Languages and Cultures in Europe (LACE)

The Intercultural Competences Developed in Compulsory Foreign Language Education in the European Union

EAC/25/06 – "Study of the intercultural skills taught in foreign languages courses at each stage of compulsory education and training in the European Union"

Final Report

Contract n° 2006-4583/001-001 SO2 EPAL of 14 December 2006

Languages and Cultures in Europe (LACE):
The intercultural competences developed in compulsory foreign language education in the European Union.

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This information is also accessible through the LACE dedicated website:

www.lace2007.eu

> **Attention: To respect the authenticity of the LACE research,
> all data has been retained in its original form.**

Objectives and outputs of the study

Objectives of the study

The primary specific objective of this study is to identify and assess the nature, scope and extent of intercultural competence currently developed in foreign language education at each of the main stages of compulsory education (understood here as ISCED 1 and 2) in selected countries of the European Union [Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, UK (England)] and the European Economic Area [Norway].

The study aims to provide practical information and advice to policymakers and other stakeholders working in this field. It contributes to a better understanding of the connections to be made between foreign language education and the development of intercultural competence and of how foreign languages can be taught so as to improve and develop not only proficiency in the foreign language but also intercultural competence.

Outputs of the study

Output 1: Curricular objectives

A review of the main provisions and objectives in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.

Output 2 (a): Approaches recommended by the curricula

A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches recommended in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.

Output 2 (b): Approaches actually used in the classroom

A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches currently used in the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.

Output 3: Experiences of teachers developing intercultural competence in foreign language education

An analysis of interviews with a sample of foreign language teachers concerning their experiences of developing intercultural competence as language teachers.

Output 4: Relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods

A comparison of the objectives of national curricula with actual classroom practice, together with an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods.

Output 5: Recommendations at the European level and national level

Practical recommendations for action at European and national level including specifically on the need (if any) for measures to improve the current teaching of languages to allow for the development of intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills and on the need (if any) to specify appropriate target objectives for intercultural competences to be acquired in foreign language education.

Procedure

The procedure suggested in the proposal and adopted in achieving the outputs of the study was as follows:

Output 1: Curricular objectives

The curricula selected for review were the documents analysed in the study commissioned by DG EAC 'Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe'[1] (or their successor documents) in as much as they referred to compulsory general education at primary and lower secondary level (ISCED 1 and 2). The curricula reviewed in countries not included in that study were comparable.

To generate the review, a sophisticated analysis tool was developed to assess the provisions and objectives prescribed by the curricula under review. The analysis tool was applied to the original documents (not translations) by local experts working in the countries investigated. The data collected was evaluated by the Steering Committee and a review generated which created a picture across the countries investigated and also allowed a certain degree of careful comparison.

The tool analysed the curricular objectives (and didactic and methodological approaches – see Output 2) according to three conceptualisations or models of intercultural competence or, more precisely, models of the sub-competences of which intercultural competence consists.

Output 2 (a): Approaches recommended by the curricula

The procedure followed here is identical to that described under Output 1. The analysis tool also collated data referring to didactic and methodological approaches.

Output 2 (b): Approaches actually used in the classroom

For this output, an online survey was conducted of 213 foreign language teachers in primary and lower secondary education. It collected quantitative and qualitative data, which were evaluated by the Steering Committee.

Output 3: Experiences of teachers developing intercultural competence in foreign language education

Telephone interviews were conducted in Danish, English, Flemish, French, and German with 78 teachers. 34 of them are teaching in primary and 54 of them in lower secondary education.

Output 4: Relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods

This output was achieved by an assessment by the Steering Committee of all the data collected.

Output 5: Recommendations at the European level and national level

The recommendations were generated by the Steering Committee in a discursive process rooted in their insights and experience as experts, based on a thorough familiarity with the data and findings of the study and taking due account of the recommendations made by the teachers questioned and interviewed.

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[1] http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/0_integral/025EN.pdf

Findings

3.1 What objectives in the area of intercultural competences are prescribed by foreign language curricula?

- The national curricula pay most attention to the development of linguistic competences and communication skills. (Inter)cultural competences (if included in the curriculum) get considerably less consideration.

- There are important differences between countries and between levels.

- Intercultural competence as an objective focuses to a large extent on knowledge and attitudes.

3.2 What didactic and methodological approaches to the development of intercultural competence are recommended by the curricula?

- Information regarding didactic and methodological approaches is limited in most curricula.

- If methods, techniques, procedures or activities are mentioned, most often these are:

    - the use of authentic materials in the target language such as TV programmes, newspapers, magazines, books and 'content and language integrated learning'
    - information about the other/another culture such as texts about the target country, oral teacher input, online information.

- The approaches described in the curricula are considered to be most likely to bring about changes in the attitudes of pupils on the one hand and in their knowledge and understanding on the other. They are generally less likely to bring about changes in the behaviour of the learners.

- The approaches are considered generally to be slightly more didactic (i.e. characterised by teacher input) in nature than experiential (i.e. characterised by learner intake).

3.3 What didactic and methodological approaches are currently used by the teachers?

Methods, techniques, procedures:

- More than 80% of teachers indicate they use Oral teacher input.

- Between 50 and 75% of respondents ticked Role plays; Task-based activities; Written information; Online information; Literature and the arts.

- Between 25 and 49% of respondents ticked Immersion, School visits abroad and exchanges; Information using other than online or written media; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Simulations and games; Cross-cultural dialogues; Internet-based collaborative learning.

- Few teachers employ classical techniques of intercultural competence development conventionally used outside the language classroom

<u>Activities:</u>

The majority of teachers indicate that they either "OFTEN" or "NOW AND THEN":

- use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture;
- ask their pupils to think about what it would like to be like to live in the foreign culture;
- use role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet;
- decorate their classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture;
- ask their pupils to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture;
- talk with their pupils about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.

<u>Subjects:</u>

Subjects that are often dealt with 'Extensively' are:

- Food and drink (77%);
- Daily life and routines (73%);
- Literature (60%).

A subject that a relatively high number of respondents said they 'Never' deal with is:
    Political system (52%)

All other subjects are discussed 'Less extensively'; some with a tendency to 'Never' (e.g. 'International relations', 'Professional life' and 'Different ethnic and social groups').

<u>Cross-curricular activities</u>:

Half (50.7%) of the respondents say they have been involved in some kind of cross-curricular activities. The inflexibility of timetables is a major reason for not having been involved in cross-curricular activities.

3.4 How do language teachers experience the development of intercultural competence in the language classroom?

The difficulty in developing intercultural competence in the language classroom mentioned most frequently by teachers is lack of time. Two aspects are involved: time within the timetable to incorporate the development of intercultural skills, and time outside the classroom to plan such teaching and to organise international contacts, projects and so on.

The second main difficulty that teachers identify is shortage of suitable resources. Some teachers complain that the textbooks are inadequate. Shortage of computers and Internet access is a problem for some teachers in some countries.

92.5% of all respondents in our study (and 91.9% of ISCED 1 teachers) report that they feel there should be more specific guidance for teachers with regard to the development of intercultural competence.

Many teachers refer to the need for training, both in terms of initial teacher training courses and in terms of in-service development. Effective training is needed for two main reasons:

- to help teachers acquire a better conceptual understanding of intercultural competence;

- to help teachers improve their methods for developing intercultural competence and raising students' interest.

Many feel that their training has been/was inadequate.

Some teachers clearly perceive the development of intercultural competence as being strongly associated with knowledge of the target language/culture, and many of them feel inadequate in this respect.

Another issue raised by a few teachers is the role of management, at both school level and government level. Clearly, management and policy-level support is vital if teachers are to develop intercultural skills effectively. There seems to be variability both within and across countries as to how much support teachers feel they receive on the ground.

3.5 How closely does classroom practice reflect the curricula and how relevant and effective are current curricula and methods?

Comparison of curricula with classroom practice:

53.1% of respondents to the online survey report spending some 80% of classroom time on language learning, and 20% classroom time on developing intercultural competence, whereas as many as 32.9% spend 60% of classroom time on language learning, and 40% on developing intercultural competence. What we can deduce from this is that considerable attention is given to the development of intercultural competence in classroom practice, which appears to be aligned with the position of intercultural competence as specified within the different curricula.

The teachers' view of intercultural competence development as being concerned primarily with affective and behavioural matters and only in second place with cognitive matters contrasts to some extent with the results of the analysis of the curricula presented in section 3.1. Here the findings on the objectives of intercultural competence development were found to be focused to a large extent on attitudes and *knowledge*, and not as in the conceptualisations of the teachers on attitudes and *behaviour*.

When it comes to the description of didactic and methodological approaches contained in the curricula under review, we again see a mismatch between teachers' conceptualisations and what is prescribed in the curricula. Whereas the teachers surveyed attach high importance to the ability to handle intercultural contact situations, a largely behavioural competence, the approaches in four out of five categories were found to be more cognitive and/or affective than behavioural in nature.

The respondents show considerable knowledge of a variety of activities, methods, techniques and procedures by which to develop intercultural competence, alongside reporting high frequency of application of these in the classroom. However, most of the activities, methods, techniques and procedures mentioned are those which are derived from the canon of communicative language teaching activities. Activities etc which are typically employed in the development of intercultural competence outside the language classroom (e.g. culture assimilator or intercultural sensitiser, case studies, self-assessment) are mentioned less often.

The online survey shows that teachers feel under-prepared for developing intercultural competence. 63.4% indicate they received little or no training in this area during their initial teacher education. 53.5% said that they had not received any training in this area at a later stage.

Unsurprisingly, 92.5% of respondents to the online survey think there should be more specific guidance for teachers with regard to developing intercultural competence.

Relevance of current curricula:

There is some but not complete overlap with the elements of the three models of intercultural competence underlying the curricula reviewed in this study. The curricula demonstrate a tendency to emphasise linguistic competence and communication skills at the expense of intercultural competence.

The curriculum review undertaken with the analysis tool makes clear that when intercultural competence is a focus of the curricula it tends to concern knowledge and attitudes rather than behaviour.

It can be said that in many cases the curricula are only partially relevant to the optimum development of intercultural competence in its full breadth.

Effectiveness of current curricula:

Intercultural competence objectives may be described in the curricula in such general terms that it is difficult for teachers to imagine what they may mean and, more significantly, how these objectives can be put into practice in the language classroom. Greater clarity and detail are necessary in the formulation of objectives in the area of intercultural competence development.

Assessment of relevance and effectiveness of current methods:

Many of the curricula reviewed do not describe didactic and methodological approaches or methods, techniques, procedures and activities. This may well be a cultural convention. However, even in the very much broader 'intended curricula', the teachers often report they are left without guidance and examples when it comes to methods, techniques, procedures and activities for developing intercultural competence.

The methods reported in the interviews and online survey as being used, while in themselves sound, tend to be limited in variety and restricted to a certain extent to the development of knowledge and awareness rather than attitudes and behaviour. Very few teachers report using classical methods of intercultural competence development outside the foreign language classroom, such as critical incidents or culture assimilators, although in principle with appropriate modification they could be used.

Recommendations at the European level

We conclude from the study's findings that, as a matter of principle, the teaching of foreign languages can be enhanced by the proper promotion of intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills. To pursue this aim, certain steps can best be taken at the European level. They concern the areas of strategy on the one hand and mobility, professional development and teaching resources on the other.

The following summarises the recommendations made by the authors of the study at this level:

- make intercultural competence development alongside foreign language learning a key feature of a new framework strategy for multilingualism;

- support intercultural competence development in language learning as a means of enhancing, also in lower secondary education, practical business-related skills for relationships both within the EU and with extra-European cultures, in pursuit of the aims of the Lisbon Agenda;

- focus on intercultural competence development alongside linguistic skills as a priority, where appropriate, in the next general call for proposals under the Life Long Learning programme;

- establish and fund an international, multi-disciplinary group of experts to establish a framework of performance indicators which describe attainment levels of intercultural competence and to develop methods of assessing intercultural competence in the language classroom;

- support awareness-raising in the area of intercultural competence for officials, educational policymakers and decision-makers, foreign-language educators and other key multipliers at the European and national level: this would assist in creating an underlying and proper

appreciation of the nature of intercultural competence, how it can be developed and how it complements European language policy;

- support research into the nature of intercultural competence and into approaches to developing and assessing it in school settings, specifically foreign language learning;

- increase funding for international teacher mobility, teacher exchanges, school partnerships, school exchanges and visits, and simplified procedures;

- support (1) the development and operation of an EU-wide face-to-face and virtual network of experts and practitioners in the teaching of intercultural competence in the context of foreign language learning, and (2) the development and operation of an EU-wide multilingual, Internet-based intercultural competence development resource bank.

