



European Schools

Office of the Secretary-General

Pedagogical Development Unit

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Basic proficiency level

Approved by the Board of Governors of the European Schools on 3, 4 and 5 December 2012 in Brussels

Decision of the Board of Governors:

The Board of Governors approved proposal A of the document “Languages Working group: final proposal” ref: 2012-01-D-36-en-5, concerning the basic proficiency level, with entry into force on 1 September 2013, the proposal being financially neutral.

A. Basic proficiency level

The 'Languages' Working Group agreed (see table below) with the definitions of the basic proficiency level in all modern languages according to the Common European Framework levels.

Basic proficiency level in the different cycles

	Nursery	Primary	S3	S5	S7
L2	0	A2	B1	B2	C1
L3	0	0	A1+	A2+	B1+
L4 advanced 4h	0	0	0	A1	A2+
L4 basic 2h	0	0	0	A1	A2
ONL	A1.1 oral	A1.2	A2	B1	B2

This reference has actually already been used in the new L3 syllabus recently approved and in the core syllabus for L2 for the primary.

However, the parents' representatives considered that these levels are not high enough, that they do not indicate real language attainment levels in the schools but instead they cater for the lowest common denominator and universities will not understand what level the pupil really has achieved.

In that connection, it was specified that these levels correspond to the 'basic proficiency level' and that higher performance levels will also be encouraged, aimed at and recognised.

An introduction to the CEFR and its link with the European Schools' syllabuses and assessment is appended to this document (Annex I).

ANNEX I

The European Framework of Reference in the syllabus of the European Schools; Aspects of performance assessment

In the syllabuses for foreign languages in the European Schools, the technical learning objectives of the CEFR reference levels are only slightly adapted in their wording, in order to achieve international and national comparability with all those instruments which likewise refer to the Framework of Reference, such as curricula of other countries or other national educational establishments (e.g. of universities and colleges), international certificates, process-oriented work instruments accompanying the learning pathway, such as the European Language Portfolio (ELP)² and, in the meantime, job descriptions also.

Classification of proficiency levels and years of learning

The classification of the proficiency levels in terms of the different stages of learning answers the question of what pupils should be required to be able to do at a specific stage of learning. The target competences formulated in the different skills areas thus represent the basic requirements which are considered to be a stage of learning for all learners.

The classification of the proficiency levels has been compared with those of the national syllabuses and adjusted to match the learning of foreign languages in the European Schools.

Proficiency levels and marking/grading scale

The question of how well pupils fulfil these basic requirements has to be answered within the framework of their individual learning profiles and verified accordingly with the European Schools' marking/grading scale: thus, for example, for a mark of 6.0 to be awarded, all the competences formulated in the CEFR skills grid for the given level must be largely mastered in terms of those basic linguistic, pragmatic and socio-linguistic aspects which are essential for successful communication in the skills area concerned.

In the appraisal of the individual learning profiles, learning-specific criteria of the classroom situation, e.g. pupil's participation, should be included in addition to fulfilment of the basic requirements.

'Tertiary languages' effect

Pupils in the European Schools should be encouraged to use existing linguistic abilities and learning strategies.

Resorting to existing linguistic abilities can be of great use to the learner's strategies when learning a third or fourth language ('tertiary languages' effect).

Reflective use of language, comparative observations and knowledge of general skills in language learning can clearly be conducive to language acquisition.

Learning pathway

Another point to be borne in mind is that progress in foreign language acquisition is not like a steadily rising line but an increasingly flattening curve: basic speaking ability (A1/A2) is essentially acquired more quickly than at the more advanced stages of learning (B1/B2).

Sources:

1) *Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen: lernen, lehren, beurteilen. Niveau A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2.*

(Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessing. Levels A1-A2-B1-B2-C1-C2)

Langenscheidt, Berlin/Munich/Vienna/Zürich/New York 2001 (German version)

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2) *European Language Portfolio, ISBN 88-424-7518-1*

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