

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTORATE GENERAL II

DIRECTORATE OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Language Policy Unit



Strasbourg, 24 June 2015

Subject: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment: 2016 Extended set of illustrative descriptors: Descriptors for Mediation: Co-operation*

Dear Ms Prokhorova,

More than twelve years after its publication, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) remains one of the best known and most used Council of Europe policy tools. Since its official publication in 2001, an impressive 'toolkit' has been built around the CEFR: samples illustrating the reference levels in a number of languages, a databank of descriptors, manuals for examination bodies, guides for different categories of users... A number of policy documents also further develop the underlying principles and education objectives of the CEFR. And, of course, the European Language Portfolio has largely contributed to the implementation of these principles, strongly promoting objectives such as reflective learning and learner autonomy.

Regardless of all the support material provided, the Council of Europe frequently receives requests to continue to develop various aspects of the CEFR, among other things by complementing the existing illustrative scales of language proficiency, such as, for example, descriptors for mediation. Descriptor scales for mediation activities and mediation strategies would indeed be an extremely valuable contribution for all professionals using the CEFR, enhancing the quality of implementation and reinforcing cooperation in Europe, and indeed beyond, around this widely used reference framework.

Much work has been done by other institutions and professional bodies since the publication of the CEFR, and work on the scales has confirmed the validity of the initial research conducted by Dr Brian North and Prof. Günther Schneider. While the status of the CEFR will remain unchanged, the Language Policy Unit intends to build on the dynamic created by its widespread use by incorporating specific relevant work on descriptors developed since its 2001 publication into an extended set of descriptors that would complement the original illustrative set contained in the body of the CEFR text, including, descriptors for mediation.

The work relating to the maintenance and updating of the CEFR will not impact on its current status. In that spirit and in order to ensure coherence and continuity with the existing scales in the CEFR, the Eurocentres Foundation has agreed to take responsibility for coordinating the selection and preparation of these extra sets of descriptors on behalf of the Council of Europe. Dr Michael Gerber, Director of Eurocentres Foundation, has given his permission for Dr Brian North to co-ordinate this work.

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I am writing to you now to thank you for the participation of your institution in the series of activities to finalise and validate the draft set of descriptors for mediation. Both Workshops 1 and 2 have been a great success that demonstrated the amount of interest that the project has generated. Some 136 institutions (c. 970 individuals) took part in Workshop 1 with some 190 institutions (c. 1280 individuals) participating in Workshop 2. Naturally all institutions participating in the validation will be acknowledged at publication in summer 2016.

I very much hope that, given the importance of these further developments, that you will continue on to Phase 3 with the online survey in the autumn. We would also be very grateful if you were in a position to recruit further language professionals familiar with the CEFR to take part in the online survey.

Meanwhile Brian North and I remain at your disposal to discuss the matter further and to provide any clarifications you may require and we wish you an enjoyable summer.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Panthier', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Johanna Panthier
Head of Section
Language Policy Unit