production	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9 Listening and Reading, plus Written Production	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*Form A15: Integrated Skills Combinations*



# SUMMARY and OUTLOOK

## **A number of open questions in the use(s) of the CV in language testing and assessment.**

- How can The CV be used sensibly? What can be done to make it fully accessible (and understood)?
- How will the CV and the CEFR coexist ?
- What are the implications in the use of the CV in linking procedures using the 2009 Manual?
- What mechanisms can be put in place to collect feedback and data from institutions engaged in high-stakes assessment in the use(s) of the CV?
- What type of research agenda is needed?
- With what timeline?

## **What do you think?**

# References

- **CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors**

<https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>

- **Education, Mobility, Otherness. The mediation functions of schools.**

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/Source/LE\\_texts\\_Source/LE%202015/Education-Mobility-Otherness\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/Source/LE_texts_Source/LE%202015/Education-Mobility-Otherness_en.pdf)

- **Collated representative samples of descriptors of language competence developed for young learners aged 7-10 years** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/overview-of-cefr-related-scales>

- **Collated representative samples of descriptors of language competence developed for young learners aged 11-15** <https://rm.coe.int/1680697fc9>

- **Webinar on “The CEFR Companion Volume and Practical Considerations for Implementation” January 2018** <https://rm.coe.int/report-webinar-on-the-cefr-companion-volume-january-2018-/1680794ec8>

**Launch meeting of the CV – Strasbourg May 2018** [https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/newsroom/-/asset\\_publisher/ESahKwOXlcQ2/content/council-of-europe-launched-the-cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors?inheritRedirect=false](https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/newsroom/-/asset_publisher/ESahKwOXlcQ2/content/council-of-europe-launched-the-cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors?inheritRedirect=false)

**Final Report VIth EALTA CEFR SIG : The CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors: Uses and Implications for Language Testing and Assessment. Trinity College Dublin January 2018**

<http://www.ealta.eu.org/events/Report%20on%20VIth%20EALTA%20CEFR%20SIG%20rev%2023.02.18.pdf>

**Ppt slides VII EALTA CEFR SIG. Bochum May 2018**

(forthcoming <http://www.ealta.eu.org/resources.htm>)

Thank you for your attention!

And look forward to your opinions!