Time for a new CEFR?
Recommendations from the field

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ALTE PARIS 2014

Background

- Partner / coordinator in over 20 European projects : EuroCatering.org, Precolt, iTILT.eu, Teaching Languages to Caregivers etc.
- National calls for project proposals (CEBIR, AKOV, ZorgTaal)
- Host of international conferences:
  - Antwerp CALL: Research Challenges in CALL (07/2014)
  - Linguapolis Summer School: A Toolbox for Design-Based Research
  - Linguapolis Master Class: Educational Engineering

Star(t)ing point

- *Competence and performance*
  What is the link between 'can do' performance statements and areas of linguistic knowledge? To what extent can or should the levels be made more explicit in terms of required vocabulary and grammar?

- *Degree of difficulty of the levels*
  How can we make sure that our examinations are measuring at the CEFR levels we claim they are? What evidence do we have to support our claims?

- *Test purpose*
  Why are we testing? What kind of decisions will be made on the basis of information collected via the test? What will be the consequences of these decisions?

- *Practicality*
  How do we link our tests to the CEFR? How practical, applicable and operational is the CEFR for concrete language testing situations?

Conference

- Language Testing in Europe: Time for a New Framework?
- International Conference hosted by the University of Antwerp
- 27-28-29 May 2013

Organising committee:

- Jozef Colpaert, Linguapolis and Institute for Education and Information Sciences (Chair)
- Ann Aerts, Linguapolis (Conference Manager)
- Mathea Simons, Institute for Education and Information Sciences
- Margret Oberhofer, Linguapolis

Conference format

Interaction with delegates

- Pre-conference survey
- Reflection and discussion
- Post-reflection: Time for a New Framework?

Keynote speakers

Paper presentations

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Speakers

- **Keynote speakers:**
  - Lyle Bachman, Professor Emeritus, Department of Applied Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles
  - Waldemar Martyniuk, Executive Director European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe

- **Invited speakers:**
  - Etienne Devaux, Screening methodologist, SELOR (Belgian public personnel selection and certification agency)
  - Jan Hulstijn, Professor of Second Language Acquisition, Universiteit Amsterdam

Preconference survey

- Survey 1
  - Sent to participants May 20th
  - Return **115 (64,7%)**

- Survey 2
  - Sent to colleagues in CALL database (May 20th)
  - Posted on L-test listserver & LinkedIn Groups
  - Return **235**

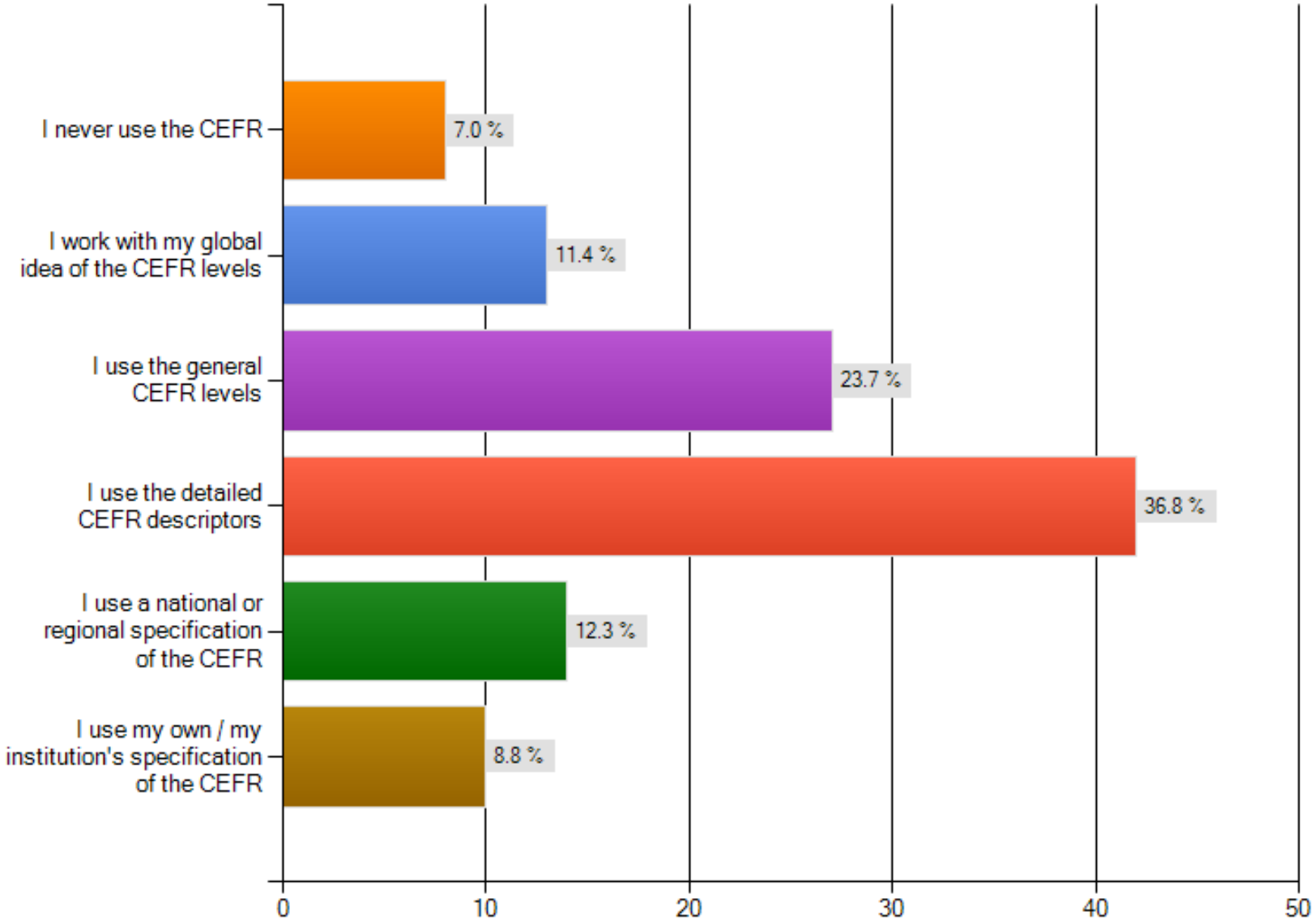
Results in mailbox (+ open answers)

