



14th CEFR SIG Meeting
Thursday, 11 June 2026, 14:00-17:00

PROGRAMME

14:00-14:10	Welcome (CEFR SIG coordinator Armin Berger)
14:10-14:30	Carolyn Westbrook (British Council) & Armin Berger (University of Vienna) <i>Clarifying CEFR alignment: Key updates in the Supplement to the Alignment Handbook</i>
14:30-14:50	Fabio Zanda (Sapienza University of Rome) & Dmitry Zagorskiy (Sapienza University of Rome, Lancaster University) <i>Towards a CEFR-aligned Italian sign language proficiency test: Insights from CEFR familiarisation</i>
14:50-15:10	Sabrina Machetti & Giulia Peri (University for Foreigners of Siena) <i>The alignment process as good practice in Italy: Standardisation phase</i>
15:10-15:30	Break
15:30-15:50	Chihiro Inoue & Fumiyo Nakatsuhara (University of Bedfordshire) <i>Validating a new EIKEN grade using the socio-cognitive framework: Expert judgement and CEFR alignment</i>
15:50-16:10	Diego Cortés Velásquez & Elena Nuzzo (Università degli Studi Roma Tre) <i>From CEFR-aligned tasks to rating scales: Operationalising the construct of writing in Certit</i>
16:10-16:30	Jan Kühn (University of Bremen) <i>10 years of scale revision: Discussing new chances and challenges of the CEFR CV grid of phonological control</i>
16:30-17:00	Open discussion: What challenges and innovations are shaping CEFR alignment today? How is the 2022 Alignment Handbook and the 2025 Supplement influencing alignment practice? How can the CEFR SIG support CEFR alignment in the future?

ABSTRACTS

Carolyn Westbrook (British Council) & **Armin Berger** (University of Vienna)

Clarifying CEFR alignment: Key updates in the Supplement to the Alignment Handbook

Since the publication of *Aligning language education with the CEFR: A handbook* in 2022, practitioners and researchers have highlighted both the value of this guidance and the challenges of applying it across varied educational contexts. In response to sustained user feedback and the growing diversity of alignment projects worldwide, the Handbook Steering Group developed the December 2025 Supplement. The Supplement emerges as a practical, experience-driven resource designed to address these needs. This presentation introduces the Supplement and situates it within the broader CEFR alignment landscape, outlining its development and purpose. It then provides a structured overview of its key contributions: refined terminology and conceptual framing, an increased focus on the concept of the Comprehensive Learning System (O'Sullivan, 2020), and the introduction of new figures that clarify the Handbook's alignment approach. The presentation emphasises that the Supplement is not a standalone document but a continuously evolving extension of the 2022 Handbook, offering additional scaffolding for planning and validating alignment processes. Overall, it aims to enhance clarity, transparency, and coherence in CEFR alignment practice.

Fabio Zanda (Sapienza University of Rome) & **Dmitry Zagorskiy** (Sapienza University of Rome, Lancaster University)

Towards a CEFR-aligned Italian sign language proficiency test: Insights from CEFR familiarisation

This presentation reports on the early stages of a three-year project aimed at developing a CEFR-aligned B1 proficiency test for Italian Sign Language (LIS). As the newly formed research group had limited experience with the CEFR, initial work has focused on a structured introduction and familiarisation, with the aim of establishing a shared understanding of the CEFR construct(s), levels, and illustrative descriptors, including those relevant to sign languages (CEFR-CV; Council of Europe, 2020). To ensure a solid foundation before moving towards the specification stage, activities have included a guided study of the CEFR structure, its theoretical basis and a collaborative interpretation of descriptors. At the same time, the process has been informed by an emphasis on critical engagement among both language testers and LIS experts, revealing challenges in interpreting the descriptors in Chapter 6 of the CEFR-CV and an urgent need for localisation (cf. Hulešová, 2022). The presentation illustrates and discusses key insights and data arising from our research group's familiarisation process and reflects on their implications for CEFR alignment in sign language assessment. The next phase of our work will continue deepening engagement with descriptors within familiarisation, using AI-assisted task design and feedback in line with the Handbook Supplement.

