



EQUAL = LANGUAGE

Manual  
on Second Language Training  
with Asylum Seekers  
and Refugees



EUROPÄISCHE UNION  
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EQUAL

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The EQUAL Community Initiative is one of the few European programmes which support the development of asylum seekers' socio-economic rights. New methods, concepts and products created by EQUAL projects and transnational partnerships facilitate the integration and reintegration of asylum seekers. Instead of being held in an extended state of unproductive limbo, asylum seekers can be given the opportunity to get involved in meaningful and competence raising activities. This would be an important step in the direction towards providing a *dignified standard of living* in accordance with the EU Community Directive on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

Transnational co-operation under EQUAL is especially important in the field of asylum reception. Harmonization of Member States' asylum reception systems began as early as 1999 at the European Council meeting in Tampere, Finland. Work on developing a European asylum policy is currently in an important phase with the launch in June, 2007 of the EU Commission's *Green Paper on a Common European Asylum System* and with a pending revision of the Reception Directive in 2008. EQUAL results and experiences are therefore proving directly relevant to the future system of asylum reception in Member States.

The transnational partnership *AwareNet - Working for social inclusion in Europe* includes projects in Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and Germany. One of their objectives is to produce a number of European manuals for working with integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The manual you have in your hand, which is for teachers, administrators and decision makers working with, or responsible for, language training for asylum seekers and refugees, is an excellent example of a successful product springing from a transnational partnership under EQUAL.

The manual makes clear that neither national legislation nor existing systems for language training meet the standards one should expect in providing asylum seekers with meaningful activity during their waiting period. The provision of language training for asylum seekers is only very rudimentary in many Member States.

The above mentioned Reception Directive also has many shortcomings. Nowhere in the Directive's 28 articles is it stipulated that asylum seekers have the right to receive training in the language of the host country during their waiting period. This is remarkable, to say the least, and has been conveyed to the EU Commission in response to its launch of the *Green Paper on a Common European Asylum System*.

In their manual, the *AwareNet* transnational partnership provides a number of convincing arguments calling for adapted language training for asylum seekers to be an integral and obligatory element of European Member States' asylum reception systems. Thus, the right for asylum seekers to receive training in the host country's language must be included in the revised Reception Directive.

Christian Råbergh

Chair of the European Thematic Group on Asylum Seekers (ETG V) in the  
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Europe is currently host to some 4.8 million refugees who are seeking to escape political persecution in their home countries, to live free of fear and to establish a new livelihood for themselves. But even after they have succeeded in getting to “Fortress Europe”, they are subject to a great many restrictions and separate treatment in the member states. Asylum seekers and refugees are not included in participation in society, and their skills and potentials are not valued, but rather they are subject to a range of mechanisms of social exclusion. The major problems are that most have insecure legal status, many are accommodated in isolation from the population, many are subject to the constant threat of deportation to their countries of origin, and some are even forced to live in illegality – all this makes it impossible for asylum seekers and refugees living in Europe to plan their lives and develop perspectives.

The language of the host country – their second language – is generally regarded as the key to vocational and hence social integration. But as long as the majority of EU countries have no policy of integration of asylum seekers with unsecured residence status, together with access to language courses and vocational training, there will be no progress in this direction in the public debate.

That is reflected at a number of different levels – normally no public funding is provided for language teaching for this target group; in some cases, asylum seekers and refugees have no access to free-of-charge state-run integration programmes, and are exclusively dependent on commercial or voluntary programmes.

In addition, conventional concepts of second-language teaching give practically no consideration to the life situation of asylum seekers and refugees, which is characterised by various legal restrictions, by a range of different educational backgrounds, and in many cases by traumatic experiences during their flight. That is also reflected in the preparation of teaching materials and textbooks – teachers repeatedly find that the conventional concepts and materials are not relevant to the life reality of their students, and the same applies to the references to everyday life included in the textbooks, and to the standardised test procedures.

This is the context in which this Manual for Second-Language Teaching for Refugees was prepared, in the framework of the Transnational Development Partnership “AwareNet – Working for social inclusion in Europe”, as part of the EQUAL programme (a Transnational Cooperation Partnership). This process involved colleagues from the four Development Partnerships from Italy, Ireland, Slovenia and Germany, who are cooperating in language education work with asylum seekers, and have put together tried-and-tested teaching concepts as examples of second-language training which is appropriate to the life situations and needs of asylum seekers, for the purpose of European transfer.

This Manual is aimed firstly at teachers who are working in second-language teaching programmes with asylum seekers and refugees, and want help in their everyday teaching activities and in the selection and preparation of materials. It also addresses policy makers concerned with planning, design and funding of course programmes, preparation of teaching materials and textbooks, and evaluation methods. One of the key concerns of this Manual is to broaden their viewpoints to include factors relevant to refugees and asylum seekers.

### Content of the Manual:

Chapter 1 deals with the Comparative Policy Framework, to give better understanding of the situation in education and second-language teaching, explaining the different legal contexts for acceptance of refugees in the four partner countries, comparing them by means of a matrix (status 07/2007). The changes in the legal framework which are in preparation in Slovenia and Italy were not completed by the final date for going to press, so unfortunately it was not possible to include these in the overview.

Chapter 2 examines the variety of life situations of asylum seekers and refugees, giving rise to the need for language teaching which takes account of their needs and also of the social marginalisation of this target group.

Section 3.1 addresses the organisational and institutional framework conditions for second-language teaching in the partner countries. The next Section (3.2.1) then gives critical consideration to the use of standard textbooks, and gives recommendations for the use of teaching materials.

The following Sections (3.2.2 to 3.2.5) give good-practice examples of teaching units in the fields of First orientation, Pre-qualification, Language training and Vocational training, Reintegration and IT introduction. The purpose of these contributions is to raise the awareness of teachers for the specific needs of their learning groups, to get them to reflect on their own teaching practice in a transfer process, and to give suggestions for ways of designing their own teaching.

Section 3.3 examines specific fields of action and target groups for second-language teaching with refugees, and the resulting requirements for teaching procedures. Traumatism is a particularly relevant issue for work with refugees.

Finally, the Recommendations chapter (4.) gives ideas for integrational education work with this target group, including consideration of the ongoing harmonisation of standards for the acceptance of refugees.

We trust that this Manual will give factual stimuli for educational work with refugees, and look forward to feedback and further suggestions.

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# EQUAL LANGUAGE MANUAL ON SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

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	GERMANY	ITALY
<b>Asylum Seeker (AS) and Refugee (R) Numbers</b>	<p>In 2006 <b>21.000 AS</b> arrived in Germany, (including about 25% new-born children of AS). <b>30.759</b> asylum claims have been examined by the Federal Office for migration and asylum seekers and refugees in 2004. <b>251</b> cases (0,8%) have been recognised according to German Constitutional Law –a historical low; <b>1.097</b> cases (3,6%) according to Geneva Convention, <b>603</b> cases (1,9 %) given leave to remain for humanitarian circumstances, 17.781 (57,8%) rejections.</p> <p>Total number of <i>de facto</i> asylum seekers and refugees in 2003: <b>416.000</b>.</p> <p>Total number of Geneva Convention Refugees in 2003: <b>75.000</b>.</p>	<p>According to the Ministry of the Interior, <b>10.348</b> asylum claims have been examined by the 7 Territorial Commissions in 2006. In <b>3.681</b> cases the refugee status has been rejected; <b>878</b> asylum claims were accepted; <b>4.338</b> persons have received a residence permit on humanitarian grounds; <b>1.088</b> were still waiting to be examined at the end of 2006; <b>363</b> were either unavailable or waiting for a revision of their asylum claim.</p> <p>Up to April 2005, before the Law on immigration (189/2002) was fully enforced, <b>4.200</b> asylum claims were examined. In <b>2.480</b> cases the refugee status was denied. <b>416</b> asylum claims were accepted whereas <b>851</b> persons received the residence permit on humanitarian grounds.</p>

IRELAND	SLOVENIA	
<p>In 2006, a total of <b>4.314</b> new asylum applications were received by Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) - there were <b>4.323</b> in 2005. The top-5 countries of origin in asylum applications in 2006 were Nigeria, Sudan, Romania, Iraq and Iran.</p> <p>In total, <b>648</b> persons were recognised as refugees (<b>397</b> after the first interview and <b>251</b> at appeal).</p> <p>Ireland does not have a legislated system of complimentary protection, but this can be granted on a discretionary basis by the Minister for Justice. In 2006, <b>212</b> persons were granted leave to remain in Ireland.</p>	<p>In 2006 <b>579</b> asylum applications were filed. Before the procedure ended, <b>523</b> AS left the country. Refugee status got <b>1</b> person, <b>8</b> of them received subsidiary protection.</p> <p>In 2005, <b>1.674</b> persons lodged the asylum application at the Ministry of Interior (82% of men and 18% of women). Altogether there were <b>1.848</b> applications to be processed in 2005.</p> <p><b>1.120</b> (67%) asylum seekers and refugees left the Asylum centre before the end of the procedure, therefore these procedures were closed.</p> <p>90.8% of examined applications were rejected.</p> <p><b>26</b> persons were recognised a refugee status, which means 3.5% of examined applications.</p> <p>Main AS countries of origin are: Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Turkey.</p> <p>At the end of 2005 there were altogether <b>122</b> recognised asylum seekers and refugees living in Slovenia: <b>53</b> due to the Geneva Convention and <b>69</b> on humanitarian grounds.</p>	<p><b>Asylum Seeker (AS) and Refugee (R) Numbers</b></p>