Preconference survey

- In my job I mostly use the CEFR as follows….
- When I use the CEFR in my job, I use it to…
- When I use the CEFR in my job, I do this because…
- I evaluate the CEFR on the following points as…
  - Applicability
  - Practicality
  - Usefulness
  - Authenticity
  - Clarity
  - Detailedness
- I evaluate the CEFR levels and descriptors as…
  - Difficulty degree
  - Definition

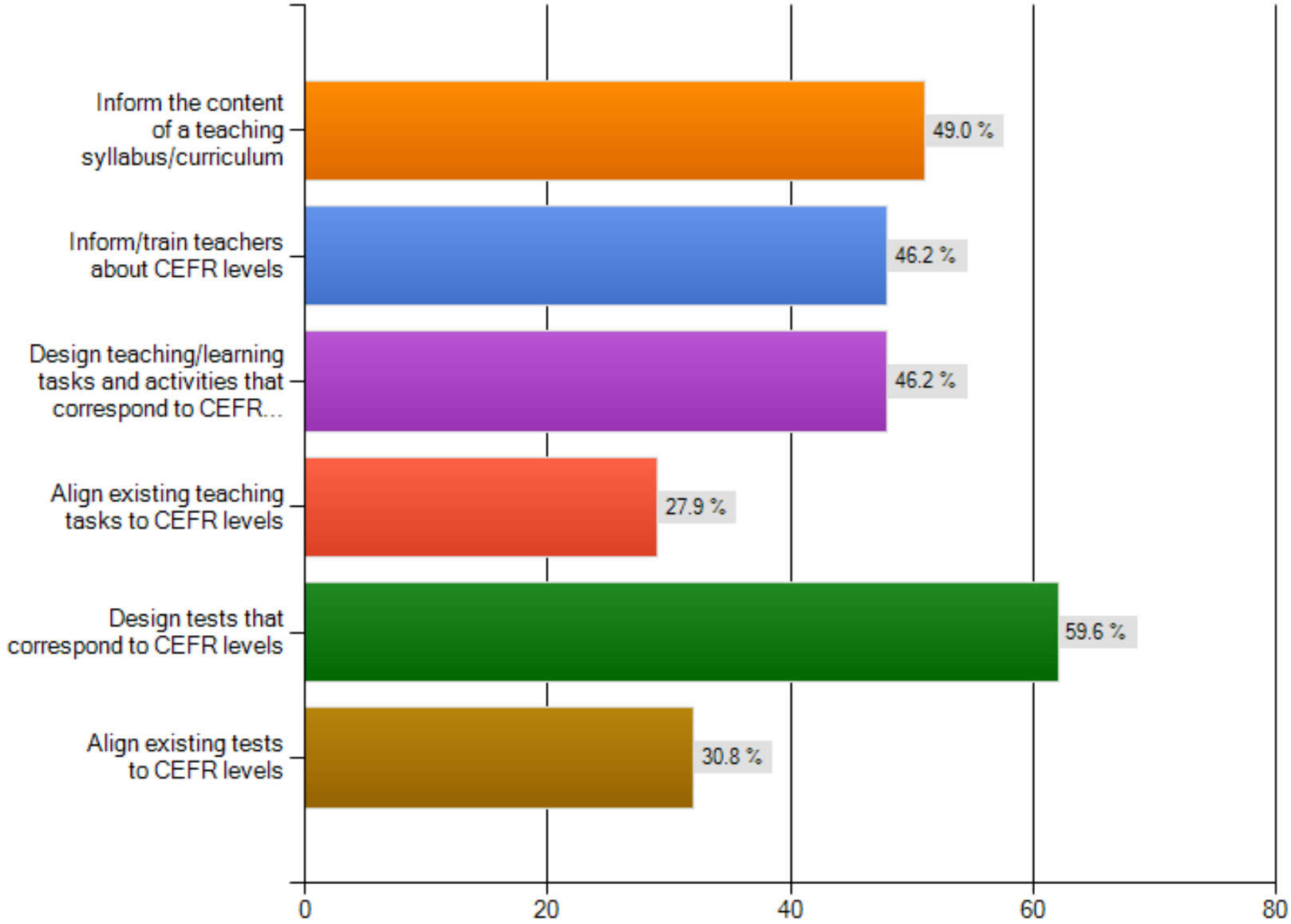
1. In my job I mostly use the CEFR as follows:

