

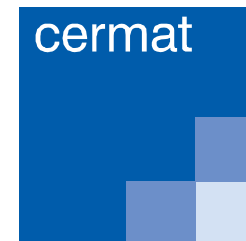
# Dilemma of the first year of Maturita in the CR: Is it worth continuing?

Martina Hulešová, Eva Kotrčková (CERMAT)

**IATEFL TEA SIG**

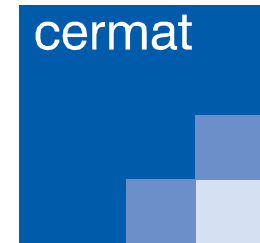
Innsbruck 16 September 2011

[hulesova@cermat.cz](mailto:hulesova@cermat.cz), [kotrckova@cermat.cz](mailto:kotrckova@cermat.cz)



# Overview

- Reforma, CERMAT, Maturita
- Maturita in foreign languages
- Problems, findings and remarks



# What is CERMAT?

## Centre on Measurement in Education

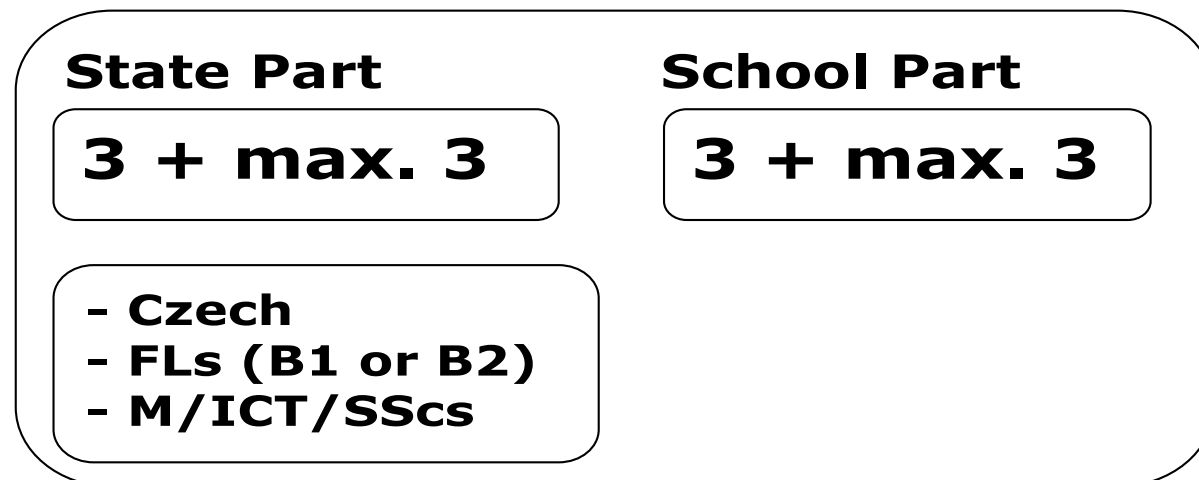
- **A state organization** established by the MoE in order to **measure outcomes** of the educational system **authorized** by the new School Act (2004) **to administer, develop, provide and evaluate**, among others, **Maturita exams** (Upper-secondary school leaving examination)
- **to provide guidelines and methodical support** (item writers, raters, teachers etc.)
- **to provide training** for raters, examiners and other groups



# What is Maturita?

Upper-secondary school leaving examination

Set of different subject exams



3 compulsory + max. 3 optional

## Portfolio:

*CZ + Cz for the Deaf, 5 FLs + En for the Deaf, MA, ICT, SSc, Hist.,  
Che, Bi, Ge, Phy, Hist. of Art*

## Why the new Maturita?

The former upper-secondary school leaving exam

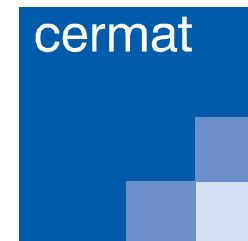
– prepared by schools and different in terms of:

- Content
- Processes
- Rating
- Interpretation...

