
Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 February 2022
at the 1423rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

Preamble

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its member States and that this aim may be pursued in particular by the adoption of common action in the fields of education and culture;

Recalling that the essential mission of the Council of Europe is the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law;

Reaffirming the commitment of member States to ensure that every citizen has access to equitable and inclusive education and enjoys the right to education as enshrined in the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5) and its protocols, and that this right shall be fully respected, protected and exercised;

Considering that the aim of the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) is to develop mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage in particular the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the parties to the convention;

Having regard to the obligations and commitments undertaken in conformity with other relevant international and European conventions, more specifically the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Having regard to recommendations and resolutions that address issues in education in general, and more specifically issues in language education relevant to this recommendation:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on ensuring quality education;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of competences in the language(s) of schooling for equity and quality in education and for educational success;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on strengthening the integration of children of migrants and of immigrant background;

- Recommendation Rec(2005)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on teaching neighbouring languages in border regions;
- Resolution on the European Language Portfolio adopted at the 20th Session (2000) of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe;
- Resolution Res(94)10 on an enlarged Partial Agreement establishing the European Centre for Modern Languages;

Having regard also to other recommendations that are relevant to the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic citizenship:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on developing and promoting digital citizenship education;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the public responsibility for higher education and research;

Bearing in mind the recommendations related to language education of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe:

- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2143 (2018) on protecting and promoting sign languages in Europe, as well as the reply to this recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers;
- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1740 (2006) on the place of mother tongue in school education, as well as the reply to this recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers;
- Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1539 (2001) on the European Year of Languages, as well as the reply to this recommendation adopted by the Committee of Ministers;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Recommendation 222 (2007) on language education in regional or minority languages;

Considering the related aims of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations:

- the Council of the European Union Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (2019/C 189/03);
- the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies (2012);
- the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and in particular SDG 4, which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all;

Having regard to other official declarations, conclusions, policy documents and survey findings relevant to the promotion of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic citizenship:

- the Political declaration on the education response to the COVID crisis endorsed by the Informal Conference of Ministers of Education organised under the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (2020) and its accompanying road map for action;
- the 25th anniversary Declaration of the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML), "Quality language education for a democratic, socially cohesive and peaceful Europe: nine ECML cornerstones";

- the conclusions of the 2010 Council of Europe Intergovernmental Language Policy Forum “The right of learners to quality and equity in education – The role of linguistic and intercultural competences”;
- the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living together as equals in dignity” (2008);
- the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) “Survey of intercultural dialogue 2017: analysis of findings” (2017);
- UNESCO’s Policy Paper 24 “If you don’t understand, how can you learn?” (2016);

Bearing in mind policy guidelines and frameworks that provide conceptual and practical support for plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic citizenship, in particular:

- the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (2018);
- the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR 2001) and the CEFR Companion volume (2020);
- A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures (2012);
- From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe (2007);

Recognising the cognitive, linguistic and societal benefits of learning a range of languages and the disadvantages for learners who have access to only one additional language;

Recognising that the preservation and promotion of Europe’s linguistic diversity are preconditions for the cohesion of European societies;

Reaffirming that linguistic and cultural diversity within a country reflects the vitality and richness of Europe’s culture;

Recognising that language is essential to understanding, assessing and formulating the arguments and opinions that are essential to democracy;

Recognising that quality language education plays a crucial role in developing the will and ability of individuals and societies to understand those whose backgrounds and views are different from their own;

Recognising that plurilingual and intercultural competences contribute to equitable and inclusive education, educational success, participation in democratic culture and societal integration;

Recognising that plurilingual and intercultural education also supports the educational and social inclusion of migrant and marginalised learners;

Recognising that the digital environment provides an unprecedented means for people to express themselves using different languages and opens new opportunities to enhance language learning and to support and promote languages not taught in the curriculum, all of which underpins the culture of democracy that enables democratic institutions to function properly,