Recommendations at the national level

Other steps can best be taken at the Member State level. These cover the areas of strategy and administration, initial teacher education, professional development of teachers, curriculum design (including assessment) and teaching and learning resources.

The following summarises the recommendations made by the authors of the study:

- fund research into intercultural competence linked to foreign language learning;

- promote understanding, among foreign-language educators, curriculum designers and other key multipliers, of the nature of intercultural competence and its development;

- promote and fund teacher and pupil mobility measures;

- improve initial teacher education to give greater emphasis to intercultural competence and its development;

- promote and fund professional development courses and in-service training for foreign-language teachers;

- improve the design of foreign language curricula to include clearer and more detailed specification of objectives, descriptions of didactic and methodological approaches and methods of assessment;

- support the development and provision of teaching and learning resources for language teachers; support and fund professional development for those developing such materials.

Authors and Acknowledgements

Europublic was commissioned in December 2006 by the European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Training and Multilingualism, to conduct the LACE study. The project team comprised thirteen Country Experts directed by a Steering Committee of four persons and supported by a five-person Europublic team comprising researchers, interviewers and a coordinator.

The exact numbers and profiles of the teachers who took part in the telephone and online surveys for the LACE study are described in the text of the report. We are very grateful to all of them for their support, without which this study could not have been conducted. We are happy to list on pages 15 and 16 the names of those teachers who agreed to their names being published. Some wished to remain anonymous.

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Overall objective of the study

The terms of reference drawn up by DG EAC for this study make clear that it is to provide policy-relevant advice and information which will "contribute to the overall objective of promoting lifelong learning of foreign languages in Europe as a way not only to allow European citizens to have skills to understand and communicate with each other but to become as well more open to others, their cultures and outlooks". The main objective of the study is to "highlight the potential correlation between the teaching and learning of languages and the development of intercultural skills, and how this might be used and exploited".

Already at the proposal stage, the Steering Committee responsible for conducting the study was clear that the term 'intercultural skills' with its clear behavioural emphasis does not adequately take account of the other equally important affective and cognitive factors. These also contribute to a proficiency at interacting effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations and in particular to the ability (mentioned in the terms of reference) to "become (…) more open to others, their cultures and outlooks".

The development of this last ability is influenced not only by the acquisition of skills (i.e. behavioural factors) but also in particular by attitudes and feelings (i.e. affective factors) and by knowledge and understanding (i.e. cognitive factors). For these reasons we refer throughout this study to 'intercultural competence' to express a broader notion of intercultural proficiency than that implied by the term 'skills' used in the Terms of Reference.

The term 'intercultural competence' is also appropriate as it establishes a clear link between the current study and its recommendations and the Commission's *Proposal for a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning* and the European level reference tool "Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – a European Reference Framework". This framework includes intercultural competence in one of its eight competence areas.

The Steering Committee undertook one further significant interpretation of the Terms of Reference when it decided to focus on the 'development' of intercultural competence rather than use the term 'teaching' The very diverse nature of intercultural competence with its affective, cognitive and behavioural components means that it is in many respects not consistently teachable in the conventional sense that, for example, languages can be 'taught' and 'learned' but rather must be promoted, developed and indeed simply allowed to develop.

Specific objectives of the study

The primary specific objective of this study is to identify and assess the nature, scope and extent of intercultural competence currently developed in foreign language education at each of the main stages of compulsory education (understood here as ISCED 1 and 2) in selected countries of the European Union [Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, UK (England)] and the European Economic Area [Norway].

It aims to provide practical information and advice to policymakers and other stakeholders working in this field. It contributes to a better understanding of the connections to be made between foreign language education and the development of intercultural competence, and of how foreign languages can be taught so as to improve and develop not only proficiency in the foreign language but also intercultural competence.

Outputs of the study

Output 1: Curricular objectives

A review of the main provisions and objectives in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education. The study's findings on this point are in Section 3.1.

Output 2 (a): Approaches recommended by the curricula

A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches *recommended* in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education. The study's findings are in Section 3.2.

Output 2 (b): Approaches actually used in the classroom

A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches *currently used* in the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education. The study's findings are in Section 3.3.

Output 3: Experiences of teachers developing intercultural competence in foreign language education

An analysis of interviews with a sample of foreign language teachers concerning their experiences of developing intercultural competence as language teachers. The study's findings on this point are also to be found in Sections 3.3 and 3.4. The teachers' experiences have also influenced the study's recommendations (Sections 5 and 6).

Output 4: Relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods

A comparison of the objectives of national curricula with actual classroom practice, together with an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods. The study's findings on this point are in Sections 3.5.

Output 5: Recommendations at the European level and national level

Practical recommendations for action at European and national level including specifically on the need (if any) for measures to improve the current teaching of languages to allow for the development of intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills and on the need (if any) to specify appropriate target objectives for intercultural competences to be acquired in foreign language education by the end of each of the levels ISCED 1 and 2. The recommendations at the European level can be found in Section 4 and those at the national level in Section 5.

Outputs 1 – 5 for the individual countries investigated can be read in the Country Reports contained in Annex 1 and downloadable from the LACE website at:

http://www.lace2007.eu

The procedure suggested in the proposal and adopted in achieving the outputs of the study was as follows:

Output 1: Curricular objectives

A review of the main provisions and objectives in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.

The curricula selected for review were the documents analysed in the study commissioned by DG EAC *Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe*[2] (or successor documents) in as much as they referred to compulsory general education at primary and lower secondary level (ISCED 1 and 2). The curricula reviewed in countries not included in that study were comparable.

To generate the review, a sophisticated analysis tool was developed to assess the provisions and objectives prescribed by the curricula under review. The analysis tool was applied to the original documents (not translations) by local experts working in the countries investigated. The tool was applied according to strict instructions in order to allow some comparison between countries (or regions). The tool provided a structured overview (per country) of the elements that are important for the analysis and a standardised report framework across the countries studied. The data collected was evaluated by the Steering Committee and a review generated which created a picture across the countries investigated and which also allowed a certain degree of careful comparison.

The tool analysed the curricular objectives (and didactic and methodological approaches – see Output 2) according to three conceptualisations or models of intercultural competence or, more precisely, models of the sub-competences of which intercultural competence consists. Two of these conceptualisations were described in the original proposal: Byram's model (1997), mainly grounded in foreign language education, and Chen and Starosta's model (2005), grounded in empirical studies in psychology and communication science. In the course of its work, the Steering Committee found it desirable to take account of the intercultural objectives of the Common European Framework for Languages, not least because of the significance the CEFR has now achieved in foreign language education across Europe.

The tool, which was developed by the Steering Committee, piloted and revised, can be examined in the Digital Annex under point 3 or be downloaded from the Lace website at:

http://www.lace2007.eu

The results of each individual analysis may have been coloured by an *inconsistent* familiarity with and understanding of the conceptualisations (and their terminology) underlying the tool. For this reason detailed country-level comparisons need to be made with care.

Output 2 (a): Approaches recommended by the curricula

*A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches **recommended** in national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.*

The procedure followed here is identical to that described under Output 1. The analysis tool also collated data referring to didactic and methodological approaches. It assessed the presence in the curricula under review of those didactic and methodological approaches described in Byram's model. As Chen and Starosta's model does not take account aspects of the

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[2] http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/0_integral/025EN.pdf

development of intercultural competence, the analysis tool also assessed the presence in the curricula under review of approaches, methods, procedures and activities frequently used in developmental settings outside school education and rooted in the more psychological and US-American tradition from which the Chen and Starosta model comes.

The results of each individual analysis may have been coloured by an *inconsistent* familiarity with and understanding of the conceptualisations (and their terminology) underlying the tool and, in particular, of the approaches, methods, procedures and activities frequently used in developmental settings outside school education.

Output 2 (b): Approaches actually used in the classroom

A review of the main didactic and methodological approaches **currently used** *in the development of intercultural competence in each stage of compulsory foreign language education.*

As the Terms of Reference rightly anticipate, the review of the didactic and methodological approaches contained in the curricula only imperfectly capture what approaches are *actually* used in the language education classroom. For this reason and as suggested in our proposal, an **online survey** of foreign language teachers was conducted. The teachers were volunteers recruited in the first instance by our local Country Experts and, secondly, through snowball sampling. The 213 participants were teachers in primary and lower secondary education. The profile of the teachers responding to the questionnaire and whose answers have been evaluated for the study can be seen in the table below.

Respondents' Teaching Level	Language taught						
	ENGLISH	FRENCH	GERMAN	ITALIAN	SPANISH	RUSSIAN	OTHER
PRIMARY EDUCATION	78	17	6	2	6	0	7
LOWER SECONDARY - GENERAL	102	30	19	1	10	0	13
LOWER SECONDARY - PRE-VOCATIONAL	33	6	6	0	1	0	3
LOWER SECONDARY - VOCATIONAL	21	4	5	0	1	0	1
UPPER SECONDARY	45	11	10	0	5	0	3
HIGHER EDUCATION	11	0	1	0	1	0	0
ADULT EDUCATION	22	2	1	1	1	0	1
OTHER	6	0	1	0	0	0	0

Total Number of Respondents   213

Table 2.1: Profile of respondents in the online survey.

The online survey was developed by the Steering Committee, piloted and revised. It collected quantitative and qualitative data and included some questions from the pencil and paper survey by Sercu (2005). Its results can usefully be read in connection with Sercu's. The data were evaluated by the Steering Committee.

The modest size of the sample and the fact that the respondents were self-selected put a certain restriction on the *statistical* significance of the findings.

Output 3: Experiences of teachers developing intercultural competence in foreign language education

An analysis of interviews with a sample of foreign language teachers concerning their experiences of developing intercultural competence as language teachers.

Telephone interviews were conducted in Danish, English, Flemish, French, and German with 78 teachers. 34 of them are teaching in primary and 54 of them in lower secondary education. Some of the respondents teaching in lower secondary also teach in primary. The profile of the teachers interviewed and whose answers have been evaluated for the study can be seen in the table below.

Respondents' Teaching Level	Language taught					
	ENGLISH	FRENCH	GERMAN	RUSSIAN	SPANISH	OTHER
PRIMARY EDUCATION	26	8	3	1	1	6
LOWER SECONDARY	41	11	6	0	5	10
TOTAL Europe	59	16	8	1	5	13

Total Number of Respondents   78

Table 2.2: Profile of respondents in the telephone interviews.

The interview format, which was generated by the Steering Committee, piloted and revised, can be examined in Annex 1.

Here too, we need to warn that the modest size of the sample and the fact that the respondents were self-selected put a certain restriction on the *statistical* significance of the findings.

Output 4: Relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods

A comparison of the objectives of national curricula with actual classroom practice, together with an assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of current curricula and methods.

This output was achieved by an assessment by the Steering Committee of all the data collected.

Output 5: Recommendations at the European level and national level

Practical recommendations for action at European and national level including specifically on the need (if any) for measures to improve the current teaching of languages to allow for the development of intercultural competence alongside linguistic skills and on the need (if any) to specify appropriate target objectives for intercultural competences to be acquired in foreign language education by the end of each of the levels ISCED 1 and 2.

The recommendations were generated by the Steering Committee in a discursive process rooted in their insights and experience as experts, based on a thorough familiarity with the data and findings of the study and taking due account of the recommendations made by the teachers questioned and interviewed.

3.1 What objectives in the area of intercultural competences are prescribed by foreign language curricula?

Three Frameworks

In order to make an analysis of the curriculum texts, we used three theoretical frameworks.

One of the frameworks is named "Intercultural Communicative Competence" and was developed by Byram (1997). It is a strongly language-oriented model comprising linguistic competence, socio-linguistic competence, discourse competence and intercultural competence and one which is firmly rooted in foreign language education in school settings.

The second model we used is Chen & Starosta's (2005). The authors have constructed a model which brings together insights derived mainly from psychology and communication studies. Their view conceptualises intercultural interaction competence through four dimensions: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation and cultural awareness.

Finally we also looked at the curricula in CEFR-mode. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe. It was developed by the Council of Europe and recommended by a European Union Council Resolution to set up systems for the validation of language ability.

General Objectives

In order to assess the importance that is attached to intercultural competence, we asked our Country Experts to assess the general objectives included in the curriculum by dividing 100 points over a number of objectives linked to each of the three frameworks.

Based on this assessment we have come – regardless of the framework that is used - to the following conclusions:

- The national curricula pay most attention to the development of linguistic competences and communication skills. (Inter)cultural competences (if included in the curriculum) get considerably less consideration.

- There are important differences between countries and between levels.

- Intercultural competence as an objective focuses to a large extent on knowledge and attitudes.

