Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l'Enseignement Supérieur

European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education

Europäischer Verband der Hochschulsprachenzentren

Secrétariat Général

Secretary General

Generalsekretariat

Åbo Akademi University
Language Centre
Tehtaankatu 2
FI-20500 Turku
Finland
tel. +358 469 216 003
e-mail: generalsecretariat@cercles.org
website: http://www.cercles.org

CercleS Focus Group Language Testing and Assessment White Paper

1. Introduction to the topic and relevance

Language education is a cornerstone of fostering global communication and cultural understanding, particularly in higher education (HE) institutions. The creation of our focus group stems from the growing recognition that European universities and language centers face multifaceted challenges in adapting to an evolving linguistic and academic landscape. Assessment is a core and problematic issue in all European universities as its impact on the design of language curricula cannot be denied. This holistic perspective calls for collaborative exploration to ensure the quality and inclusivity of language learning and assessment practices in academic contexts.

Themes

- Best practices in formative and summative language assessment in the academic context
- Innovations in digital assessment tools for language proficiency
- Effective assessment of multilingual learners
- Equity and inclusivity in language assessment
- Preparing students for standardized language exams
- Test construct/language construct (reception, production, interaction, mediation)
- Approach to assessment (integrated, scenario-based, task-based, action-oriented)
- Assessing language competence
- Different types of assessment and their combinations (e.g., criterion-based, scalar, qualitative, quantitative)
- Articulation of language policy and assessment strategies

Target Audience

- Educators and language teachers
- Curriculum developers
- Policymakers in education
- Testing and assessment developers

Presidency
Dr Julia Zabala Delgado | Centro de Lenguas | Universitat Politècnica de València |
Camí de Vera, s/n | Edificio 4P | 46022 Valencia, Spain
tel. +34 96 387 70 00 | e-mail: juzadel@upv.es
General Secretariat
Dr Mia Panisse | Åbo Akademi University | Language Centre |
Tehtaankatu 2 | FI-20500 Turku, Finland
tel. +358 469 216 003 | e-mail: generalsecretariat@cercles.org

CercleS is a Non-Governmental Organisation affiliated to the Council of Europe

- Language center managers
- CercleS community
- CercleS Executive Committee

Challenges in European Language Centers and Universities

- **Limited Resources and Staffing**: Language centers often grapple with budget constraints and insufficient staffing, affecting the quality and accessibility of language programs. In this context, how is it possible to set up quality-based assessment policies?
- **Adaptation to Digital Tools**: The rapid shift toward online language learning and assessment exposes gaps in technological infrastructure and educators' proficiency in utilizing digital platforms. In addition, digitalization of language assessment may pose challenges in terms of safeguarding academic integrity and accessibility for test takers (equity/fairness/justice/reliability).
- **Multilingual and Diverse Classrooms**: Increasingly diverse student populations require tailored approaches to language teaching, learning and assessment, which can pose logistical and pedagogical difficulties.
- **Alignment with Standardized Assessments**: Balancing local curriculum needs with the demands of international language exams adds strain on institutional frameworks.

2. Proposed Solutions and Actions

2.1. Enhanced Professional Development:

- Provide workshops and training for educators on digital tools and innovative teaching, learning and assessment strategies.
- Establish mentorship programs to support language educators in adopting best practices.
- Design specific workshops to help language teachers and policy makers to align assessment and curricula in order to answer the needs of second language learners in the contemporary world.

2.2. Advocacy for Increased Funding:

- Lobby for policy changes to secure dedicated financial resources for language programs.
- Foster partnerships with external organizations to co-fund language initiatives.

Presidency
Dr Julia Zabala Delgado | Centro de Lenguas | Universitat Politècnica de València |
Camí de Vera, s/n | Edificio 4P | 46022 Valencia, Spain
tel. +34 96 387 70 00 | e-mail: juzadel@upv.es
General Secretariat
Dr Mia Panisse | Åbo Akademi University | Language Centre |
Tehtaankatu 2 | FI-20500 Turku, Finland
tel. +358 469 216 003 | e-mail: generalsecretariat@cercles.org

CercleS is a Non-Governmental Organisation affiliated to the Council of Europe

2.3. Curriculum Modernization:

- Develop materials and methodologies that embrace multilingualism and diversity in classrooms.
- Integrate meaningful, formative assessments that support learners in language ability development and inform teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching.
- Focus on constructive alignment of learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment tasks to support deep and effective learning and respond to students' individual learning needs in the academic and professional contexts.

2.4. Strengthened Collaboration:

- Encourage cross-institutional partnerships for sharing resources and expertise.
- Formulate a unified approach to bridge local and standardized assessment practices by aligning them to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume.

3. Intended Impact

These proposed actions aim to create a sustainable ecosystem for language education that is inclusive, adaptive, and robust, ultimately enhancing both teacher and student experiences.

4. References and Further Reading

Council of Europe (2020): *CEFR Companion Volume*.

Council of Europe: *Assessment - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)*. https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/assessment

European Commission (2023): *Multilingualism in Higher Education: Policies and Practices*.

UNESCO (2023): *Digital Tools for Inclusive Education*.

FG coordinators:

Barbara Sawicka (barbara.sawicka@put.poznan.pl)

Laurent Rouveyrol (laurent.rouveyrol@sorbonne-nouvelle.fr)

June 2025