	<b>GERMANY</b>	<b>ITALY</b>
<b>Asylum Procedure</b>	<p>Only a few AS submit their asylum applications at the borders. The entry is refused when the AS enters from “a safe third country”. Most enter Germany on an illegal basis or with a valid visa and apply for asylum within the country. AS are referred to a particular reception centre in accordance to the centralised distribution procedure. All applicants are interviewed individually. Most of the decisions are made within the first 6 months. The Federal Office may reach one of the following decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The recognition as a victim of political persecution (German Constitutional Law)</li> <li>- Refuse to grant refugee status but instead grant refugee status protection against deportation in accordance with the Geneva Convention.</li> <li>- Residence permit on humanitarian grounds for AS who are facing the risk of torture, death penalty or any violation of rights according to EU-Convention and aliens act.</li> <li>- Refusal of any right to remain, the applicant will be ordered to leave the country within one month.</li> </ul> <p>Negative decisions can be appealed. The success rate is about 8%.</p> <p>The new Immigration Act (01.01.2005) recognises non-governmental persecution and gender discrimination, but according to the NGO <i>Pro Asyl</i>, the Act's humanitarian goals have been missed almost completely. For the people concerned this means that they still do not have a safe prospect in Germany and must face deportation after five, ten or more years of sojourn.</p> <p>According to the new regulation of the Right of Stay (Bleiberecht) AS and long-term tolerated applicants are eligible for a residence permit, in case they fulfil the following criteria: six (families with children) to eight (single, married couple without children) years of sojourn, “sufficient housing” (that means 12 square metres living space for each person), a long-term job. Residence permit will be given as a trial until December 2009, prolongation will be given only, when the applicant can earn his living.</p>	<p>There is no specific Italian framework law on asylum. The asylum application can be made on arrival in Italy, by applying to border Police. If AS are already within the country, they can submit an application to the Foreigners Office at the local Police Station where they ask for a hearing at the Local Commission in charge of the recognition of the refugee status. Illegal migrants are normally held in the Identification Centers where they can submit the asylum application. According to the Immigration Law AS will be called for the interview within 30 days. The Local Commission may reach one of these decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The recognition of refugee status.</li> <li>- Rejection of application but a recommendation to the Police headquarters (Questura) to submit a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.</li> <li>- Refuse of application. In this case, the AS can firstly make the request for a revision of the decision to the Local Commission integrated with a member of the National Commission and then, if the revision is negative, the AS can appeals to the local courts.</li> </ul> <p>Appealing to the local courts doesn't necessarily mean that expulsion measures are suspended.</p>

IRELAND	SLOVENIA	
<p>The Refugee Act 1996 is the principal piece of domestic legislation dealing with asylum seekers and refugees. The Act incorporated the 1951 Geneva Convention into domestic law, set out a framework for the determination of asylum applications and provided for the establishment of ORAC as well as the Office of Refugee Appeals Tribunal (ORAT). The Act has been amended on three occasions since then the Immigration Act 1999, the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000 and the Immigration Act 2003. Almost 90% of asylum applicants apply at the ORAC, with the remainder applying at ports of entry, which means the majority come in on valid visas or are smuggled or trafficked into the country. The asylum process is mainly divided into 2 major sections: the first stage (ORAC) and second, the appeal stage (ORAT). Asylum applicants are interviewed in person and are provided with legal advice from the Refugee Legal Service. An applicant is either recognised as a refugee or turned down. Once an applicant has failed at appeal they are given 3 options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply to the Minister for Justice for leave to remain (which is discretionary and not legislated);</li> <li>- leave voluntarily;</li> <li>- or be deported.</li> </ul> <p>New legislation enacted in 2006 introduced complimentary protection though statistics are not yet available.</p>	<p>The Asylum Act was adopted in 1999 and has since then been amended 4 times. The last change came into force on 4th of March 2006.</p> <p>Slovenia is now in a procedure of adopting a new Asylum Act. There were several objections on the proposed Act from NGOs. In July 2007 there were still no new information regarding the new Act.</p> <p>The Act 2006 brought great changes to the Slovenian asylum legislation and practice as it seriously lowers the current asylum standards in Slovenia. One of the major changes of serious concern in the asylum procedure is the undefined “pre-asylum” procedure, which will be carried out by police authorities. The applicant firstly has to hand over a statement on the reasons for the asylum application to the police authorities. If the police find the reasons to be unsatisfactory it will deny access to the asylum procedure and the applicant shall be deported. There are no procedural guarantees for the applicant, no right to an efficient legal remedy and the constitutional right to asylum is also breached as the applicant will not have the possibility to lodge an application in formal proceedings at the department for asylum of the Ministry of Interior. Furthermore the Act does not contain any procedural safeguards which the police will follow while examining the asylum application, which increases the possibility of deportation of people in need of international protection. According to the law, asylum applicants can be lodged in the Asylum Centre; persons waiting to lodge their applications are transferred there by the police. If the Ministry of Interior issues a negative decision an appeal can be made at the Administrative Court. If the decision by the Ministry was made through the accelerated procedure the time limit for the appeal is 3 days, while the time limit for regular procedures is 15 days.</p> <p>The negative decision of the Administrative court can also be challenged at the Supreme Court within 15 days. However, if the Supreme court’s decision is also negative the rejected asylum seekers and refugees are usually give a 3 day time limit to leave the country voluntarily; otherwise they are taken to the Center for illegal migrants where they await deportation.</p>	<p><b>Asylum Procedure</b></p>

	<b>GERMANY</b>	<b>ITALY</b>
<b>Welfare Benefits/ Accommodation</b>	<p>AS have to stay in reception centres (community housing) without allowance to leave the district. Meals are provided, clothing in emergencies. After 3 months, the AS normally move into an asylum centre, distributed on the basis of current population. Living there is compulsory. Recognised asylum seekers and refugees and Geneva Convention asylum seekers and refugees have access to private housing on the same terms as German nationals.</p>	<p>The Immigration Law (189/2002) set up and provides funding for a Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), a national wide network of around 100 municipalities that coordinate local projects for AS&amp;Rs accommodation, integration and assistance. The “Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees” in 2006, gave some kind of assistance to approximately 7.030 persons, 5.347 of which were accommodated within a local project. The Protection System offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reception and assistance for AS.</li> <li>- Support to social and economic integration for asylum seekers and refugees.</li> <li>- Information and assistance in following the recognition of asylum seekers and refugees status procedures.</li> <li>- Orientation and assistance to voluntary repatriation.</li> </ul>
<b>Income Support</b>	<p>During the first three months in reception centres AS receives monthly allowances of 41€ per person, 20€ per child, food and clothes are provided.</p> <p>Afterwards in some “Länder” AS receive 75% of the welfare benefit of a German citizen, in other parts they will receive only above mentioned allowances plus food and clothes. After 3 years, AS are entitled to the same social benefits as nationals.</p> <p>Recognised refugees and Geneva Convention refugees and holders of a residence permit on humanitarian grounds are entitled to the same benefits as nationals.</p>	<p>For AS, a daily cash benefit of €27 is provided for 35 days. Asylum seekers and refugees are entitled to the same social benefits as the Italian citizens although family support is very difficult to be obtained.</p>

IRELAND	SLOVENIA	
<p>AS are housed in reception centres in Dublin for an initial 2 week period, before being dispersed to direct provision centres across the country. At the end of 2006 were just under 6.000 persons in the Reception and Integration Agency's accommodation centres, though the numbers are expected to fall. They are provided with full room and board i.e. 3 meals a day. It is not compulsory to stay in the centres, but anyone opting out does not receive financial assistance from the state. Since recognised refugees have the same rights as Irish citizens, they are free to access private and social housing.</p>	<p>There is only one Asylum Centre in Slovenia, located in Ljubljana, where 203 persons can be accommodated. In June 2007 there were 94 people living in AC of which 89 were asylum seekers. 53 asylum seekers are living out of the Center. 133 asylum applications were filed till June, 43 cases (regarding 76 people) are still unsolved.</p> <p>AS are provided with 3 meals and clothes from humanitarian donations. Recognised asylum seekers and refugees have almost the same rights as Slovenian citizens. They don't have access to social housing but they can live in the accommodation centres of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the first 3 years. As integration measures are not developed, asylum seekers and refugees face serious subsistence problems in the first 2 years.</p>	<p><b>Welfare Benefits/ Accommodation</b></p>
<p>AS receive €76.40 per month (€19.10 per week) per adult and €38.40 per child per month throughout the asylum process, as long as they are in the direct provision centres. Those who choose to live outside the centres have no access to these payments. Recognised refugees have the same access to social benefits as Irish citizens.</p>	<p>The 2006 Act on Asylum abolished the pocket money for AS. The amount in the past Act on Asylum was anyway incomprehensibly low: € 7 per month. AS have no right to receive any financial assistance from the state. Recognised asylum seekers and refugees have the same access to social benefits as Slovenian citizens. Asylum seekers and refugees living in private accommodation have the right to receive financial allowance in the first 3 years.</p>	<p><b>Income Support</b></p>

	<b>GERMANY</b>	<b>ITALY</b>
<b>Education/ Training</b>	<p>In most “Länder” children of AS have the right to attend school until the age of 18. In practice, it depends on the goodwill, interest and resources of the local schools. There are no language programmes for AS, unless NGOs organise classes. AS have no access to training programmes by the national employment office.</p> <p>No restrictions to attend university, but also no financial support.</p> <p>Recognised refugees and Geneva Convention refugees as well as holders of residence permit on humanitarian grounds have the right to attend “integration-courses” for 630 hours according to the new immigration act.</p> <p>Access to vocational training same as nationals.</p>	<p>AS Infants and children under the age of 16 have the right to schooling and are required to attend.</p> <p>AS above the age of 16 have no right to attend public school or University, yet directors of secondary schools can decide to receive AS in class.</p> <p>AS have access to Italian language courses for adults financed by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>According to the Decree Law n.140 (2005) AS have access to vocational training.</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees are treated as Italian citizens but there are many problems with the accreditation of prior learning (APL).</p>
<b>Work</b>	<p>AS are not allowed to work during the first year. Afterwards a work permit according to the “rule of last priority” can be given. Germans or foreigners with permanent stay will be preferred. Available jobs are mostly unskilled and poorly paid.</p> <p>No restrictions for recognised asylum seekers and refugees and Geneva Convention refugees.</p>	<p>According to the Decree Law n.140 (May 2005) AS can work if there is no response after 6 months from the submission of the asylum application and the AS is not responsible for the delay.</p> <p>Foreigners holding a residence permit on humanitarian grounds have the right to work, but the annual renewal of the residence permit and the difficulty to turn it into a residence permit for work interferes with their integration.</p> <p>Refugees can work and they are treated same as Italian citizens.</p>

