



Ministerium für Schule & Bildung

Völklinger Straße

Düsseldorf

30 September & 01 October 2025

DAY 1

30 September 2025, Düsseldorf

Conference Opening & Welcoming Words

Dorothee Feller, Minister of Education of North Rhine-Westphalia, welcomes the participants in a video address. She stresses the benefits of language learning for students' personal lives and professional careers, as well as the importance of cultural understanding and intercultural competences in a globalised world. CertiLingua, she says, opens doors and builds bridges. She thanks the international network for its continuing efforts for the label whose quality standards she stresses and which she regards as an outstanding example of European cooperation.

Silke Hinz, chairwoman of the international steering group, then officially opens the Annual conference in Düsseldorf, where the label was launched in 2007, and points out the special character of this yearly event. She continues by expanding on overarching educational goals that CertiLingua helps to achieve, such as democratic competences and confidence in coping.

Fostering the ability to deal with intercultural differences in a competent way entails the ability to change one's perspective or to tolerate ambiguity which can be regarded as central to democracy as well.

Experiencing self-efficacy in international face-to-face projects strengthens students' confidence in their ability to face other challenges that lie ahead of them.

Generally, a positive trickle-down effect that benefits the entire school can be observed in CertiLingua schools, as they offer continued foreign language learning opportunities and CLIL classes not limited to CertiLingua applicants, and provide an international orientation that is an asset to the entire school community.

With the CertiLingua network developing and piloting new forms of assessment as well as with the label's ongoing work on integrating AI into the (language) classroom, there might also be broader positive effects for CertiLingua schools.

The many benefits the label has for schools and school development could, however, be stressed more. The same can be said about the label's potential to be applied to the idea of the 4 Cs.

The network is therefore encouraged to not only emphasize the direct and more obvious competences the label fosters, but to also align it with overarching educational goals, or, in other words, to sometimes "adjust the spotlight" accordingly whenever appropriate.

Evaluation 2024

Jan Gerstenberger presents the data on the label's development in 2024/25.

Overall, there are very stable numbers with 795 certificates in 2024, although there might be a slight decrease in schools from 347 to 333. This, however, can most likely be explained with many countries having cleaned up their data recently, which led to schools that had not had any candidates for some time anyway being removed.

To date, more than 11,000 certificates have been awarded - a number to be proud of. Given that every project requires at least one partner, this translates to at least than 22,000 encounters of young people around Europe, most likely more!

Key Note Speech

Jonas Erin (French Ministry of Education; ECML), expert for intercultural mediation, democracy and AI, talks about „Opportunities and challenges for plurilingual and intercultural education in times of AI“.

His presentation, in which he outlines four stages of coming to terms with AI in the language classroom, can be found in the appendix.

Reports from the Member States

(see PDF-Version of the Padlet in the appendix)

Austria, Belinda Steinhuber

New schools who have joined the label recently are expecting to have applicants soon. In the case of schools leaving CertiLingua, this was frequently due to the colleagues in charge of the label having left the school.

Also, changes in the curricula have made it difficult for schools to fulfil the criteria. Among these, achieving B2 in the second foreign language is particularly challenging, as the number

of compulsory lessons has been reduced and interest has decreased. The new curricula will make it possible for schools to make their own choices for a certain number of lessons and CertiLingua schools are encouraged to invest these into foreign languages.

German speaking community of Belgium, Christian Balzer on behalf of Ruth De Sy

The only CertiLingua school remaining is nevertheless very active. The extra work CertiLingua entails appears to be demotivating for some, especially since all students in the German speaking community have to take a DELF test so that not everybody sees the point of investing time and effort into yet another label.

North Rhine-Westphalia, Christian Balzer

While the number of certificates is stable, some schools that have been rather inactive in recent years no longer hold the label. Examples of audio-visual project documentations are provided on the website now, and an international working group meets online regularly to support the schools in piloting this idea further.

The idea of sharing success stories of the label is much welcomed.

France, Arabella Thomas

59 labels were awarded at 38 schools where a great diversity of subjects is involved.