Sabrina Machetti & Giulia Peri (University for Foreigners of Siena)

The alignment process as good practice in Italy: Standardisation phase

Despite the growing prominence of mediation in the CEFR Companion Volume (2020), research on its implementation in language certification remains limited in the Italian context. At the same time, the four Italian certifying bodies (CLIQ Consortium, n.d.) are increasingly engaging with mediation in both teaching and assessment. This paper presents a case study of the alignment process undertaken within the Certification of Italian as a Foreign Language (CILS) of the University for Foreigners of Siena, focusing on CEFR levels A2 and B1. Initially targeting school-aged learners with a migrant background, the project completed the familiarisation and specification phases in 2024 (Machetti & Peri, 2025), following the procedures outlined in *Aligning language education with the CEFR: A handbook* (2022). The subsequent standardisation phase adopted an activity-based, bottom-up approach, drawing on existing test tasks and incorporating insights from the 2025 Supplement to the Handbook, through collaborative analysis and comparison with CEFR descriptors and illustrative scales. This contribution discusses key outcomes of the standardisation phase, highlighting challenges, decision-making processes, and implications for future standard setting in this context. It argues that standardisation plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between CEFR descriptors and test development practices.

Chihiro Inoue & Fumiyo Nakatsuhara (University of Bedfordshire)

Validating a new EIKEN grade using the socio-cognitive framework: Expert judgement and CEFR alignment

This presentation introduces an a priori validation study of EIKEN Pre-2 Plus, a new grade developed to bridge the proficiency gap between two existing grades for Japanese learners of English. Using expert judgement grounded in the socio-cognitive framework (Weir, 2005), test materials and sample responses were evaluated against parameters of context (topic, discourse mode, etc.), cognitive (cognitive processes), and scoring validity (rating scales, descriptors) across all four skills. CEFR alignment (A2–B1) was confirmed through both expert review and IRT analysis. The study demonstrates how systematic expert judgement methodology supports global test development, balancing local contextual needs with international standards.

Diego Cortés Velásquez & Elena Nuzzo (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

From CEFR-aligned tasks to rating scales: Operationalising the construct of writing in Certit

This contribution builds on previous work on the alignment of Certit's B1 writing tasks with the CEFR's action-oriented approach (Cortés Velásquez & Nuzzo, 2026), extending the focus from task design to the operationalisation of the construct in rating procedures. Following an initial familiarisation phase with CEFR constructs and a systematic revision of writing prompts, recent work has addressed the development of new analytic rating scales for written production. These scales aim to ensure greater construct validity and transparency by explicitly linking assessment criteria to key CEFR dimensions, including task achievement, communicative effectiveness, and textual and linguistic resources. The presentation will compare earlier rating practices with the newly developed scales, highlighting key differences in construct representation, level-relevance, and scoring procedures. Particular attention will be paid to how the new scales better capture the action-oriented nature of writing tasks and support more consistent rating behaviour. The discussion will also address challenges encountered in the process, including the balance between analytic detail and usability, and the implications for rater training and standardisation. By focusing on the transition from task design to rating scales, the paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on how CEFR constructs can be meaningfully operationalised in language certification contexts, and how alignment processes can support both validity and reliability in assessment.

Jan Kühn (University of Bremen)

10 years of scale revision: Discussing new chances and challenges of the CEFR CV grid of phonological control

From all the content updated in the CEFR Companion Volume (CoE, 2020), no scale or grid underwent such an extensive revision process as the scale of phonological control. Considered as the “least successful of those calibrated in the original research behind the descriptors published in 2001” (CoE, 2020, p. 133), nearly all the original descriptors were replaced. Further, two detailed scales—one for segmental and one for suprasegmental features respectively—were created, and a C2 Descriptor was added to each scale. When combined, these created the new grid of phonological control (Piccardo, 2016). The biggest change, however, lies in the way pronunciation learning, teaching, and assessment goals were conceptualised. By adapting the Intelligibility Principle (Levis, 2005), successful communication has been made a priority, and foreign accent has been recognised as a natural part of L2 speech, even at higher levels. While the revision undoubtedly led to an overall improvement in theory (cf. e.g. Chudoba et al., 2020; Dahmen, 2019) and practice (Kühn & Dahmen, *in press*), the new underlying construct also opens up new questions and dilemmas that have to be addressed and discussed. In this contribution, we will discuss some of those questions and dilemmas and explore to which extent and how the CEFR can offer solutions to them.