

Philia Thalgott

Foreword

The Council of Europe (47 member States, based in Strasbourg) has been working on migration-related issues for over four decades, and has affirmed the importance of education for migrants in nearly 30 recommendations and resolutions from its Committee of Ministers and its Parliamentary Assembly, including Conventions.

The Council of Europe's new project on the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants (LIAM) aims to support member States in the development of policy and practice based on a clear recognition of adult migrants' human rights. This is especially important at a time when surveys conducted in the course of the project show a growing tendency for member States to attach language requirements to the granting of citizenship, the right to residence, and sometimes the right to enter the country in the first place.

As affirmed by official texts of the Council of Europe as well as of the European Union, access to education is particularly important for migrants. Furthermore, language is central to many of the issues raised by migration, particularly integration and social cohesion. Therefore, providing adult migrants with opportunities to learn the language of the host country and assessing their developing proficiency can aid their integration in the host society.

However, while language competences are an important component of integration, they cannot be a pre-condition for integration, since acquiring a language is potentially a lifelong process.

For some years, the Council of Europe has offered its member States not only clear and agreed principles and guidelines but also targeted practical support to help them respond to the challenges of linguistic integration.

As a first step towards compiling an inter-disciplinary inventory of relevant research findings, in order to better understand how research can support the development of policy and practice in this field, the Council of Europe organised a symposium on "The linguistic integration of adult migrants: lessons from research" in Strasbourg on 30 March – 1 April 2016. This publication offers documented results of research presented during the symposium by researchers and practitioners from a wide range of contexts and disciplines.

It is anticipated that relevant Ministries in Council of Europe member States will be able to use these findings to inform their decisions concerning the linguistic integration of adult migrants.

Language Policy Programme
Education Policy Division / Education Department
Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation
Directorate General Democracy
Council of Europe, Strasbourg
www.coe.int/lang-migrants