IRELAND	SLOVENIA	
<p>AS have a right to education up to the age of 18. Strictly speaking they are not barred from attending college/university, however they are not financially supported by the state and have to pay very high international fees. AS are provided English language lessons by various agencies, support groups and NGOs.</p> <p>Recognised refugees have the right to attend university and if they meet the residency requirements, can qualify for the same fees as Irish students. Generally, they also have the same access to education and training across the board.</p>	<p>AS under the age of 15 have the right to schooling and are required to attend. AS above the age of 15 have no right to attend public school or university, yet directors of secondary schools can decide to receive AS in class.</p> <p>AS can learn Slovenian language in classes organised by NGOs.</p> <p>They don't have access to vocational training.</p> <p>Recognised asylum seekers and refugees have the same rights as Slovenian citizens regarding education.</p> <p>Recognised asylum seekers and refugees can attend Slovene language classes of 300 hours, financed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.</p> <p>There is an article in the Act on Education stating that each university program should assure 5% of places to foreigners.</p>	<p><b>Education/ Training</b></p>
<p>Apart from a one-off conditional decision in 1999 granting access to employment for over 3,000 AS, they are not entitled to work in Ireland pending a successful decision on their asylum application. This policy has been reinforced by the fact that Ireland is one of two EU member states that have not signed up to the Reception Directive, whose article 11 deals with access to employment for AS.</p> <p>Refugees and those granted leave to remain have the right to employment.</p>	<p>AS, according to the new Act on Asylum, can obtain the working permit after one year in the asylum procedure if they are not responsible for the delay.</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees have the right to work as any Slovenian citizen.</p>	<p><b>Work</b></p>

	<b>GERMANY</b>	<b>ITALY</b>
<b>Legal Aid</b>	AS are not entitled to free legal aid during the first instance procedure. During the second instance, free legal aid is only granted to those whose case is deemed to have prospects of success.	AS can make a request for free legal aid in order to present an appeal against the Commission's refusal. Free legal aid can be obtained through a rather complex procedure at the Civil Tribunal. It is necessary to have a lawyer to present an appeal against the forewarning to leave the country or the order of expulsion. Associations dealing with asylum seekers and refugees or foreigners, offer free legal aid.
<b>Health</b>	The access to medical treatment during the first 36 months is restricted to cases of serious illness or acute pain. After this period, AS may have the same access to health services as German nationals if they fulfill certain conditions. Asylum seekers and refugees entitled to same benefits as nationals.	AS are entitled to benefit from the Public Health Service, even if they are appealing a refusal by the Central Commission.
<b>Funding for Programming with AS&amp;Rs</b>	The majority of funds come from the national government and Länder government. Some programmes run by NGOs are partly financed by European fund.	The majority of funds come from Central Government partially from the European Refugee Fund (ERF).  All these funds have been allocated to the National "Protection System for Asylum seekers and refugees" for accommodation, housing, legal and social assistance and integration measures implemented by local authorities.  Other funding may come from private or European sources (e.g. EQUAL) for integration projects and for victims of torture, legal advice, measures against exclusion, cultural initiatives (EU and UN funds).

IRELAND	SLOVENIA	
<p>The Refugee Legal Service (RLS) provides a low-cost (cost ranges from €6 to €35) independent and confidential legal services to asylum seekers and refugees. The RLS can provide advice to applicants before submission of the questionnaire or prior to attendance at interview and can also make written submissions to ORAC in support of an application. The RLS can also provide representation before the RAT.</p>	<p>The old Asylum Act guaranteed free legal aid given to asylum seekers and refugees by refugee counsellors on all levels of the procedure. The Act amending the current Asylum Act abolished free legal aid in first instance; consequently asylum seekers and refugees are only beneficiaries of free legal aid on appeal. Free legal aid in first instance will be provided by NGOs, but there is no funding for this purposes available yet.</p>	<p><b>Legal Aid</b></p>
<p>AS are entitled to the following health services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a medical card for free general practitioner services;</li> <li>- an exceptional needs payments through the social welfare system;</li> <li>- voluntary medical screening and other specialised services;</li> <li>- a free professional clinical and counselling service that focuses on the psychological needs of individual AS and refugees. In particular, the Service offers therapy and counselling suited to the individual's needs and will facilitate the individual's referral to other health professionals and support agencies.</li> </ul>	<p>AS have the right on urgent medical assistance but on therapy. Recognised asylum seekers and refugees have the same benefits as nationals.</p>	<p><b>Health</b></p>
<p>Funding mainly comes from the state and the European Refugee Fund. NGOs and support groups are mainly funded by philanthropic foundations.</p>	<p>From 1992, after the independence of Slovenia, projects were funded mainly by UNHCR that is leaving Slovenia at the end of May 2006. In 2005 the first ERF was available. There are some funding possibilities at the Ministry of Social Affairs (like EQUAL) and at the Embassies where some small projects can be funded.</p>	<p><b>Funding for Programming with AS&amp;Rs</b></p>

## 2. Diversity of the target group:

### Diversity of life situations and tailor-made language training

Asylum seekers and refugees form social groups that live in the various member states of the European Union, under similar conditions in terms of their access to work and vocational training, healthcare, social benefits and political rights. This comparable life situation can be used to design language courses which are specifically related to the everyday problems of asylum seekers and refugees. *Target group specific* language training of this kind addresses participants who have normally not learnt the language of the host country in their country of origin, so that they are beginners in acquiring this second language. It is extremely important for the asylum seekers and refugees to learn this new language, to give them a basis for building up their livelihood in the host society. On the other hand, it is not always evident, at least during the asylum application procedure, why they should make an effort with the new language if they are constantly at risk of deportation to their country of origin – so their high level of motivation to learn may be dampened by discouragement and self-doubts. Many asylum seekers and refugees are living in an isolated situation, which means that for a long time it is hard for them to make contacts with neighbours in the surrounding areas, or with clubs or associations, so there is little to help them in acquiring the second language in everyday life. Many of them also find learning difficult at first, because they have to get used to a learning situation again, and to re-acquire strategies for learning. Some may also have learning problems because they are still suffering from traumatisation.

So although the conditions of life are similar within the target group, the term “refugee” may cover a very wide range of biographies and personal situations, educational careers and learning needs, experience backgrounds, and aims for the future. These individual conditions cannot simply be ignored in the design of language courses— group specific approaches are needed with individualising aspects, to make them match the needs of learners. Such *needs-oriented* approaches are characterised as follows:

- They are *learner-oriented*, i.e. it is essential to ensure that the language teaching is oriented towards the needs of those who want to learn the language;
- They are relatively *open* in design, so that they can respond to the individual needs and starting positions of participants;
- They are *easy-access*, so that they can also enable disadvantaged people and those who are not accustomed to learning a chance to participate;
- They are *flexible*, so that they can take due account of heterogeneous life situations of the target groups.

### *Two dimensions of “diversity”*

Recognition of social and cultural differences is often associated with the term “diversity” in the current social and educational debate. The connotations of “diversity” are also useful in design of language training for asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, a distinction has to be made between two aspects in the meaning of this word:

- On the one hand, “diversity” describes the different life situations, individual specifics and range of potentials, and the cultural origins and traditions,

which characterise people. In this context, the word expresses the simple insight that people differ from one another in a wide range of characteristics – gender and skin colour, cultural and religious orientation, belonging to age groups and generations, cognitive, physical and mental dispositions, and sexual preferences. This *horizontal dimension* puts the emphasis on the exciting, creative and innovative aspects. What makes multi-cultural learning groups so stimulating is that the encounters between people with such differences can give rise to lively learning processes.

- On the other hand, “diversity” also refers to social inequality, cultural exclusion, and refusal of political equality and equality before the law. This *vertical dimension* emphasises the fact that “differences” are used in the structuring of hierarchies in society. Asylum seekers and refugees are subject to “multiple” discrimination compared with those belonging to immigrant society. Thus social, cultural and language differences are often interlinked, with a range of negative effects – and the exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees is particularly severe. Such wide ranging inequalities make it more difficult to design “appropriate” language courses, because the learning potentials of the target group are restricted by insecurity in their financial conditions, by cramped living situations, inadequate health care, lack of social contact, etc.

Very high standards are required to design language courses for asylum seekers and refugees with systematic recognition of “diversity”– it involves not only adapting the language teaching technique to the individual learning conditions and the specific linguistic level of the participants, but also taking account of the greater difficulties of this target group in access to learning and education, and their social exclusion. A language course with awareness of “diversity” uses the cultural heterogeneity of the group, but at the same time takes account of possible differences in learning needs and learning problems of men and women, children, young people and adults, and of social differences and disabilities.

### *Language training designed for diversity*

The development of gender, culture, age and disability sensitive language courses for asylum seekers and refugees has an impact on choice of subjects and methods, and sets special organisational requirements.

