Mediation and exploiting one’s plurilingual repertoire: Exploring classroom potential with proposed new CEFR descriptors

This workshop will give participants the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the product of a 2014–17 Council of Europe project to update the CEFR’s 2001 illustrative descriptor scales and to develop descriptors for areas that were not covered in the original set, namely mediation activities, mediation strategies, online interaction, reactions to literature, and plurilingual and pluricultural competences. The focus will be on giving participants an opportunity to (a) discuss the potential that the descriptors offer for enriching language pedagogy and assessment by encouraging collaborative interaction, the co-construction and mediation of ideas and the exploitation of learners’ plurilingual profiles in class, and (b) envisage the kinds of teaching and assessment tasks that operationalisation of the descriptors suggests. The approach taken to mediation in the project reported on is far broader than in some interpretations, including pedagogic and social mediation as well as conveying received meaning – the latter being the main sense in which mediation was introduced in the CEFR in 2001.

The development of the extended categories of descriptors followed the same three-phase process as in the original CEFR descriptor research in the 1993-96 Swiss research project (intuitive authoring and editing, qualitative validation in workshops, quantitative validation through Rasch model scaling), but on a larger scale. Some 150 institutions and 1,300 people took part in the three validation phases that took place between February 2015 and February 2016, with a formal consultation phase from October 2016 till February 2017. The definitive version is expected to be published in December 2017. A brief report on the piloting of the descriptors to date will also be given, together with an invitation to join the network for further piloting in the academic year 2017-18.

Dr Brian North, Eurocentres, Switzerland

Dr Brian North has extensively collaborated with Council of Europe during his long career at Eurocentres. He developed the CEFR levels and illustrative descriptors, co-authored the CEFR itself, the prototype European Language Portfolio (ELP), the Manual for relating examinations to the CEFR, the European Association for Quality Language Services (Eaquals) CEFR Core Inventories for English and French, and the European Profiling Grid for language teacher competences (EPG). His most recent project is the 2014-17 update and extension of the CEFR descriptors.
**Prof Enrica Piccardo**, OISE – University of Toronto, Canada/Université Grenoble-Alpes, France

Professor Enrica Piccardo is Associate Professor at OISE – University of Toronto and at the Université Grenoble-Alpes, France. She has extensive experience in language teaching, teacher education and second/foreign language education research. A CEFR specialist, she has coordinated two European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML) CEFR-related projects and collaborated in the Council of Europe project to develop descriptors for mediation, online interaction and plurilingual/cultural competences. Her other research focuses on complexity theory, emotions and creativity in language education, assessment and its role in the curriculum.