

EUROPEAN PROFILING GRID

USER GUIDE



THE EUROPEAN PROFILING GRID (EPG) A USER GUIDE

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I. AIMS OF THE USER GUIDE

The User Guide is a valuable companion to the EPG. It aims to :

- > present the concept and purpose of the EPG ;*
- > describe the structure and contents of the EPG ;*
- > explain the underlying principles and assumptions behind the EPG ;*
- > define the broader areas of application of the EPG and the e-Grid ;*
- > offer specific guidance to the three major groups of users of the EPG and the e-Grid; Teachers, Trainers and Managers ;*
- > answer some Frequently Asked Questions related to the use of the Grid ;*

II. AIMS OF THE EUROPEAN PROFILING GRID

The European Profiling Grid (EPG) is an innovative instrument, the main purpose of which is to provide language teachers, teacher-trainers and managers with a reliable means of outlining current competences and enhancing professionalism in language education. The ultimate aim is to increase the quality and efficiency of the training and professional development of language teachers.

More specifically, the EPG is intended to :

- > assist self-assessment and mapping of a range of current language teaching skills and competences ;*
- > outline individual and group profiles of language teachers in an institution, stating the levels of competence attained according to a set of categories and descriptors ;*
- > help to identify development needs and training programmes ;*
- > serve as an additional tool for staff selection and appraisal ;*
- > assist in understanding of and communication between different pedagogical systems and educational traditions in Europe ;*
- > foster transparency of teaching standards, facilitating teacher mobility.*

The EPG is **not** meant to be a checklist for observations, for job interviews or performance reviews. It can only serve as an additional reference point for aspects of appointing and assessing staff. **Its main aim** is to provide a snapshot of the current phases of professional development of teachers in various European countries and help them realise their potential for growth.

III. THE EPG: UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The “CAN DO” principle

In line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), teacher competences are viewed from a positive perspective, i.e. focusing on what teachers know and are able to do at a particular moment of their career. The principle also reflects the action-oriented approach promoted by the CEFR in the areas of learning, teaching and assessment.

The INCREMENTAL CHARACTER of descriptors

In line with the continuity of teachers` professional growth, the progression of descriptors in the EPG spans three main phases of development and six sub-phases. Each successive phase incorporates features of the preceding one and builds upon it by adding more advanced competences.

The SELF-ASSESSMENT / ASSESSMENT principle

The EPG assumes the existence of - or stimulates the establishment of - a culture of self-assessment in the language teaching institution. Teachers are empowered to judge their own performance in a more informed and objective way. They become motivated to carry out self-assessment in order to monitor and enhance their own development. Trainers and managers, on the other hand, can use the EPG as an additional tool for assessing the developmental needs of their staff and for ensuring the progress of their institution.

The REFLECTION principle

This is closely related to the previous principle: if they reflect on the results of self-assessment (as well as on the outcomes of assessment carried out by peers, trainers and managers), teachers are less likely to overestimate or underestimate their capabilities. They become more aware of their specific needs and areas for development. Using the EPG descriptors is a powerful stimulus for reflection and action planning.

The need for COMMON STANDARDS

The EPG proposes common European standards related to qualifications, language proficiency and awareness, key teaching competences and the professional conduct of language teachers. It thus facilitates the mobility of teaching staff within Europe. It also fosters the transfer of expertise and best practices locally and internationally.

The need for CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Most importantly, the EPG, based as it is on research, with its wide range and progression of competences can be reliably used to identify teachers` needs and, alongside other quality assurance procedures, to guarantee the sustainable development of individuals and institutions.

MODULAR CHARACTER OF THE GRID

The Grid itself is open to further developments. It can be complemented with new categories and descriptors, as well as new interface languages, thus creating opportunities for continuous updating and creativity.

IV. THE STRUCTURE OF THE EPG

The EPG is a tool which contains a series of **descriptors** of the can-do type, outlining the multi-faceted activity of language teachers. The descriptors represent a gradual progression of teachers' qualifications and competences from teachers-in-training, through novice teachers, teachers with considerable practice, to experienced modern language professionals.

Thus, horizontally, the Grid distinguishes between **six phases** of development, which, for convenience purposes, are grouped into three main phases, 1.1 and 1.2, 2.1 and 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2 to encompass teachers of different experience and degrees of competence.

