Language Support for Migrants
A Council of Europe Toolkit

80 TOOLS FOR PROVIDING LANGUAGE SUPPORT TO MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Introduction to the Toolkit

Introduction

Over recent years the Language Policy Programme of the Council of Europe and the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) have been working on a major education initiative, the aim of which is to support migrants and refugees in their learning of the language of the society in which they are settling. Acquiring these language skills is essential for adult migrants and refugees as they adjust to an unfamiliar cultural and social environment, seek access to employment, try to meet the legal requirements for permission to work, for permanent residency or citizenship, and so on. It is also crucial that young people of school age who are of migrant origin or are unaccompanied minors have knowledge of the language of schooling, which is essential for academic success as well as for interactions in the local community.

Ideally, migrant learners of the languages of their new host countries need the kind of professional support that can be provided by language teachers in an organised programme. However, in some contexts and in emergency situations such support may not be easily available or affordable. In such cases, targeted support provided by volunteers working, for example, with NGOs and community-based programmes is essential.

Following the large influx of refugees in 2014-2015, the Council of Europe's first priority was to assist volunteers and others working with these groups. In 2017 a toolkit comprising 57 resources for volunteers and others working with refugees was made available in eight languages on a [dedicated website](). In 2020 attention turned to the needs of migrants and refugee children, defined as those under the age of 18. A first step was to review the relevant resources in the 2017 Toolkit, to adapt those that were suitable for this age-group, and to create further tools to meet specific needs, for example relating to the integration of migrant children into the school system. However, many of those who are 16 to 18 years old and so over the age of compulsory schooling have quite different needs related to their transition to adulthood. As with adult migrants, these include the need to find training opportunities, employment and their own accommodation. These specific needs are addressed in other newly created tools which form part of the Toolkit described below.

The new Toolkit for providing language support to migrants and refugees

The Language Support for Migrants (LSM) Toolkit is a continuation of the long-term Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants ([LIAM]()) project, which began in 2006, and is based on the same underlying principles. The LSM Toolkit has been created to meet both the specific needs of teachers providing language support in mainstream educational programmes or formal language learning settings, as well as the needs of teachers working in the compulsory school who are teaching different subjects to classes that include migrant children and adolescents. The Toolkit is also aimed at volunteers, who are often not trained language teachers and are working in the community, in refugee reception centres or alongside teachers.

The Toolkit consists of a set of 80 resources designed to guide educators (teachers, volunteers) who are providing these kinds of language support for adult migrants and migrant children in a wide range of contexts. They are also designed to provide guidance and resources for other stakeholders such as those responsible for designing and organising formal or non-formal language support provision, especially for newly arrived migrants and refugees and/or those in charge of defining the content of pre-service and in-service training programmes for teachers and volunteers. A separate [Guide]() is provided for those organising focused training and supervisory support for such teachers and volunteers. It outlines the potential scope of such training, offering practical examples of how selected LSM tools can be used in training and professional learning.

Some of these tools are specifically designed to address the needs of migrant learners with a low or very low level of literacy. This is an area of need and support that is focused on in the [Reference guide on Literacy and Second Language Learning for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LASLLIAM)](), launched in 2022. Other Council of Europe tools

specifically targeted at these particularly vulnerable learners are available here following thorough piloting during the LASLLIAM project. These additional LASLLIAM resources are integrated with the tools offered in the LSM Toolkit.

Most of the LSM tools are designed also to address the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees. This is an area on which the aforementioned 2017 LIAM Toolkit focused on, with particular regard to adult refugees. The additional multilingual resources contained in the overlapping LIAM Toolkit are still available for use alongside the LSM Toolkit.

The main characteristics of the resources are summarised in the '**Toolkit in detail'** section below. Many of the tools included were the subject of systematic research during the second half of 2023. The aim was to obtain general feedback and suggestions for improvement. The research focused on the 23 tools that had been added to the 2017 Toolkit of 57 tools aimed at those providing language support to refugees, which were successfully piloted in 2016-2017, and 9 other tools that had been substantially adapted to render them more suitable for a wider range of migrant profiles, including children. The research included two main piloting procedures, which are described in a full report available here.

The LSM Toolkit in detail

All the tools have clearly specified objectives and an easy-to-follow layout and are written in a simple way, avoiding unnecessary terminology. Careful checks by users are needed to establish whether adaptations are needed in specific contexts and to meet the needs of given groups of learners. Otherwise, the tools are designed to be 'ready for use' when planning and running language support sessions which involve active use of language and collaboration among learners. However, the tools are <u>not</u> designed to constitute a language course or a fixed pathway, but instead are a set of resources that can be used according to the needs of learners and the nature of their learning environment. There are two exceptions, one in section B and the other in section C, which are detailed below. Users of the resources are also reminded that, when providing language support, it is important to value and encourage use of migrants' first languages and languages shared by learners and educators as a means of contributing to their learning of the new language and fostering their self-esteem.

There are three main categories of tools:

A. Tools designed to enhance the general understanding of educators who are providing language support for migrants about the nature of the task and the needs of the learners. These tools offer awareness-raising and guidance that is brief and readable. They provide general information on language learning and its cultural and intercultural dimensions.

B. Tools offering practical help when planning and preparing a course or series of language support sessions and when organising the learning environment and the resources needed. These tools describe procedures for identifying the language needs of migrants and for organising language support to meet their needs. Some of the tools suggest activities designed to support learners in getting acquainted with each other, in acquiring new vocabulary and reflecting on language and language learning.

