Language Support for Migrants
A Council of Europe Toolkit

Tool 21 - Preparing an environment for the provision of language support

Aim: To offer practical advice about organising a space and providing resources for language support sessions.

It is important not to worry if nothing at all is available: you can support language learning effectively by just explaining, miming and acting out different words and expressions. Depending on the context, however, it the suggestions below may be helpful.

The learning environment

- Try to find a space that is well lit, well ventilated and not noisy. Make it as welcoming as you can and encourage the learners to help keep it clean and tidy. You can also discuss some shared rules with them on using the learning space.
- Give the space an intercultural and plurilingual feel by allowing participants to use their own languages to support their own and each other's language learning and encouraging them to display information about their home countries and the host country.

Resources

- Collect a variety of resources such as maps, photos, posters, music, videos of the host country, as well as posters with numbers, letters and words, to support practice of vocabulary in the new language.
- If no wall board is available, try to get a small, portable board or a flip chart with large sheets of paper to write and draw on.
- Prepare a collection of simple real-world items (realia) such as public transport tickets and timetables, maps, leaflets from relevant local service providers, packaging and labels, job adverts, newspapers and other objects from home. These can aid comprehension and make language practice more interesting and meaningful.
- In addition, collect and stick a variety of photos and pictures cut out of magazines on cards. Work together with colleagues to build up a shared set of resources like these.
- Learners can also take photos of signs, public transport, notices, buildings etc. that interest them. They can look things up on the internet if they wish and practise language between sessions.
- If a Wi-Fi connection is available, migrant learners can use their smartphones, laptops, and other portable devices to become more independent learners.
- If available, a printer or photocopier is very useful to print out worksheets, handouts, local information, etc.

Stationery

- Try to make sure each learner has a pen or pencil and a notebook (an additional small one for recording new vocabulary is very useful, too).
- Large sheets of paper are good for posters made during group work, for mind maps and for sharing ideas.
- If no stationery is available, learners can use sheets of recycled paper and a stapler.
- Post-it notes, scissors and glue can also be very useful for various learning activities.
- Lined paper is good for migrants who are new to writing or who are beginners in the script of the host country.
- If available, different coloured pens can be helpful for highlighting different topics.
    - Use Blu-Tack or sticky tape to display and share the work done by learners on the walls.