### *Content and subjects*

As all asylum seekers and refugees have certain aspects of their life situation in common, they *all* have a need for certain communicative skills to handle these everyday requirements – going shopping, using public transport, making phone calls, going to council offices to sort out administrative matters, using healthcare services, coping with the asylum application procedure, finding work, etc. The language requirements of such everyday situations can be used to develop thematic curricula, to focus language training on coping very specifically with the kind of problems and needs that asylum seekers and refugees have to deal with in everyday life. At the same time, the differences in life situation and learning needs within the overall group of asylum seekers and refugees mean that there are very specific language contents that are relevant only for individual participants:

- *Parents of young children* may need language skills aimed at questions of upbringing and education. They urgently need to acquire the basic vocabulary needed to communicate with teachers at kindergarten and school. They also need information on the structure of the educational system in the host country, and on the expectations that the educational facilities have vis-à-vis parents, and on ways of getting support and advice in educational matters. Refugee parents can be encouraged by the language course to attend parent-teacher meetings, school open days, etc., and thus to play an active part in building up relations with the educational institutions.
- *Women* may find it motivating to work together on compiling a *asylum seekers and refugees' cookery book*, presenting traditional recipes from their countries of origin and describing various national festivals and festivities, and also giving information on the political backgrounds and reasons for flight from their home countries. Other women are more interested in working on a *European dictionary*, explaining key concepts from everyday political and social life in the European Union in a way that is also comprehensible to less educated women, thus giving them fundamental access to information and participation in political life.
- *Coping with racist behaviour* is an important skill for asylum seekers and refugees in most European countries. Intercultural language training can be useful, giving them resources for *verbal self-defence* and practising appropriate strategies, such as how to defend themselves if treated in an unfriendly or contemptuous way at the supermarket, on a train or at an administrative office; what to say and do if someone insults them, jostles them or spits at them in the street or in the school playground; how to behave in the event of an identity card check; what to do if they do not have their papers with them; what verbal strategies they can use in their second language to claim their rights in a polite and friendly way, and yet with resolution and self-confidence.

Such examples show how much course concepts differ in terms of contents and subjects, if they are aimed at the life realities of asylum seekers and refugees, not only in abstract form, but taking seriously the variety of learning needs and learning occasions which are relevant for the asylum seekers and refugees.

### *Methodology*

Language courses for asylum seekers and refugees may also have to take new methodological directions to make them appropriate to their target group, as has been demonstrated in numerous model projects. Participants may suffer from learning impairments, due to physical disability, health problems and mental disorders resulting from war, torture and flight, and also from living under very difficult conditions in their country of origin. Such conditions make it advisable to focus the courses on problem areas:

- *Physical exercise* may be a priority for some asylum seekers and refugees, to enable them to participate regularly in language courses. Many suffer from headaches, migraine or physical tensions due to lack of physical exercise (going for walks, swimming, etc.). The course concept may therefore link language training with *health promotion activities*, and it may be useful for a language teacher and a physiotherapist to conduct the course jointly. The contents should focus on health

issues, and the course should also include physical exercises and gymnastics. That frees up the mind for learning.

- *Healthcare* is a key aspect to many asylum seekers and refugees. They may have totally inadequate provisions in their asylum-seeker accommodation, many may be suffering from chronic diseases, and their living conditions are often such as to 'make them ill'. It is therefore advisable to link their language courses with issues of *basic healthcare*, for example in cooperation with nursing staff having the same mother tongue. This should answer questions such as what medical supplies should they keep in readiness at home? What is the right way to take their temperature with a thermometer, or to take their own pulse? Multicultural learning groups often know about a wide range of methods from ethnic medicine, such as treatment of colds, sore throats, stomach complaints and headaches. It could be a useful course project to put together a health manual with such 'home cures'. And a basic introduction to the structure of the health system is also advisable, e.g. how to find a doctor; overview of help given by medical advice offices and out-patient departments; preparations needed for a stay in hospital.

- *Sex education* is a no-go area in most language courses. Language teaching tends to ignore intercultural and gender mainstreaming approaches. But it is possible to devise appropriate concepts, giving the linguistic means for talking about contraceptives and AIDS prevention, by working in cooperation with local counselling agencies, which can often provide suitable bilingual brochures and materials. This is all the more important as asylum seekers and refugees, especially younger asylum seekers and refugees, are very much at risk from drug taking in collective reception centres, refugee camps, hotels and accommodation containers, and may also be at risk from prostitution. There is no place for the middle-class morality of conventional language courses— indeed it would be cynical.

- *Traumatisation victims* can be helped by linking language teaching with therapeutic programmes. That gives psychosocial stabilisation, while teaching the appropriate linguistic skills. *Art therapy*, for example, has proved to be a valuable approach, offering men and women aesthetic forms of communication and expression, and enabling them to "give voice to" their fears and problems in a non-verbal manner. *Theatre and play therapy* programmes have proved useful with younger asylum seekers and refugees. *Writing workshops* are a creative way of gaining access, for example getting victims to write stories or poems on issues that are subjectively important to them, and training linguistic skills in conjunction with biographical self-reflection.

- *Disabilities* of many kinds are common among asylum seekers and refugees, and pose a challenge in course planning. Asylum seekers and refugees are likely to have physical disabilities resulting from war or torture; many of them need a wheelchair or are dependent on orthopaedic aids. The institutions where language courses are held are mostly not designed for barrier-free access for people with physical disabilities. There is a lack of special courses for the blind, enabling them to acquire the second language with appropriate materials and technical aids. There is practically no provision for training in sign language and other systems of supported communication. Where learners have disabilities of this kind, it is advisable for language teachers to work in cooperation with staff trained for work in special schools, or with specialist institutions.

## Organisation

Design of language courses to meet the specific needs of the target group requires appropriate organisation.

- *Time organisation* is important, especially for women, who often need part-time courses to enable them to attend while still coping their everyday duties (looking after children, meeting lawyers, etc.). The times of the courses should fit in with public transport timetables, to keep their travelling cost down. There should be childcare arrangements. It may also be useful to hold the language courses in the schools where the participants' children are taught; that gives the mothers a chance to get some first-hand experience of the school situation of their children.
- *Context organisation* is essential, remembering that language courses are just a part of the educational programmes, and need to be seen as part of the overall situation. Tools for managing the overall situation of clients include skill inventories, portfolios, counselling records and personal profiles. Education and training can then be designed to fit in with their personal situation. It is hard for asylum seekers and refugees (and for others!) to grasp the complicated organisation and structure of linguistic, school and vocational education and qualification, social support and counselling, especially in the big cities. *Information* (brochures, website) and *counselling* should be provided to give a better overview of what is available.
- *Network organisation* is valuable to give a cohesive approach, working with development partnerships and the local education scene to counteract institutional fragmentation and complexity. Asylum seekers and refugees in particular need a network that is designed to ease the transitions between the various sub-systems and to support them with back-up measures. It should provide modular units and systematic links between the different segments, to establish a *cohesive system*.

## Diversity and empowerment

*Empowerment* means involving the target group in decision making processes and project design, and strengthening their own ability to act. That is particularly important for asylum seekers and refugees, because otherwise they have very few opportunities for active participation, despite the difficulty in implementing these ideas in language courses due to time restrictions. Work with asylum seekers and refugees is increasingly moving towards self-management organisations and networks, for 'empowerment'. That opens up a range of opportunities for the players involved:

- The shared experience of migration background between teaching staff and clients helps development of programmes appropriate to the life situation and needs of clients. It also helps to overcome language barriers and cultural differences, to facilitate access to the target group, and to realise initiatives for more self-determination in the teaching process. It gives more opportunities for political articulation and participation in the project.
- Employment of multicultural teaching staff makes it easier to bridge the gap between the established local staff and migrant clientele. It makes intercultural projects more credible, in terms of access, treatment of the clientele, and also

recognition of immigrants within the structure of the organisation. At the same time, it means that teaching jobs, otherwise dominated by locals, are also open to qualified migrants.

- Multicultural teams facilitate mutual transfer of skills, and promote broader and more targeted use of material, financial and personnel resources. They create links between the local support organisations and the migrants' self-management organisations, avoiding the creation of unnecessary 'parallel systems'. The recognition of migrants as organisers of social work also has an important integrating significance and major symbolic value.

The involvement of migrant organisations is a must for steady progress towards an immigration society. Recognising the active role of migrants in organising teaching and social work is an important step for democratisation of multicultural social structures and for comprehensive recognition of diversity.

### 3. Language Training with asylum seekers and refugees

#### 3.1. Framework

##### 3.1.1 Teaching institutions and funding

In **Germany** asylum seekers and refugees having “tolerated” status generally have no access to language courses funded by the public sector. The Integration Act provides for compulsory German language courses for migrants, but these courses are aimed only at persons who have secured status of stay. Asylum seekers and refugees and applicants who have been rejected but cannot be deported have a status of “toleration” (suspension of deportation), with extensions each time for a limited period only. There are no public funds available for their integration. Theoretically, “tolerated” asylum seekers and refugees can take part in language courses in the framework of the state-run integration programme for migrants; but unlike those with secured status of stay, they would have to pay €2 per lesson themselves, which they simply cannot afford for a course of 600 lessons. Participation in language courses at private language schools is likewise ruled out by the cost. If there is any language teaching available for asylum seekers and refugees at all, that is organised on an unpaid basis and held directly in the asylum seekers and refugees’ accommodation, by church organisations or small NGOs—these are mostly the only educational offerings of any kind available to asylum seekers and refugees during their long waiting periods.

From 2002 onwards, the European Community Initiative Programme EQUAL started funding language and vocational training courses for asylum seekers and refugees with unsecured status for the first time, aimed at integration in the local labour market, and at the same time at possible reintegration in the country of origin. The Development Partnerships organised in this framework develop intercultural educational facilities at local district level for migrants, and work together with migrant self-help organisations, vocational training and education institutions, to set up concepts for language training and vocational training specially designed for this target group.