(one possible answer)



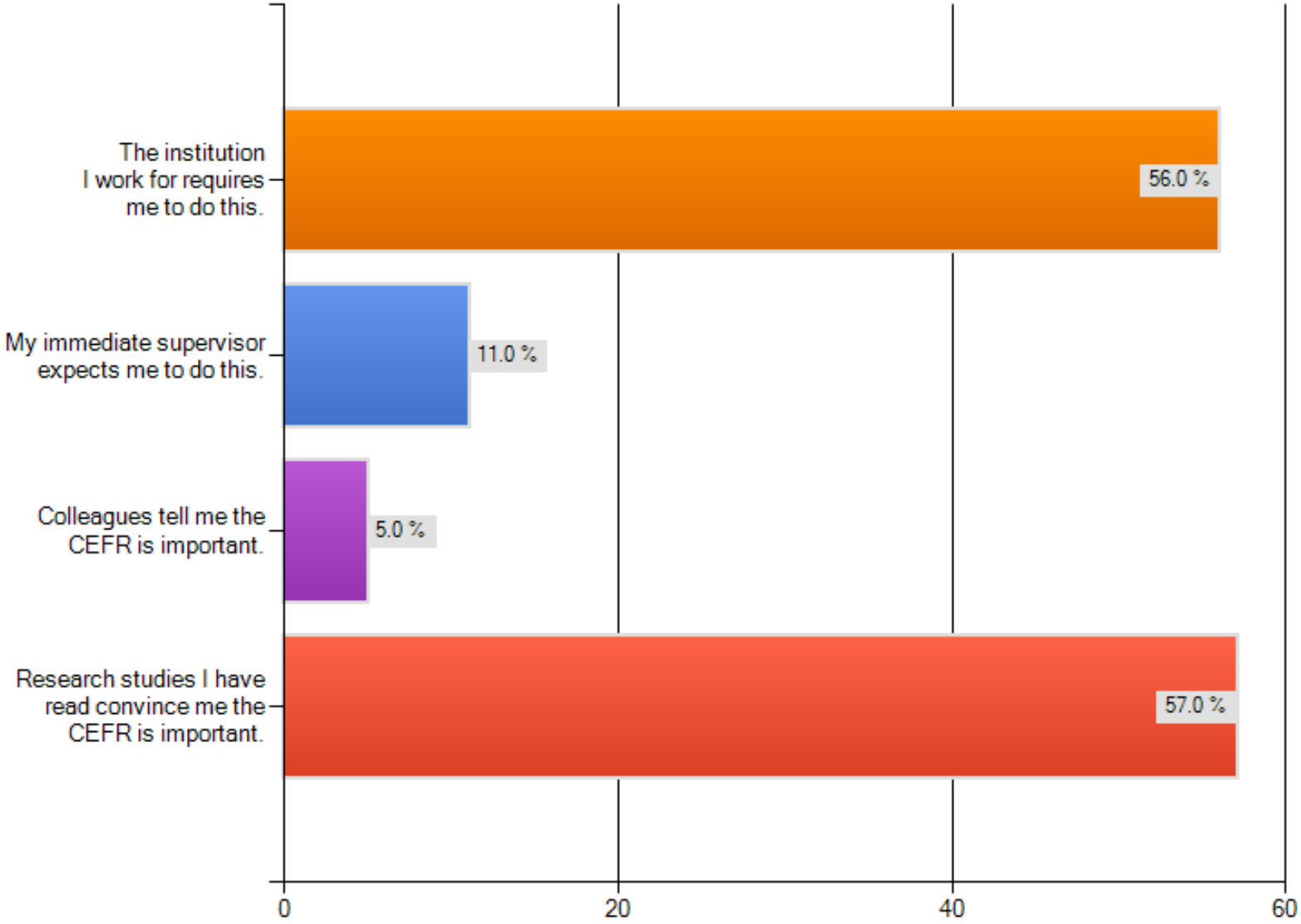
2. When I use the CEFR in my job, I use it to:

(more answers possible)

