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 English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Higher Education

White Paper

1. Introduction to the topic and relevance

Teaching in English is increasingly common at European universities, reflecting the growing internationalization of higher education. The shift towards EMI requires academic teachers to develop not only subject-specific expertise but also effective strategies for content delivery in an international, multilingual environment.

The EMI Focus Group was established to address these evolving demands by supporting the professional development of educators, fostering collaboration, and enhancing teaching quality in EMI settings.

Our key aims and scope of interest include:

- exploring EMI in Higher Education;
- investigating the role of language centres in creating and supporting professional development programmes and educational initiatives for EMI;
- designing, piloting, and implementing tailored courses and training sessions for EMI teachers;
- producing general guidelines for EMI teachers and teachers-to-be;
- collecting data from content teachers, language teachers, and students regarding past experiences and future challenges in EMI;
- exchanging teaching materials, pedagogical approaches, and resources used in EMI courses;
- supporting networking among content teachers who deliver courses in English;
- establishing intensive EMI courses for higher education lecturers;
- conducting and sharing research on the effectiveness of EMI in higher education;
- promoting best practices and innovations in language education from the student's perspective - special attention given to the learner support provided by Language Centres, ensuring that students receive tailored assistance, inclusive pedagogics, autonomy, motivation, effective feedback mechanisms, resources, and guidance to help them achieve their language and content learning goals.

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 |
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Challenges in European Language Centers and Universities

The implementation of EMI presents challenges for European universities and language centres, affecting both teachers and students. Some key challenges we plan to examine include:

- language proficiency and pedagogical skills: many academic teachers lack formal training in teaching through English, leading to concerns about linguistic accuracy, clarity, and classroom interaction;
- student comprehension and engagement: students, particularly non-native English speakers, may struggle with understanding lectures and expressing their ideas confidently in academic discourse;
- institutional support and resources: universities often lack structured EMI training programmes, guidelines, and sufficient support for educators transitioning to EMI;
- cultural and communication barriers: intercultural differences can impact both teaching styles and student participation, requiring teachers to adopt culturally sensitive pedagogical strategies;
- quality assurance and assessment: establishing clear benchmarks for EMI course effectiveness and ensuring fair assessment practices remain ongoing challenges.

2. Proposed Solutions and Actions

The EMI Focus Group proposes a range of solutions to address these challenges and enhance EMI implementation:

- equipping teachers with EMI tools: providing training in classroom management, student engagement, and discipline-specific language support;
- developing EMI guides and materials: creating comprehensive resources for academic staff and administrators to navigate EMI effectively;
- offering EMI courses, webinars, and workshops: conducting targeted training sessions to strengthen lecturers' language and pedagogical skills;
- supporting teaching material development: assisting academic staff in preparing linguistically sound and pedagogically effective materials for diverse student cohorts;
- enhancing public speaking and communication skills: trainings in effective delivery techniques and intercultural communication;
- facilitating networking and peer support: encouraging collaboration and exchange of best practices among EMI teachers;

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- organizing conferences and training events: establishing forums for knowledge-sharing and professional development in EMI;
- The EMI Focus Group and its collaboration with European Alliances - the aim is to establish links with European University Alliances that are also working on the development of language policies; EMI courses will be delivered within the framework of the EUNICE European University.

3. Intended Impact

By implementing these initiatives, European language centres and universities can:

- improve the quality and accessibility of EMI courses;
- strengthen faculty competence and confidence in teaching through English;
- enhance student learning outcomes and engagement;
- promote international collaboration and academic mobility;
- foster inclusive and effective multilingual learning environments.

Through ongoing research, resource-sharing, and targeted training, the EMI Focus Group aims to advance EMI practices across European higher education institutions, ensuring academic excellence in an increasingly globalized university setting.

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FG coordinators:

Edyta Olejarczuk, PhD (edyta.olejarczuk@put.poznan.pl)

Nuala Mederski MA (nuala.mederski@put.poznan.pl)

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