C. Tools describing practical language support activities of various kinds that can be done in a limited period of time. These tools suggest ways of handling different stages of learning and work on the language needed for different situations and topics. Most of them are in the form of "scenarios" which deal with real-life communication situations (e.g. seeing a doctor, going to a shop, playing sports, etc.), and which encourage migrants to socialize with neighbours, work colleagues, classmates, other young people, etc. The suggested activities assume that learners' language skills are at an elementary or even beginner level, i.e. pre-A1, A1 or A2 as defined by the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) and its Companion Volume.

These 80 tools for language support are adaptable and are intended to be translated into several languages. As indicated within the tools, a few of them are more suitable for higher levels of competence in the target language (A2, B1), but the majority of tools assume only elementary knowledge of the host country language. While they are numbered for reference, they can be selected and used in any order and can also be filtered according to the different

ages of target learners they address (adults, adolescents, children), as well as the focus of the sections and subsections in which they are included. These are described below.

A. Raising awareness (tools 1-15)

The aim of tools in this section is to provide general background for those providing language support to migrants. They cover global issues and topics related to the context of language support. Some tools are designed to shed light on challenges that confront learners of a new language. Tools 12 to 15 in this section focus on four different languages or language groups that may be spoken by some of the migrant learners who users are working with. However, as an aid to teachers and volunteers, course organisers may wish to create similar tools on various other languages spoken by migrant learners in their contexts.

Reflecting on the task of providing language support to migrants

1. Supporting migrants in managing relations with people in a new context
2. Supporting recently arrived migrants who are adjusting to their new situation
3. Some considerations to be aware of when working with recently arrived migrants
4. What is involved in providing language support for recently arrived migrants
5. Some points to bear in mind when providing language support for migrants
6. Supporting migrants of different ages who are learning a new language
7. Migrants as language users and learners

Migrant learners and their languages

8. Creating a plurilingual self-portrait: a reflective task for you
9. Challenges when learning to read and write in a new language
10. Supporting migrants with low literacy
11. Taking advantage of the first languages of migrants
12. Arabic: some information
13. Kurdish: some information
14. Persian languages: some information
15. Somali: some information

B. Preparing and planning language support (tools 16-39)

The success of the language support provided will depend on the extent to which it meets the needs of the migrants concerned and on the suitability of the resources used. The tools in this section are designed to help teachers and volunteers with these challenges. They can be used when planning and preparing language support sessions and can also be consulted for guidance whenever necessary. The section contains a series of three tools on the initial stages of language support for migrant learners (tools 21 to 23 which users may wish to use in the sequence indicated).

Practical considerations when planning language support

16. Taking account of diversity when providing language support for migrants
17. A checklist for reflecting on differences within groups of migrant learners
18. Being aware and taking account of the uneven linguistic profiles of migrants
19. Reflecting on your language support work
20. Setting objectives for language support for migrants who are beginners in the new language

Series on beginning language support for migrants

21. Preparing a learning environment for providing language support
22. Planning language support at a very elementary level
23. Finding out about situations in which migrants need to use the target language

Supporting classroom learning

24. Supporting young migrants as they adjust to the language in which subjects are taught at schools and further education/vocational colleges
25. Functions and expressions useful in subject teaching with young migrants
26. Dealing with grammar when providing language support
27. Assessing language learning and offering feedback in a supportive way

Using texts and pictures
28. Selecting and using texts for listening at elementary level
29. Selecting and using texts for reading at elementary level
30. Selecting pictures and 'realia' for language activities: some guidelines
31. Supporting migrants in taking advantage of opportunities to read in public spaces
32. Using cartoons to help migrants to learn a new language
33. Accustoming migrants to watching the news

Dealing with vocabulary
34. Ideas to support migrants' learning of basic vocabulary for everyday life
35. Techniques to aid vocabulary learning
36. Introducing basic vocabulary for expressing opinions and emotions

Addressing the occupational domain
37. Supporting migrants who need to look for training opportunities
38. Supporting migrants who need to describe their general skills when applying for a job
39. Supporting migrants who are starting to look for work

C. Language support activities (tools 40-80)

The tools in this section are designed to offer practical ready-to-use suggestions for conducting language support sessions. Some are designed for the initial phase of language support to find out about migrant learners' language skills and language needs. Others are in the form of model 'scenarios' for practising language for specific social contexts. These can easily be adapted to meet the specific needs of given groups of migrants. The section begins with a series of tools designed to help users to identify the individual needs of the migrants they are working with. Again, these can either be used in the sequence indicated or selectively.

Series on discovering migrants' needs
40. The first interview
41. Finding out what migrants can already do in the target language and what they need to be able to do
42. Finding out about migrants' literacy and language profile in the target language
43. Finding out more about migrants' own language resources and skills
44. Migrants' language profile
45. Making notes on migrants' background

Getting started with language support
46. Breaking the ice and building group confidence
47. Using an 'about me' wheel with migrants
48. Getting recently arrived migrants to talk about themselves
49. Language games and activities for migrants
50. Plurilingual portrait: a reflective task for migrants

Getting migrants to reflect on their language learning
51. Encouraging migrants to think about their learning
52. Encouraging migrants to think about learning activities
53. Encouraging migrant to assess their own progress in language learning

Scenarios for use in language support

Interacting with the local community

Family tools