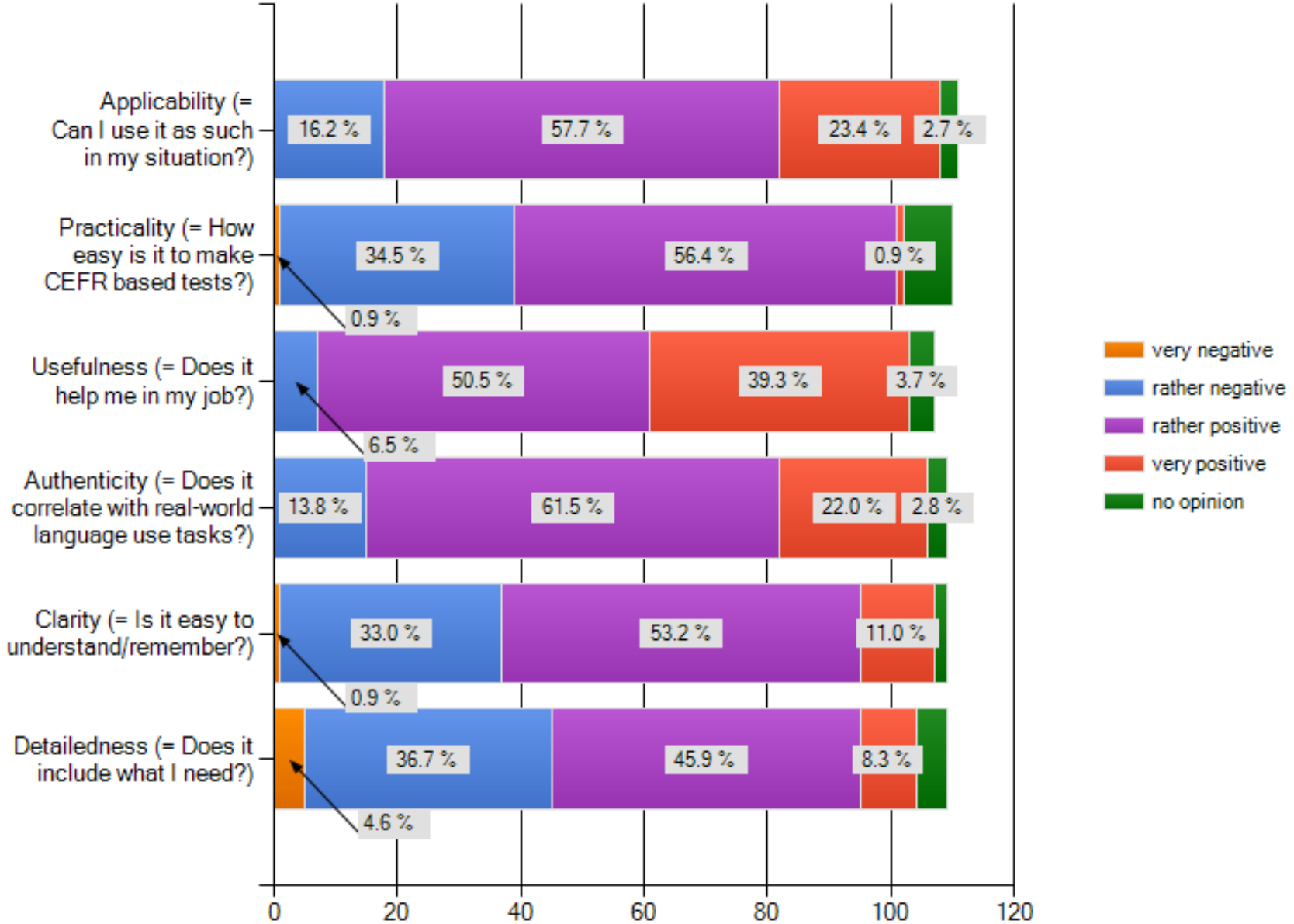


3. When I use the CEFR in my job, I do this because:

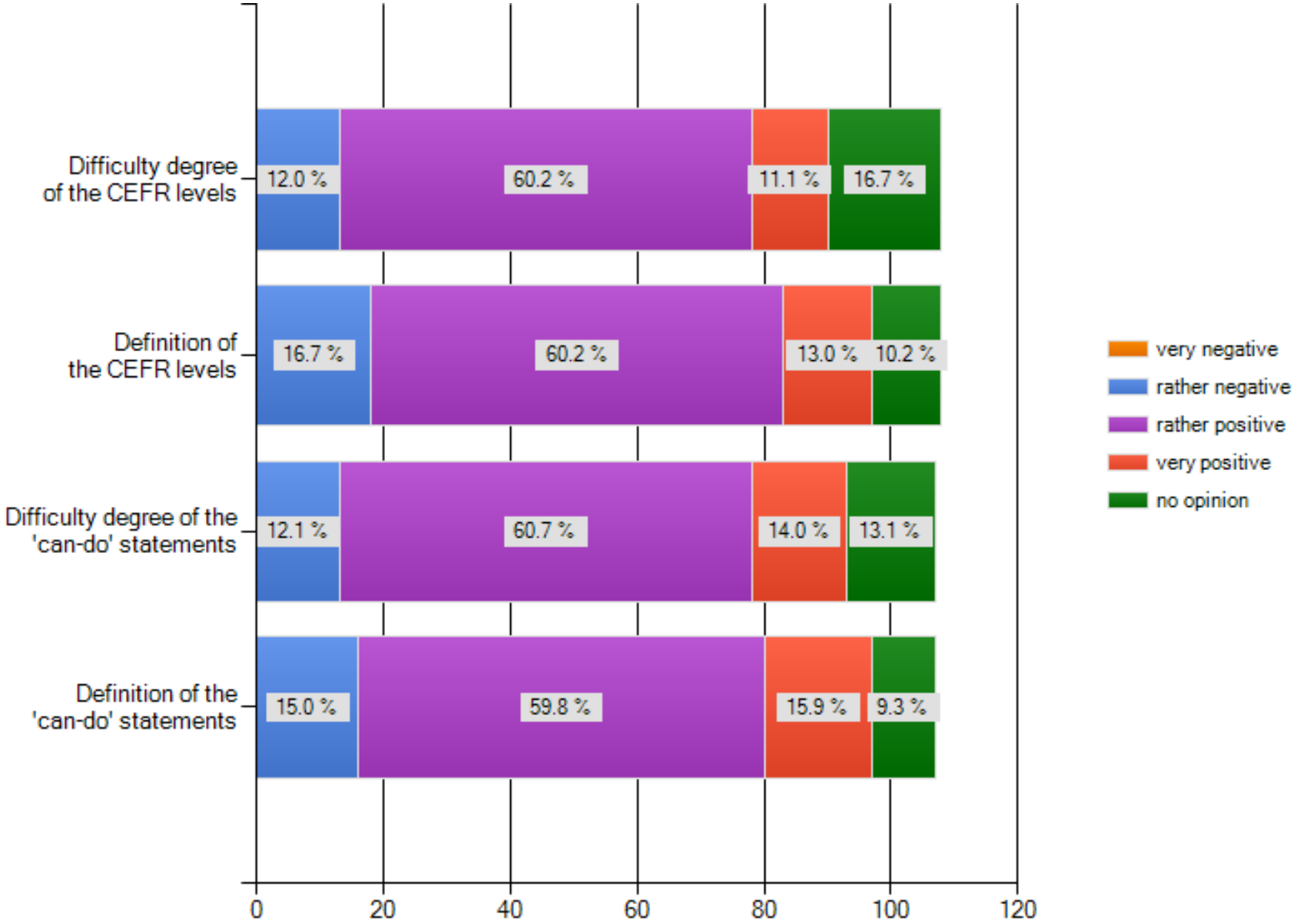
(more answers possible)