1. Recommends that the governments of member States:
 - a. implement the measures set out in the appendix to this recommendation, taking due account of national, regional and/or local circumstances, and in conformity with constitutional provisions;
 - b. encourage school principals, directors and managers to implement whole-school policies and practices that welcome and valorise linguistic and cultural diversity, promote language learning and the development of plurilingual repertoires, encourage intercultural learning and prepare pupils and students to participate in democratic culture;
 - c. request institutions responsible for the initial and further education of teachers to focus on pedagogies that foster inclusive plurilingual and intercultural education and enable student teachers and teachers to implement them across the curriculum;

- d. invite higher education institutions to review their policy and practices with a view to ensuring that their graduates are equipped with the linguistic and cultural resources needed to participate in the democratic processes of Europe's diverse societies;
 - e. encourage universities and other competent institutions and agencies to engage in research that contributes to international understanding of plurilingualism and intercultural dialogue at all educational levels and in all social domains;
 - f. encourage agencies, organisations and networks that promote non-formal and lifelong learning to foster plurilingualism and intercultural dialogue and recognise their benefits for education and democratic culture;
 - g. encourage school inspectors and agencies responsible for quality assurance and quality improvement to foster and support plurilingual and intercultural education in all educational sectors and at all levels;
 - h. support collaboration between educational and cultural institutions, civil society and businesses to promote plurilingual and intercultural learning for democratic culture;
 - i. support the efforts of relevant bodies to encourage public debate about languages and cultures, language learning and plurilingualism, and their importance for personal and professional development, quality education, societal integration and access to human rights and democracy;
 - j. ensure that this Recommendation, including the guidelines contained in the appendix, is translated and disseminated as widely as possible among competent authorities, stakeholders, the press and other media, through accessible means, modes and formats of communication;
 - k. review the implementation of this Recommendation on a regular basis within the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU);
2. Requests the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to transmit this recommendation to:
- the governments of those States Parties to the European Cultural Convention which are not members of the Council of Europe;
 - the European Union;
 - the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD);
 - the United Nations, in particular UNESCO, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education;
 - the OSCE, in particular the High Commissioner on National Minorities;
 - the professional associations and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that comprise the Professional Network Forum of the European Centre for Modern Languages.

Appendix to Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1

Guidelines for developing and promoting plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture

1. Purpose

The efficient functioning of democracies depends on social inclusion and societal integration, which in turn depend on an understanding of, respect for and engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity. This recommendation aims to give fresh impetus to the promotion, development, and implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education, recognising its importance for personal and professional development, equity, societal integration, the exercise of human rights and participation in democratic culture.

2. Scope

These guidelines seek to define the elements required to support the development of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture, which valorises all languages, spoken and signed, whether or not they have official status or are part of the official curriculum. The guidelines are aimed at:

- i. public authorities at all levels and other official actors responsible for education systems, in particular for the development of policies, curriculums and the content of educational programmes, and the design and administration of public examinations;
- ii. school principals, directors, managers and their teaching and other staff;
- iii. those responsible for the initial and further education of teachers;
- iv. universities and other institutions of post-secondary education;
- v. school inspectors and agencies responsible for quality assurance and quality improvement in education;
- vi. institutions involved in educational research;
- vii. organisations involved in non-formal education and lifelong learning;
- viii. academic associations and teachers' and lecturers' unions and associations;
- ix. international, national, regional and local associations of parents/guardians;
- x. employers concerned with language learning and the promotion of social integration in the workplace;
- xi. NGOs and private organisations involved in the promotion of language learning.

Because plurilingualism, intercultural dialogue and democratic culture are matters of concern for society at large, these guidelines are also relevant to civil society (sports, music, social and cultural associations, etc.), businesses, the media and a wide range of other stakeholder groups.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this text, the following definitions are relevant:

- a. "Plurilingualism" is "the potential and/or actual ability to use several languages to varying levels of proficiency and for different purposes" (Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe, p. 10). As a "communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact", plurilingualism develops "as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience)" (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, section 1.3).
- b. "Multilingualism" refers to the presence of two or more languages in a community or society.
- c. "Plurilingual repertoire" refers to the different languages an individual is able to use. The languages may have been learnt in different contexts (in the home, through social contact, at school, etc.); they may be used for different purposes (communicating with the family, socialising with neighbours, studying at school or university, etc.); sometimes two or more of them may be used at the same

time. Plurilingual repertoires are dynamic in the sense that their constituent languages interrelate and interact, and they are fluid, tending to change over the course of a lifetime. It is usual to have different levels of competence in the various languages of a plurilingual repertoire.