### Example of typical final language exam:

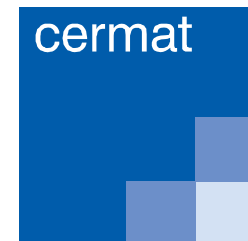
15 minutes of (student's or teacher's 😊) „monologue“ about Geography of the United States

**Typical lesson:** mainly traditional grammar/lexical approach (text-vocabulary-exercises-translation-grammar/vocabulary test)



## Short summary of the long history

- Early 90's**      reform intentions, documents, little reaction/response
- Mid 90's**      first serious discussions (OECD recommendation to start a reform and to introduce a new upper-secondary school leaving examination system)
- Late 90's**      the decision to provide national standardized tests/exams – Maturita
- 1997 – 1999/2001**      first model, first mock exams – pretesting/piloting in order to gather data about the level
- 1999**      Green Book (analysis “Czech Education and Europe”)  
First reactions: provisional government – support to the idea of the new maturita;  
Foundation of CERMAT charged with the complete realization of Maturita



**1999–2000** frustrated intentions to initiate public discussion about the need of reforma  
– no public interest

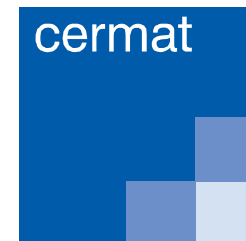
**2001** strategic document White book long-term program of the development of the educational system

**2001-2009** followed by the development of the National Syllabi and by „school syllabi“

**2004** new School Acts

New programmes to be implemented in 2007 (1st and 6th grades) and in 2009 (secondary schools)

The original model discussed publicly was changed a lot



**2007** Protest  
10000 students; egg throwing at the minister  
Maturita postponed to 2010

5-month discussion - new model

**2008** School Act ammended:

start 2009/2010 and 8/2009 General Mock Exam

**6/2009** Protest (they missed the ministry's building 😊)

**7/2009** Protest - (300 „students“ paid by a political party)

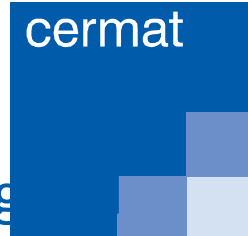
**9/2009** Maturita postponed

(start 2010/2011 and October 2010 General Mock Exam)

**10/2010** GME'10

**4-5/2011** Finally!

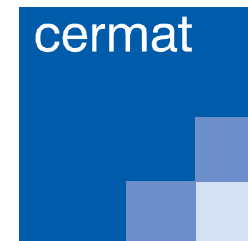




## Common features for the reform

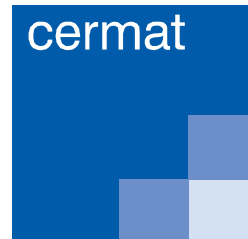
- low interest of the public and teachers in participating (g  
exam = no exam or exam without any effort)
- no professional discussion
- no literacy in the theory of education, assessment, testing
- ordered reform without any support
- no support to CERMAT from the Ministry
- insufficient or bad communication among CERMAT, MoE, the  
public, stakeholders
- testing in the CR – emerging business
- Czech language exam – the biggest problem

# Maturita in Foreign Languages



- 5 FL, 2 difficulty levels, 4 skills  
En, Ge, Sp, Ru, Fr (+ Cz and En for the Deaf)
- Students can choose the language and the level
- 2 sessions – 6 exam versions/year
- Modifications for students with special needs (time, test booklet, answer sheets, room, assistance, modified tasks/items, Braille, screen reader + synthetic voice...)
- even for a single student
- Decision to publish the exams immediately
- Comparability of modified and non-modified test versions;  
Spring 2011: different versions for these two „subpopulations“
- No Czech for foreigners





## Who are the candidates?

- Students of **grammar** and **vocational schools, training institutions**, distance studies...) – about 75 % 19, 25 % adults

The exams don't take into account the **age differences** of the population (neither the Curricula does) - **RUz 67 %**, **GEz 10 %**

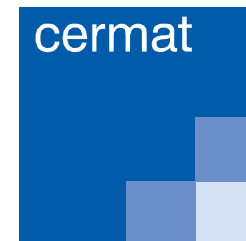
Two **different outcomes** in Curricula (only grammar schools can „choose“ the level)

- **A2 and B1** vs. **B1 and B2** but exam levels **B1 and B2**

Not all types of schools reach the level/s stated in their Curriculum (Maturita can point it out)

Deaf students:

