



The Council of Europe's toolkit for volunteers and others providing language support for refugees

An introductory guide

(Presentation: Richard Rossner)

The Council of Europe's toolkit was devised as part of the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) project (see www.coe.int/lang-migrants for further information) within the Council of Europe's Language Policy Programme 2015-2017. It takes the form of a website containing 57 'tools' and other resources that can be used by volunteers to prepare for and provide language support for refugees. The individual tools were prepared by contributors from four different organisations, in Austria, France, Italy, Romania and the UK respectively. Further details about the [development process](#) and about the [contributors](#) can be found on the website, which can be viewed on any kind of computer or mobile device connected to the internet. However, the layout will vary depending on the device used.

Following on from an [introduction](#) to the principles behind the toolkit website prepared by Jean-Claude Beacco, this introductory guide offers a step-by-step 'tour' of the toolkit's structure and using links to the various pages and to examples of individual tools

1. The homepage

Click on the above link. You will find the following:

- a. A general introduction to the toolkit;
- b. The list of languages in which the website is available (in the lower half of the page) which is also to be found (in abbreviated form) in boxes on the right. These contain direct links to the website in the various different languages: click one or more of these languages to see different versions of the homepage;
- c. Links to a downloadable leaflet in English and French (bottom right);
- d. Links to the six other areas of the website via tabs across the top of the page under the heading of the page, or in a bar menu. These sections are explained below.

2. 'Introduction'

Click on the tab marked 'introduction'. The page contains four headings with images, and brief descriptions of the kinds of tools available under each heading. The headings are as follows:

- a. 'The Council of Europe and language policy for migrants/refugees';
- b. 'Refugees: some essential background';
- c. 'Cultural and language awareness';

d. 'Language learning'.

For ease of navigation, this list of headings is also available on the right-hand side of the page in this section, as is the case in the other sections.

Click on the '[language learning](#)' subsection (for example) – under a brief introduction there is a list of five tools. Like all the tools in the toolkit, each has a transparent title, and each can be viewed on screen and/or downloaded in PDF or in Word format. Word format allows users to adapt the tools to their specific context or purpose if they need to.

Click on [tool 10](#) '*What is involved in providing language support for refugees?*' (for example): like all the tools, tool 10 includes a summary of the aim just below the title. In this case, the aim is to encourage volunteers to think about the language support needed by refugees and how it can best be provided. This is important because volunteers may or may not have experience of volunteering or of providing language support, or they may think they need to adopt the role of 'language teacher', which is not the case. This point is discussed under the heading 'Teaching versus providing language support'.

The second page contains some important 'points to note', which it would be useful for volunteers to reflect on, especially those who are working with refugees in this way for the first time.

The 'Dos and Don'ts' table on the third page is designed to encourage volunteers to reflect on the way they should approach their task. Where possible, it would be valuable if volunteers could discuss their thoughts about these points with other volunteers and/or with a coordinator, for example. The reflection task is followed by a brief discussion of each of the possible behaviours listed in the table.

Note that in the text there are links to other tools in the toolkit which are relevant. This is a feature of many other tools.

Now return to the 'introduction' section.

IMPORTANT NOTE: *to return from looking at any tool to the website and the list of tools, use the back button ←*

3. '[Preparation and planning](#)'

Use the tabs or the menu bar to find this section. The general aim of the tools in the section is to provide help for refugees in preparing their language support session. This time, there are three sub-headings with brief introductions to each:

- a. 'Some points to think about'
- b. 'Needs analysis'
- c. 'Planning content'

Choose '[some points to think about](#)': you will see a list of ten tools. As an example, select [tool 21](#), '*Selecting and using texts for listening and reading at elementary level*'. Again, the tool begins with a clear aim, namely to help volunteers with challenges they are likely to encounter in finding and using suitable texts in the target language (the language refugees want to learn) for refugees to listen to and for them to read. The tool is divided into two sections, one about listening activities and the other about reading activities. Each invites the volunteer to think

about the kinds of text that may be suitable and interesting for refugees with a very elementary level of proficiency in the target language, and then to consider some key questions about organising listening or reading activities, before suggesting a step-by-step approach illustrated by an example.

