Tackling today’s challenges together: Linguistic integration of adult migrants

If refugees and migrants are not well integrated, European societies cannot be peaceful democracies, in which everyone’s human rights and dignity are respected.

Migrants need to be able to communicate within their host country and to participate in society and daily life.

Refugees and asylum seekers urgently need basic communication skills in the language of their transit and destination countries.

Many European countries require adult migrants to pass language and knowledge-of-society tests for entry, residence or citizenship. There is also a tendency to increase the language levels expected.

Unrealistic language requirements can hamper migrants’ integration and one-size-fits-all courses are unlikely to meet migrants’ diverse needs.

Success in a test does not guarantee integration.

Inappropriate use of Council of Europe language-proficiency scales (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR) may contravene international standards.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Integration is a two-way process; policy makers and citizens, as well as migrants, must play an active role.

Council of Europe tools, standards, guidelines and programmes, based on the Organisation’s core values – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – assist host countries in integrating migrants.

These include resources to ensure that:

► language tests do not exclude those who would otherwise be eligible for entry, residence, work or citizenship;

► adult language courses are of good quality and tailored to migrants’ needs;

► migrants’ existing language skills are valued as a basis for learning the new language; and,

► levels of language proficiency are realistically and flexibly defined.

A Council of Europe toolkit is in preparation to provide guidance and easy-to-use teaching materials for volunteers working with refugees.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Over one million refugees and asylum seekers* entered Europe in 2015.

Migrants must pass a language test to obtain a residence permit in 23 Council of Europe member states. For citizenship, they must reach a set level of language proficiency in 26 member states. **

Linguistic integration of adult migrants

Sources:

*UN Agency for Refugees: http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php

**Council of Europe survey on national language requirements for migrants, 2014: www.coe.int/lang-migrants.

http://www.coe.int/education
COUNCIL OF EUROPE POLICY GUIDELINES

- The linguistic integration of adult migrants: from one country to another, from one language to another (2014)
- Adult migrant integration policies: principles and implementation (2010)
- The role of languages in policies for the integration of adult migrants (2008)
- Language tests for social cohesion and citizenship: an outline for policy makers (2008)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE MATERIALS

For learners, teachers, course and test designers

- The linguistic integration of adult migrants and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2012)
- European Language Portfolio – learning the language of the host country – adult migrants (2012)
- Tailoring language provision and requirements to the needs and capacities of adult migrants (2008)
- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001) – to be adapted to use with migrants

Self-evaluation for course providers

- Quality assurance in the provision of language education and training for adult migrants (2008)

Language in the workplace

- Learning the language of the host country for professional purposes – Outline of issues and educational approaches (2012)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDARDS

Conventions

- The European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers (1977, ETS No. 93): signatory states agree to “facilitate the teaching of its language or, if there are several, one of its languages to migrant workers and members of their families”.

Committee of Ministers recommendations

- CM/Rec(2011)2 on validating migrants’ skills
- CM/Rec(2008)10 on improving access of migrants and persons of immigrant background to employment
- CM/Rec(2008)7 on the use of the Council of Europe’s Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism

Parliamentary Assembly recommendations

- Rec2034(2014) on integration tests: helping or hindering integration?
- Rec1625(2003) on policies for the integration of immigrants in Council of Europe member states
- Rec786(1976) on the education and cultural development of migrants

USEFUL COUNCIL OF EUROPE WEBSITES:

- Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants: www.coe.int/lang-migrants
- Language Policy: www.coe.int/lang
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): www.coe.int/lang-CEFR

http://www.coe.int/education