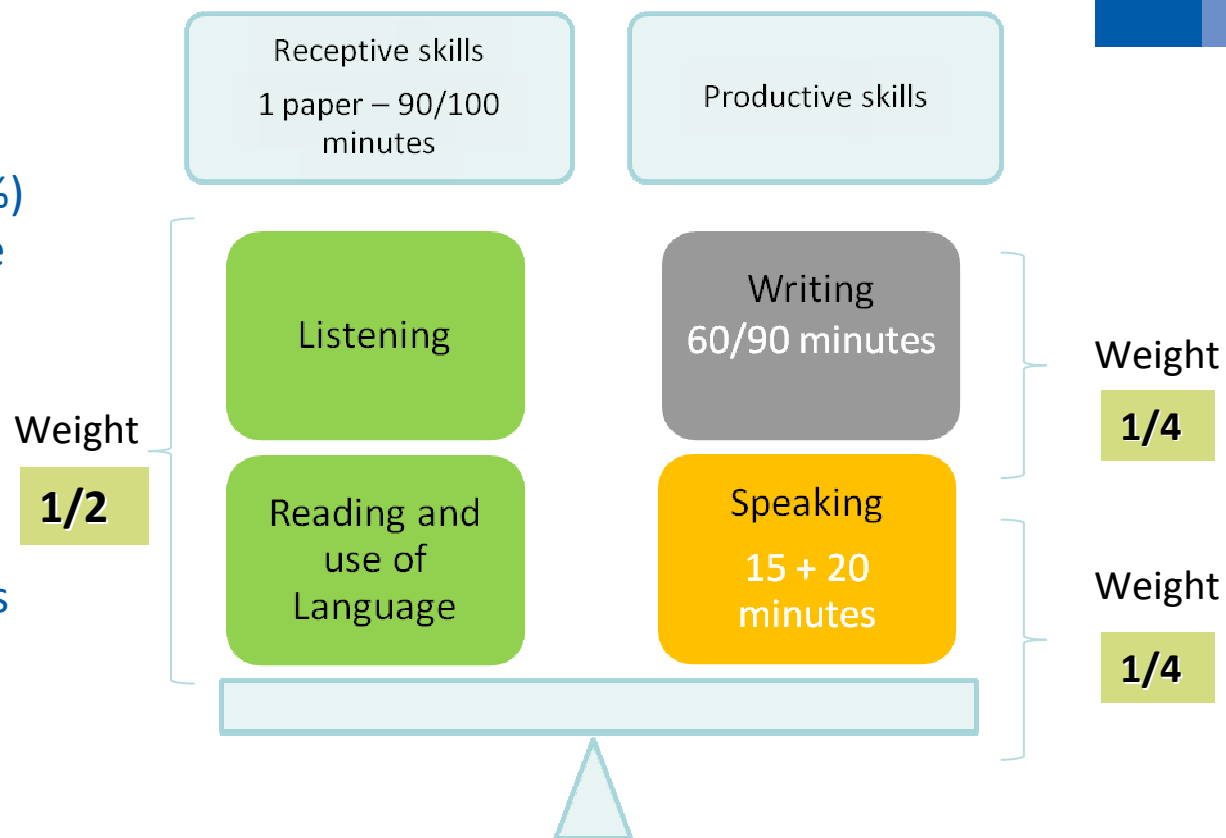
- Cz as FL vs. Cz as the mother tongue
- En level doesn't match the Curricula



# Exam structure

3 parts  
3 cut scores (3x 44 %)  
Pass, if pass all three

5 grades:  
5 = fail  
and 4 equal intervals



- **Basic level** – by Law: core minimum for all the students taking the Maturita exam in languages (cut-score 44 % - set globally and beforehand)

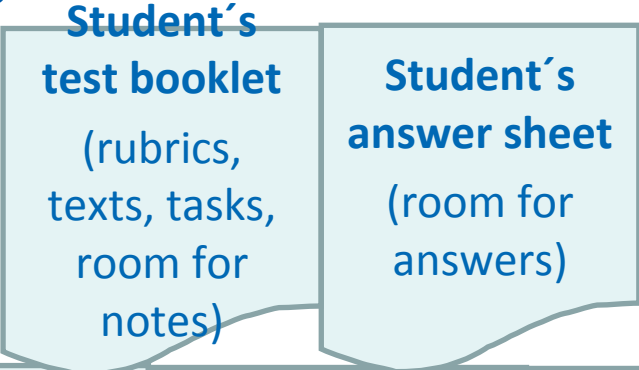
# Structure of the Language Exam

Z LEVEL			V LEVEL		
<b>LISTENING</b>					
4 parts	30 min.	1. Max. 100 w./text 2. 300 – 350 w. 3. 300 – 350 w. 4. Max. 100 w./text	4 parts	40 min.	1. Max. 100 w./text 2. 450 – 500 w. 3. 500-600 w. 4. Max. 100 w./text
<b>READING AND USE OF LANGUAGE</b>					
5 parts (4 + 1)	60 min	1. Max. 100 w./text (450) 2. 450 w. 3. 350 w. 4. 450 w./text 5.	6 parts (4 + 2)	60 min.	1. Max. 100 w./text (450) 2. 300 – 350 w. 3. 450 – 500 w. 4. 100 w./text 5. 6.
<b>WRITING</b>					
2 parts	60 min	1. 130 – 150 w. 2. 60 – 70 w.	2 parts	90 min.	1. 210 – 230 w. 2. 100 – 120 w.
<b>SPEAKING</b>					
4 parts	15 min.	1. 3 min. 2. 4 min. 3. 5 min. 4. 3 min.	4 parts	15 min.	1. 3 min. 2. 4 min. 3. 5 min. 4. 3 min.