In **Ireland**, the Vocational Education Committees (VECs), funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES), organise and provide ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages) throughout Ireland. For asylum seekers, refugees and people with ‘*Leave to Remain*’ these classes are free of charge. There are also numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community organisations and church groups that provide ESOL classes.

The funding for such classes is either channelled through the VECs or comes from other sources. Course duration and numbers of hours vary considerably. Classes can be between 1 and 20 hours per week. There is currently no national curriculum for ESOL. However, increasingly FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards) accreditation is offered to ESOL students through the National Framework of Qualifications.

In **Italy**, the second language teaching system addressing asylum seekers and refugees is made of several subjects, including both: public institutions (schools, local authorities, unions) and the civil society (NGOs, associations, volunteers). The courses are very often free of charge for the trainees and sometimes provide them with additional and complementary services, such as: financial support, transportation facilities, and kindergartens for children, among others. The majority of the courses are

organized within the framework of specifically tailored projects, funded by the national and local authorities as well as falling under the European umbrella. Others are offered against the payment of enrolment fees.

In Slovenia, projects are generally run by NGOs but there is no financial support available for professional assistance. Language courses for asylum seekers and refugees are held in the asylum centre. There is a general lack of appropriate space and equipment to hold these courses. The asylum centre does provide notebooks and pens to the students, but still there is a lack of particular text books which are written specifically for asylum seekers and refugees. In some cases, it is up to the individual to find language. The EQUAL project provides funding which enables more courses and volunteer work. There are also opportunities to create a useful handbook and workbook

### 3.1.2 Teaching staff: basic skills required

In **Germany** for example, the criteria applicable from 2009 onwards for acceptance of teaching staff for these integration courses are quite strict in terms of their academic qualifications and their teaching experience (for example, only university graduates with a qualification in teaching of German as a foreign language are accepted directly; further training is required for any teaching staff who do not meet these criteria). However, there are no official standards for the additional skills needed by teaching staff for this target group.

It is indispensable for teaching staff to have done intensive work on the causes of flight, possible traumata, and the conditions of life of asylum seekers and refugees, and to take these into account at all times in course planning and teaching. As the following chapters<sup>1</sup> will show, teaching staff also need to have a very high degree of empathy, and also *mental hygiene* skills, to ensure that they can meet the needs of the specific target group, while maintaining high professional standards.

In **Ireland**, all ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers/tutors employed by CDVEC should hold a minimum qualification of a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) or equivalent qualification in English Language Training.

In addition, it is preferable that ESOL teachers/tutors working in adult community education settings should have:

- a recognised qualification and experience in adult and community education/training in adult teaching and learning methodologies
- adult literacy training and experience
- ESOL & literacy training and experience

In **Slovenia**, there are no formal skills required for teaching staff. As a result, most of the teaching staff are volunteers, with some of them, Slovenian language students. This does present some specific difficulties in learning how to communicate in English for some students. For this purpose cooperation with University of Ljubljana began where a program that will be rolled out in the future, will involve professors and students of the Slovene language.

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular Chapter 3.3.4

### 3.1.3 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages** (CEFR) was drawn up by the Council of Europe<sup>2</sup> with the aim of achieving more orientation to learners' needs, and more transparency and comparability in acquisition of language skills and in language certificates.

It is regarded as "action oriented", in the opinion for example of the Goethe Institute,

"because it considers language users and language learners above all as 'social actors', i.e. as members of a society who have to accomplish communicative tasks under certain conditions and in certain fields of action; i.e. these are not just linguistic tasks. (...) [and] it takes account of changes in the needs of learners and in the circumstances in which they live, study and work."<sup>3</sup>

The concrete implementation of this aim shows that reference is made exclusively to the circumstances in which **European** learners "live, study and work" and in particular spend their holidays:

"If you attend the course regularly, and do the pre- and post-lesson work, you will be able by the end of the course to write a simple postcard, e.g. holiday greetings (A1) (...) and to deal with most situations encountered when travelling in the language area (B1)"<sup>4</sup>

Even the conditions of life under which migrants have to learn a second language are practically not found at all in the CEFR. The clearest example of that is shown in the section on "Speaking", by which communicative skills are meant. The levels from B2 onwards in this section describe situations which exist in this form practically only in a university environment:

"You can express your ideas and opinions precisely and link your contributions skilfully with those of other people

(...) can express complex situations in detail, and thereby link major subjects with one another, give special emphasis to certain aspects, and conclude your contribution in an appropriate way (C1)"

This totally ignores the everyday situation of asylum seekers and refugees, which is characterised by exclusion, uncertainty and legal barriers to engage in paid employment. The following is an example of level B1, which is tested in Germany with the "German Certificate":

"You can take part in conversations (...) on everyday subjects such as family, hobbies, work, travel."

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<sup>2</sup> The Council of Europe includes all the states of geographical Europe, including Russia (with the exception of Montenegro, Belarus and the Vatican City), and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Cyprus. Its Statute provides for general cooperation of the member states to promote economic and social progress. The Council of Europe is not institutionally linked with the European Union, although both use the same flag and the same anthem.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.goethe.de/Z/50/commeuro>

<sup>4</sup> All quotations taken from: Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), German version by VHS Hamburg.

- Some of these topics which scarcely play a part in the day to day reality of asylum seekers and refugees.

Conclusion: the CEFR may be a useful tool for comparison of the language certificates of **European** students, academics and management executives, but not for assessment of the language skills of asylum seekers and refugees **in Europe**.

## 3.2. Tools to develop “communication competence” in the second language

The specific life situation of asylum seekers and refugees has been described in the previous chapters. This life situation has to be taken into consideration in language teaching, for orientation of participants. Orientation of participants in adult education means (at least) two things:

- 1) Continuous participation and reaching of agreements;
- 2) Orientation of contents towards the experience and biography of participants.

Participant-oriented work is characterised among other things by constant reflection on the learning process, to create the necessary conditions for response to group dynamics factors, to learning difficulties and to any conflicts experienced by participants. This sets high standards for the teacher’s competence. In addition, orientation towards the experience and everyday lives of the asylum seekers and refugees requires the use of authentic materials (such as official forms, adverts from weekly magazines, advertising brochures, etc.).

Other relevant factors include homework – is it realistic to set homework, where participants are living in very restricted accommodation together with other members of the family, with no opportunity to withdraw from them and concentrate? (see chapter 1 accommodation). Many of the asylum seekers and refugees living in Europe have children to look after, which makes things harder, especially for women. They not only have a space problem, but also a time problem, making it hard for them to do homework or to go through the material covered in the previous lesson. One response is to take account of the situation right at the planning stage of the course, and to provide free time for learning in the institution/on the premises.

Another practical problem arises from the precarious financial situation of asylum seekers and refugees. The writing materials and books that are normally indispensable for teaching cost a lot of money – including dictionaries, grammar books, index cards, etc. Many asylum seekers and refugees simply cannot afford to spend money on these materials, so alternative solutions have to be found, for example by making books available at the institution, or buying a set of books for the whole class, or encouraging participants to borrow books from public libraries.

Two other questions arise due to the unsecured and often difficult position of the asylum seekers and refugees in the host country, and possible traumatic experience with resulting mental problems:

What kind of performance can participants still produce, i.e. what effort and concentration can they put into the course?

What is the impact of the difficult life situation of the asylum seekers and refugees? What criticism is still reasonable, for example if they fail to do their homework, or cannot concentrate, or are frequently absent or late for lessons, or if they make little progress? How should the teacher respond in this kind of situation?

No generally applicable answers can be given to these questions. It is always necessary to take account of the specific life situation of asylum seekers and refugees, and to reflect on language teaching in this context. The practical examples given below are just a few ideas on teaching methods.

### 3.2.1. Use of material – standard textbooks and critical use of them

The textbooks available in the market are normally designed to serve the needs of as large as possible a group of language learners, since publishers want to sell as

many books as possible. Normally they give no attention to the life situation or linguistic needs of asylum seekers and refugees, especially as asylum seekers and refugees have practically no access to language courses, and no money to pay for them.

It is still possible to use “standard” textbooks in the target group, but using them requires much more careful, much more thoughtful use than for teaching, say, a group of university students or business people. A few examples of this approach are given below.

### **Subjects, vocabulary and linguistic resources to be included in teaching**

Subjects and language resources that are relevant to all students of a second language are not listed here. But there are some areas of life and communicative skills which may be particularly relevant for asylum seekers and refugees, to help them cope in everyday life, as shown by the following examples.

#### **Visits to administrative services**

Visits to official administrative services are a subject that is now included in a number of textbooks, but the vocabulary included is mostly not enough for the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, so extra material is needed here. That includes the relevant vocabulary, and also information on expected behaviour in the host country, such as forms of politeness and appropriate manner, and various other linguistic resources – being able to give a response, to ask a question, to report on something, to comment on something, to discuss something, etc. This unit also includes the ability to understand letters and official forms, and to write letters and fill in forms, ideally using authentic materials.

Tip: Use role play with participants, practising the situation “at the administrative office”. This kind of “behavioural training” can be immensely important for asylum seekers and refugees. It also enhances their self-confidence and sense of security... and mostly it is also fun. It may also be possible and appropriate to record the role play on video, and then to discuss the results with the whole class.

#### **Linguistic resources for expression of emotions, wishes and disapproval**

Vocabulary for exchanges on emotions is often covered in textbooks on the basis of relations between two people, in many cases love relationships, but there is little to express other emotional needs. It is likely that some of your participants will be suffering from great distress, or may wish to talk about their own situation or their own experience. It is of course up to participants themselves to decide whether they wish to talk about such subjects in the lessons or in counselling situations, but as a course instructor you should provide the necessary linguistic resources for them to do so. That includes verbs and adjectives that express feelings and wishes (angry at, wanting, suffering from, being ashamed at, tormented by, wishing, etc.), and the ability to make a complaint or protest in appropriate form, both verbally and in writing, and vocabulary for reporting and commenting on incidents.

