**3rd Intergovernmental Conference**

*Quality in the linguistic integration of adult migrants: from values to policy and practice*

COUNCIL OF EUROPE — CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
Language Policy
Politiques linguistiques

# CONCLUDING REMARKS, AND SOME PRIORITIES FOR COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTION

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# Purposes of the third intergovernmental conference on LIAM

- Information-sharing and up-dating, especially relating to recent Council of Europe initiatives, and related work carried out by others

- A forum for participants to network, to exchange opinions and experiences, and to discuss their needs

- A means to assist the Council of Europe in setting the agenda for its future work in LIAM.

# Brief review of the conference (personal perspective)

An inspiring opening session with some timely reminders of the reasons why how relevant the issues we have been focusing on are to the Council of Europe's work.

Ulrich Bunjes, the Acting Director of Democratic Citizenship and Participation drew attention to:

- the CoE's work in education and languages is central to its aims to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law

- high quality in all aspects of provision is a necessity if the it is to meet its objectives.

# Opening remarks (continued)

Ambassador Castro Mendes, on behalf of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

- drew attention to the long history of the Council of Europe's concern for vulnerable groups including migrants, dating back to a 1968 resolution;

- made reference too to the White Paper of 2008 on intercultural dialogue underlined the importance of intercultural policies in enabling migrants to participate fully in the life of host communities.

On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly Pierre-Yves Le Borgn' spoke of his passionate belief in the contribution of migrants and migration to European society, the importance of LIAM and of the work being done by the Council of Europe in this area.

# Focus on new Council of Europe resources:

- Philia Thalgott described the thought-provoking recommendation questioning the value of tests in integration measures, and advocating alternative means of assessment

- David Little presented the *Guide to Policy Development and Implementation*, which raises key issues about the design and implementation of language programmes and the assessment of linguistic competence and contains clear recommendations

- Jean-Claude Beacco gave participants a tour of the  very rich variety of resources contained in the new LIAM website

- Reinhilde Pulinx and Claire Extramiana presented the report on the comprehensive 2013 survey completed by 36 Member States, drawing attention to some interesting if disturbing trends.

# Group discussion

There was lively discussion in all three groups focusing on some simple questions concerned with:

- what kind of language competence migrants actually need, and how the very different levels required by Member States relate to these needs

- the purpose of and rationale for testing of the kind favoured by many Member States, and alternatives that are available

- Contrast between tests which can aid migrants in various ways and tests used for regulatory purposes, or in some cases, to attempt to reduce migration.

Rapporteurs made a note of the main points raised in order to report back in the plenary discussion forum.

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Council of Europe Language Policy Unit – www.coe.int/lang

# Selected insights and issues from the Discussion Forum

1a. LANGUAGE RESOURCES NEEDED BY ADULT MIGRANTS

- Individual needs – how best to identify these?
- The need for individualised and autonomous learning
- The need for training in learning how to learn
- Language proficiency is necessary but not sufficient for integration
- The difference between 'instrumental' and practical language needs

1b. VARIATIONS IN CEFR LEVELS REQUIRED

- Surprise that these range from zero to a rather high (B1)
- Decisions seem political or imitative but not always rational
- Language 'profiles' are more valuable than language 'levels'
- Successive CEFR levels are not equidistant but exponential.

# Selected insights and issues from the Discussion Forum (continued)

2A TESTS – A HELP OR A HINDRANCE?

- Tests for exclusion, or tests for integration?

- Depends on how tests are used – as a threat or as a useful tool to measure progress, diagnose needs

- Standardised tests are a barrier to tailor-made courses

- Tests leading to courses, or tests relating to achievement?

- How to achieve fairness (and respect human rights)

2B: ALTERNATIVES TO LANGUAGE TESTS?

- Look at other indicators of social competence - broaden the view of relevant competences beyond language

- Find ways of minimising the negative impacts of formal assessment, especially for disadvantaged migrants.

# Two highly relevant examples of project related to LIAM

- ECML *Language for Work* project, the aim of which is to create a network of those working in this area so that research and resources can be shared among those working in this are.

- The very impressive Swiss FIDE project – an example of a fully thought-through and imaginative and multi-layered strategy to aid the linguistic integration of adult migrants. The website is already endowed with rich resources – an inspiration for others involved in LIAM

# Piloting examples from Member States

- Barbara Simpson introduced the ELP specifically designed for use with adult migrants, and its related guides and worksheets. Then Costanza Bargellini described the piloting carried out by the Fondazione ISMU, Milan in its 'Vivere in Italia' project

- Richard Rossner referred to the importance of quality in LIAM and described the Council of Europe's self-assessment handbook for providers and its role in quality assurance. Then Nataša Pirih Svetina, head of the University of Ljubljana's Centre for Slovene as a Second Language, described the piloting process and results

OTHER MEMBER STATES ARE INVITED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE PILOTING AND CONSULTANCY OPPOTUNITIES

# Related work at the OECD & EU

OECD:

- differential individualised training
- flexible programmes with different tracks
- more on the job training
- the key role of evaluation throughout courses

EU:

- Reaffirmed the Common Basic Principles (2004), with reference to language support for migrants
- European Website on Integration http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/
- New round of funding to support initiatives - Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

# Round table on cities

Very interesting initiatives from 4 cities:

- Practical orientation tasks out & about (Wels)

- Open conversation groups for migrants (Hamburg)

- Council of foreign residents enabling representatives to get involved in city policy and action (Strasbourg)

- Non-formal learning and bridge-building projects bringing together migrants and local citizens – e.g. stories from countries of origins with illustrations  (Torres Vedras)

# Concluding personal impressions

- Participants came from different backgrounds, but there was very positive dialogue and sharing on many key issues

- A genuine desire was demonstrated to improve the means available to support LIAM, and to find better solutions to the issues of levels and assessment of proficiency

- Genuine interest and enthusiasm was shown for the work done by the Council of Europe

- Some Member States expressed interest in using/adapting the Council of Europe's resources and giving feedback

- A need was felt to take account of related work such as that done by the EU and the OECD, and in projects like FIDE

Apparently there is a shared opinion: creating a 'community of practice' in the field of LIAM is the only real way to ensure that the quality of the language support provided is maintained and enhanced, and that the chances of successful linguistic integration are optimised.

# SOME POSSIBLE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ACTIONS

1. Survey: continue a monitoring exercise (via e-mail)
2. Work on developing additional resources:
   1. Descriptors and guides for supporting migrants with low literacy or/and little educational background
   2. Instrument and guide for needs assessment in LIAM
   3. Guide on means of assessment other than testing
   4. Streamlining ELP – towards 'lite' versions
   5. Relating CEFR descriptors to the needs of AM
   6. Language profiles rather than  language levels

3. Develop support for and collaboration with member states: piloting and expert visits
4. Create closer links with EU, OECD and other bodies.