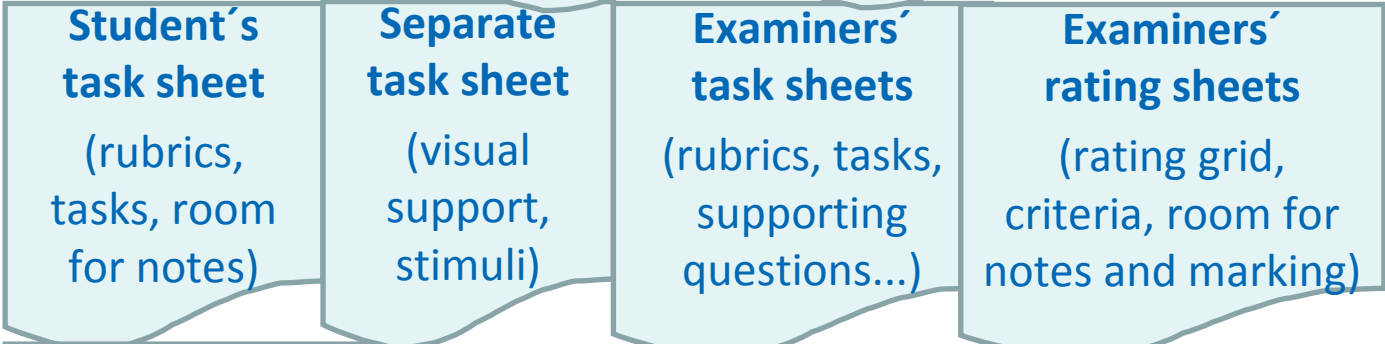
# Examination material/s



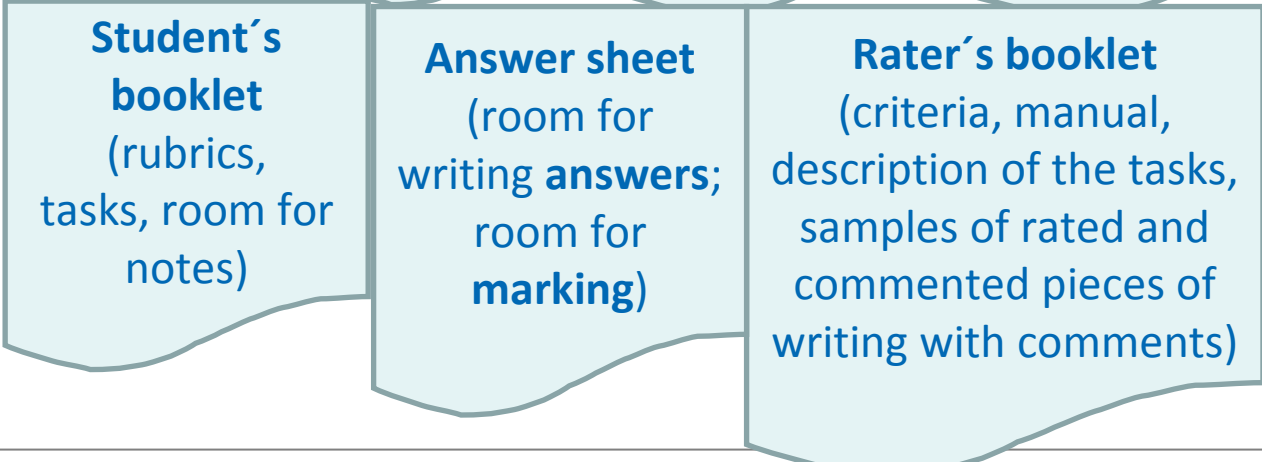
Test of receptive skills



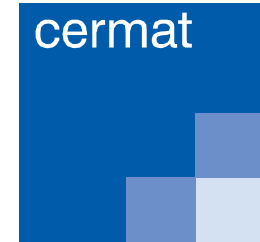
Speaking



Writing



# Training



Teachers – raters of writing and speaking

Test administrators

School management

Headmasters

...

(2006) 2009 till now



# Marking



**TEST (receptive skills) – centralized, standardized...**

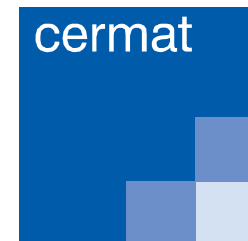
answer sheets scanned at schools

read and treated **centrally**

1 item/1 point



# Marking



## Productive skills:

All teachers were trained by CERMAT to rate individually and to discuss the results and to come to consensus on the final marks.