#### **Adaptation of teaching units to the realities of asylum seekers and refugees**

There are many conventional textbooks that present a life situation which asylum seekers and refugees will inevitably regard not only as pointless and meaningless, or even as cynical. At the same time, it must be remembered that language tests complying with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) require certain vocabulary, and students have to master this.

The point of these comments is not to exclude completely the subjects indicated in the examples below. What is needed is awareness of how to handle them, taking account of their usual presentation and the usual exercises that go with them in conventional textbooks. There can be no patent recipes, as every group of students is

different – but it is important to take a critical attitude to the existing materials, and to adapt them to the needs of the target group.

### **1. Example: “home conditions”**

Some of the textbooks show mostly luxurious homes and lifestyles. But many asylum seekers and refugees are living either in camps or in very basic accommodation. How far is it possible to use textbooks with that kind of material, without causing participants to be ashamed of their living conditions, or to have the feeling that this is cynical?

There are various ways of handling the situation:

- a. You can use the “luxurious lifestyle” materials, but at the same time make it clear that this in no way reflects the reality for most of the population; you can contrast this teaching material with other materials and photos, and/or ask the participants to describe the living conditions they have seen at the homes of neighbours, friends, relatives, etc.
- b. You can collect more suitable photos of homes yourself, and use these as stimulus material for speaking and learning.
- c. You can ask participants to bring photos of their homes. But this naturally calls for a sensitive approach– some participants may be eager to describe their own accommodation, while others would find that embarrassing.
- d. Get the participants to draw and describe their dream home, in a completely exaggerated way. This neutralizes the subject.
- e. It may also be fun for participants to describe typical buildings and homes in their country of origin. Here again, there is a need for sensitivity and a certain balance. The past should neither be blocked out, nor should it be placed in the foreground. And it is important to involve participants in the decision on whether or not to do this.

### **2. Example: “the future” and future planning**

As the name indicates, the grammatical form of the “future” tense relates to future events and circumstances, and these may be critical. Mostly the situation and perspectives are not rosy from the present viewpoint of asylum seekers and refugees– they are threatened with deportation, and do not know how long they can stay; they are refused a work permit, or they cannot get a job because they did not have a chance to get a vocational qualification when younger, etc. The subject of future perspectives, including job aspirations, can lead to great frustration. However, it may be useful not just to concentrate on the current situation and to give way to a feeling of resignation, but rather to make plans for the future, despite everything– but without generating unrealistic hopes.

### **3. Example: “past” tense**

In the teaching of the grammatical forms of the past tense, exercises in the textbooks usually ask participants to talk or write about their own past. The past experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, and the way they feel about these, are not always fundamentally different from those of other people, but it is more probable that they have negative memories, or even traumatic experience. It is also possible that people who have experienced terrible things may have a great need talk about what happened to them, and that this may give them mental relief. So treatment of “the past” requires special sensitivity on the part of the teacher (and the other participants).

Tip: Let the participants *decide for themselves* what they would like to talk about, and what they prefer to leave out. Offer a number of different ways of talking about the past, e.g.:

- a. Reporting about their own past
- b. Telling a story (perhaps a funny story) based on a picture story provided by the teacher
- c. Report on an imaginary person or telling an imagined story

Tip: Try to keep a balance – give participants an opportunity to speak, even about negative experiences, but always keep the whole of the group in view. If the situation begins to get out of hand, e.g. if a participant cannot stop talking about her own experience, you should stop her in a friendly but definite manner. Or if a participant starts to cry, you should respond appropriately to that participant but at the same time ask the others in the group how *they* feel about the situation. It is important to maintain a certain structure in lessons, because that gives participants a sense of security. Security, structure and stability are of key importance specifically for asylum seekers and refugees, because their life situation in general is characterised by so many uncertainties. They may well experience regulated and clearly structured teaching as a safe haven.

### Conclusions:

It is advisable to direct the choice of contents and linguistic resources covered by the textbooks primarily towards the needs of participants. The best way of doing that is to give participants freedom of choice in exercises and subjects. That means that if participants feel the need to speak about something, they have the freedom to do so, but at the same time full respect is given to the life situation of asylum seekers and refugees and to their individual characteristics and histories.

### Questions on methodological transfer:

- How meaningful do you think it is to address the specific life situation of asylum seekers and refugees during lessons, or to direct lessons primarily towards this subject? What are the possible positive effects, and what are the possible negative effects?
- How is suffering and distress treated in different countries and cultures? What are the needs of participants in this respect – do they wish to keep silence about their suffering, or to suppress it, or to talk openly about it? How can you find out the different attitudes of participants to suffering and distress, and their individual needs in terms of talking about these things, and how can you deal with these issues appropriately in your lessons?
- What needs do we as teachers assume, and what are the real needs of the participants? How can we identify these needs?

### 3.2.2 First orientation: Basic language learning.

#### Examples of a teaching unit for initial orientation

New language – new group – new place of learning – new district –  
new country

That is the situation for most participants at the beginning of a new “Basic language” course. The quality of the way they get started in the learning group, the learning environment and the systematic learning of the second language are key factors for a positive approach and for learning success, as practical experience shows. That applies all the more for asylum seekers and refugees, who are particularly dependent on stabilisation by orientation assistance and clear structures, because of their own

insecure situation in life and because many of them are traumatised by experience in the course of their flight.

The teaching staff of a Hamburg organisation for example that has been providing German courses and counselling for migrants and asylum seekers and refugees for the past 15 years has found that sticking rigidly to a textbook does not meet the needs of participants, especially in the first few weeks.

With this situation in mind, a concept has been developed for initial orientation “from inside to outside”, giving participants space and structures so that they can gradually familiarise themselves with the learning group, the place of learning/institution, and the local district.

### **Learning group**

The welcome session on the first day of teaching introduces the various ways of greeting people in different contexts (formal/informal situation), together with the appropriate gestures in the respective cultural contexts (shaking hands / embracing / bowing, etc.).

Tip: Remove tables, arrange chairs in a circle, give space for participants to move towards one another.

Asking people’s names is introduced and practised in the various possible linguistic structures, together with possible answers. The alphabet can also be introduced and practised on the basis of names, as participants spell their names to one another. The classroom can be used as a space for practising this, with participants moving around freely in the room and addressing one another. This may be followed by introduction of and practising of question/answer structures, asking about country of origin, family/children, job, where they live, etc. Good experience has also been obtained with forming small groups and creating new group identities in this way, by asking questions such as “Who has more than two children?” or “Who lives in Altona?” (a district of Hamburg) – the answers show new constellations of participants who have certain shared aspects in their life situation. There is a need for sensitivity in selection of questions, as they could lead to unpleasant situations for some participants, for example if one of the participants is alone in the room because she is the only one who is not married or has no children, so that she feels exposed, or feels compelled to “tell lies”.

Questions about job / employment here or in the country of origin can then be used as the basis for talking about the legal issues of access to the labour market, and if applicable recognition of qualifications previously obtained. Discussion of these subjects during the course requires a great deal of specialist knowledge, plus communicative ability and empathy on the part of the teacher – it may be assumed that, though participants do not have the language skills to talk about these matters, the subject as such is of great importance and direct relevance to them.

Tip: Language structures and the alphabet should be shown in visual form and should be kept on permanent display. A world map showing the countries of origin of participants has also proven valuable as a constant source of material for discussion.

Ideas for games:

- One participant thinks of a person in the group, and answers questions with Yes/No.
- Each participant is assigned one person by drawing of lots, and is asked to put together a collage on that person (materials: newspapers or magazines, catalogues, etc.). The group then has to guess which person this refers to.
- Participants, working in groups, select a person from a pile of postcards/ clippings from magazines, and reach agreement in the group on what the person's name is, where the person comes from, etc. If this is an unknown person, the exercise calls for imagination. If it is a well-known person, that mostly leads to discussion to get the correct information.

### Place of learning

The first step for familiarisation with the place of learning is the room where the course is held. That starts with naming the objects in the room, and giving them the correct grammatical article. Participants put labels on the objects themselves, and practise the phonetics, spelling and gender of the new words in small groups.

Tip: The classroom and the objects in it are identified with labels or word cards, which are kept on display.

The next step is familiarisation with the learning institution, including the staff working there. This may be done in small groups, each of which are given the task of assigning written word cards to the appropriate rooms, items of furniture, etc. Another assignment for the groups could be to conduct interviews with staff employed in other parts of the organisation – a first step towards trying out the language structures outside of their group as well. These persons can then be presented to the whole of the group.

Tip / Game idea: Photos are made of details, parts of rooms, etc. (either by the teacher or by participants), and the corresponding objects/details are then found at the place of learning, and named.

This section can also be used to introduce the structure of the institution, and to talk about further courses and activities it provides, about target groups, and about the concept and goal of the work.

### New district

A street map is used to identify and mark where participants live. Some time should be given to talking about the precarious housing situation (reception centres, camps, etc.) and their effects on the participants.

The corresponding district can be projected onto the wall as a map section, to locate the course institution and the surrounding streets. Small groups can then be sent out to walk around and enter in a blank street map of the area the most important streets in the local area, and to add shops and other facilities (reading the signs, names, etc.). That can be followed up with work on vocabulary.

Tip / Game idea “District Rally”: Photos are prepared of street corners, courtyards, shop windows, shops, etc., and small groups are each given the task of finding the relevant places in the district (indication of street, house number, etc.). Additional task: bring something from each of these places to the class.

### Questions for methodological transfer:

- Where is it appropriate to include the learning environment directly in your course?
- What forms of work / practical references can be used to give participants an active role?
- Where can you include authentic material in your teaching?
- How can you ensure that the problems in the life situations of participants are taken up in the course (where they wish to do so)?