Analysis according to the Byram model

In the curriculum texts of the twelve countries studied, 'Linguistic Competence' is prominently present. Other competences receive average attention. However, Discourse Competence and Intercultural Competence tend to be mentioned least often.
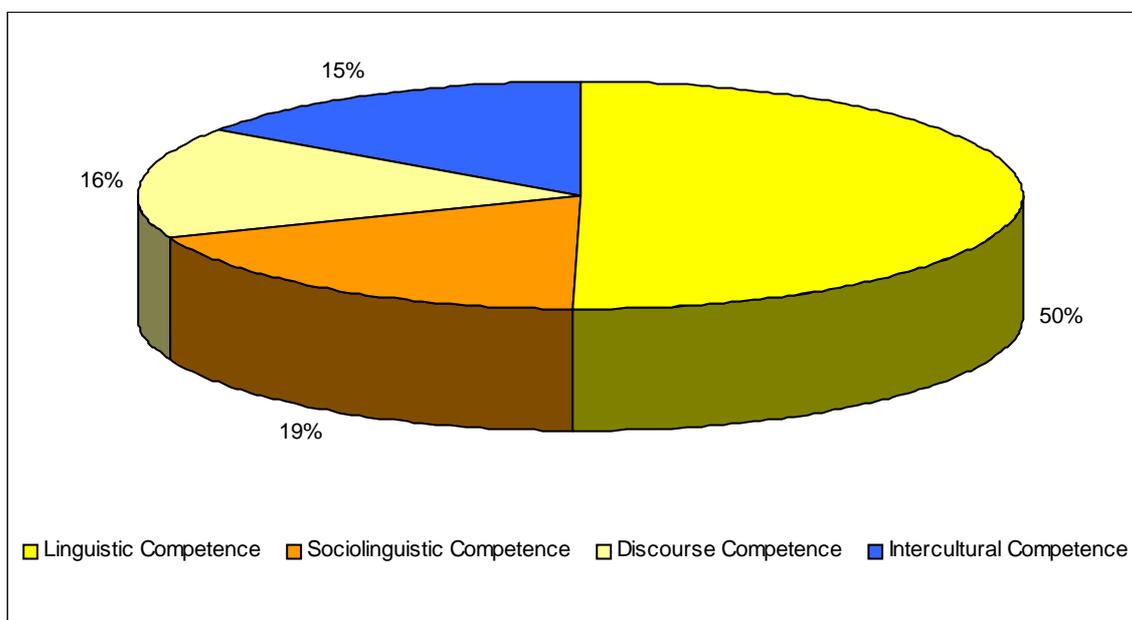
Figure 3.1.1: Objectives in the curricula reviewed according to the Byram model. (Percentages are indicative only)

"Intercultural Competence" as an objective was assessed by means of examining what Byram regards as its constituent parts: Knowledge, Discovery and Interaction, Attitudes, Interpreting and Relating, and Critical Awareness.

Of these five aspects, "Knowledge" and "Attitudes" are mentioned most often. "Discovery and Interaction", as well as "Interpreting and relating", receive lower scores. And "Critical Awareness" is least often referred to.

Analysis according to the Chen and Starosta model

When using the Chen and Starosta framework to analyse the national curricula, we see a similar tendency: "Communication Skills" are prominently present.

However, the items that are used to measure "Cultural Awareness" lead to a higher score for this objective compared to the assessment made within Byram's framework. That being said, one should be aware that what Chen and Starosta define as "Psychological Adaptation" (which was assessed by examining factors such as the ability to deal with frustration, stress, alienation and ambiguity) can be considered as being a part of what is regarded as "Intercultural Competence" in Byram's framework.

Within 'Communication Skills' it is 'Message Skills' (e.g. knowledge of the language, ability to use the language, knowledge of facial expressions, non-judgemental feedback) and 'Social Skills' (e.g. ability to think the same thoughts, ability to feel the same feelings, ability to take the perspective of the interlocutor) that are dealt with most often.

An important item of "Cultural Awareness" unsurprisingly turned out to be 'knowledge and understanding of social customs of the target culture'.
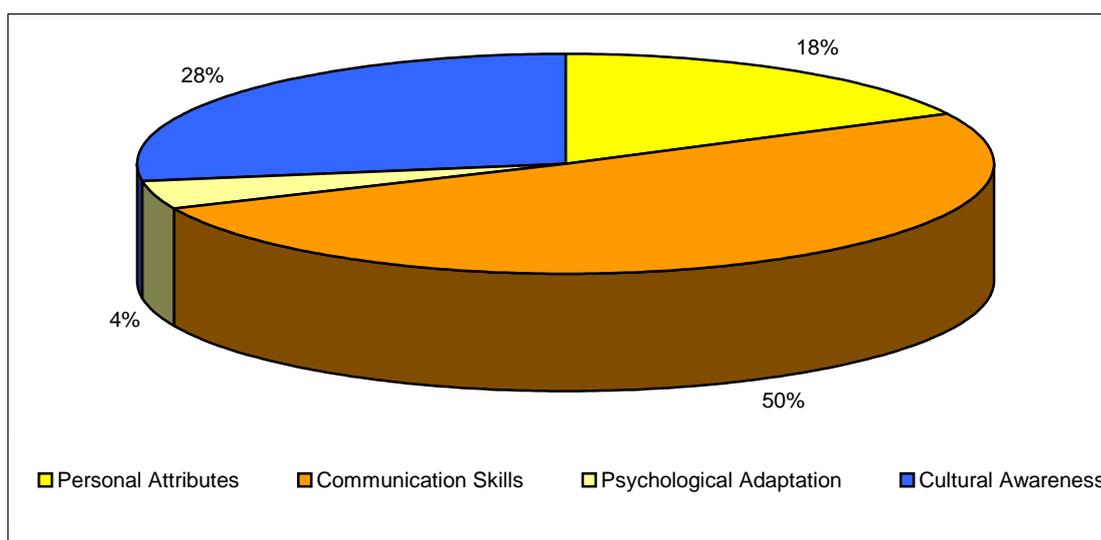

Figure 3.1.2: Objectives in the curricula reviewed according to the Chen and Starosta model.

Analysis according to Common European Framework for Languages

The CEFR adopts an action-oriented approach towards language use, embracing language learning. The descriptive scheme focuses on the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of general and communicative language competences.

General competences of a language user/learner comprise four sub-categories: 'Declarative Knowledge' (*savoir*), 'Skills and Know-how' (*savoir–faire*), 'Existential Competence' (*savoir être*) and 'Ability to Learn' (*savoir apprendre*).

Communicative competences include 'Linguistic Competence', 'Socio-linguistic Competence' and 'Pragmatic Competence'.

'Linguistic Competence' again quite clearly scores most highly, but 'Declarative Knowledge' (or 'Savoirs') also receives considerable attention in national curricula.

'Declarative Knowledge' includes for example 'knowledge of the world', 'socio-cultural knowledge' and 'intercultural awareness'. This last aspect receives least attention in the national curricula reviewed.

'Skills and Know How' also has an intercultural component (cultural sensitivity, cultural mediation and overcoming of stereotypes) and here too, this component is least often covered in national curricula.
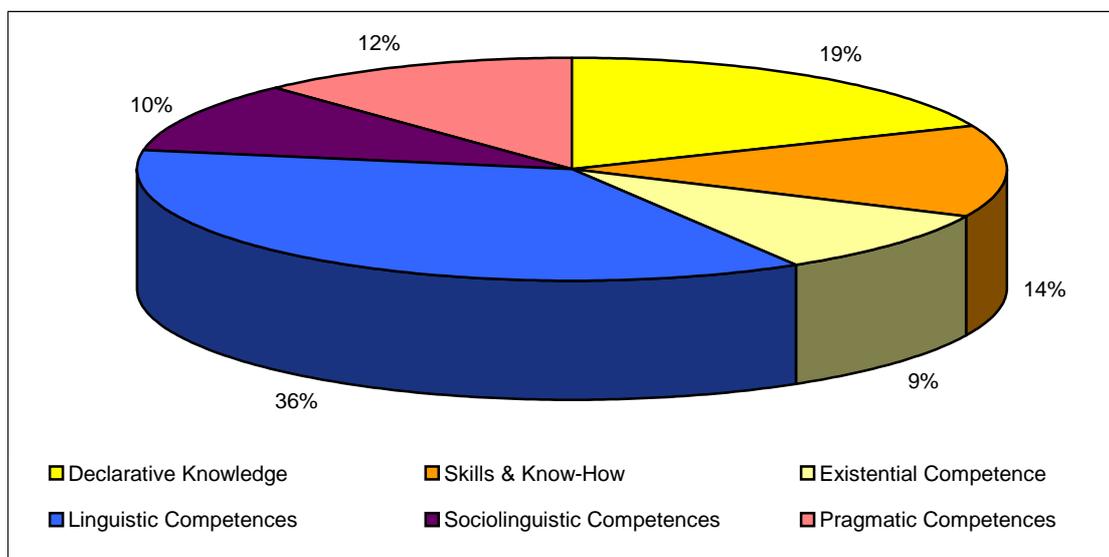

Figure 3.1.3: Objectives in the curricula reviewed according to the Common European Framework for Languages.

Specific Objectives

Byram's theoretical framework was used to make a more detailed assessment of the national curricula.

Savoirs

The following aspects of *Savoirs* were mentioned more often than others: Knowledge of the means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (at a distance or in proximity); Knowledge of the national memory of one's own country; Knowledge of the national definitions of geographical space in one's own country; Knowledge of the processes and institutions of socialisation in one's own country; and Knowledge of the processes of social interaction in one's interlocutor's country.

This means that pupils are expected to know about:

- events and their emblems (myths, cultural products, sites of significance to the collective memory) which are markers of national identity in one's own country as they are portrayed in public institutions and transmitted through processes of socialisation;

- perceptions of regions and regional identities, of language varieties, of landmarks of significance of markers of internal and external borders and frontiers in their own country;

- education systems, religious institutions and similar locations where individuals acquire a national identity, are introduced to the dominant culture in their society, pass through specific rites marking stages in the life-cycle in their own country;

- levels of formality in the language and non-verbal behaviour of interaction, conventions of behaviour and beliefs and taboos in routine situations such as meals, different forms of public and private meeting, public behaviour such as use of transport, etc.

Savoir comprendre

This refers to skills of interpreting and relating. It stands for the ability to interpret a document or events from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own. However, none of these skills is often mentioned in any of the curricula.

Savoir s'engager

This comprises 'Critical Cultural Awareness' and '(Political) Education' and refers to the ability to evaluate perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria. Here too, none of the specific objectives is often mentioned in any of the curricula.

If we were to pick one specific objective in this category that is more often mentioned than others, it would be the ability to identify and interpret *explicit* values in documents and events in one's own culture, which means that a pupil/student can use a range of analytical approaches to place a document or event in context and to demonstrate the ideology involved.

Savoir apprendre/Savoir faire

This objective refers to 'Skills of discovery and interaction' and includes the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

This objective is not very often touched upon. One aspect that did get some attention is the ability to identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances.

This means that students are expected to be able to use their knowledge of conventions of verbal and non-verbal interaction (i.e. conversational structures, formal communication such as presentations, written correspondence, business meetings, informal gatherings, etc.) to establish agreed procedures on specific occasions, which may be a combination of conventions from the different cultural systems in the interaction.

Savoir être

This entails curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own.

Aspects of this that are included in some curricula are: the willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with 'otherness' in a relationship of equality and an interest in discovering other perspectives of interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena in other cultures and cultural practices.

This signifies that students are expected to:

- have developed an interest in the other's experience of daily life in contexts not usually presented to outsiders through the media nor used to develop a commercial relationship with outsiders;

- have developed an interest in the daily experience of a range of social groups within a society and not only that represented in the dominant culture;

- not assume that familiar phenomena (cultural practices or products common to themselves and the other) are understood the same way;

- not assume that unfamiliar phenomena can only be understood by assimilating them to their own cultural phenomena;

- be aware that they need to discover the other person's understanding of (un)familiar phenomena and of phenomena in their own culture which are not familiar to the other person.

3.2 What didactic and methodological approaches to the development of intercultural competence are recommended by the curricula?

General Information on Didactic and Methodological Approaches

The information regarding didactic and methodological approaches contained in the curricula is often limited. Exceptions to this are the curricula of France, Greece, Slovenia, UK (England), Denmark and Belgium (for ISCED2).

If methods, techniques, procedures or activities are mentioned, most often these are:

- the use of authentic materials in the target language such as TV programmes, newspapers, magazines, books and 'content and language integrated learning';

- information about the other/another culture such as texts about the target country, oral teacher input, online information.

Other methods that were mentioned:

- indirect contact with other cultures through role play;

- finding out about different languages and cultures of other children in the class/school;

- small projects/activities about other language(s) and/or countries which involve making or doing something (i.e. rather than reflection);

- visual support for younger learners through mime, gestures, drawings, sketches, puppets, realia.