The phases are related to **four** broad categories of language teachers' professional practice: Training and Qualifications, Key Teaching Competences, Enabling Competences and Professionalism. Developing vertically, the EPG features **thirteen categories**, grouped in the above-mentioned four categories. For a detailed description, the reader is referred to the Grid itself.

The first main category ("**Training and Qualifications**") consists of **four sub categories**, describing the level of proficiency of teachers in the target language, their education and training, assessed teaching practice as well as the scope and length of their teaching experience. It aims to incorporate the wide range of language proficiency and training backgrounds of teachers in Europe, including both native and non-native speaking teachers.

The category ("**Key Teaching Competences**") encompasses **four sub categories**, which aim to incorporate teachers' knowledge and skills in methodology, lesson and course planning, assessment, interaction management and monitoring.

The category ("**Enabling Competences**") includes **three sub categories**: intercultural competence, language awareness and the use of digital media.

The final category ("**Professionalism**") is dedicated to the **two sub categories** professional conduct and administration, including the approach to administrative duties, teamwork and the teacher's commitment to personal professional growth, as well as to the development of the institution.

V. AREAS OF APPLICATION OF THE EPG

Self-assessment

Teachers can use the EPG descriptors to assess their own competences in the respective areas at any time during their career. **They need to check the relevant descriptors and tick the blank Grid or parts of it (see the blank Grid in the Appendix).** They can also identify developmental pathways and seek professional advice from teacher trainers as to how to develop further. Teachers can continue self-assessing their competences over time and monitor their own progress and professional growth. A printout of the results of self-assessment can be a useful supplement to one`s CV.

Assessment

The EPG can facilitate the description and analysis of both individual teachers at the school and the staff as a whole. **The e-Grid** provides a quick, visually attractive and effective presentation of the teaching staff`s competences through graphs and tables. On the basis of the results of their assessments of teachers and teachers` own self-assessment, teacher trainers can assess the evolving competences and the developmental needs of the staff.

Training

The individual and group profiles that are generated enable teacher trainers to provide specific professional advice and guidance to teachers, to design different pre-service and in-service training programmes, to recommend different training events outside the school and to encourage individual teachers to do courses leading to qualifications. Trainers can use the existing expertise of experienced teachers by involving them in guiding less experienced colleagues or by encouraging them to lead some training sessions at the school. For their part, managers can create the necessary conditions (attitudinal, financial, etc.) for the further development of their staff and to support in-service teacher training.

Management

Even though the EPG has not been designed for the purposes of appraising staff, managers can use it as an additional tool that will facilitate the process by focusing on relevant categories and descriptors. The EPG also sets some common standards and thus provides greater objectivity when managers select new teachers for their school (bearing in mind the profile of their existing team) or when they delegate new responsibilities to their teachers.

Quality assurance

The EPG proposes a common framework for assessing teachers` qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience and as such it is a reliable tool for guaranteeing the quality of teaching in different institutions and contexts, as language teachers will be assessed by the same criteria elsewhere.

Certification

The EPG, together with carefully designed procedures and additional instruments, can be used to certify staff competences.

VI. MAIN GROUPS OF USERS

Users as individuals

- > *Language teachers in the private sector as well as in the state sector ;*
- > *Inexperienced / novice teachers ;*
- > *Experienced teachers ;*
- > *Teacher trainers and mentores ;*
- > *In-service teacher trainers and mentors ;*
- > *Pre-service teacher trainers and mentors ;*
- > *Academic coordinators and Directors of study ;*
- > *Managers of language institutions.*

Users as institutions

- > *Language schools and Language centres ;*
- > *Language departments of schools ;*
- > *Language departments of universities ;*
- > *Associations for quality language services ;*
- > *Quality assurance institutions ;*
- > *Ministries of education ;*
- > *Teacher training institutions ;*
- > *HR. departments.*

VII. GUIDANCE FOR USE: TEACHERS

You want to become a teacher or you are a practising teacher. **The EPG and its electronic version (the e-Grid)** will provide valuable support in **self-assessing** your performance and tracking the stages of your professional growth. **Here are some possible scenarios in which you could use the Grid to help you reach an informed decision rapidly.**

Getting the right qualification

You decide to **become a language teacher**. You are not a native speaker and have studied the target language but you have no language certificate or teaching qualification. The EPG makes you aware of what you need to do to get a teaching job (see *Education and Training*). You will probably consider sitting an international exam testifying to your level of language proficiency, and also looking for teacher training options that offer documented and supervised teaching practice. If you are a native speaker, you will look for centres that offer an internationally recognized teaching qualification.