## **SPEAKING and WRITING - running at schools**

2 trained and certified examiners/raters

analytical criteria (0 – 3 scale, max. 36 and 39 points)

centralized methodology

record of marks – scanned and analysed in CERMAT



**But:**

**before the exam...**



- Double marking **for writing** cancelled

“provisionally/temporarily“ just before GME2010

- no other system replaced it, no control, no overlap in rated scripts,  
1 script = 1 rater

- one individual **rater – student’s own teacher**

- Marks for the criteria (Task completion, Organization, Vocabulary, Grammar...) are not collected, **only the final mark**

**Training program** (since 2009):

- well prepared content, badly organized (less time and sessions, the content partially implemented – questionable loyalty or approach of some trainers: „This is not MY exam, it is THEIR exam“; trainees expected to be paid)
- Negative attitude of headmasters

**But:** **immediately before  
and during the exam**



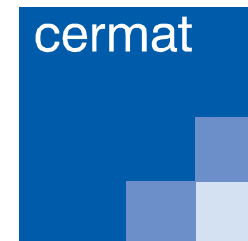
## Speaking and Writing

### No systematic monitoring

- What happens at schools? (before and during the exam)
- Do they follow what they learnt during the training sessions?
- Have they practiced it with their students?
- Are they familiar with the worksheet? And with the content?
- Do they read the methodology, the tasks... before marking/examining?



# Speaking and Writing

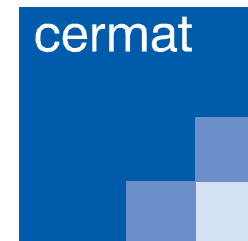


- Real pressure on teachers to let students pass (personal money, “prestige” of schools, fear of parents, school owners, colleagues...)

“Why to have them here for another year?”

- No information (headmasters to teachers, teachers to students...)
- No attention paid to the methodology sent repeatedly to schools

# Speaking and Writing



## Some teachers complain:

- time management difficulties while working with the worksheet (speaking)
- Difficulties in assessing and examining at the same time (speaking)
- Complicated assessment criteria (speaking and writing)
- Objectivity in marking (writing and speaking)

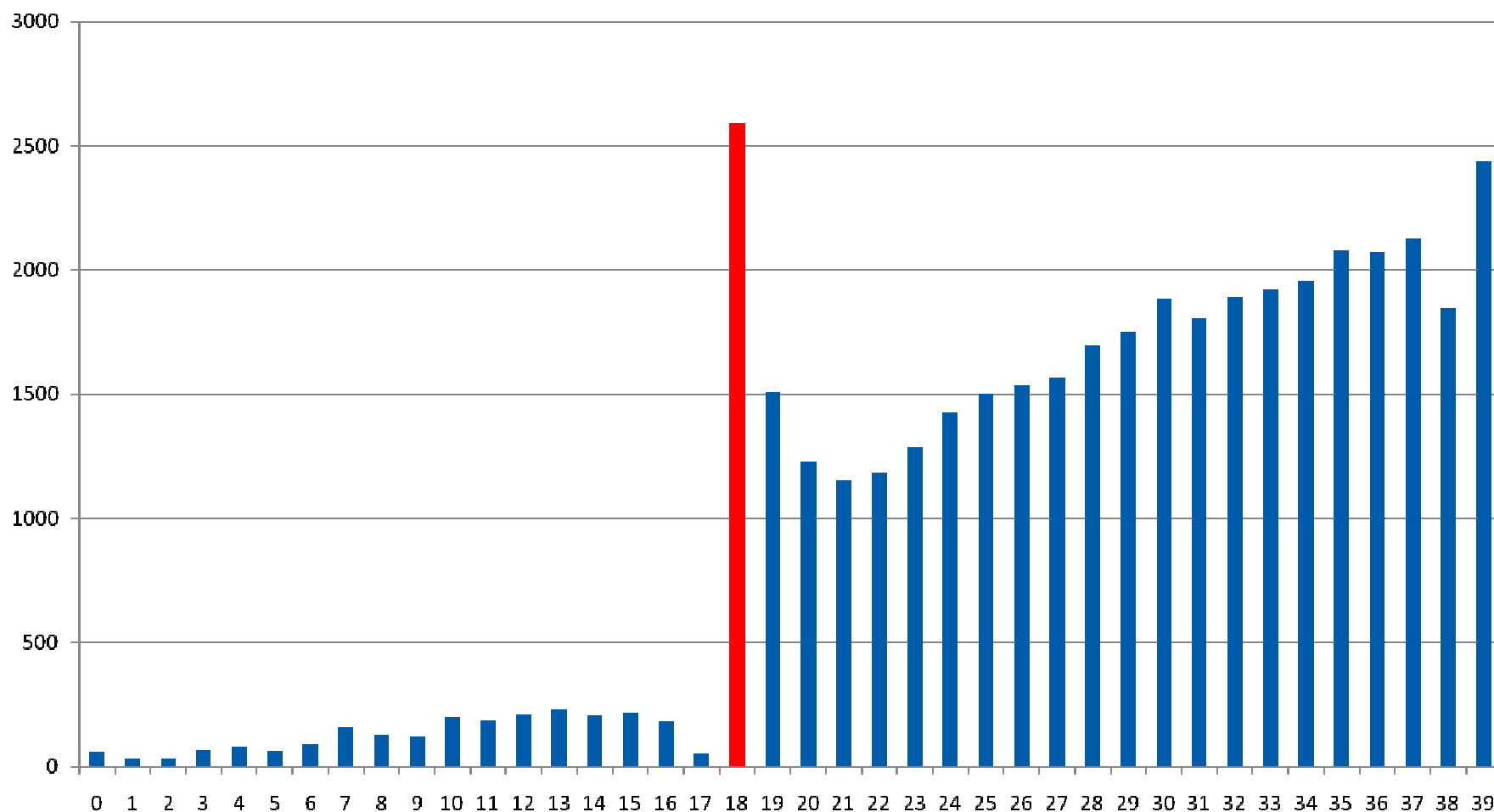
## (Some of ) our flaws:



- We have trained assessor for speaking, not interlocutors (speaking).
- We do not monitor the exams (all parts).
- We do not collect complete data, only final results (speaking and writing).
- We don't run analysis for ratings of speaking and writing.

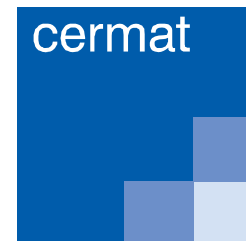
# Speaking – realized as the first part (EN\_low)

Candidates/Scores

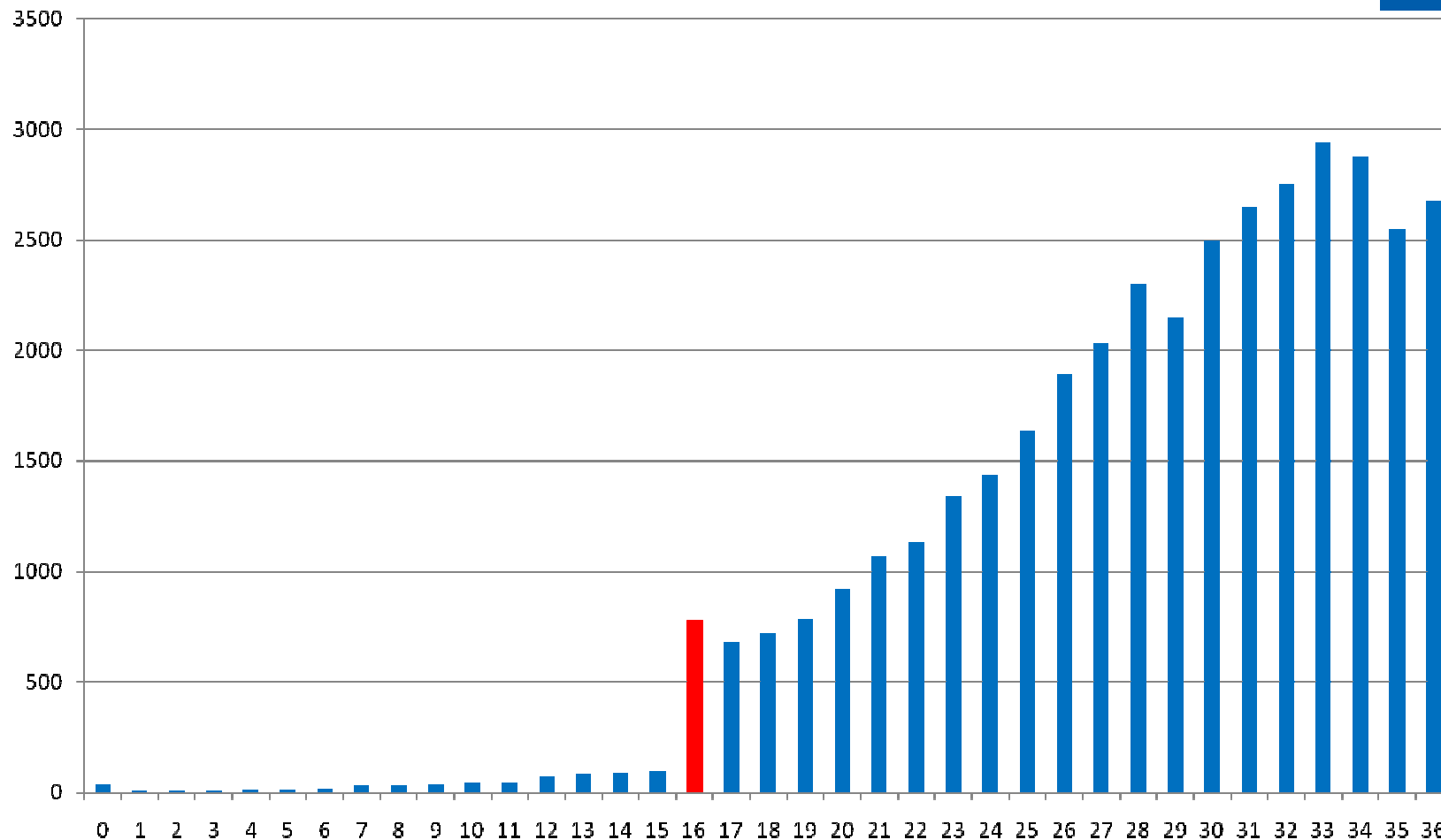


# Writing

EN\_low



Candidates/scores

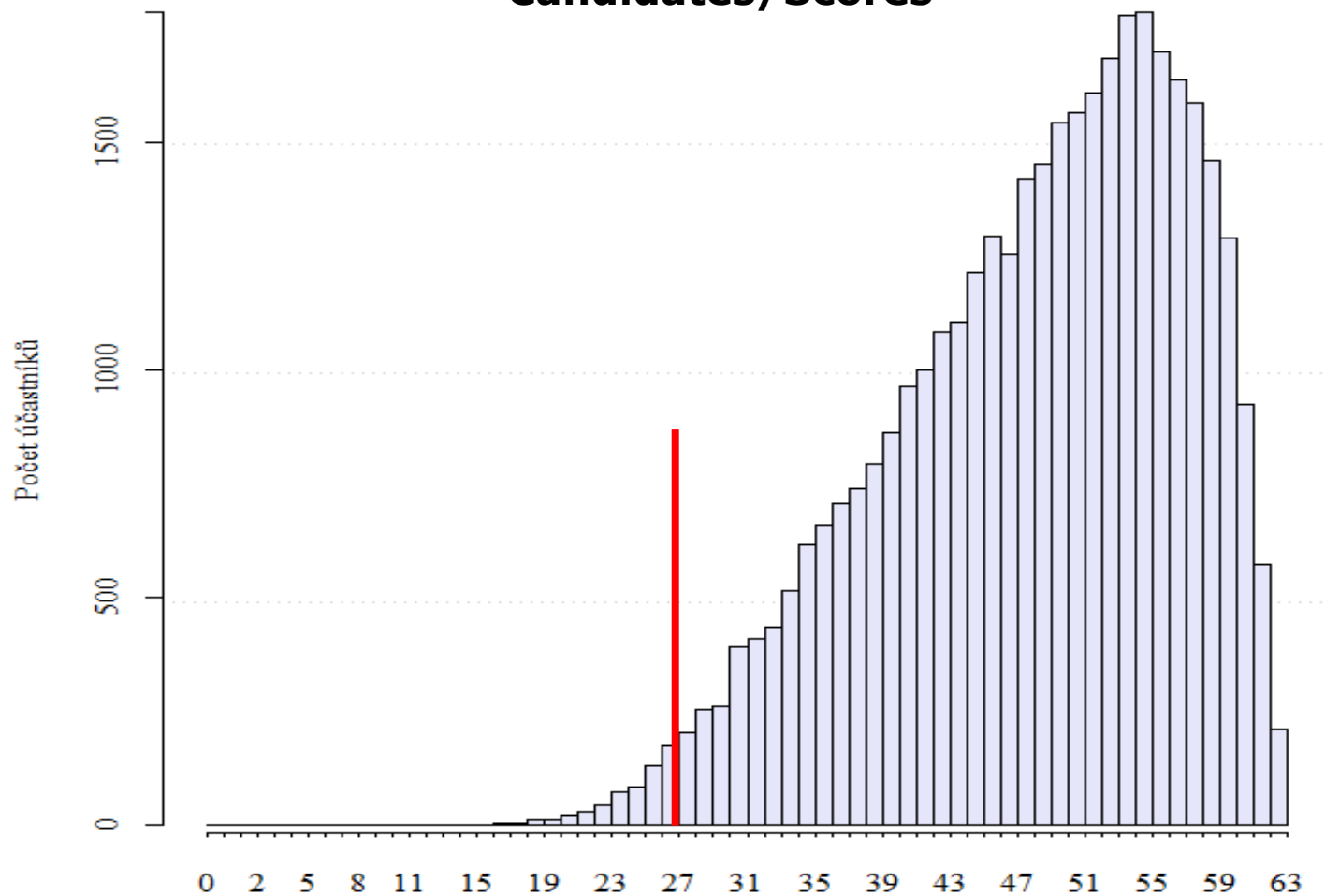


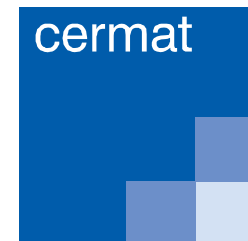


# Test of receptive skills

EN\_low

Candidates/Scores





## Quality Issues

- Specifications prepared as B1 and B2; same for all languages and test versions

**Striving** to be comparable in construct, content and difficulty across versions of the same language and across languages

- Levels undergoing the process of relating to the CEFR levels
- Internal monitoring of test comparability
- expert judgement

At the moment, only qualitative and internal evidence  
no regular pre-testing



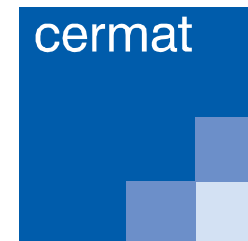
# Quality Issues

We have declared that our tests will stay “secret” after the examination (anchoring...), but we didn't reach this goal.

Comparability across versions/time?

**P:** Need of empirical evidence :

- pre-set “universal” cut score (semiconscious decision)
- no routine and systematic pretesting