Specific information on Didactic and Methodological Approaches

Here too we have used Byram's framework to make an assessment of these approaches. For each of the *savoirs* the Country Experts were asked to mark in a list the methods that were mentioned in the curricula.

They were also asked to describe the nature of the approaches, using the following scheme:

- didactic: approaches which are characterised by teacher input;

- experiential: approaches which are characterised by learner intake;

- affective: approaches likely to bring about changes in attitudes;

- cognitive: approaches likely to bring about changes in knowledge and understanding;

- behavioural: approaches likely to bring about changes in behaviour.

Savoirs

If methods are mentioned in the curriculum, they are most often:

- Information using other media
- Oral teacher input
- Role plays
- Literature and the arts

Almost none of the curricula mentions:

- Tandem learning
- Case studies
- Culture assimilator or intercultural sensitiser
- Area studies

Nature of the approaches:
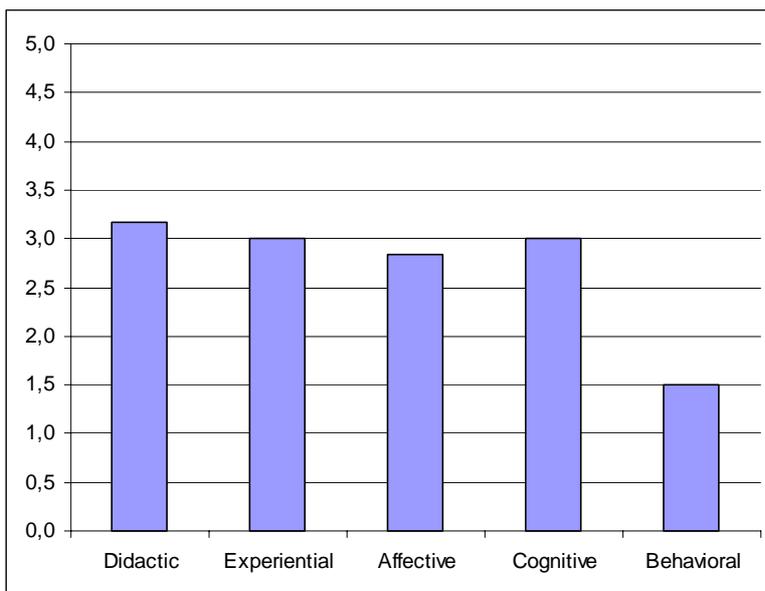
Figure 3.2.1: Nature of approaches under Savoirs.

Savoir comprendre

If methods are mentioned in the curriculum, they are most often:

- Oral teacher input
- Simulations and games
- Role plays

None of the curricula mentions:
- Internet-based collaborative learning
- Tandem learning
- Case studies
- Area studies

Nature of the approaches
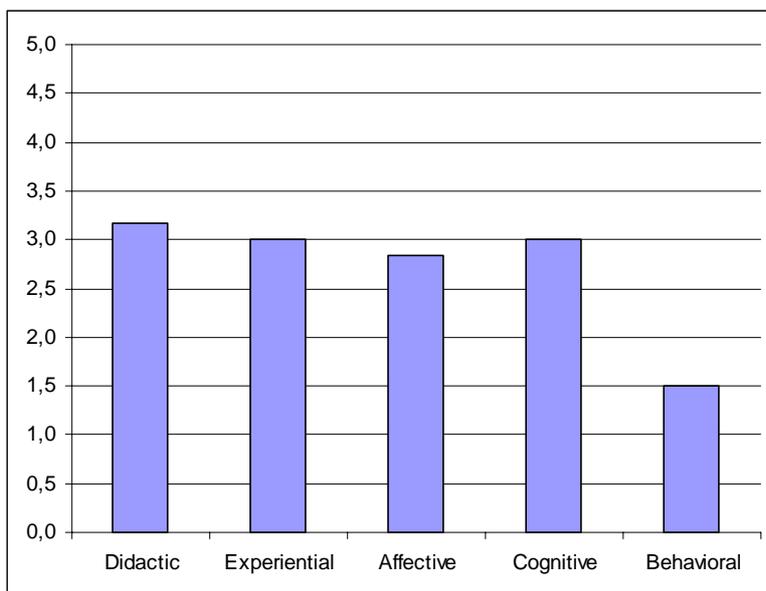
Figure 3.2.2: Nature of approaches under Savoir comprendre.

Savoir s'engager

Methods are mentioned only in Slovenia, France (ISCED2) and Greece (ISCED2).

None of the methods that are mentioned are mentioned significantly more often than others.

Almost none of the curricula that refer to methods mentions:

- Tandem learning
- Case studies
- Area studies
- Immersion, school visits abroad and exchanges
- Literature and the arts

Nature of the approaches
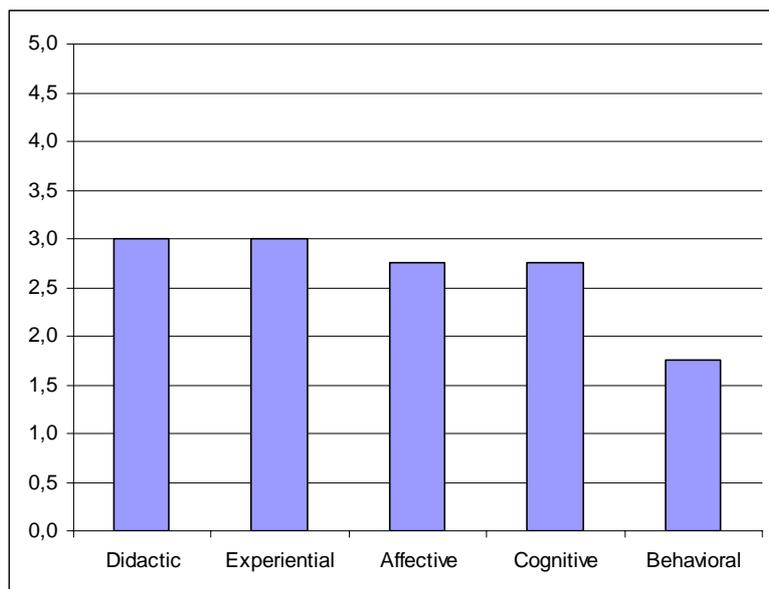
Figure 3.2.3: Nature of approaches under Savoir s'engager.

Savoir apprendre/faire

Methods are mentioned only in Belgium, Poland, Slovenia, and Greece (ISCED2).

Methods most often mentioned are:

- Oral teacher input
- Information using other media
- Role plays

Almost none of the curricula that refer to methods mention:

- Tandem learning
- Area studies

Nature of the approaches:
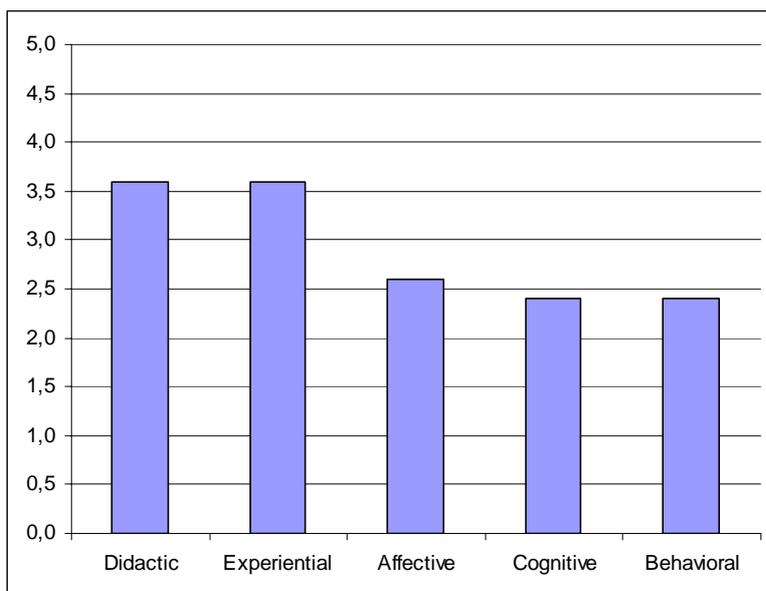
Figure 3.2.4: Nature of approaches under Savoir apprendre/faire.

Savoir être

Methods are mentioned only in Belgium, Poland, UK-England (ISCED1), Slovenia, and Greece (ISCED2).

None of the methods that are referred to are mentioned significantly more often than others.

Almost none of the curricula that mention methods mentions:
- Tandem learning
- Area studies

Nature of the approaches
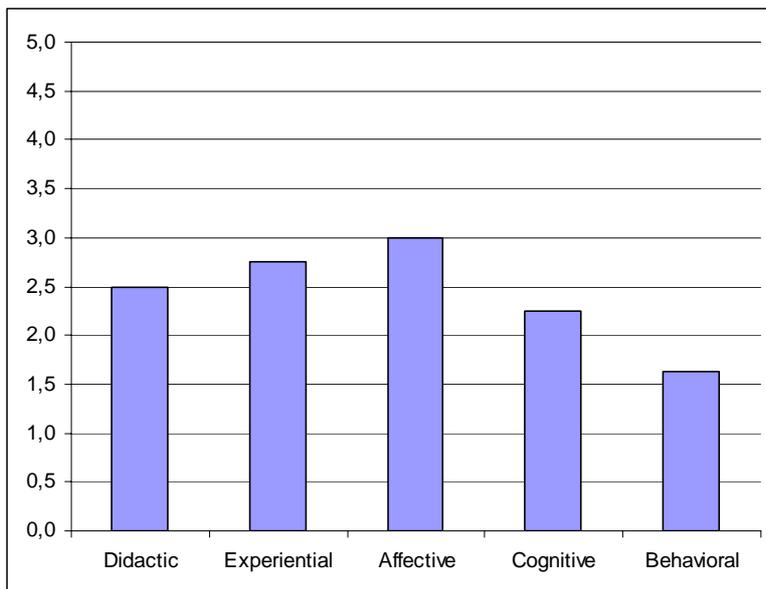
Figure 3.2.5: Nature of approaches under Savoir etre.

3.3 What didactic and methodological approaches are currently used by the teachers?

This question was dealt with in both the online survey and the telephone interviews. Here we present the results of the online survey interspersed with supporting quotes from the interviews in italics.

Methods, techniques, procedures

Respondents to the online survey were asked to identify the methods, techniques and procedures they apply to develop intercultural competence in the classroom. The responses across Europe are presented in Table 1, while Table 2 summarises the responses across the countries examined.
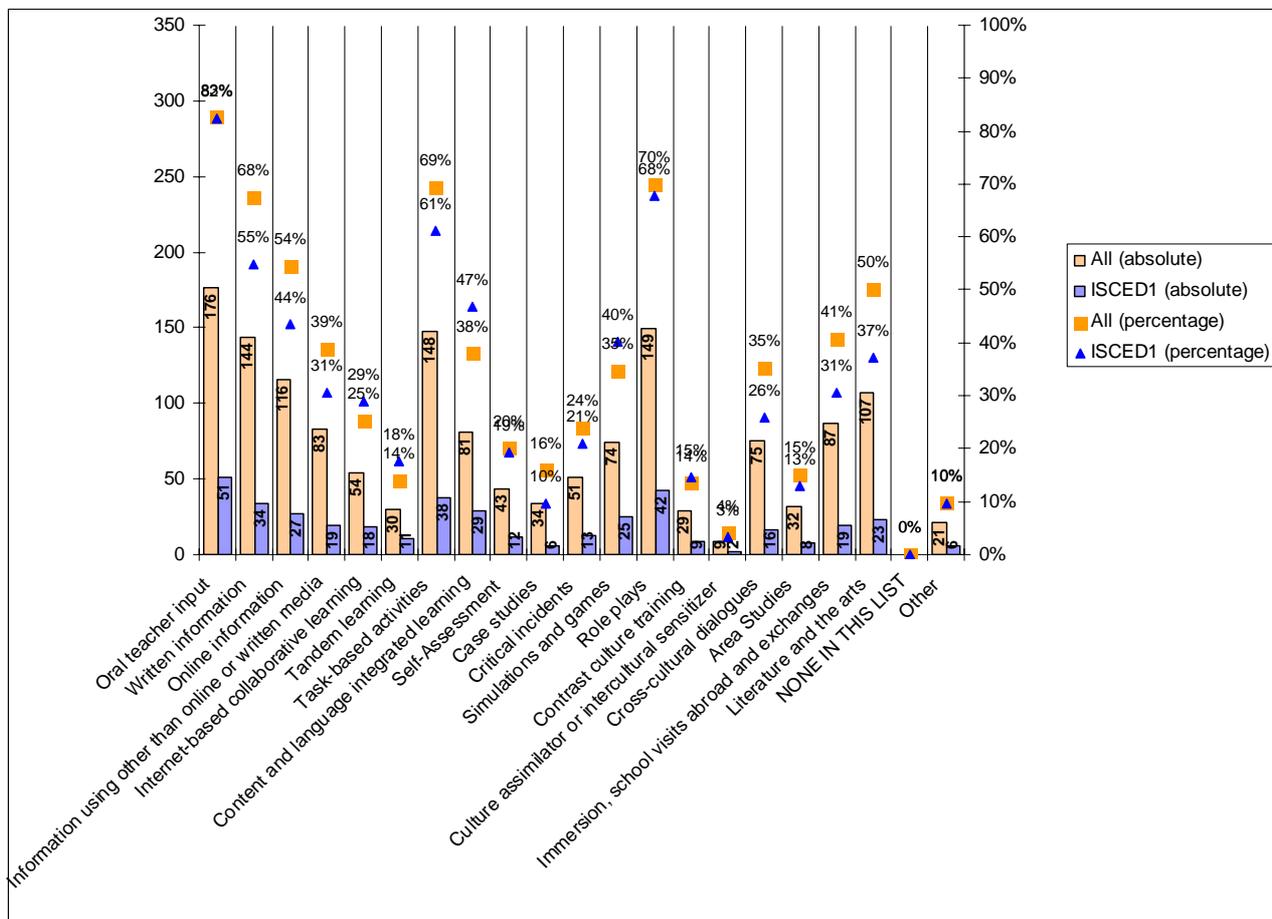
Figure 3.3.1: Methods, techniques and/or procedures used to develop IC (aggregated for all countries surveyed).