### Tip: “The starter kit”

Vital factors for success for the participants include not only getting off to a good start in the learning group and the learning environment, and systematic learning of the second language, but also their equipment with writing and learning materials. It is important for everyone to get a good start in this respect too, with equal chances for all. In practice that is often difficult; asylum seekers and refugees normally do not have enough money, or do not have any money at all, to buy the necessary materials. So an important point for language courses is to prepare a “starter kit”. As a course leader, you should think about what materials are needed for your lessons. The kit could for example include pencil, pencil sharpener, eraser, ruler, ballpoint pens in two colours, ring files, exercise books and paper.

Distribution of a “starter kit” to every participant at the beginning of the course gives a number of benefits, both for the students and for the teachers:

- Creates curiosity for something new in the course.
- Gives a shared start to the course. This strengthens the group spirit and the group structure.
- Same material starting conditions for all students in the course.
- The fact that everyone has the same material conditions at the start means the teacher can concentrate fully on teaching.
- Exercises and homework can now be done at home (at any rate in terms of the material equipment).
- Learning is systematised and structured by the use of different ring files and exercise books.
- Participants are taken seriously and supported in their motivation to learn a language.

## Teaching units for everyday life

A main priority in teaching languages to asylum seekers and refugees and indeed to all migrants is the need to give them the language resources to cope with everyday life as a asylum seeker or a refugee. These resources have to be integrated into language teaching – a key difference compared with conventional foreign language courses. Supplementary units have to be added to the textbooks, for example:

### *Street maps*

The goal of this unit, working with a local street map, is to enable participants to find an address in the alphabetical index of street names, and then to find the street on the map, using the indicated page number, map number, and grid coordinates. This is followed by exercises, e.g. to find the address of a flat and the address of a kindergarten, using the index and the map. Then working out the distances by reading the scale of the map, so that the participants can assess whether it is reasonable to walk the distance, or whether there is public transport, and if so what that involves.

The teaching unit could then be rounded off by a rally going through the district, where participants are to ask questions to find out certain things at specified places, or to bring back certain objects with them.

### *Advice centres and counselling services*

The goal of this teaching unit is to give participants an overview of the advice services of public and private-sector organisations. A list of the most important advice services should be distributed, and teacher and participants should go through it to work out what kind of advice is given by each of these services. As an exercise, the teacher can then describe a certain problem situation, e.g. “When you initially applied for asylum, the wrong date of birth was taken for your eldest child. Now you want to know what you can do to put things right.” This could also be backed by internet research to find an answer to the problem.

Tip: This teaching unit could be combined with a visit to one or more advice centres. That will depend on the specific needs of your participants.

### *Newspaper ads*

Newspaper adverts are often written in a kind of jargon. They also try to squeeze in as much information as possible in the smallest possible space, with the result that many ads are made up almost exclusively of abbreviations. The first step is to learn to read and understand the ads. These could include adverts for housing, and job vacancies. Participants should start by trying to work out some of the abbreviations themselves, and then they should put together a list of standard abbreviations in class. Another exercise is for the teacher to describe, for example, the situation of a family looking for a flat; participants then have to pick out from a newspaper the offers that come into consideration, i.e. what would meet the needs and wishes of the family and what the family can afford. A second step would be for participants to write their own ads; and a third would be for them to respond to the ads, either in writing or by phone, depending on their linguistic skills.

### *Forms*

The goal is to teach respondents how to fill in forms. It is advisable to use copies of forms that are relevant to the life situation of participants, e.g. public authorities, banks, schools, etc., so that respondents can practise with authentic material.

*Telephone training*

The goal is to equip participants for everyday use of the phone. Even if they have a good standard in the language, participants may have great difficulty when using the telephone. This training includes items such as teaching participants how to spell their own name and address on the phone, in a clearly understandable way. It includes understanding and using phrases that occur frequently in official phone calls, such as “We will let you know”, or “We will contact you in due course” (see separate sheet on telephone training). To practise phone calls, participants can call one another from various different rooms of the institution. Telephone training also includes emergency calls, such as calling the police, the fire brigade or a hospital.

An answering machine can be used to practise leaving messages, firstly recording such messages and then listening to them. A certain amount of sensitivity is needed here, and empathy among the course participants, as some participants may not like to hear the sound of their own voice.

Tip: Telephone training can easily be included in exercises at any stage of the lessons. The participants involved simply sit back-to-back and simulate a phone call – they only hear the voice of the other person and have to communicate without the support of gesture, facial expression or lip movements. The situation can be made even more realistic by using old telephone handsets or mobile phones (preferably switched off!).

**3.2.3 Integration: pre-qualification, language training combined with vocational training**

Every job market places various demands and expectations on its employees. Supplementary language teaching within the structure of pre-qualification combined with vocational training should comprise special-purpose language study based on the needs of the course participants.

The following subjects, depending on the conditions of employment of the associated country, may be suitable for lessons.

	Subject		Contents
	Labour laws		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work permits</li> <li>▪ Rights and responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Employee/Employer</li> <li>▪ Giving notice, etc.</li> </ul>
	Social security		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health insurance</li> <li>▪ Social security</li> <li>▪ Pension schemes, etc.</li> </ul>
	Job organisation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Co-determination</li> <li>▪ Trade unions</li> <li>▪ Company cooperation</li> <li>▪ Work Conflicts etc.</li> </ul>

Fields of work		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Qualifications</li> <li>▪ Professions and jobs</li> <li>▪ Job wishes</li> <li>▪ Mobility</li> </ul>
Time and money		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hours of work</li> <li>▪ Time planning</li> <li>▪ Wages</li> <li>▪ Employment contract</li> <li>▪ Taxes</li> <li>▪ Bank account, etc.</li> </ul>
Applications		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Curriculum Vitae (CV)</li> <li>▪ Job market</li> <li>▪ Job interviews</li> <li>▪ Credentials</li> <li>▪ Application folder</li> <li>▪ Job centre, etc.</li> </ul>

The order of importance of the subjects to be covered should be based on the needs of participants and not laid down in a pre-determined order.

Tip: Ask respondents to make a list of relevant questions and topics concerning the job market in their country. What questions and uncertainties did they have at the beginning of their job?

### Soft skills

In the rapidly changing job market, soft skills, trade and trade-associated qualifications are becoming increasingly important to the job market. Soft skills are just as important today as the specialist skills. Human Resources Managers put them at the top of their list when considering a job applicant.

Soft skills therefore need to be given equal importance and promotion in supplementary language classes.

#### What are “soft skills”?

Soft skills comprise an undefined number of human characteristics, abilities and personal characteristics needed to carry out a job or profession. Soft skills include the following abilities:

Discipline	Motivation	Assertiveness
Teamwork	Conflict-solving ability	Manners
Mastery of the language	Communication	Reliability
Flexibility	Ability to handle stress	

### Practice example:

There is a trade qualification project for asylum seekers and refugees in Hamburg, that gives participants the chance to work in a training company (Laundry) with lessons on the side, so that they can gain a trade pre-qualification. The supplementary language course is a part of the training. The language classes in that course can deal with the topics arising from the practical work in various ways.

The specialist language used in the training company is explored on every level. That means including the whole personality of the participant. Learning should take place at the intellectual, emotional, physical and sensory levels. Doing and thinking are intrinsically linked together. Vocabulary for clothing items used in the firm is practised with the help of a wardrobe put together specially for this purpose. Participants pick out an item of clothing and name it. At the same time another participant writes the word on the blackboard. The group helps her with the task. This simple exercise can be carried out in groups of two to three people and is an ideal way to promote teamwork and communication at the beginning of the course. It enables participants to learn and increase their vocabulary through a game. The game can be expanded by the use of adjectives such as red, blue, pretty, big, coloured, striped, etc. (there is no end to the words you can choose).

Tip: Make a pile of different types of clothing. Give the participant thirty seconds in which to put on as many clothes as possible. Thirty seconds later, the next one starts and so on. The course participants make a mental note of a partner, describe him or her to the group and the group must guess who he or she is.

General trade-orientated topics are also discussed in lessons. And the subject of demands on employee / employer can be introduced by the question “What is your dream job?” This motivates participants to talk about different job situations.

Tip: To make it easier, the beginnings of sentences can be given, such as “The wages are... The work atmosphere is... Breaks are.. The position is... Your work-mates or colleagues are...”

After that, the participant role-plays an employer and answers the question of what he or she expects the ideal employee to be like. This will normally show that the expectations of the employer are different from what employees do on the job. An employer could possibly answer: “Employees must be loyal to the company. They should not be sick. They should be able to work in every department. They should be responsible and have a sense of responsibility towards the job. They must be mobile and flexible, etc.” Participants then discuss and talk about the above. Finally Soft Skills are gathered and discussed. What does it mean to be reliable? What does it mean to be able to cope? Think with participants about what soft skills are needed, and what training is necessary to promote them.

### 3.2.4 Reintegration / Migration to other countries

It is essential to include a possible return of asylum seekers and refugees to their own country or onward migration, as a part of language and vocational training for asylum seekers and refugees. This would be particularly relevant due to the current rigid deportation practice in many European countries. Global vocational opportunities must also be included in vocational training, where the participants come from different cultural and national backgrounds.

Depending on the individual case history, this topic may arouse either interest or indifference, or be very distressing for participants. Each person and also each group will view this subject differently. The ensuing, active discussion should be inaugurated and conducted by the group participants themselves.

The subject of reintegration may arise in a variety of ways, and may be referred in the context of teaching different subjects. Participants may talk about their countries of origin in the framework of background studies about the host country. If participants show a lively interest in this theme, that could lead to project work. For example, participants can introduce their country of origin in class. The form used for that will depend on the language level of the class.

Tip: Ask participants to prepare a short lecture, or moveable wall charts, etc., about their country of origin or another country, and present this to the group. They can cover points such as area, languages, currency, agriculture, religion, etc.