- no item/task bank
- no calibrated or anchor items/tasks...
- amount of tests needed = difficult to control, document and build reliable evidence of the quality



# Observation

Schools started to “select” students BEFORE Maturita

All students have to pass all school subjects (at least D grade) and gain the final school report in order to be able to sit the Maturita exams.

**Before:** who had the final report, was allowed to take Maturita and which was a “bonus” often taken as granted

**Now:** the number of students which did not get the final school report (and weren't allowed to take Maturita) increased dramatically

## What does it mean?

- more responsibility (?) in the final school evaluation?
- Positive change in the school assessment?
- Effort to gain better results for school in Maturita by lowering the (potential) number of failed students?



# Students taking the exam in Spring 2011

Exam	compulsory	optional	total
EN_low	39026	1068	40094
EN_high	3242	3432	6674
GE_low	8198	250	8448
GE_high	187	230	417
FR_low	189	64	253
FR_high	48	68	116
RU_low	1217	33	1250
RU_high	31	31	62
SP_low	123	44	167
SP_high	74	16	90

## Observation

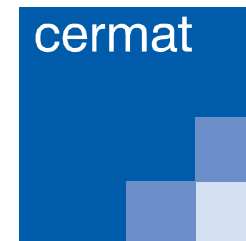
- Students decided to play safe

They have chosen the low level – there is no real motivation to prove higher level of ability

The exams seem to be easy