In the charts and the text of this section, percentages are used. This is mainly for the purpose of comparing. No statistical tests have been performed. That being said, the following observations can be made:

More than 80% of teachers indicate they use: Oral teacher input.

Between 50 and 75% of respondents identified: Role plays; Task-based activities; Written information; Online information; Literature and the arts.

> *"I prefer always pieces of original children's "literature", what I mean are children's books in the native language where you can give authentic material. It gives another view of thinking, from the native point of view. Through these rhymes and children songs the children are engaged and it is a kind of a real success, much more of than any other activities."* **[ISCED 1 teacher in Hungary]**

Between 25 and 49% of respondents identified: Immersion, School visits abroad and exchanges; Information using other than online or written media; Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); Simulations and games; Cross-cultural dialogues; Internet-based collaborative learning.

> *"We have an exchange programme with a college in Tours. This is annual, it's for 11–15 year olds. The French students were with us just recently and they worked together on a project for a full school day, i.e. 6 hours in total. The outcome was a song. They could use poetry, posters and artwork and all of that in French and English. They were comparing life in England and France for a teenager, it was good fun."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in UK]**

> *"What we did was to organise a pen-pal link with a child in France who had the same profile. We found this through "e-twinning". The children love it, and they realise how different their lives are in reality."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in UK]**

Unsurprisingly, given the age of the pupils concerned, the following methods are used less by ISCED 1 teachers than ISCED 2 teachers: (1) Written information; (2) Online information; (3) Immersion, school visits abroad and exchanges; (4) Literature and the arts.

The fact that less than 25% of respondents indicated Critical incidents and Self-Assessment, or Cultural assimilator or intercultural sensitiser, points out what has already been emphasised in the curriculum analysis: few teachers employ the classical techniques of intercultural competence development conventionally used outside the language classroom: they are thus involved in developing "critical cultural awareness, skills of discovery".

Also few teachers indicate: Tandem learning activities, Case studies and Area studies.

	Oral teacher input	Written information	Online information	Information using other than online or written media	Internet-based collaborative learning	Tandem learning	Task-based activities	Content and language integrated learning	Self-Assessment	Case studies	Critical incidents	Simulations and games	Role plays	Contrast culture training	Culture assimilator or intercultural sensitiser	Cross-cultural dialogues	Area Studies	Immersion, school visits abroad and exchanges	Literature and the arts
Europe	****	***	***	**	**	*	***	**	*	*	*	**	***	*	*	**	*	**	***
Belgium	****	*****	**	**	**	**	***	**	0	0	0	**	****	0	0	*	0	**	*
Denmark	****	****	****	****	**	*	****	**	*	***	**	**	*****	0	*	***	***	**	****
Finland	****	***	**	**	**	*	***	**	*	*	**	**	****	*	*	**	*	***	***
France	****	***	***	**	*	*	***	*	0	*	*	*	****	*	0	*	*	***	**
Germany	*****	****	***	**	*	**	****	**	*	*	**	*	*****	*	*	**	*	**	***
Greece	****	***	***	**	**	*	****	**	**	*	**	**	***	***	*	**	0	**	***
Hungary	****	***	**	**	*	0	***	**	**	*	*	**	*****	*	*	**	*	**	***
Italy	***	**	***	**	**	*	***	***	**	*	**	***	***	*	*	**	*	**	*
Norway	****	****	****	*	*	*	****	***	**	**	**	**	**	*	0	**	**	**	****
Poland	***	***	**	**	*	0	****	**	0	0	*	**	***	*	*	*	*	*	**
Slovenia	*****	*****	**	**	**	**	*****	***	**	*	0	***	***	*	0	0	*	*	**
UK (England)	****	***	***	**	**	*	**	**	*	*	*	**	***	0	*	**	*	**	**

Table 3.3.2: Methods, techniques and/or procedures used to develop IC (broken down in terms of countries surveyed)

Building on Sercu's (2005) survey, the online survey respondents were asked to indicate how often certain activities take place when developing intercultural competence.

The findings on this question can be summarised as follows:

The majority of respondents in both groups, ISCED 1 and ISCED 2, indicate that they either "OFTEN" or "NOW AND THEN":

- use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture:

  "Mostly through computer-class: ICT has become very important. On-line projects can be more than two countries, e.g. about the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean sea and their importance (with a school in Spain) - messages across the Baltic Sea (with Russia). Have taken part in the European Day on-line. bring a class abroad and have contacts with people there. It's important to have contacts with teachers! Teachers education should give teachers the opportunities to have such contacts." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Finland]**

- ask their pupils to think about what it would like to be like to live in the foreign culture;

- use role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet;

- decorate their classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture;

- ask their pupils to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture;

- talk with their pupils about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries.

A more detailed evaluation of the activities now follows in the form of a list of the activities with a brief comment about how the respondents answered:

I ask my pupils to think about the image which the media promote of the foreign country

75 out of 213 respondents say they 'Never' ask their pupils. Twenty-eight (28) respondents (of whom 4 in Primary) answer that they often do this. Respondents teaching in ISCED1 tend to tick 'Never' more often than other teachers and tend to tick 'Often' less frequently.

I tell my pupils what I hear (or read) about the foreign country or culture

Almost all teachers do this at least 'Now and then'. Nearly half of all respondents say they 'Often' do this. There is little difference between teaching levels.

I tell my pupils why I find something fascinating or strange about the foreign culture(s)

The majority of respondents say they 'Often' tell their pupils why they find something fascinating or strange about the foreign culture(s). There is little difference between teachers in ISCED1 and teachers in Lower Secondary. 10 teachers (of whom 4 in ISCED1) answered that they never do this.

I ask my pupils to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture

A greater percentage (57%) of respondents claim they 'Now and then' ask their pupils to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture. Primary level teachers give this answer less often (48%) and tend to answer 'Never' more frequently (34%) than the group as a whole (24%).

I use videos, CD-ROMs or the Internet to illustrate an aspect of the foreign culture

A limited number of respondents (9 out of 213) said they 'Never' use this tool. Most teachers (54%) use it 'Often' and an important percentage (41%) use it 'Now and then'. Proportions are close to equal in both groups (ISCED1 and Lower Secondary).

I ask my pupils to think about what it would be like to live in the foreign culture

Most teachers ask their pupils either 'Now and then' (118 of 213) or 'Often' (65 of 213) to think about what it would be like to live in the foreign culture. For the whole group there are only thirty (30) respondents (of whom 4 in ISCED1) who claim they 'Never' use this activity.

I talk to my pupils about my own experiences in the foreign country

Only 10 respondents answered that they 'Never' talk to their pupils about their own experiences in the foreign country. Most teachers (127 out of 213 or 60%) even do this 'Often'. Teachers in ISCED1 tend to answer 'Often' more frequently. Teachers in Lower Secondary choose 'Now and then' more often than Primary level teachers.

I invite a person originating from the foreign country to my classroom

Most teachers invite people originating from the foreign country 'Now and Then'. An important percentage (37%) of the respondents in this survey said they 'Never' do this:

> *"We have native French speakers coming in to work with the children, we have a link with a school in France where we can exchange work with the children in the French school, and in year 6 the children go on a school trip to Normandy."* **[ISCED 1 teacher in UK]**

I ask my pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language

Most teachers who claim they 'Never' do this are ISCED1 teachers (24 out of 39), and most respondents who answered 'Often' are Secondary level teachers. That being said, the majority of respondents say that they 'Now and then' ask their pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language.

I bring objects originating from the foreign culture to my classroom

Only 26 respondents claim they never bring objects to the classroom. ISCED1 teachers tend to answer 'Often' more frequently than others:

> *"I use lot of "realia" (…) We prepared an English recipe, we prepared tea and muffins and a proper English breakfast, we cooked together and compared our food with English food."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in Italy]**

I ask my pupils to participate in role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet

Most teachers use 'Role play situations' either 'Often' (27) or 'Now and then' (112). But a significant number of the respondent group, (64, of whom 20 teach at ISCED1 level, say they 'Never' use this:

> *"I use role play and games and I will start all over again when there is a problem, until they all understand. I get a lot of support from children who are more advanced to support those who have difficulties."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in Italy]**

I decorate my classroom with posters illustrating particular aspects of the foreign culture

This is a popular activity used by almost all teachers (196).

I comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the foreign language materials I am using in a particular class

47 teachers (of whom 19 in ISCED1) say they never do. All others do this 'Now and then' (45%) or 'Often' (31%). ISCED1 respondents tend to answer 'Never' more frequently (31% compared to 22% in the group as a whole).

I ask my pupils to compare an aspect of their own culture with that aspect in the foreign culture

This activity is used by almost all teachers, with almost no difference in the distribution of 'Often' and 'Now and then' between teaching levels:

> *"Use books about everyday life in other countries. Focus on similarities and differences."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in Norway]**

I touch upon an aspect of the foreign culture regarding which I feel negatively disposed

Only a limited number of respondents answered that they 'Often' do this, while more than half (53%) said they 'Never' do this. For Primary level teachers, the figure is as high as 61%. For the whole group, less than half of the respondents say they do this 'Now and then' (46%). This percentage is lower for the group of ISCED1 teachers (37%).

I talk with my pupils about stereotypes regarding particular cultures and countries or regarding the inhabitants of particular countries

The majority of respondents (89%) say they talk about stereotypes either 'Often' (36%) or 'Now and then' (53%). Only 22 respondents claim to never do this.

The online survey data show the following differences and similarities between teaching levels:

- ISCED 1 teachers tend to tick "NEVER" more often than ISCED 2 teachers when they "ask their pupils to think about the image which media promote of the foreign country", "ask their pupils to independently explore an aspect of the foreign culture", "comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the foreign language materials they are using in a particular class", "touch upon an aspect of the foreign culture to which they feel negatively disposed".

- ISCED 1 teachers answer "OFTEN" more frequently than ISCED 2 teachers when asked if they "talk to their pupils about their own experiences in the foreign country" or they "bring objects originating from the foreign culture to their classroom".

- ISCED 2 teachers answer "NEVER" more often than ISCED 1 teachers (44 out of 64) when asked if they "use role-play situations in which people from different cultures meet".

- ISCED 2 teachers tend to answer "OFTEN" or "NOW AND THEN " more frequently than ISCED 1 teachers when they "ask their pupils to describe an aspect of their own culture in the foreign language" and "comment on the way in which the foreign culture is represented in the foreign language materials they are using in a particular class".

Subjects

Respondents to the online survey were asked to indicate how often they dealt with certain subjects when developing intercultural competence. The results are summarised below.