Accumulating assessed teaching practice

You are **a trainee teacher**. You realize the importance of teaching practice and feedback. You will try to make use of opportunities such as team-teaching, microteaching and teaching at different levels. You will start welcoming the opportunities to be observed by a tutor as well as to observe your peers. You will keep a record of the feedback given and try to incorporate the advice offered in your teaching practice. You will try to be proactive and ask for documented feedback once you begin real classroom teaching (see *Assessed Teaching*).

Becoming aware of specific needs

You are **a recently qualified teacher**. You realize that you need to further expand your knowledge of language learning theories and methods, learning styles and learning strategies (see *Methodology: Knowledge and skills*) and you start to participate regularly in the in-service training events at your school as you want to get first to Development Phase 2.2. and later 3.1 which requires in-service training. You become aware of the variety of skills you need to have. Later on, to improve for example your assessment skills you can ask to be trained and involved in conducting placement and progress testing at your school (see *Assessment*).

Acquiring new skills

You are **an experienced teacher**. For the first time you need to teach a multilingual group, and you realize you need to develop your intercultural competence. You will start to prepare classroom activities to expand your own and your learners' understanding of intercultural issues. You will start to plan for discussions of social and cultural similarities and differences. You will do some reading on the cultural background of your learners to anticipate and manage effectively areas of intercultural sensitivity (see *Intercultural competence*).

You are **an experienced teacher**. You have been teaching for more than 10 years. You realize, however, that there are areas that have developed only recently. You will seek to avoid burn-out by trying to improve your digital media skills. You will try to use different software programmes, learn how to use the IWB, if one is available in your school, make PowerPoint presentations, and involve your learners in digital projects using platforms like Moodle or Wiggio (see *Digital Media*).

Growing professionally

You are **an experienced teacher**. You feel prepared to get to Development Phase 3.2 and become a teacher trainer. You will plan to study for an MA degree or a recognized professional diploma (e.g. Cambridge DELTA for teachers of English) (see *Education and Training*). You will ask to be actively involved in in-service training events as well as run teacher development programmes on your own. You will also ask to be involved in the school's observation scheme so as to observe less experienced colleagues (see *Professional conduct*).

VIII. GUIDANCE FOR USE: TRAINERS

*You are an academic coordinator/trainer in a language education institution. Your main responsibility is the professional development of the teaching team. You need to design and run individual and group training programmes that meet the specific needs of your teachers. **Here are some possible scenarios in which you could use the Grid to help you reach an informed decision rapidly.***

Assessing individual teachers performance

You can use the EPG or parts of it to assess the competences of each individual teacher in your team throughout the academic year. You can do this by exploring first their own self-assessments. Then you can compare these with the results of your lesson observations and post-lesson discussions. Lastly, you can conduct interviews with individual teachers to analyse their stronger and weaker areas and reconcile any differences of opinion. You can focus on a relevant category, a sub category or even a descriptor. Thus, you can permanently keep track and a record of the range of competences and the phases of development of each teacher.

Drawing up the collective profile of the teaching team

By collating the individual profiles of teachers, you can outline the group profile of your team and represent it in a table or through a series of graphs. It is a document usually required during internal and external quality assurance procedures in language education institutions. More importantly, in this way you will be, at any moment, aware of the collective strengths and weaknesses in your team. The information will help you to decide to what extent teachers can help each other by sharing best practice. It will also provide useful hints regarding your own involvement as well as how to involve outside experts in the training programmes that you are expected to organise.

Designing and running in-service teacher training programmes

The assessment results based on the EPG can serve as a useful guide for designing individual and group training programmes. For example, when the self-assessment and assessment outcomes reveal that a teacher experiences difficulties with setting up and managing group work (see *Interaction Management and Monitoring*), you can provide extra help by planning more observations with post-lesson feedback, by guiding her/him to observe more experienced colleagues, to do some relevant reading, etc. If you realize on the basis of the collective profile that the majority of teachers struggle with applying CEFR criteria to assessing learners' speaking and writing skills (see *Assessment*) then you can plan some CEFR standardization sessions, video observations, practical work on assessing written papers, etc.