4. I evaluate the CEFR on the following points as:



5. I evaluate the CEFR levels and descriptors as:



Post-reflection:
Time for a new framework?

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1. Presentation of the results of the session ‘Reflection and discussion’:
   - Which aspects of the CEFR are amenable to improvement?
   - Who should do what and how?
   - Try to formulate 2-3 tweet-like statements per person/ group.

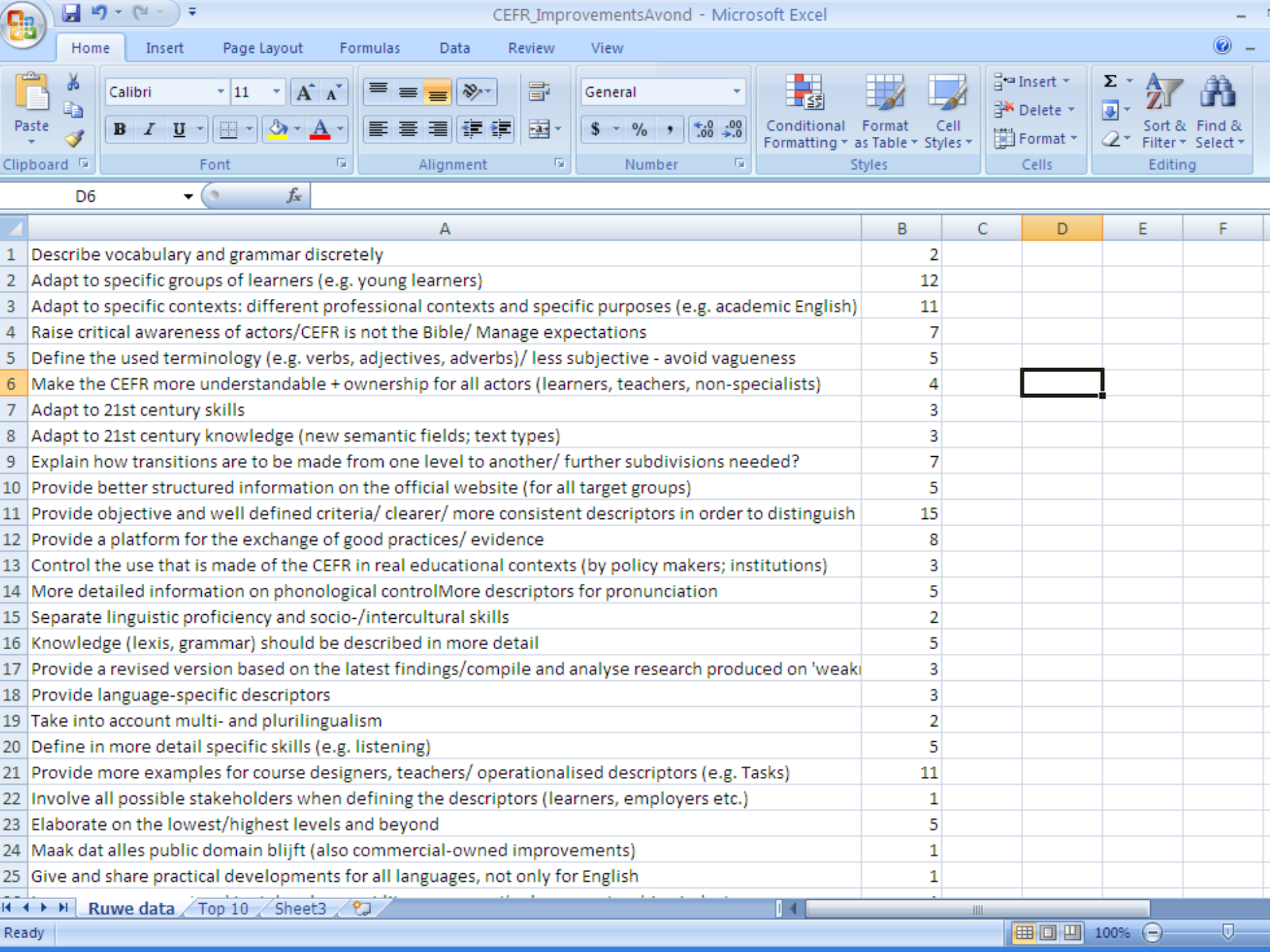
2. Suggestions of the keynote speakers

3. Determine together the priorities (n=3) using our voting system

- Return: n = 53
- Suggested improvements: n= 151

Used methodology

- Transcription of the paper versions
- Keywords
- Definition of possible improvements (n= 35)
- Quantification



	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Describe vocabulary and grammar discretely	2				
2	Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)	12				
3	Adapt to specific contexts: different professional contexts and specific purposes (e.g. academic English)	11				
4	Raise critical awareness of actors/CEFR is not the Bible/ Manage expectations	7				
5	Define the used terminology (e.g. verbs, adjectives, adverbs)/ less subjective - avoid vagueness	5				
6	Make the CEFR more understandable + ownership for all actors (learners, teachers, non-specialists)	4				
7	Adapt to 21st century skills	3				
8	Adapt to 21st century knowledge (new semantic fields; text types)	3				
9	Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another/ further subdivisions needed?	7				
10	Provide better structured information on the official website (for all target groups)	5				