	ISCED 1 (62 Respondents) "I deal with it ..."			ALL (213 Respondents) "I deal with it ..."			ISCED 1 (62 Respondents) "I deal with it ..."			ALL (213 Respondents) "I deal with it ..."		
	Often (absolute)	Now and then (absolute)	Never (absolute)	Often (absolute)	Now and then (absolute)	Never (absolute)	Often (%)	Now and then (%)	Never (%)	Often (%)	Now and then (%)	Never (%)
History	8	41	13	35	152	26	13%	66%	21%	16%	71%	12%
Geography	20	40	2	60	143	10	32%	65%	3%	28%	67%	5%
Political System	0	12	50	8	94	111	0%	19%	81%	4%	44%	52%
Different ethnic and social groups	7	30	25	33	131	49	11%	48%	40%	15%	62%	23%
Daily life and routines	48	14	0	163	50	0	77%	23%	0%	77%	23%	0%
Living conditions	24	29	9	90	105	18	39%	47%	15%	42%	49%	8%
Food and drink	48	13	1	155	56	2	77%	21%	2%	73%	26%	1%
Youth culture	21	31	10	109	90	14	34%	50%	16%	51%	42%	7%
Education	26	33	3	105	103	5	42%	53%	5%	49%	48%	2%
Professional life	3	29	30	14	130	69	5%	47%	48%	7%	61%	32%
Traditions, folklore, tourist attractions	37	25	0	127	86	0	60%	40%	0%	60%	40%	0%
Literature	12	30	20	45	127	41	19%	48%	32%	21%	60%	19%
Other cultural expressions (music, drama, art, ...)	22	36	4	72	132	9	35%	58%	6%	34%	62%	4%
Values and beliefs	17	29	16	56	128	29	27%	47%	26%	26%	60%	14%
International relations (political, economic, cultural)	1	21	40	9	116	88	2%	34%	65%	4%	54%	41%

Table 3.3.3.: Subjects dealt with in the development of IC according to level expressed in numbers and percentages.

For the whole group, subjects that are often dealt with 'Extensively' are:

- Food and drink (77%)
- Daily life and routines (73%)

"We are looking at the daily life of a 12-year old in France, comparing that to what a pupil in the UK does, comparing the lifestyles, their school day, the different timetables, different priorities. We even did that with a school in Ghana, we looked at a typical school day of an African child and compared the differences to a school day in the UK." **[ISCED 2 teacher in UK]**

- Literature (60%)

"Last year I tried to do a play, a drama in English. We played 'Peter Pan'. it was an eye opener for the children and for me - because even the shyest children, who were normally refusing to speak or to read, started to speak when playing their roles. There was the case of a little girl who, after she had been in the play, completely changed her attitude. Now she can read and speak, it completely broke the ice." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Italy]**

A subject that a relatively high number of respondents said they 'Never' deal with is:

- Political system (52%)

All other subjects are discussed 'Less extensively'; some with a tendency to 'Never' (e.g. 'International relations', 'Professional life' and 'Different ethnic and social groups').

None of the respondents answered that they never deal with:
- daily life and routines
- traditions, folklore, tourist attractions

When looking at the responses for ISCED1, the subjects that are more often dealt with 'Extensively' are similar to those in the whole group.

Subjects that are often 'Never' dealt with by ISCED1 respondents are also the same as for the group as a whole, but their responses are more emphatic:

- Political system (81%)
- International relations (65%)

Cross-curricular activities

Respondents to the online survey were asked to indicate whether they had been involved in cross-curricular activities with teachers of other subjects when developing intercultural competence. The results are summarised below.

	ALL	ISCED1
Yes	50.7 %	45.2 %
No, because I teach all/almost all subjects myself (e.g. if you are a teacher in Primary Education)	13.2 %	37.1 %
No	36.2 %	17.7 %
TOTAL number of respondents	213	62

Table 3.3.4: Percentage of teachers developing IC (or not) in cross-curricular activities.

Teachers in ISCED1 who aren't involved in any cross-curricular activities (37.1%) are often not doing so because they are teaching all or almost all subjects themselves.

When looking at the whole group of respondents, only half (50.7%) say they have been involved in some kind of cross-curricular activities.

Those respondents who answered 'yes' to this question were then asked: Which courses/subjects were involved?

	ALL	ISCED1
First Language (Mother tongue/Native tongue)	71.6 %	67.9 %
History	60.6 %	53.6 %
Geography	77.1 %	82.1 %
Science	19.3 %	25.0 %
Biology	14.7 %	25.0 %
Arts	49.5%	64.3 %
Music	54.1%	67.9 %
Religion	15.6 %	7.1 %
Cooking	45.0 %	42.9 %
Gymnastics	11.9 %	10.7 %
Other (please specify)	16.5 %	10.7 %
TOTAL number of respondents	109	28

Table 3.3.5.: Subjects involved in cross-curricular activities.

For those who are involved in cross-curricular activities, the subjects most often concerned are:

- Geography (77.1%)
- First Language (Mother tongue/Native tongue) (71.6%)

To some extent also the following:

- History (60.6%)
- Music (54.1%)

About half of the respondents mention:

- Arts (49.5%)
- Cooking (45.0%)

Respondents who say they are not involved in any cross-curricular activities were asked why this is the case:

	ALL	ISCED1
It's not mandatory	7.7 %	0.0 %
I don't think it is necessary	2.6 %	0.0 %
Other teachers don't think it is necessary	24.4 %	33.3 %
I don't have the time	24.4 %	8.3 %
Other teachers don't have the time	30.8 %	25.0 %
My pupils wouldn't be interested	3.9 %	0.0 %
Too difficult to implement	38.5 %	33.3 %
Timetable is not flexible enough	55.1 %	50.0 %
Other	12.8 %	25.0 %
TOTAL number of respondents	78	12

Table 3.3.6: Percentage of teachers giving a particular reason for not developing IC in cross-curricular activities.

The inflexibility of timetables is a major reason for not having been involved in cross-curricular activities. Other important elements appear to be: 'Other teachers don't have the time' and 'Too difficult to implement'. Quite a number of respondents also ticked: 'Other teachers don't think it is necessary' and 'I don't have the time'.

3.4 How do language teachers experience the development of intercultural competence in the language classroom?

Respondents were asked to identify the difficulties teachers in their country encounter in developing intercultural skills in the classroom. The table below summarises the responses across the countries examined and the responses across Europe are presented in Table 3.4.2. The situation is very similar in ISCED 1 and ISCED 2.

The difficulties identified most frequently by teachers (broken down by country).

	Lack of Time	Shortage of Suitable Resources	Lack of Training	Poor Knowledge of Foreign Culture	Class too big or diverse	Lack of Management Support
Belgium	***	**	*	**	*	
Denmark	***	***		**	*	
Finland	***	**		*	*	
France	***	***	***	**		
Germany	***	***	*	*	**	
Greece	***	**	***		**	*
Hungary	**	**	***	***		
Italy	**	**	***	**		
Norway	***	**	**	***		
Poland	***	***	**		**	
Slovenia	***	**	***	*	*	
UK (England)	**	***	*	**	*	

*** = ticked by 75% or above of respondents
** = ticked by 50–74% of respondents
* = ticked by 25–49% of respondents

Table 3.4.1: The difficulties identified most frequently by teachers (broken down in terms of countries surveyed).

As can be seen from Tables 3.3.5 and 3.4.1, the two difficulties mentioned most frequently by teachers are lack of time and shortage of suitable resources. With regard to time, two aspects are involved: time within the timetable to incorporate the development of intercultural skills, and time outside the classroom to plan such teaching and to organise international contacts, projects and so on. The following comments illustrate this:

Not enough hours **[ISCED 1 teacher in Poland]**

It's primarily lack of time! The overall planning is too tight. **[ISCED 2 teacher in Finland]**

A huge problem is the lack of time. 3 x 45 minutes is not much. Hence guidance as to how to find and incorporate the aspects of intercultural competences could be a good idea. [ISCED 2 teacher in Denmark]

"Lack of time and how the classes are organised. Is the school system flexible enough especially when we talk about personal contacts and projects? You can't use fixed timetables for this. That's the most difficult thing. It's a bit easier at lower secondary level. It means a lot of work outside your class. It should not be part of your free time. You should be paid for your work. That's why many teachers say no thank you." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Finland]**

Some teachers thus make recommendations in relation to this:

"Allow teachers to take part in overseas exchanges and other professional development opportunities by providing supply teaching cover (and not limiting it to during their holiday time)." **[ISCED 1 teacher in England]**

"Allocate time within the overall KS3 [= ISCED 2] curriculum for the development of intercultural skills, so that it is not always 'taken out of' language lessons." **[ISCED 2 teacher in England]**

One reason why teachers may be reluctant to allocate time to the development of intercultural skills, which the last quote hints at, is that their students are assessed primarily in terms of language proficiency. For example, in the English curriculum, although intercultural competence is given emphasis in terms of aims and objectives in the curriculum, the attainment targets are focused completely on language skills. It is not surprising, therefore, that teachers concentrate on language skills and feel they do not have enough time to deal adequately with intercultural skills which are not assessed.

The difficulties identified most frequently by teachers (aggregated for all countries).
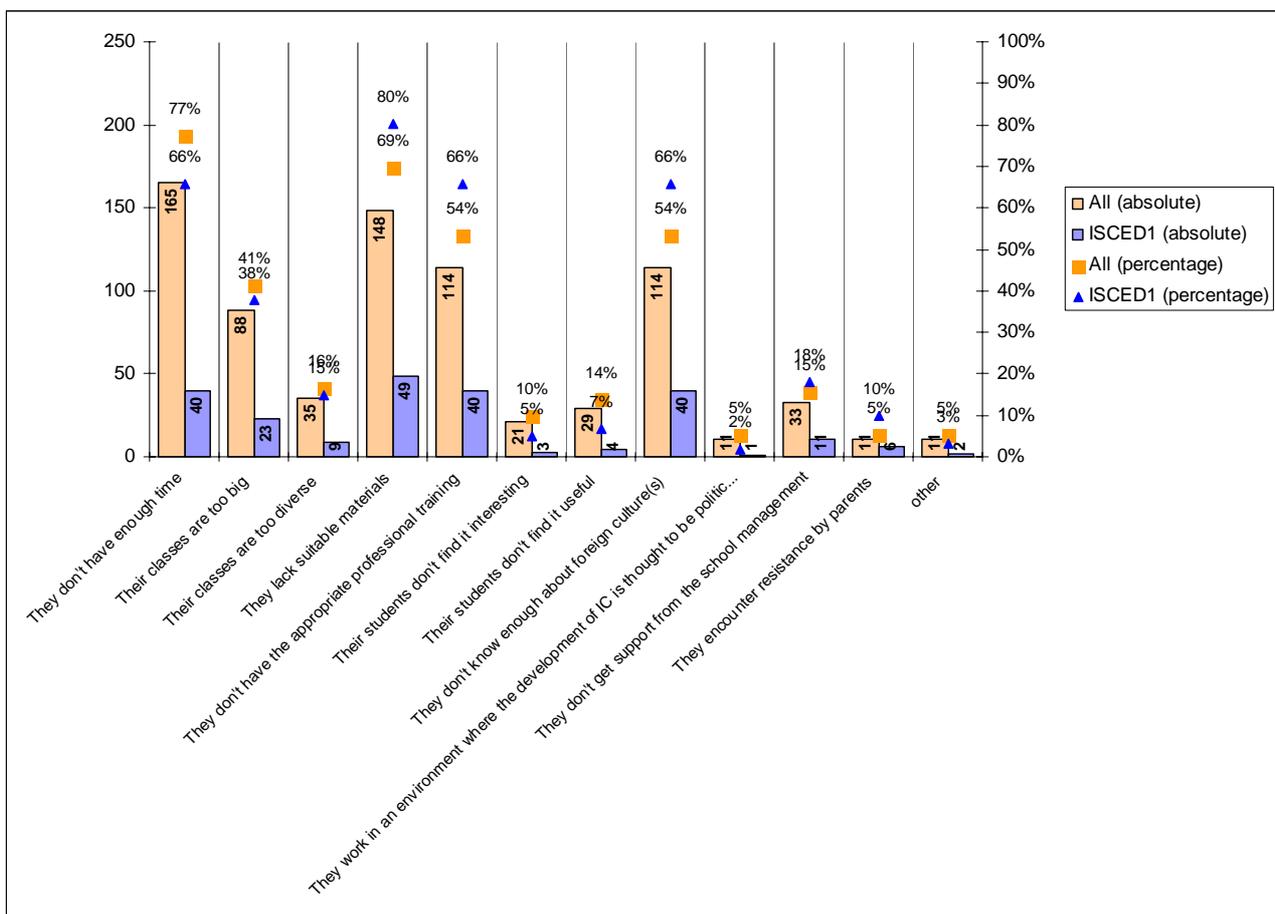
Table 3.4.2: The difficulties identified most frequently by teachers (aggregated for all countries surveyed).