Partners for student mobility are there, but more are welcome to set up further mobility schemes. Regional academies have been formed for the label's administration, and the academy of Orleans/ Tour has joined the label as well.

Estonia, Pille Põiklik

The number of labels has not increased but is on a stable footing. Estonia continued the tradition of a joint student-teacher event for CertiLingua schools. At the moment, language certificates are used to measure students' language skills, but a new protocol for the languages is needed for languages for which (free) language examinations are not available for students.

Italy, Gisella Langé

An impressive number of 448 certificates was reached in Italy, with many Italian students even showing competence in three languages.

Gisella Langé stresses that CertiLingua is the only certificate that attests *intercultural* competences.

All in all, the label's development in Italy is an outstanding example as can also be seen in the Padlet (see above).

Rhineland Palatinate, Michael Grabis

Michael Grabis presents an example of how the coordinators at CertiLingua schools can be supported by granting them a one-hour reduction in their teaching duties.

Moreover, an annual school convention is held to discuss the label's development in Rhineland Palatinate and to safeguard the high-quality standards.

Hesse, Daniela Neumann

CertiLingua has led to more students continuing French, and there is a general backwash effect on school communities. There is great interest in the video format that is currently being piloted as a new form of project documentation.

Lower Saxony, Jennifer Chmelensky

The CertiLingua schools meet regularly in Hannover.

As in many other states, many students drop out of the second foreign languages in upper secondary, though. If they could be motivated to continue, there would be more certificates.

Brandenburg, Christian Balzer on behalf of Gundula Meyer-Oehring

The situation in Brandenburg, where 3 schools participate in the label, is stable.

Berlin, Caroline Bolz

After a rather challenging time, CertiLingua has recovered in Berlin.

Nine certificates have been awarded this year, but, as everywhere, the second foreign language remains a challenge. The quality of documentations has improved significantly, which has raised the question whether AI may have had an impact in this regard. Caroline Bolz points out that a broader range of topics would be desirable in the future. She adds that students often find it difficult to go abroad during the last two years of upper secondary,

which is why *Model United Nations* seems to be developing into a sort of standard way out of this situation.

Bremen

(see Padlet)

Saxony, Florian Lindner

As in many other states, numbers in Saxony are stable, and the decline due to the Corona pandemic has been overcome. At CertiLingua schools, courses in the second foreign language are continued, even when the number of students is very small (five or six).

For obvious reasons, projects with Russia have become very difficult if not impossible.

Mecklenburg Western Pomerania

Four schools are participating, and between seven and nine certificates are awarded regularly.

Day 2

Workshop I – AI, Belinda Steinhuber

Transparent rules for the use of AI need to be developed

- ask students whether, and if yes, how they used AI and have them add their prompts
- ask students to reflect on their use of AI on a more abstract level

Other skills than writing need to be addressed

- focus more on speaking skills
- let students have a discussion more often
- spend more time on oral mediation than on writing
- integrate democracy skills into the language classroom
- make learners aware of different kinds of bias
- make digital literacy and digital citizenship more visible in CertiLingua

Overuse of AI must be prevented for educational and environmental reasons.

Educating learners to become independent and autonomous should also be made a more prominent goal in CertiLingua.

However, just as the Member States trust each other, we should put a certain amount of trust into our CertiLingua students as well and should not be too suspicious of them using AI inadequately when producing their project documentations.

Workshop II – Video Project Documentations, Thomas Wegner

Based on two examples from the pilot phase some general ideas regarding Video Project Documentations are discussed.

- Many formats are possible, and it is not necessary for a student to be seen in their video, if they do not wish to do so (e. g. presentation format).
- Many of these formats do not require sophisticated skills in film production and are, therefore, feasible for basically everyone.
- They all entail an added value, since, even when a text is scripted, it is still read out in addition to what would otherwise have been a written documentation only.
- A video can, moreover, convey a certain enthusiasm of the student (second example), although this might make it necessary to be in it (see above).
- The existing CertiLingua standards work equally well for other formats of project documentations, as could be observed in the first example where a change of perspective was missing.
- As with all other documentations or CertiLingua in general:
 - The quality of the project determines the quality of the documentation, and it seems beneficial if students are given “voice and choice” in this respect – which is another educational benefit of the label in general. It is good, if they can do a project they are genuinely interested in.
 - Counselling is key and should also focus on creativity and the 4 Cs.