Adjusting pre-service teacher training programmes

The EPG categories and descriptors can provide useful insights for pre-service syllabus design. For example, pre-service teacher training programmes can increase the number of hours for observed and assessed teaching practice (see *Assessed Teaching*). They can extend the scope of competences to be developed by including in a more systematic way intercultural and digital skills (see *Intercultural Competence, Digital Media*). In addition, they can contribute to the process of developing a self-assessment culture by encouraging the prospective teacher to use the Grid as an instrument for self-reflection and action planning.

Encouraging the development of specific needs and competences

By using the Grid the trainer pays special attention to individual teacher' strengths. If a teacher is particularly interested in methodology issues and theories of learning (see *Methodology: Knowledge and Skills*) she/he can be encouraged to prepare a more theoretical session for colleagues, and also to do an MA in a specific area. If another teacher is good at explaining/modelling language (see *Language Awareness*) or at using a specific marking code for correcting errors (see *Assessment*), she/he can be invited to run a practical session on these topics. If a teacher displays a high level of technical competence (see *Digital Media*), she/he may be asked to lead a Special Interest Group on computer-mediated language learning. Thus, some teachers will gradually assume the role of teacher trainers at phase 3.2.

Assisting the School Manager in taking decisions

By making systematic use of the Grid descriptors trainers will be able to assist their managers in taking decisions on staff recruitment and development. The EPG can be used by trainers as a reference point when new appointments are needed, when observing novice and experienced teachers and when appraising aspects of staff performance in order to provide a boost for team building, for individual and institutional growth.

IX. GUIDANCE FOR USE: MANAGERS

You are the manager of a language institution and your major responsibility is staff recruitment and development. You work in close cooperation with your academic coordinator who is also a teacher trainer. Here are some possible scenarios in which you could use the Grid to help you reach an informed decision rapidly.

Employing a new teacher

You have to decide on the profile of a new teacher you are planning to employ. You are looking for specific levels of language proficiency combined with methodological competence and relevant experience (see *Language Proficiency, Teaching Experience and Key Teaching Competences*). The Profiling Grid will guide you in the selection of teaching competences and experience to match your present needs. It will help you to formulate some additional questions during the screening and interview process.

Balancing the teaching team

You want to have a clear overview of the collective profile of your teaching team in order to make it more balanced and versatile in terms of competences so that you are better able to meet the needs of your clients. You can complete individual teacher profiles using the EPG or the e-Grid. By collating the individual profiles of your teachers, you can create a clear graphic representation of the teaching team's profile. You will then have a good basis for allocating more resources to developing certain competences in the team, to delegating new responsibilities to teachers or employing additional teachers with the skills needed.

Benchmarking performance

You decide to update your knowledge of quality standards in language teaching and improve quality assurance procedures. You need to compare your teaching team's general or specific capabilities (see *Lesson planning, Assessment*) with the capabilities offered by competing institutions. In this case the benchmarks in the EPG can provide a reliable guide (see *Key Teaching Competences, Enabling Competences*). You and your staff will need to become familiar with the standards and norms suggested by the various categories and sub-categories in the Grid. These common standards will help you learn from the best but also encourage you to identify the unique features of your team.

Assisting appraisals

The use of the EPG for self-assessment and assessment purposes cannot replace your appraisal procedure but it can assist you in making it more effective. You can utilize the self-assessment results of teachers in specific areas and compare them with the results of your own and your academic coordinator's assessments. The discussion will facilitate the process of action planning based on mutual agreement.

During the appraisal you could highlight areas of strategic importance for the institution. For example, unexpectedly you have to deal with unusually diverse groups (different nationalities, educational cultures, religious backgrounds). In such a case your discussion/recommendations could focus on the Intercultural Awareness section of the EPG rather than the whole Grid.