The second main difficulty that teachers identify is shortage of resources. Some teachers complain that the textbooks are inadequate:

"We lack proper teacher and learning resources which concentrate on intercultural. We only get course books which are concentrating on the linguistic issues – they do not take intercultural matters or understanding into consideration." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Greece]**

"We need textbooks that have a greater focus on intercultural competence and on cultures outside the English-speaking world." **[ISCED 1 teacher in Poland]**

"We need books that include intercultural competence. Teachers are in general very eager to improve the pupils intercultural competence, but they have to do a lot of work on their own. A major problem is also the lack of access to the Internet." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Poland]**

As the last and the next quotations indicate, shortage of computers and Internet access is a problem for some teachers in some countries:

"In the form of Internet based information we could have easy access to [resources] but we haven't got enough computers and sufficient Internet access. There is one IT room available and it is always busy. I would like to have computers and Internet access in my classroom; I also want more up-to-date and new books." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Slovenia]**

However, having good access to the Internet does not necessarily resolve the issue, as the following quotation makes clear.

"We already have interactive whiteboards in the classroom so we can use the Internet, show videos and play audio tapes. But to achieve the authenticity of the experience to the children is the most difficult one for me"." **[ISCED 1 teacher in England]**

In other words, although resources are extremely important, and in fact fundamental, in themselves they are insufficient. This is because the teacher needs to be able to adapt and/or use them in ways that are meaningful to the children:

"*Effectively, the materials are readily available but not all the children would understand it. I have to take their teenage problems into consideration. I have to work with examples which have meaning to them in the context of their own life – it all has to be very praxis oriented."* **[ISCED 2 teacher in England]**

92.5% of all respondents in our study (and 91.9% of ISCED 1 teachers) reported that they felt there should be more specific guidance for teachers with regard to the development of intercultural competence. Examples that they felt would be useful included:

- Examples of activities to do in the classroom (79.7%)
- Exchange programmes for teachers (70.1%)
- Workshops (63.5%)
- Examples of exercises (50.3%)
- More staff development (in-service training) (49.2%)
- Seminars (48.2%)
- Online forum to exchange ideas (47.7%)

Many respondents commented on the difficulty of attracting students' interest in intercultural competence:

Lack of interest from the pupils, who can't see the relevance." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Denmark]**

"I think from my experience in my classroom my students find the different elements of the other culture less important, because they are less familiar. This creates prejudices, a certain arrogance which, I think, is simply an expression of their lack of knowledge, lack of willingness to find out why the other is different. Once they have learned and understood it, they accept it, but it is a difficult process." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Greece]**

"If you are teaching in a difficult area, the children do not care, they have their own difficulties. Just knowing about other children's lives is not important to them. But when you show them that other children also can have problems in a similar way or situation, that is a way forward; because then they can share experiences, they can sympathise with each other." **[ISCED 2 teacher in England.]**

In contrast, others reported that intercultural competence is motivating for their students, and they conveyed more concern about classes being too big or diverse:

"Very often the classes are too big. Differences in intellectual level in the class often takes a lot of time to organise the lessons. When you focus on intercultural competence verbally, you feel it motivates the students." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Norway]**

Clearly some teachers have found ways of overcoming any lack of interest that the children display, and so this raises the question of training. Many teachers referred to the need for training, both in terms of initial teacher training courses and in terms of in-service development. Effective training is needed for two main reasons:

- to help teachers acquire a better conceptual understanding of intercultural competence;

- to help teachers improve their methods for developing intercultural competence and raising students' interest.

Many feel that their training has been/was inadequate:

"When you have never received any guidance in teaching intercultural competence it is all up to yourself. Because of the lack of guidance it takes too much time to deal with it on your own." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Norway]**

"When I was trained, I did not get what I need today! What is needed is real guidance in the training of the teachers, or maybe more in-service training concerning this topic." **[ISCED 1 teacher in Hungary]**

"I think the difficulties for the teachers can originate from the fact that we do not know enough about intercultural teaching! We do not have sufficient knowledge ourselves about cultures of other people. Maybe we do not have enough adequate training and we have not been trained 'how to teach intercultural competence'." **[ISCED 1 teacher in Hungary]**

"What is intercultural competence? It's a tricky question. It's related to personal skills and so difficult to develop in pupils, also because it needs the willingness of the pupils to learn intercultural competence. It's difficult to operationalise intercultural competence. It can be difficult to draw the lines for the level of tolerance. How do you teach the pupils not to think in stereotypes, when you use stereotypes in teaching about other cultures?" **[ISCED 2 teacher in Finland]**

"... there are so many things that we foreign-language teachers have to remember to STRESS. There is the language and the different skills in it, there is cultural knowledge and social skills... I think a little bit of education along the teaching career is not only nice but it is necessary. In the everyday life, many teachers' main concern is how to manage the classroom with students with poor to excellent skills in the language department. In the daily routines, ideals may sometimes fade away, and continuous education helps the teachers to remind themselves of the ideals and perhaps be more active in changing their teaching little by little." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Finland]**

Some teachers clearly perceived the development of intercultural competence as being strongly associated with knowledge of the target language/culture, and many of them felt inadequate in this respect:

"Teachers don't have sufficient knowledge of other cultures." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Hungary]**

"Teacher lack knowledge of other countries and their cultures." **[ISCED 1 teacher in Italy]**

"Some teachers of languages are not always a good example. They do not travel enough and do not have enough knowledge." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Slovenia]**

Such concerns raise a fundamental question: to what extent should the development of intercultural skills be associated with particular languages and cultural groups, and to what extent should it be a generic skill that is not tied to a particular language or cultural group? Understandably, most foreign language teachers perceive it as the former, but it could be argued that the latter is also extremely important.

Another issue raised by a few teachers is the role of management, at both school level and government level:

"Some teachers find themselves already having too many obligations. School management needs to support intercultural competence financially and morally. Each school should have an international committee to promote the idea of intercultural competence." **[ISCED 2 teacher in Denmark]**

"People in the ministry and in schools are not really aware of the importance of cultural diversity." **[ISCED 1 teacher in Slovenia]**

Clearly, management and policy-level support is vital if teachers are to develop intercultural skills effectively. There seems to be variability both within and across countries as to how much support teachers feel they receive on the ground.

3.5 How closely does classroom practice reflect the curricula and how relevant and effective are current curricula and methods?

Comparison of curricula with classroom practice

The data show a strong link between curricula and classroom practice with respect to the development of intercultural competence (by the respondents across all countries).

A substantial majority of the interviewed respondents report that they have specific objectives on the development of intercultural competence in their respective curricula, and all report that they include intercultural development in their teaching of the foreign language. Just over half of respondents interviewed report that they include intercultural competence development to a large or very large extent when teaching the foreign language.

53.1% of respondents to the online survey report spending some 80% of classroom time on language learning, and 20% classroom time on developing intercultural competence, whereas as many as 32.9% spend 60% of classroom time on language learning and 40% on developing intercultural competence. What we can deduce from this is that considerable attention is given to the development of intercultural competence in classroom practice, which appears to be aligned with the position of intercultural competence as specified within the different curricula.

However, if we assume that teachers' conceptualisations of intercultural competence are reflected in their classroom practice, a comparison of the data from the online survey with the results of the curriculum analysis shows a certain mismatch between what may happen in the classroom and the objectives and approaches prescribed by the curricula.

The online survey asked teachers the following question: What do you understand by 'developing intercultural competence' in a foreign language teaching context? Following Sercu (2005), the teachers were asked to answer by ranking nine possible conceptualisations in order of importance. The results are indicated in the Tables below.

OBJECTIVE	ALL TEACHING IN PRIMARY OR LOWER SECONDARY		Teaching in PRIMARY		NOT teaching in PRIMARY	
	AVERAGE SCORE	RANKING	AVERAGE SCORE	RANKING	AVERAGE SCORE	RANKING
Provide information about the history, geography and political conditions of the foreign culture(s)	6.44	9	6.69	9	6.36	9
Provide information about daily life and routines	5.13	5	4.98	5	5.18	4
Provide information about shared values and beliefs	5.86	8	5.69	7	5.96	8
Provide experiences with a rich variety of cultural expressions (literature, music, theatre, film, ...)	5.70	7	6.35	8	5.45	6
Develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures	2.73	1	2.47	1	2.77	1
Promote reflection on cultural differences	5.12	4	4.94	4	5.19	5
Promote increased understanding of students' own culture	5.73	6	5.58	6	5.79	7
Promote the ability to empathise with people living in other cultures	4.55	3	4.47	3	4.57	3
Promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations	3.73	2	3.82	2	3.73	2

*Table 3.5.1: Teachers' conceptualisations of 'developing intercultural competence' according to ranking, with average score. Note on interpreting the table: A **LOWER** score means that the conceptualisation is considered **MORE** important. A **HIGHER** score means the conceptualisation is considered to be **LESS** important.*

If we categorise the conceptualisations according to their scores, this results in the following:

SCORE	ALL	Only ISCED1	ALL except ISCED1
1 – 2,99 (Most important)	Develop attitudes of openness…	Develop attitudes of openness…	Develop attitudes of openness…
3 – 4,99	Promote ability to handle… Promote the ability to empathise…	Promote ability to handle… Promote the ability to empathise…	Promote ability to handle… Promote the ability to empathise…
5 – 6,99	Promote reflection… Provide information about shared daily life… Promote increased understanding… Provide experiences with a rich variety… Provide information about shared values… Provide information about history, geography,…	Promote reflection… Provide information about shared daily life… Promote increased understanding… Provide information about shared values… Provide experiences with a rich variety… Provide information about history, geography,…	Provide information about shared daily life … Promote reflection… Provide experiences with a rich variety… Promote increased understanding… Provide information about shared values… Provide information about history, geography,…
7 – 9 (Least important)			

Table 3.5.2: Teachers' conceptualisations of 'developing intercultural competence' according to score.

It is striking that, apart from the first three conceptualisations, all have more or less similar scores. In the text below, the average scores per conceptualisation are given in brackets in the following order: *score for all - score for ISCED1 only - score for Lower Secondary*.

The highest ranked conceptualisation by far is Develop attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other people and cultures (*2.73 – 2.47 – 2.77*). This conceptualisation can be described as largely affective in nature.

Second highest-ranked conceptualisation is Promote the ability to handle intercultural contact situations (*3.73 – 3.82 – 3.73*). This conceptualisation can be described as in primarily behavioural in nature.

Promote ability to empathise with people living in other cultures (*4.55 – 4.47– 4.57*) ranks third. This conceptualisation can be described as largely affective in nature.

All but one of the remaining places are occupied by conceptualisations which are cognitive in nature.

The teachers' view of intercultural competence development summarised above as being concerned mainly with *affective* and *behavioural* matters and only in second place with *cognitive* matters contrasts to some extent with the results of the analysis of the curricula presented in section 3.1. Here the findings on the objectives of intercultural competence development were found to be focused to a large extent on attitudes and *knowledge*, and not as in the conceptualisations of the teachers on attitudes and *behaviour.*

When it comes to the description of didactic and methodological approaches contained in the curricula under review, we again see a mismatch between teachers' conceptualisations and what is prescribed in the curricula. Whereas the teachers surveyed attached high importance to the ability to handle intercultural contact situations, a largely behavioural competence, the

approaches in four out of five categories were found to be more cognitive and/or affective than behavioural in nature.

That said, it may be that for some respondents it is difficult to separate the concept of intercultural competence from other objectives relating to language teaching and learning, and more holistic aspects of learner development. Thus these teachers do not view intercultural competence as a separate, or even inter-linked curricular theme, but rather as integral and inseparable from good practice in language teaching and learning.

Interpretations differ widely on what is, and what is not, part of intercultural knowledge and skills development; and what is, or what is not, part of language learning and development. However, according to the conceptualisations underlying this study and described in Section 1 and in terms of classroom practice, the inclusion of intercultural competence development appears to be widespread, even if there appears to be a certain mismatch described above between curricula and classroom practice.

The respondents show considerable knowledge of a variety of activities, methods, techniques and procedures by which to develop intercultural competence, alongside reporting high frequency of application of these in the classroom. However, most of the activities, methods, techniques and procedures mentioned are those which are derived from the canon of communicative language teaching activities. Activities etc which are typically employed in the development of intercultural competence outside the language classroom (e.g. culture assimilator or intercultural sensitiser, case studies, self-assessment) are less often mentioned.

The online survey shows that teachers feel under-prepared for developing intercultural competence. 63.4% indicated they received little or no training in this area during their initial teacher education. 53.5% said that they had not received any training in this area at a later stage.

Unsurprisingly, 92.5% of respondents to the online survey think there should be more specific guidance for teachers with regard to developing intercultural competence.

This suggests a positive attitude to the inclusion of the development of intercultural competence within classroom practice.

Whereas a relatively close correspondence can be detected between the curricula and classroom practice, this does not necessarily mean that the curricula are as relevant or as effective as they could be.