The idea of providing examples for video documentations is discussed somewhat controversially. While they might encourage more students to go for this option, they also might be seen as a normative standard and thus narrow down this potentially very creative format to some degree.

Moreover, two more general aspects are mentioned:

- The video format opens many options that a written documentation does not. Making many of these options a binding requirement might lead to standards

spiralling out of control, so that caution is to be applied when it comes to the formulation of such standards.

- However, it is a CertiLingua principle that Member States can introduce requirements that exceed the international standards binding for all, for example they can
 - require a documentation to be – at least partly – done in both of CertiLingua languages,
 - have students give an additional presentation of their project to the school community.

Talking about the school community, video documentations can greatly increase the label's recognition and visibility there and elsewhere.

Workshop III - Motivation, Gisella Langé

Motivation is to be increased in students, families, and colleagues, and the following ideas are presented:

- make CertiLingua seen at schools
- connect to businesses in your community
- organize events for both purposes
- contact universities and convince them to recognize CertiLingua.
- convince students to make the extra effort
- use the media students use (such as Instagram)
- have alumni report about the benefits CertiLingua has had for them
- create promotional videos
- add testimonials from the ministries
- encourage teacher training and training of coordinators
- invite colleagues to online trainings in other countries.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Resolutions

1. New Standards of Excellence in ICC

A new version of the CertiLingua Standards of Excellence was presented at the conference that aligns CertiLingua with the New Companion Volume of the CEFR.

Proposal:

The Annual Conference agrees to replace the existing **CertiLingua Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences** with the **new version** as presented to the Annual Conference 2025.

This version (see attachment) is **unanimously accepted** and is going to replace the current version. An updated version of it will be published in the 2025 compendium as soon as possible.

This also affects the CertiLingua Certificate which provides these standards on its backside.

2. Pilot phase video only

It is proposed to prolong the pilot phase for the video project documentations until 2027.

Proposal:

The Annual Conference agrees to **prolong the pilot phase for Project Documentations that only consist of audio or audio-visual materials**. The corresponding international group will continue to report to the International Steering Group and the Annual Conference. The CertiLingua Standards of Excellence (Awarding Criteria and the Standards of Excellence in Intercultural Competences), provide a binding orientation and generally have to be fulfilled, although minor concessions may be acceptable as in the previous pilot phase. A first draft of said checklist is now in existence and is scheduled to be put up for a vote during the Annual Conference in 2027: The pilot phase will thus be prolonged until 2027. The original resolution was taken in Milan, in 2023.

This proposal is unanimously accepted.

3. Deletion of Covid part in compendium

It is proposed to delete the documents concerning the Covid pandemic from the compendium.

Proposal:

The Annual Conference agrees to **delete those parts of the CertiLingua Compendium that still refer to the “COVID sections” and that are no longer needed**. The corresponding section can be found on pages 58 – 60 of the compendium. Furthermore, the corresponding section on the CertiLingua website has also been deleted.

The proposal is unanimously accepted, and the corresponding passages will be deleted from the compendium. An updated version will be published as soon as possible.

4. Editorial changes compendium

In the process of updating the compendium it can happen that minor mistakes are detected or names need to be changed. It is proposed that such minor editorial changes can be performed without consulting the Steering Group first or without prior consent from the Annual conference.

Proposal:

The Annual Conference agrees **that editorial changes of the following nature may be made to both the CertiLingua website and the CertiLingua compendium without the express consent and without a resolution taken by the CertiLingua steering group:**

- Updates concerning names of the members of the steering group
- Updates concerning orthography or minor editorial errors

This proposal is unanimously accepted.

Date and place of the Annual Conference 2026

The Annual International CertiLingua conference 2026 is going to convene in Mainz, Rhineland Palatinate from **30 September to 01 October 2026**.