



Council of Europe
Language Policy Unit
DGII – Education Department
www.coe.int/lang-migrants

Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants



Curriculum / course programme / course design / course objectives

The need for a curriculum

Like any educational provision, courses for adult migrants need to be run within a framework that specifies general principles and aims, and outlines the approach to be used, which may be called a curriculum or as discussed in Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education (p.13), a 'plan for learning': "Curriculum" is a difficult concept to pin down, and a common agreed definition of it is still a long way off. Here, we shall use it very broadly to mean "a plan for learning". The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) insists that the school curriculum is part of a wider curriculum, a "path travelled by a learner through a sequence of educational experiences, whether under the control of an institution or not" (CEFR, chapter 8.4). It accordingly sees the "educational" curriculum as part of an "experiential" and "existential" curriculum, which starts before schooling, develops alongside it, and continues after it".

A curriculum for courses for adult migrants is, however, not like a school curriculum which is designed to cater for all children passing through the school system. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, curriculum designers have to take into account the very diverse needs, educational backgrounds and plurilingual repertoires of adult migrants in striving to provide a framework in which courses can be designed that will aid their language development in such a way as to support the integration process.

Course design and course objectives

A language course curriculum for adult migrants that takes Council of Europe principles into account puts the needs, expectations and language profile of migrants at the heart of the process of course design. Those responsible for designing courses or series of courses for adult migrants consider the specific needs of the learners expected to enroll on each course, including their educational and cultural background, their level of literacy in their own language or other languages, their situation in the host country, their specific vocational, professional or social language needs, and so on. These needs, together with the key features affecting course organisation, such as the number of hours available and the frequency and size of classes, will determine the course objectives and the desired course outcomes. But adult migrants do not expect or deserve to be treated like children. They need to play a role in deciding the objectives and outcomes of the course in which they are the key participants, and these may differ from individual to individual.

Depending on the flexibility available within the institution, course design may include agreeing with migrant learners:

- the level of proficiency or profile that participants are expected to attain by the end of the course;

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- the methodology and learning materials that would be most suitable;
- the use to be made of the learners' own languages, and their previous experience of language learning;
- how the course time should be divided between 'taught' lessons, individualised autonomous learning using digital and other media, and other learner activities.
- the procedures to be used to assess progress and the achievement of learning outcomes.

Developing course programmes

A programme or a written plan for each course or course module is a way of giving practical guidance to teachers, who themselves may come from different backgrounds and have experience of teaching migrants that varies considerably. Having a specification of objectives and content for given periods of time (months, weeks etc.) within a given course can provide invaluable support. However, bearing in mind the diversity of special language needs adult migrants may have, no syllabus document should be seen as – or be written as – a straight-jacket. Teachers should be free to deviate from and add to what is specified in the syllabus in order to better respond to the needs of their learners at given times. Indeed, for tailor-made courses for adult migrants, syllabuses may suggest various options rather than specifying a defined pathway.

The CEFR as a resource for language curriculum, syllabus and course design

It is essential that the teaching methodology and the processes of learner assessment outlined in curriculum and syllabus documents support migrants in the integration process, and safeguard their human rights and their pluricultural and plurilingual identities in line with Council of Europe guidelines and recommendations. With this in mind, language course curricula and syllabuses in Europe, including those for adult migrants, generally draw on the principles contained in the CEFR and the descriptors of levels' that it contains. However, the CEFR itself is not a curriculum or syllabus, nor does it include descriptors or recommendations relating specifically to the teaching of languages to migrants: it is a resource to support anyone who is designing a curriculum for language education. In particular, designers of curricula and syllabuses for adult migrants are likely to take account of the action-oriented view of language competence described in the CEFR, as well as the notion that language curricula and syllabuses need to be 'multi-dimensional'. This implies that, depending on learners' needs, it makes sense to specify course objectives in terms of given 'actions' or communication tasks that participants are likely to face, and the language competences that they will need to deal with these tasks.

A well thought-through and simply written curriculum, and clear and flexible syllabus documents generated through a well managed course design process are key factors in the quality and effectiveness in language courses for adult migrants.

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Related Resources

Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM): www.coe.int/lang-migrants
 Language Policy Unit's main website: www.coe.int/lang

- *Providers of courses for adult migrants- Self-assessment Handbook*, 2012, Richard Rossner
- *Profiles instead of levels*, 2012, Hans-Jürgen Krumm
- *Quality assurance in the provision of language education and training for adult migrants – Guidelines and options*, 2008 - Richard Rossner
- *Education: Tailor-made or one-size-fits-all? A project commissioned by the Nederlandse Taalunie*, 2008- ITTA/Elwine Halewijn; CTO/Annelies Houben, Heidi De Niel
- *Concept Paper: The role of languages in policies for the integration of adult migrants*, 2008 - Jean-Claude Beacco
- *The Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: evaluating policy and practice* (Reference Document for the *conference* in 2010) – David Little (ed.)