- d. “Intercultural competence” is the capacity to approach other people with respect, openness and understanding; to argue for and justify one’s own point of view in a sensitive and responsible manner; and to use one’s experience of cultural diversity to reflect critically on issues that one usually takes for granted. Intercultural competence may or may not include the ability to communicate in two or more languages.
- e. “Mediation” refers to activities that facilitate communication between individuals or groups who, for whatever reason, are unable to communicate with each other directly. In an extended sense, mediation refers to the linguistic and cultural processes by which schools and other educational institutions help their learners to negotiate meaning, construct knowledge and engage with linguistic and cultural diversity.
- f. “Language/s of schooling” refers to the dominant language/s of learning and teaching, extra-curricular activities and institutional management. It embraces both language as a subject in its own right (literacy, literature) and language in other subjects (for example, history, maths, science). In most contexts, the language of schooling is a national or official regional language; sign languages may be used in the education of the deaf.
- g. “Home language/s” refers to the language/s of domestic communication and the language/s acquired in early childhood, including sign languages. The term is used to refer to any and all languages used in a home context and does not imply a value judgment.
- h. “Additional language” is an umbrella term that refers to any language an individual learns in addition to their home language/s. By focusing on the individual’s developing plurilingual repertoire rather than specific languages, the term avoids the confusion that can arise, for example, by labelling as “foreign” a language that is foreign to the majority but the home language of a minority of learners.
- i. “Plurilingual and intercultural education” is a holistic concept that has an impact on all areas of education policy and practice. Setting out to foster the development of integrated linguistic repertoires in which languages interrelate and interact, it takes explicit account of and seeks to bring into interaction with one another:
 - i. the languages and cultures that learners bring with them, including sign, minority and migrant languages and cultures;
 - ii. the language/s of schooling, which vary in genre and terminology according to the different subjects taught and differ in significant ways from the language of informal everyday communication;
 - iii. regional, minority and other languages and cultures that are part of the curriculum;
 - iv. foreign languages (modern and classical);
 - v. other languages and cultures that are not present in school and not part of the official curriculum.

The learning of at least two languages in addition to the language/s of schooling is often considered an essential element of plurilingual and intercultural education.

4. Principles

Plurilingual and intercultural education:

- i. is essential to education for democratic culture;
- ii. respects and values linguistic and cultural diversity;
- iii. promotes language awareness and language sensitivity across the curriculum;
- iv. encourages critical reflection on cultural diversity;
- v. helps to foster critical digital literacy and digital citizenship;
- vi. encourages learner autonomy and values the learner’s voice;
- vii. supports the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised learners on an equal footing with other learners.

5. Measures

a. *Introduction*

- i. The following measures embody a vision of education based on the Council of Europe's foundational values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
- ii. The measures spell out what this recommendation implies for public authorities at all levels and other official actors responsible for schools, universities and other institutions of post-secondary education; and organisations that promote non-formal and lifelong learning.
- iii. The full implementation of the measures, which requires co-ordination at national level and collaboration between agencies of formal, non-formal and lifelong learning, is the work of many years because it entails shifts not only in educational policy and practice but also in societal attitudes to linguistic and cultural diversity.
- iv. Much can nevertheless be achieved in the meantime by adjusting policy and practice at the level of the educational institution and the classroom and by drawing on existing Council of Europe resources.
- v. In implementing plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture, all authorities and agencies concerned by education should adapt these measures to their own context.

b. *Policy and practice*

Those responsible for national, regional and institutional policy in all educational sectors should:

- i. review existing policies with a view to strengthening plurilingual and intercultural education and supporting linguistic and cultural diversity;
- ii. ensure that the language dimension of all subjects is made explicit in curriculum guidelines and curriculums;
- iii. ensure that curriculum guidelines and curriculums provide pupils and students with the opportunity to develop, ideally in at least two languages in addition to the language/s of schooling, the competences needed to engage in authentic and progressively complex oral and written communication, and that every effort is made to provide certification of those competences;
- iv. encourage the learning of additional languages from an early age and ensure that at each successive stage of education account is taken of the competences learners have already developed;
- v. reflect on traditional linguistic hierarchies and seek to diversify the range of languages offered;
- vi. promote the teaching of languages in interaction with one another;
- vii. encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration between teachers of different languages and different curriculum subjects;
- viii. promote bilingual and immersion education and content and language integrated learning (CLIL);
- ix. explore ways of including home languages – signed as well as spoken – that are not part of the official curriculum in the educational process and, where appropriate, provide formal recognition and certification of those languages;
- x. ensure the quality of language learning and acknowledge the contribution made by non-formal education and informal learning;
- xi. create conditions that are favourable to the organisation of complex learning environments, including those that fully integrate the use of digital media;
- xii. support the creation of teaching and learning resources designed to help the development of plurilingual repertoires and intercultural awareness and competences;
- xiii. encourage pedagogical approaches that empower learners by developing their autonomy and their critical thinking skills, make space for the learner's voice, create a democratic classroom and school culture and prepare learners for lifelong learning;
- xiv. encourage pedagogical approaches that develop learners' language and cultural awareness and equip them to engage in intercultural dialogue;
- xv. encourage the adoption of inclusive whole-school/institution-wide approaches to linguistic and intercultural policy and practice;

- xvi. support the creation and use of assessment instruments that are fully aligned with the goals of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture;
- xvii. encourage learning mobility, whether physical or virtual, on the part of teachers and learners;
- xviii. facilitate the professional development of teachers and other educational staff in relation to plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture;
- xix. engage parents, guardians and those responsible for non-formal educational initiatives in activities that promote, celebrate and highlight the value of plurilingualism and intercultural dialogue.

c. *Initial and further education of teachers*

Institutions and agencies responsible for the initial and further education of teachers and educators in all sectors and at all levels should promote plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture by:

- i. assigning a central role in their own curriculums to the concepts and principles on which such education rests, including the language dimension of all curriculum subjects;
- ii. challenging attitudes, beliefs and preconceptions about language, language learning, plurilingualism, culture and intercultural learning;
- iii. developing student teachers' and teachers' own plurilingual and intercultural competences as an essential dimension of their pedagogical competences;
- iv. engaging teachers in a detailed exploration of what plurilingual and intercultural approaches to education entail in terms of classroom practice;
- v. helping teachers to develop the pedagogical competences needed to manage linguistic and cultural diversity for the benefit of all pupils and students;
- vi. helping teachers to develop the pedagogical competences needed to support a democratic classroom culture that fosters autonomous learning and critical thinking and makes space for the inclusion of the learner's voice;
- vii. helping teachers to develop assessment competences that take account of plurilingual and intercultural learning;
- viii. encouraging teacher mobility as an important aspect of professional development;
- ix. developing teachers' competence in action research so that they can contribute to the evidence-based development of educational policy and practice.

6. Co-operation

a. *Intersectoral co-operation*

Public authorities and other official actors should seek to engage the support of civil society, employers, the private sector and a wide range of stakeholder groups for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture.

b. *Parents and legal guardians*

Public authorities and other official actors should invite international, national, regional and local associations of parents or guardians to take note of this Recommendation and support its implementation.

c. *Professional bodies*

Public authorities and other official actors should inform academic associations and teachers' and lecturers' unions and associations about this Recommendation and invite them to support its implementation.

d. *Council of Europe*

The Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice, through the intergovernmental Language Policy Programme, and the European Centre for Modern Languages are committed to continuing their support for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture. The Council of Europe is also committed to strengthening its co-operation with the European Commission in the field of language education, in particular through the annual co-operation agreements between the European Commission and the European Centre for Modern Languages.