Assessment of relevance of current curricula

To assess the relevance of current curricula in developing intercultural competence in the context of foreign language education it is necessary to examine the degree to which the objectives described in the curricula coincide with concepts of intercultural competence. As documented in Section 4.1 of this study, there is some but not complete overlap with the elements of the three models of intercultural competence underlying the curricula reviewed in this study. The curricula demonstrate a tendency to emphasise linguistic competence and communication skills at the expense of intercultural competence.

This is confirmed by the reports of our Country Experts, who for example write:

"It is said in the curriculum that cultural learning will happen alongside teaching reading and listening skills, and is not an objective in itself."

[Country Expert, Belgium (NL)]

"Le curriculum fait la place belle aux objectifs linguistiques exprimés en termes de compétences."

[Country Expert, France]

"The core curriculum, valid since 2003, does not include objectives referring to intercultural competence. (…) it indirectly deals with affective aspects of intercultural competence related to attitudes".

[Country Expert, Poland]

This emphasis on linguistic competence and communication skills at the expense of intercultural competence may be reflected in what is assessed in the language classroom, i.e. language at the expense of intercultural competence:

"There is a very noticeable discrepancy between the importance attached to intercultural skills in the content and teaching of the curriculum and the attainment targets that are specified. (…) Intercultural skills are only assessed in so far as they form a component of communication skills; in other words, they are not assessed in their own right."

[Country Expert, UK (England)]

There is some justification to conclude, as this Country Expert does, that what is assessed is generally what is mostly taught - at the expense of what is not assessed:

"The message to the teacher, curriculum designer, textbook writer and other users of the document is clear: intercultural competence is not to be assessed. The consequence is also clear: intercultural competence will be developed less because what is not assessed and tested is taught and learned less, if at all."

[Country Expert, Germany]

The curriculum review undertaken with the analysis tool makes clear that when intercultural competence is a focus of the curricula it tends to concern knowledge and attitudes rather than behaviour. This is also reported by at least one Country Expert:

The core curriculum that is currently followed does not contain objectives that would satisfy pupils' and teachers' expectations regarding intercultural competence. It only deals with affective aspects of intercultural competence related to attitudes.

[Country Expert, Poland]

Thus, all in all, it can be said that in many cases the curricula are only partially relevant to the optimum development of intercultural competence in its full breadth.

Consequently, it is important to consider in the individual case the extent to which it is necessary and practicable to extend the range of objectives in this area. Certainly it can be said that the effectiveness of the development of intercultural competences in the language classroom can be increased by making the curricula more relevant, i.e. by ensuring that intercultural competence development objectives are prescribed in their full breadth.

Assessment of effectiveness of current curricula

A curriculum which is not relevant is unlikely to be effective. In addition, for a curriculum to be effective it is also necessary that the description of the objectives is sufficiently clear and detailed to be understandable.

Both the teachers surveyed and interviewed and the Country Experts reported that intercultural competence objectives may be described in such general terms that it is difficult for the untrained teacher to imagine what they may mean and, more significantly, how these objectives can be put into practice in the language classroom. Moreover, many of the teachers reported on in this study said that they lacked the necessary knowledge and training in the development of intercultural competence.

"Le curriculum pourrait être une aide plus efficace et plus adaptée si quelques aspects étaient précisés ou élargis."

[Country Expert, France]

"It can be concluded that the document under review could be more effective in promoting the development of intercultural competence if it were more concrete and detailed in its description of objectives."

[Country Expert, Germany]

This lack of clarity and detail in the description of the objectives may have another effect, which becomes all the more obvious when this lack of detailed description is contrasted with the sometimes very full description of objectives in the area of language proficiency. The effect namely may well be to reduce the degree of significance given to the development of intercultural competence. This may in turn lead to a reduced amount of teaching time being devoted to intercultural competence development.

It is thus necessary to examine in the individual case whether the curriculum could be more effective in promoting the development of intercultural competence if it were clearer and more detailed in its description of objectives.

Assessment of relevance and effectiveness of current methods

Many of the curricula reviewed do not describe didactic and methodological approaches or methods, techniques, procedures and activities. This may well be a cultural convention. However, even in the very much broader 'intended curricula', the teachers often report they are left without guidance and examples when it comes to methods, techniques, procedures and activities for developing intercultural competence.

This is also reported by our Country Experts, who write for example:

"The curriculum is an extremely generalised document, which does not impose any method or approach."

[Country Expert, Poland]

"The curriculum shows lack of explicit explanations, advice and specific instructions on teaching IC on this level"

[Country Expert, Slovenia]

"Some examples of how the lesson should unfold are given but no specific information about the development of intercultural skills."

[Country Expert, Greece]

"No didactic and methodological advice is given to teachers as to how to approach the fostering of intercultural competence in young learners (12-14-year-olds)".

[Country Expert, Belgium (NL)]

Given this lack of guidance as to how to develop intercultural competence and the consequent lack of examples in the teaching materials language teachers use, it is unsurprising that the methods reported in the interviews and online survey as being used, while in themselves sound, tend to be limited in variety and restricted to a certain extent to the development of knowledge and awareness rather than attitudes and behaviour.

Very few teachers report using classical methods of intercultural competence development outside the foreign language classroom, such as critical incidents or culture assimilators, although in principle with appropriate modification they could be used.

In short, curricula could be made more effective by including more detailed guidance as to didactic and methodological approaches that could be adopted, not least because many teachers report a lack of education and training in the area of intercultural competence and its development.

The study's findings confirm that the teaching of foreign languages is the logical and appropriate environment for the simultaneous development of linguistic skills and intercultural competences. There is sufficient evidence that this dual approach is already being widely applied in the EU's Member States, though the range of intercultural competences prescribed for development by the curriculum is often limited.

The teaching of foreign languages will be enhanced by the promotion of these intercultural competences, since the spoken and written word - perhaps the key expression of a culture - is however only one of the many facets of a society and its culture: the full meaning of a language comes to life through an understanding of its speakers' value systems, beliefs, norms, practices, traditions, history, as well as its non-verbal signals. If this understanding is then also complemented by an ability to deal with these features affectively and behaviourally, the success of language learning will be all the greater.

To ensure effective results in the teaching of intercultural competence, it will be necessary to set target objectives for pupils of foreign-language lessons/courses, to be attained by the end of levels ISCED 1 and 2.

Certain actions can best be taken at the European level and the findings of the current study lead us to make the recommendations that follow. These cover strategy on the one hand and mobility, professional development and teaching resources on the other.

Strategy issues

1. The establishment of a European research programme into the links between language learning and intercultural competence, which explores:

    - the contributions that different disciplines can make to our understanding of intercultural competence;

    - effective approaches and techniques for developing intercultural competence in school education, notably in foreign-language learning, in order to meet the demands of a multilingual economy and to reflect increased cultural diversity in national cultures and the implications for social cohesion;

    - effective assessment of intercultural competence in school education.

2. An investigation into the objectives of intercultural competence development in foreign-language education and the main didactic and methodological approaches as a feature of *upper secondary* (ISCED 3) and post secondary vocational and professional (ISCED 4) foreign-language education.

3. An investigation of intercultural competence and its development in *university-level* (ISCED 5 and 6) foreign-language education and foreign-language teacher education.

4. Greater focus on intercultural competence development in the work of the Eurydice network by gathering, monitoring, processing and circulating reliable and readily comparable information on intercultural competence development in education systems and policies in Europe.

5. Inclusion of intercultural competence in the context of foreign-language learning as a topic in the Jean Monnet programme.

6. Focus on intercultural competence development, alongside linguistic skills, as a priority, where appropriate, in the next general call for proposals under the Life Long Learning programme.

7. Support for intercultural competence development in foreign-language learning as a means of enhancing – also in lower secondary education – practical business-related skills for relationships both within the EU and outside, in pursuit of the aims of the Lisbon Agenda.

8. Co-operation between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in arriving at a common approach to the objectives of intercultural competence development in foreign-language education, on the basis of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

9. The establishment and funding of an international, *multi-disciplinary* group of experts to establish a framework of performance indicators which describe attainment levels of intercultural competence and to develop methods of assessing intercultural competence in the language classroom. Such a complex task should be undertaken at the European level, but participation in this process by senior national-level experts in intercultural competence, foreign-language education (including curriculum design) and testing is essential.

10. The co-organisation in 2008 by the European Commission and the Slovenian Presidency (in co-operation with the LACE Country Experts at the Educational Research Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia) of a symposium for officials, educational policy-makers and decision-makers, foreign-language educators and other key multipliers at the European and national level. This would contribute to policy on intercultural competence development as a key feature of a revised version of *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism*, as published in the Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on November 22, 2005.

11. An introduction for officials, educational policy-makers and decision-makers, foreign-language educators, curriculum designers and other key multipliers at the European and national level, in multinational groups, to state-of-the-art intercultural competence development techniques. This would assist in creating an underlying and proper appreciation of the nature of intercultural competence, how it can be developed and how it complements European language policy.

12. The establishment of a European intercultural competence development prize for outstanding work in the theory and practice of intercultural competence development and assessment. This would be similar to 'The European Label' for innovative projects in language teaching and learning.

Mobility, professional development and teaching resources

13. Increased funding and simplified application procedures for international teacher mobility, teacher exchanges, school partnerships, school exchanges and visits.

14. Support for the development and operation of an EU-wide face-to-face and virtual network of experts and practitioners in the teaching of intercultural competence in the context of foreign-language learning, and dedicated to the dissemination of research results, information about current developments, examples of best practice and evidence of valorisation.

15. In support of the above, development and operation of an EU-wide multilingual, Internet-based intercultural competence development resource bank. This would make available teaching and learning materials: best practice examples, authentic materials, video clips, libraries, Internet sites, project reports and ideas.

16. Development of a multilingual glossary of terms relating to intercultural competence and its development.

We suggest that the above should be reinforced by actions taken at the national level and that the following recommendations should be made to Member States. These cover the areas of strategy and administration, initial teacher education, professional development of teachers, curriculum design (including assessment), and teaching and learning resources.

Our principal suggestions relating to Member State policies, applicable in varying degrees to reflect current national realities, are the following:

Strategy and administration

17. Funding research into the links between language learning and intercultural competence, to explore:

    - the contributions that different disciplines can make to our understanding of intercultural competence;

    - effective approaches and techniques for developing intercultural competence in school education, notably in foreign-language learning, in order to meet the demands of a multilingual economy and to reflect increased cultural diversity in national cultures and the implications for social cohesion;

    - effective assessment of intercultural competence in school education.

18. Promotion of understanding, among foreign-language educators, curriculum designers and other key multipliers, of the nature of intercultural competence through professional development courses, conferences, symposia etc.

19. Promotion and funding by national education authorities and school management of measures for international teacher mobility, teacher exchange, school partnerships, exchanges and visits, and simplified procedures.

20. Increased funding for 'foreign-language assistant' schemes, enabling young people to contribute to the teaching of foreign languages in the schools of the cultures where they are studying the language, literature etc.

21. The allocation of more teaching time to foreign languages and other subjects with which intercultural competence development could be integrated and the allocation of more teaching time to the cross-curricular development of intercultural competence.

22. Appropriate recognition and reward by school management for the time and effort spent by teachers in developing their intercultural competence and their repertoire of methods and resources, which in view of the lack of appropriate resources often exceeds in time and effort what is usual for lesson preparation.

Initial teacher education

23. Initial foreign-language teacher education should give greater attention to intercultural competence and its various facets (development, assessment, etc.) than is presently generally the case.

24. Compulsory longer-term residence abroad in target cultures for those studying foreign languages at university and intending to become foreign-language teachers.

25. Further research into the development and assessment of intercultural competence, so that qualified university staff can be made available as foreign-language teacher educators.

Professional development

26. Professional development courses and in-service training for foreign-language teachers in the area of intercultural competence and the methodology of its development.

27. 'Train-the-trainer' courses to ensure that educators and trainers are available in sufficient numbers to conduct the professional development courses and in-service training for foreign-language teachers.

Curriculum design

28. Clear and detailed specification of objectives in the field of intercultural competence in foreign-language curricula.

29. Specification of attainment levels in intercultural competence and description of methods for assessing intercultural competence to be included in foreign-language curricula

30. Intercultural competence should be explicitly assessed in foreign-language education.

31. Suggestions of techniques (approaches, methodologies, procedures, methods, exercises, and activities) for the development of intercultural objectives to be made in foreign-language curricula.

32. Clear and detailed specification of intercultural competence objectives in the curricula of other subjects, providing the starting point for increased cross-curricular cooperation.

Resources

33. Development and provision of teaching and learning resources for language teachers (toolboxes, Internet support networks, textbooks, downloadable resources, project ideas, etc.).

34. In support of the above, professional development courses for textbook writers and others involved in the creation of such resources.

35. In parallel, greater availability of the necessary physical resources, in particular PCs and Internet access, libraries, books, etc.

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