11	Provide objective and well defined criteria/ clearer/ more consistent descriptors in order to distinguish	15				
12	Provide a platform for the exchange of good practices/ evidence	8				
13	Control the use that is made of the CEFR in real educational contexts (by policy makers; institutions)	3				
14	More detailed information on phonological controlMore descriptors for pronunciation	5				
15	Separate linguistic proficiency and socio-/intercultural skills	2				
16	Knowledge (lexis, grammar) should be described in more detail	5				
17	Provide a revised version based on the latest findings/compile and analyse research produced on 'weak	3				
18	Provide language-specific descriptors	3				
19	Take into account multi- and plurilingualism	2				
20	Define in more detail specific skills (e.g. listening)	5				
21	Provide more examples for course designers, teachers/ operationalised descriptors (e.g. Tasks)	11				
22	Involve all possible stakeholders when defining the descriptors (learners, employers etc.)	1				
23	Elaborate on the lowest/highest levels and beyond	5				
24	Maak dat alles public domain blijft (also commercial-owned improvements)	1				
25	Give and share practical developments for all languages, not only for English	1				

Selection of most frequently chosen improvements….

Priority 1

1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors

2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)

3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers

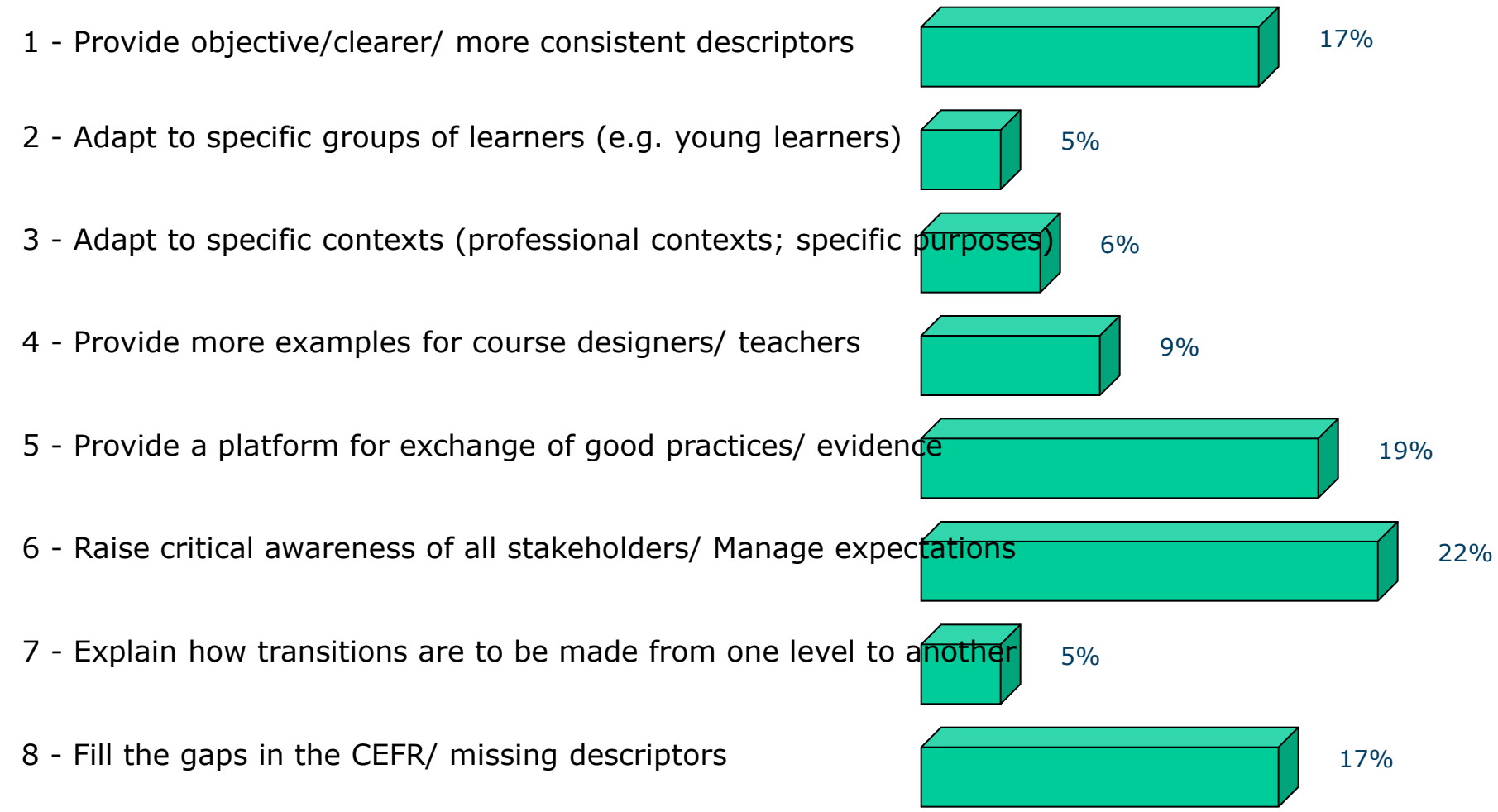
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence

6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations

7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another

8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors

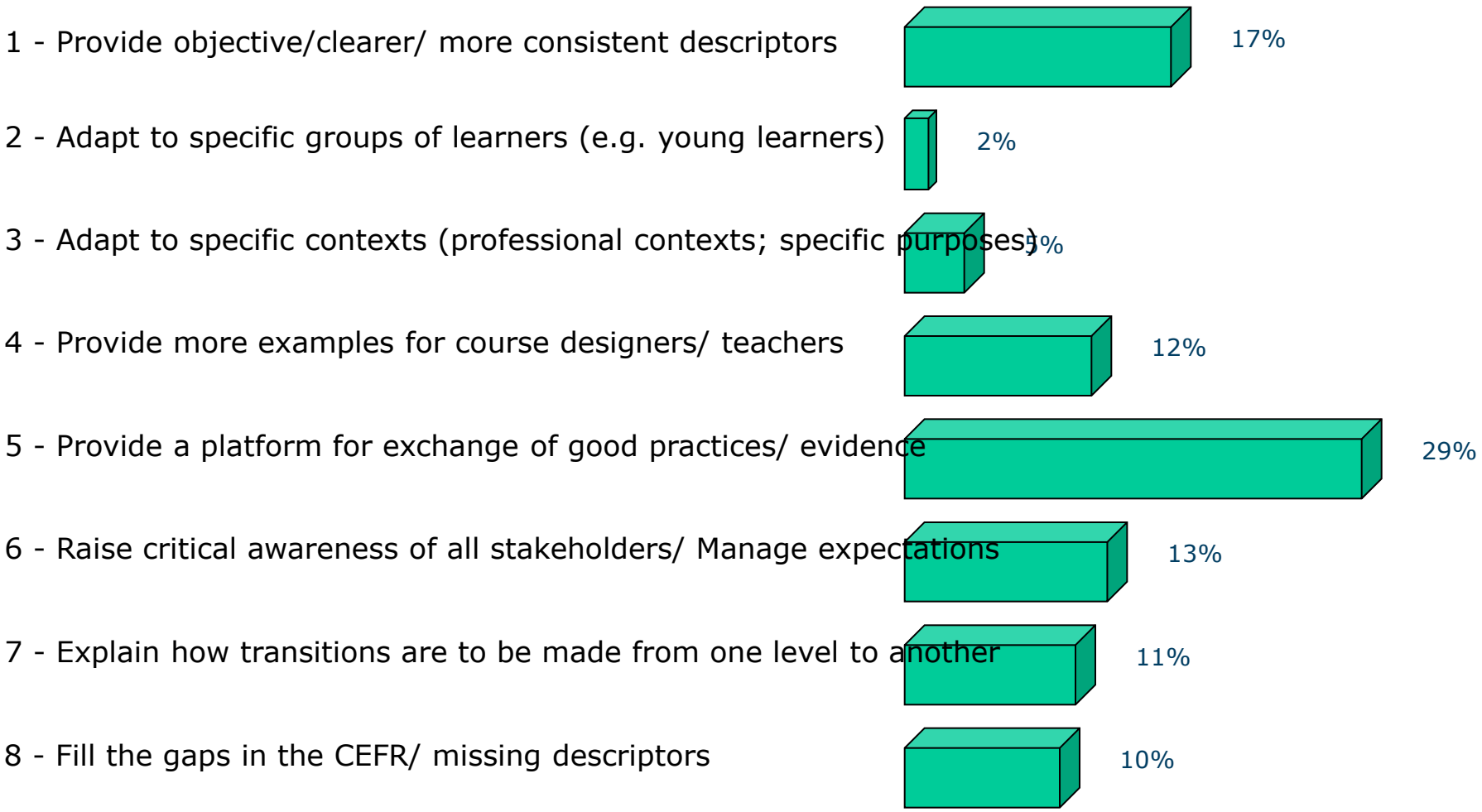
Priority 1


1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors
17%
2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)
5%
3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)
6%
4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers
9%
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence
19%
6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations
22%
7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another
5%
8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors
17%

