Language Support for Migrants
A Council of Europe Toolkit

Tool 33 - Encouraging migrants to watch the news

Aim: **To offer guidance on getting migrants to watch and understand the news regularly as a means of developing their listening comprehension.**

Plentiful exposure to the language being learned is crucial for successful language learning (see also Tool 31 – *Supporting migrants in taking advantage of opportunities to read in public spaces* and Tool 32 – *Using cartoons to help migrants to learn a new language*).

The news, whether on TV, phone apps or social media, provides good opportunities for such exposure, and migrant learners should be encouraged to watch the live news regularly, both for their own information and also as training in listening to authentic language. This is an especially useful resource because:

- the news is easily available on various media
- It is usually read in a clear and expressive voice
- lapses into spontaneous spoken language are usually avoided
- the news is usually divided into separate sections or clips: learners may not be able to understand the news items in one section, but this does not mean it will also be impossible for them to understand news items in other clips or sections
- there may be titles or captions indicating what the news items are about, such as politics, sport, the economy etc. On phone apps and social media, the news may be in in written form but is often accompanied by video clips using the same or similar language
- subtitles may also be available in the same language, and this may aid comprehension for some migrants.

Some suggestions about encouraging learners to watch the news regularly

- If using TV news broadcasts, agree with your learners which one you will all watch. To start with, get them to listen to a replay of it four or five times so that they can get used to the structure of the news programme, the kinds of images used, the newsreaders and the captions and/or subtitles (if available).
- Focus on news items that learners may know something about or where they may be able to understand or guess the content, such as:
  o the weather forecast
  o sports news
  o news that directly or indirectly concerns their countries of origin
  o other international news
  o other common news items, for example about accidents, traffic jams, demonstrations, strikes etc.

Give priority to news items which:

- contain relevant video or photos etc. rather than videos of discussions, interviews, speeches or debates etc, which are harder to follow
- provide information rather than commentary or interpretation
- are easier to understand because they are not intended to be humorous, amusing, or weird.

Watch two or three news items with your learners or get them to watch them together in pairs. They can ask each other questions, and you can give them further guidance about the content or unfamiliar expressions. Then get them to watch other news on their own without your help but be ready to answer questions that might arise afterwards. They may also like to read the same news in written form, providing other opportunities for comprehension and learning new words or expressions.

With learners at elementary level, you could also watch the news of the day first and note down difficult new vocabulary or cultural points. Then you can 'pre-teach' these words, expressions or concepts using a questioning and guidance approach before asking learners to watch and try to understand the news, first in parts, then as a whole.

Suggest that learners should look at the news regularly, explaining that, although at first, they may only be able to understand parts of it, the news becomes easier to understand when learners get used to watching and listening to it.