Matching teacher competences to course type

You are asked to send a teacher with a specific profile to a corporate/institutional client. The teacher is required to have strong competences in course planning for a business context (see *Lesson and Course Planning*) or more specific competences in the area of digital media for an IT company (see *Digital Media*) or more advanced competences in the area of assessment for an academic institution (see *Assessment*). Focusing on these sections of the Grid you can examine the individual profiles of teachers, consult your academic coordinator and make an informed decision.

Supporting teacher development

You need to decide on next year`s budget for staff development and wish to concentrate on raising the level of qualifications within the teaching team. You explore the needs of your language institution but also the needs of individual teachers. The individual profiles of teachers based on self-assessment using the EPG will reveal their stronger but also weaker areas. You are particularly interested in the Qualification and Training and Professionalism sections. You look at the self-assessment results and talk to your teachers about their expectations, current needs as well as plans for the future. The discussion based on the EPG will assist you in your decision as to how to support their professional growth through further qualification (e.g. MA or Diploma programmes), through taking specialist courses or participating in national/international seminars and conference events.

X. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

What's the difference between language proficiency and language awareness?

Language proficiency refers to your level of knowledge and ability to use the target language while language awareness refers to your knowledge of how the language works- its structure, meaning, communicative functions, etc. (see Glossary).

If I am a proficient user of the language, why do I need language awareness?

To be able to select, analyse and explain language items for teaching / learning purposes in a way that is appropriate for the level being taught (A1-C2).

Can I assess myself as 3.1/3.2 under the sub-category of education and training if I have a Master's degree in English Language or in Applied Linguistics but I haven't completed a language pedagogy module?

As specified, you need to have a degree or a degree module in teaching the target language involving supervised teaching practice or an internationally recognized certificate in teaching the target language.

I studied methodology at university and we had teaching practice followed by oral feedback. Does it count as assessed teaching practice?

If it was part of a language pedagogy module and you were formally assessed, then it can be considered as valid assessed teaching practice.

There are no systematic observations or teacher trainers at my school. How can I obtain documented/structured feedback?

You need to be observed by a qualified teacher trainer or a senior teacher at your school. If there are observations at the school, even though not systematic, you might request some written feedback from your observer.

If I specialize in teaching young learners, does it mean that I can't assess myself as 3.1 because I haven't taught in at least 4 different contexts?

You might consider previous experiences in different contexts, e.g. state vs. private school, intensive vs. extensive courses, teaching different age groups or teaching one-to-one at some point in your career (see the Glossary).

I am experienced enough and I feel that I am ready to take on new responsibilities and move to development phase 3.2. What do I do?

You need to contact your teacher trainer or academic manager so as to discuss together what responsibilities you can take on or how you can be involved in guiding less experienced teachers or in leading some in-service workshops.

How many of the descriptors under a category need to be applicable to me in order for me to assess myself as being at that phase of development?

The EPG does not suggest a numerical approach to your competences. It aims at making you aware of your competences and at helping you identify your development needs. It shows where you are at any stage of your career. You can self-assess on an on-going basis so that you can follow your own progress and professional development. You need to tick only the descriptors that apply to you at a given time.

Is it OK if I assess myself as 3.2 under some categories (e.g. education and training) but as 2.2 under the others (e.g. digital media)?

It is normal for any teacher to have different levels of competences in different categories, i.e. to have a jagged profile.

Can a non-native speaker be assessed as 3.2 under the sub-category of language proficiency?

Yes, if the teacher has native speaker competence in the target language (because s/he has lived or studied in the country for a number of years) or has a C2 certificate plus a natural command of the target language.

Does the sub-category of intercultural competence apply to me if I teach only monolingual classes in my country and I do not have personal experience of teaching the target language in multi-cultural groups or in a foreign country?

Yes, even if you do not have the experience yet, you need to be culturally aware and be able to anticipate and prevent any intercultural incidents. Also, it is highly likely that you will have some international or migrant students in your class, or students with different ethnic or religious backgrounds. In addition, if you teach adults who work in foreign companies, you need to select materials that are matched to the cultural horizon of learners as well as to develop their ability to discuss and analyse cultural similarities and differences. Also, teachers of different nationality may be teaching at your school.

Could I use the Grid as an observation checklist to observe my colleagues?

The EPG is not intended to be used as an observation tool. However, you may use some of the descriptors as a reference point for observing certain aspects of a lesson, for example, those in "interaction management and monitoring".

Credits

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