



IO1: INTERACTIVE MAP OF LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES AND SKILLS

Outcomes of the roundtable with stakeholders on language diversity in Cyprus



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Introduction:

This document is a summary of a roundtable with stakeholders, held in April/May 2020, on the linguistic diversity in the partner countries of the TANDEM project. For more information about the project, please consult the project's website: www.teachyourlanguage.eu.

Who participates to the roundtable (Short description & Profession)?

1. Female, PhD Candidate-Researcher in Instructional Technology in the University of Cyprus, 6 years of experience in teaching Greek as a foreign language (designing and implementation)
2. Female, Greek philologist, Officer in Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus the last 6 years, experience in teaching Greek to migrants, experience in designing material and organizing workshops for teachers working with migrants
3. Female, social worker, specialization in people with senile dementia and Alzheimer, experience in teaching Greek as a foreign language to adults and minors
4. Female, retired social worker in the field of local government, with experience in immersion programs for migrants and in teaching Greek to migrants. Experience in design and implementation of social activities on the questions of xenophobia, labour relations, and counselling. She is also external partner-supervisor for the traineeship programs of master students in universities in Cyprus.

Round table topics

Main trends: National and Local (or regional) level

All participants agree that the flow of migrants coming to Cyprus is high. The main migrant groups are from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and different European countries. The main reasons that migrants come to Cyprus are for work opportunities, education (study at Universities/colleges) and to seek asylum.

The main languages spoken by migrants are English, Arabic (and its different dialects), Vietnamese, Tagalog (Philippines), Romanian, Bulgarian, French.

All participants agree that in general the educational level of migrants ranges between low, high and very high. They pointed out that there has been an increase of qualified and over-qualified migrants during the past few years. Yet, most of these migrants, especially the ones who are asylum seekers and have not been approved for permanent stay in Cyprus, cannot practice their degree/profession due to local restrictions.

Regarding the level of locals who speak a second language, all participants mentioned that the first foreign language that almost all Cypriots speak is English.

Younger people in particular tend to have a more advanced knowledge of English. This is explained if we take into consideration the fact that Cyprus was a British colony. Other foreign languages commonly spoken by Cypriots are French, Spanish, Italian, Turkish and there is a growing tendency into learning Russian.

Language Learning opportunities for migrants and Low Qualified Adults

Participants agreed that the language that would be useful for migrants to learn is Greek, and it is a very important prerequisite if they want to be employed in Cyprus. There are various programmes that offer Greek lessons to migrants and foreigners.

Regarding foreigners, the school of Greek language at the University of Cyprus specifically offers Greek courses for Erasmus students. As far as migrants are concerned, there is another programme called "I can learn Greek" organised by the Cyprus Labour Institute – PEO in collaboration with the University of Cyprus which provides Greek lessons to third country nationals. Another programme that offers Greek language courses to migrants are training centres held by the Ministry of Education.

Regarding the offer of language courses to migrants, some issues have been raised by the participants; there is a lack of local transportation at the time when the courses occur so migrants might not have a way to physically access the courses whereas another important issue is that migrants have limited access to information in general, so they might not even know the existence of the courses in the first place. Another limitation mentioned is that language classes run for a specific period of time with a limited amount of students and if the number of students is very small, the whole course is cancelled.

For locals, there are many language learning opportunities offered by training centres of the Ministry of Education, where they offer many European languages (Swedish, German) and non-European languages (Russian, Turkey) with a small registration fee.

Digital skills and language learning

Digital skills are essential to language learning. Participants agreed that having good digital skills allows you to be creative, imaginative and interactive when it comes to language teaching and learning. Nevertheless, human contact and face to face communication are still vital for language teaching so a combination of "traditional" and digital teaching methods is the ideal way.

Intercultural skills and language learning

All participants agree that language teaching can enhance intercultural skills because they are interconnected. In order to teach a new language you need to be open-minded, respect other people's culture and create a safe learning environment for the learners. It is essential that learners feel included, respected and comfortable within the learning environment.

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