Priority 2

1. Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors
2. Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)
3. Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)
4. Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers
5. Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence
6. Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations
7. Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another
8. Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors

Priority 2


1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors
17%
2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)
2%
3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)
5%
4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers
12%
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence
29%
6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations
13%
7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another
11%
8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors
10%

Priority 3

1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors

2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)

3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers

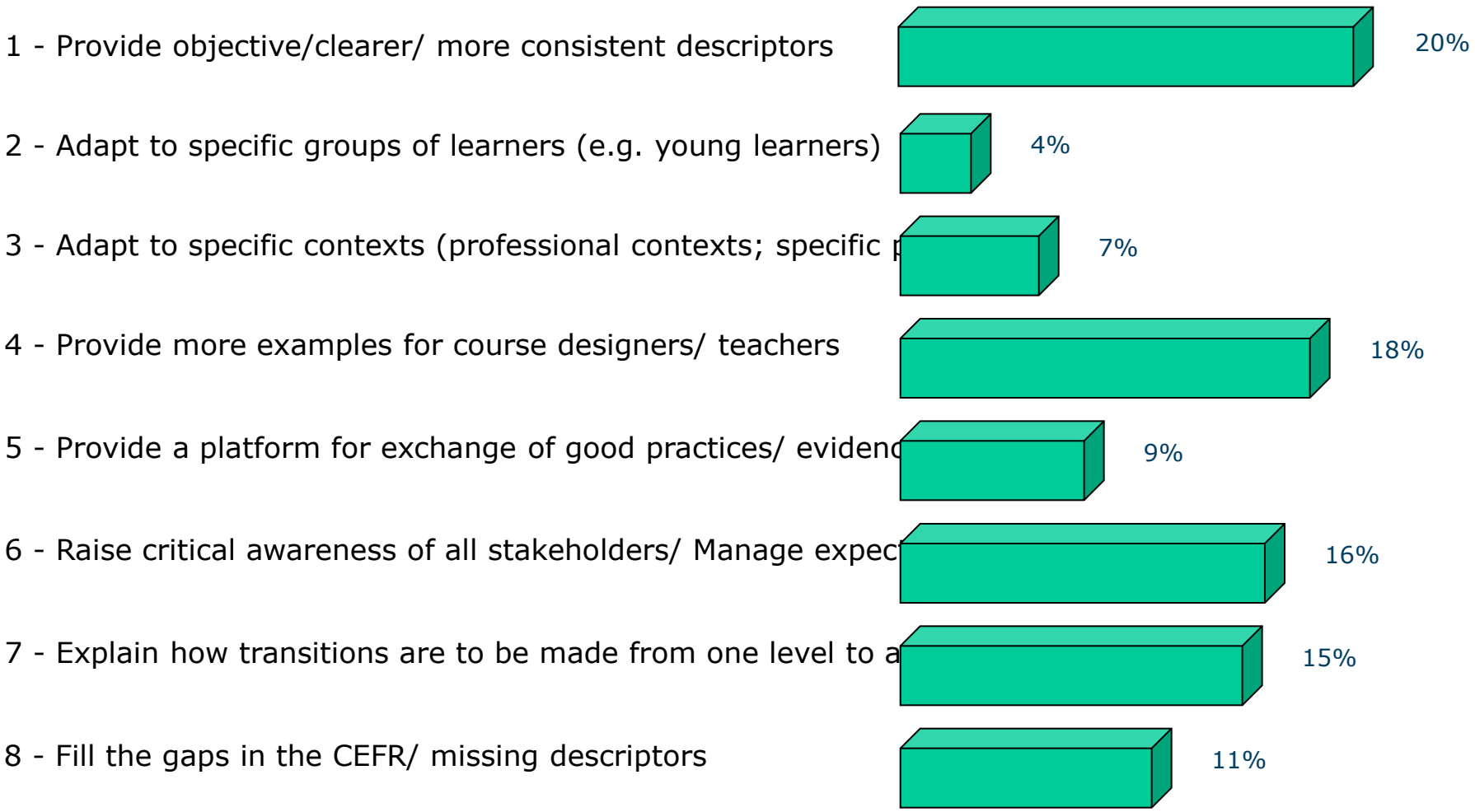
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence

6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations

7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another

8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors

Priority 3


1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors
20%
2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)
4%
3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific p
7%
4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers
18%
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidenc
9%
6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expec
16%
7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to a
15%
8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors
11%

Summary

1 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations

2 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors

3 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers

Conference website: http://www.ua.ac.be/LT-CEFR2013

L. Bachman & A. Palmer. (1996). Language Testing in Practice.
L. Bachman & A. Palmer. (2010). Language Assessment in Practice.

CALL 2014 Antwerp: Research Challenges in CALL
https://www.uantwerp.be/en/conferences-and-summerschools/antwerp-call/

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