- Only few stakeholders are informed, understand the results, can interpret results and know how to implement them in their system of requirement...
- Our communication with them is not constant, complex and user friendly

With the number of problems, can we “sell” the exam well?



**Is it worth continuing with Maturita?**

**YES!**

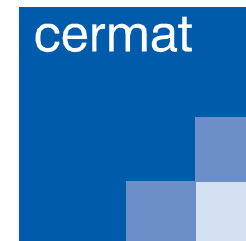
**We have positive findings too...**



## Impact of Maturita...

- Increasing reflection of teaching methods and content, awareness of weakness in teaching (especially after GME2010)
- More structured and balanced teaching and learning
- Implementation of the assessment criteria (or the idea of complex assessment)
- Implementation of structured tasks with a particular goal
- Using tools for self-assessment, feedback...
- Students viewed through the standards – curricula, CEFR...
- Increased self-confidence thanks to training





## **Dilemma of the first year of Maturita in the CR:**

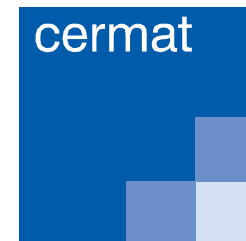
**Is it worth continuing?**

**YES!**

**but: Where to start?**

## New projects

- More centralized rating of writing with fewer pre-selected raters
- Training for interlocutors
- Changes in gathering data (for W and S – all criteria, not only the final mark)
- ...
- better communication with the stakeholders and with the public in general



**Thank you.**

