

# MAKING INTEGRATION WORK

## Language Training for Adult Migrants

Joint OECD-BMI-IRCC Discussion

28 April 2021



# For migrants, language is the key to good jobs and full participation in society.

- *Independent of reason for migration*, immigrants who speak the host-country language have significantly higher employment rates than those who do not.
- Language plays an important role in the creation of community and a sense of belonging. Immigrants who speak the host-country language often report a greater feeling of social integration than those who do not.

## What considerations surround language training for adult migrants?

- Multiple objectives for both host country and migrant
- Competing obligations, including childcare and work
- Different learning methods and starting points



# Policymakers should address four main challenges

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## Personalisation

- How to adapt to migrants' different circumstances, starting points, and pace of progress

## Ease of Access

- How to remove obstacles to participation

## Quality

- How to avoid overlap or gaps in services and ensure that high-quality courses are available

## Evaluation

- How to understand the impact of language training on migrant integration and develop cost-effective programmes



# Tailor courses to migrants' needs and starting points

Start by assessing learners' level of education and capacity to learn

Integrate language and job training

Build on new technologies in language learning



- Assessment and placement in learning tracks should take into account education level and other factors.



- Language learning can be combined with vocational training as part of active labour market policies.



- The use of digital tools can help language teachers personalise the learning experience and add flexibility.



# Reach a greater number of migrants by removing obstacles to participation

Ensure access to language training for all migrants

Make language training flexible and compatible with daily life

Consider affordability when developing financing models



- Early access is essential, but settled residents may also benefit from language opportunities.



- Meet migrants where they are by offering childcare, evening courses, and place-based services.



- Where courses are not free, a participation-based deposit scheme may be more motivating than a non-refundable fee.



# Ensure well-coordinated and quality language tuition are broadly available

Invest in teacher preparation and recruitment

Engage with non-traditional partners to broaden opportunities

Coordinate stakeholders to avoid overlap and under-coverage



- Language teachers need specific preparation to understand the intercultural and psychological dimensions of learning in a migration context.



- Partnerships with schools can improve outreach and bring context to language courses. Engaging the private sector can offer agility.



- Where service provision is decentralised, a national body can ensure goals, assessments, and certifications are homogenised.



# Evaluate the impact of language training and act on the result

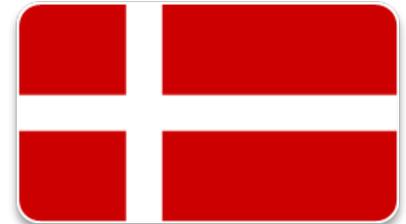
Language programmes that incorporate a systematic and in-built element of evaluation are rare for several reasons:

- costs
- data constraints
- insufficient participant numbers in smaller-scale programmes
- need to identify an adequate comparison group

While there are many studies of language training's association with language levels, very few focus on the impact of language training on non-language outcomes

- lock-in effect
- long-term employment outcomes
- vocational versus traditional language courses

Evaluate the impact of language training and act on the result





# Main Policy Lessons at a Glance

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Ensure access to language training for all migrants

Make sure new migrants get access to language training early

Make language training flexible and compatible with daily life

Consider affordability when developing financing models

Invest in teacher preparation and recruitment

Create incentives rather than imposing sanctions

Start by assessing learners' level of education and capacity to learn

Engage with non-traditional partners to broaden opportunities

Coordinate stakeholders to avoid overlap and under-coverage

Build on new technologies in language learning

Integrate language and job training

Evaluate the impact of language training and act on the result



# THANK YOU!

For more on OECD's Work on migration  
and integration visit:  
[www.oecd.org/migration](http://www.oecd.org/migration)