Now choose the last sub-section, '[planning content](#)': you will see only three tools, all of which are lists designed to help volunteers choose language they want to highlight in their language support. Select [tool 33](#) '*Expressions for everyday communication*'. As the aim states, this tool is to help volunteers to choose expressions that are related to scenarios that they plan to focus on in their language support activities with refugees. The list is ten pages long and covers a wide range of expressions useful for beginners in the target language. These are organised in tables under thematic headings. The first column describes the function or purpose for which the expressions are used, the second lists the expressions themselves, and the last column provides examples of how the expressions can be used. This list, like those in tools 31 and 32, is a very useful resource for volunteers who need to find suitable expressions and examples quickly.

Now you need to click on the back button to return to the website.

4. '[Activities](#)'

As you will see when you click on the 'Activities' tab at the top of the page, this section contains five different types of tool that can directly help volunteers plan and run language support sessions. Each sub-section has a slightly different orientation covering:

- a. 'Getting started' - one tool to help volunteers to work comfortably with a group
- b. 'Learning vocabulary' – three tools
- c. 'Thinking about language learning' – two tools to get refugees thinking about their languages and their learning
- d. 'Scenarios for language support' – 15 tools that provide ideas for running language support sessions
- e. 'Mapping journeys and interacting with the host community' – three tools that can help volunteers organise language support in the local area.

Click on [tool 35](#) in 'learning vocabulary': '*Ideas for learning basic vocabulary: everyday life*'. You will see that this tool offers advice on selecting and using pictures to introduce and work on basic vocabulary. The various examples of pictures provided in the tool may be useful, but it is suggested that volunteers try to find alternative or additional pictures that are meaningful to the refugees in the context in which they are working. As mentioned in the first paragraph, [tool 22](#) provides further advice on finding and selecting pictures and real objects for use with refugees.

'[Scenarios for language support](#)' is by far the largest sub-section, and each scenario follows a similar format. What changes is the real-world situation being focused in in the language activities and resources. Click on the 'scenarios' sub-section on the 'activities' page and read carefully through the notes about scenarios. These explain the layout of the scenarios and provides suggestions for preparing to use any of them. These guidance notes contain links to various other tools that can also help orientate volunteers to using the scenarios well.

To see an example of a scenario for language support, click on [tool 44](#) '*using health services*'. This shows the simple and clear layout of scenarios, and how activities follow each other in a

logical sequence. As in most scenarios in the toolkit, ideas are provided for refugees with low literacy in the target language, and some pictures are also included as examples. It is not suggested that this or the other scenarios should be given to the refugees on paper. Generally, volunteers will refer to the scenario and use it as a plan or as ideas for their language support. Very often volunteers will want or need to adapt the language and activities to better match the needs of the group. They will also invite refugees to give their own examples and use their own ideas in role play dialogues and other activities. In other words, scenarios are starting points for language support: they are not designed to be followed strictly but rather to be adapted and extended to meet the needs of each volunteer and each group of refugees.

Now go back to the website and select another scenario, for example, [tool 45](#) 'shopping: buying clothes' or [tool 47](#) 'food: inviting someone to a meal' so that you can compare the ways different scenarios are organised.

5. 'Resources'

This is another useful section of the website. It contains the following:

- a. A list of all the tools, where you can download any tool, or all of them if you wish;
- b. A glossary containing explanations of some of the terms used in the various tools;
- c. Links to directories of relevant websites in English, French, German and Italian;
- d. A short list of links to the websites of the Council of Europe and other key international organisations.

6. 'About the toolkit'

This section contains:

- a. Information about the piloting of the toolkit in Italy in early 2017
 - b. An account of how the toolkit was developed
 - c. A list of the people who contributed in different ways to the development of the toolkit;
 - d. Information about the event held in November 2017 to launch the toolkit.
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It is suggested that you continue to explore the different section and sub-sections of the toolkit and examining the different tools. The toolkit is a free resource. Please inform anyone you know who may be interested in using the toolkit in their work with refugees about its contents and where they can find it.