

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

DIRECTORATE GENERAL II

DIRECTORATE OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Language Policy Unit



Strasbourg, 12 December 2014

Subject: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment: 2014 Extended set of illustrative descriptors: Descriptors for Mediation: invitation for co-operation*

Dear Prof. Kropachev,

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.

I am writing to you now in connection with your response earlier this year to Dr North that you would be interested in participating in a series of activities to finalise and validate the draft set of descriptors for mediation. The work involves two workshops with distance validation activities, followed by participation in an online survey:

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Workshop 1 End February / early March 2015

Sorting the descriptors for related scales into their respective categories, plus commenting on the descriptors:

- Like
- Don't like: drop
- Amend like this

Workshop 2 May 2015

Sorting the descriptors for certain scales (each scale presented separately) into their respective levels, plus commenting on the descriptors:

- Like
- Don't like: drop
- Amend like this

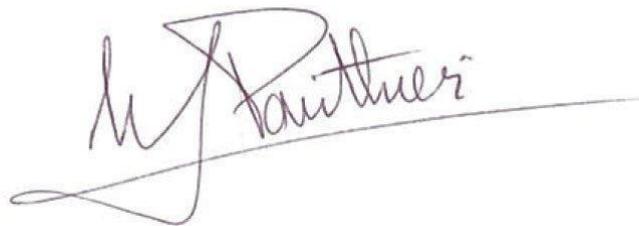
Online SurveyMonkey Survey August/September 2015

Each of the two workshops will take about 3 hours. Since the sorting activities in the workshops are intended to be done in pairs with discussion, participation of between 4 and 16 people, with one participant acting as contact person / coordinator, is desirable. It may also be a good idea to follow up the return of the workshop materials with a Skype conference between the contact person / coordinator and Dr North.

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.

I very much hope that, given the importance of the proposed further developments, that you can give positive consideration to this invitation to co-operate with the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe. Brian North and I remain at your disposal to discuss the matter further and to provide any clarifications you may require. We would be grateful to hear from you by 12th December 2014.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Johanna Panthier', written over a horizontal line.

Johanna Panthier
Head of Language Policy Unit