This calls on the range of cultural experience that participants have, and gives the group as a whole a chance to share this experience.

Lessons dealing on this subject require a high level of empathy from the teacher. It is equally important to consider with great sensitivity whether participants want to go more deeply into the issue of reintegration.

Tip: Be sensitive of the conflicts or emotional reactions that arise. Has this subject created conflict or distress among students?

#### Practice example:

#### Vocational Training in a Global Sphere

A example of this is the EQUAL training programme conducted in Hamburg with 15 young asylum seekers and refugees having unsecured status of stay; it gave them a two year training in the construction sector, together with German trainees and other foreign trainees. That programme included a two-day project called “Building in a Global Space”, designed to present construction methods and job opportunities in other European and non-European countries and to discuss these, so as to show the trainees vocational perspectives in the building sector with a view to onward migration or return to their country of origin. Experts came on each of the two project days to make presentations on construction issues and to talk about work conditions in Afghanistan, Scandinavia, West Africa and in the UK, and then discuss these with the trainees and the teaching staff. After completion of their training, work in Scandinavia or in some parts of the UK may be a worthwhile alternative in view of the risk of unemployment in the German construction industry, and in view of the demand for skilled labour in these areas. Those who are, either voluntarily or due to the force of circumstances, considering migration or return to a non-European country, were

shown the advantages of having obtained a qualification, and the work opportunities which that gives. These project days were conducted on an interdisciplinary basis, and their language and content were prepared both in German lessons and in the specialist lessons.

The intention is to put teaching units of this kind on the curricula of vocational training schools as intercultural modules, oriented to the life situations of participants; this takes account of the heterogeneous composition of the learning group and makes use of it.

### 3.2.5 Language learning and IT Introduction

Basic IT knowledge and media competence are indispensable for participation in society today, and acquiring these should therefore be integrated right from the start in acquisition of a second language. The internet in particular is an extremely useful tool, specifically for the target group of asylum seekers and refugees, enabling them to research global information and to maintain contact with friends, organisations and relatives via e-mail.

The computer can also be used as a tool for language learning. There are now many free-of-charge web-based training facilities available (at least for German as a second language) as a supplement to textbooks. Participants, and in particular young participants who already have affinity to new media, may be more motivated for second-language learning by means of e-learning than by conventional teaching and exercises. E-learning is also good for matching learning materials to individual abilities (learning experience, speed of learning) and needs of the participants, e.g. depending on the skills they particularly need (listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing ability.)

Tip: All participants should be given a free webmail account, which can also be used for sending homework and for communication within the course.

This is dependent on media and methodology competence of the teacher, target-group related selection, purchase of e-learning software, and provision of the necessary space and equipment (training room with PCs, Internet access, beamer, headphones, etc.). If e-learning is to be used for free individual working (homework), the PC room should be available for use outside of the course times, since otherwise most participants will have no individual access to computers and Internet, in view of their precarious financial and housing conditions. A laptop pool has also proved to be a valuable resource, for lending out to course participants.

At the same time, teaching staff must bear in mind all the considerations mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 3.2 with respect to the individual situation of course participants – teachers must always be careful with any subject or research topic that could be associated with violence, injuries, traumatising or shame.

In preparation for this, teachers should find out what skills the participants have in use of the media – if they have little or no prior knowledge of IT, a systematic introduction will be necessary.

**Tip: One-dot survey**

The quickest way to find out the IT skills of participants is the “One-dot survey”. The teacher writes a question on the board or on a flipchart, e.g.

Have you ever written an e-mail?

Do you use a computer for learning German?

At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives each participant one sticky label with a dot, to stick on the appropriate category as they go out. The resulting pattern immediately shows a cluster of dots, e.g.

Never ● ●

Sometimes ● ● ●

Every day ● ● ● ●

Participants who are afraid of being different from the others can decide for themselves whether they want to place their dot first or last.

Participants are given an introduction to the hardware. The computer parts are labelled in two languages (e.g. on post-it notes). Then participants try out the keyboard functions, and take notes on these, either in their mother tongue or their second language, depending on their linguistic level. After training in navigation with the mouse (e.g. with a graphics painting program such as Paint), the participants are introduced, by means of a beamer presentation, to Internet navigation and search engines (e.g. using Internet Explorer in Windows XP). At the beginning it is important to choose the simplest navigation path, and to give participants plenty of time to try out each step themselves. A diagram on the board, or a handout, should be used to support the beamer presentation. Example:

- Click on the Internet symbol in the start menu.
- Click on the address bar. The text is now marked in blue.
- Then key in [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and press the enter key.
- Click on “Images”.
- Enter a search term and then press “Image search”.
- You can store the image on your computer, by using the right-hand mouse button.

**Tip:** If it is not clear whether participants are traumatised, or what the cause of such traumatisation is, the first research task may be something quite trivial, e.g. to find the image of a specific object:

Find an image of an eraser in the World Wide Web.

If not given specific instructions, many participants enter the name of their country of origin or place of birth as the search word.

It is important to use the same terms consistently at the beginning, to avoid confusing participants by use of synonyms (e.g. Return/Enter key), and to keep calm if technical problems occur. Take all questions by participants seriously, and answer them in a calm tone of voice. It is particularly important for this target group to maintain a stress-free working atmosphere in the IT training room, and to create a sense of solidarity.

### 3.3. Challenges to teaching methods and examples of promising practice

#### 3.3.1 Teaching illiterate students

Access to education is often prevented by the social conditions in the countries of origin. Literacy programmes and basic education are therefore an important condition for linguistic and social integration in the host country.

There are various definitions of “illiteracy”:

“Illiteracy” or “total illiteracy” is the condition of someone who has never learnt to read and write. “Secondary illiteracy” (a term used since the 1970s) is the condition of a person who has learnt to read and write, but then lost these skills again. One of the main reasons is the increasing replacement of the written and print media by the telephone and screen media.

“Functional illiteracy” is the condition of someone who is not able to use written forms in everyday life, or not able to use them with the efficiency considered self-evident in the social context. Functional illiterates are people who can identify the letters of the alphabet, and who may well be capable of writing their own name and a few words, but who are not capable of understanding the meaning of a lengthy text, or cannot understand it quickly and effortlessly enough to make any practical use of it. There is no fixed dividing line here between “understanding” and “not understanding”.

Illiteracy is a relative term. Whether or not a person is regarded as illiterate depends not simply on their individual reading and writing skills; it is also a matter of the level of mastery of the written language expected in the specific society in which that person lives. A person whose individual skills are below the necessary level, and below the level regarded as self-evident under the circumstances, is functionally illiterate. The term “functional illiteracy” takes account of the relationship between existing literacy skills and the degree of mastery of written language that is necessary and expected in the historical and social context.<sup>5</sup>

All three forms of illiteracy (total, secondary and functional) are more common in women than in men. That is due to inequality in access to education for men and women, and due to the division of work in society, which means that most women throughout the world work in the household, so they are engaged in activities which are remote from reading and writing. It is therefore useful to offer literacy courses for women (see also Chapter 3.3.3). Illiteracy is by no means restricted to the “third world”. In Germany, for example, it is thought that more than 4 million people are illiterate.

The above definitions of illiteracy mean that major distinctions have to be made within literacy courses, i.e. different courses have to be provided for the different degrees of illiteracy. Another point not mentioned in the definitions above is that people may often be literate in one writing system, but not literate or not sufficiently literate in another. Someone who already masters one script, such as Arabic, and then learns the Latin alphabet, can make much better progress than someone who is not literate in any script.

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<sup>5</sup> Hubertus, Peter: *Alphabetisierung und Analphabetismus*. Bibliography. Publ.: Schreibwerkstatt für neue Leser und Schreiber e.V., Bremen 1991, pp. 5, 31.

Illiteracy tends to be associated with shame. People who cannot read and write, or whose reading and writing skills are poor, are often reluctant to admit it. They often have a sense of shame, particularly in the presence of their children, who learn to handle the situation in the new society much faster in any case. In many cases the women get no support within their families for their efforts to learn to read and write, or the family even discourages them. That makes it all the more important for them to get this support and encouragement in the course, and for the course to provide an atmosphere of solidarity for learning. That is another reason why it is useful to provide women's courses in literacy.

In practice, it has proven valuable to provide literacy courses in the mother tongue, too. Experience shows that those who develop language awareness through their mother tongue are also better equipped to learn another writing system, or another language. Apart from that, many participants want to become literate in their mother tongue, and are distressed at learning to read and write a foreign language but not being literate in their mother tongue.

Many find the links between written characters and sounds an obstacle at first, i.e. they find it hard to understand that a letter corresponds to a certain sound, which they have to make themselves. Those who are already familiar with one writing system transfer the knowledge of that system to a new language – for example the letter “s” may be voiced (like English “z” ) or unvoiced (like English “s” at the beginning of a word); and the same letter is also used in the composite consonant “sch” (like English “sh”). Arabic, for example, has 4 different characters for voiced “s” and 3 for unvoiced “s”, while the “sh” sound is a completely different letter. Arabic does not write the short vowels, and the reader has to put them in while reading. That is why those who can read Arabic tend to keep putting in vowels in German where none exist.

### **Practical teaching**

People who have had little or no schooling need to be familiarised with the school situation. It is not self-evident for them to have a pen and paper at hand. It is helpful simply to buy ruled exercise books for all participants. At the beginning, participants should write with pencils, so that they can make corrections and do not have to keep crossing things out.

It is important for them to get used to a relaxed posture for sitting and holding a pencil. Those who are not used to writing will quickly cramp up. Many are also embarrassed at not being able to write, and get tensed up for that reason alone. It is a part of the teacher's job to make sure that they are sitting comfortably, and that they repeatedly have relaxation exercises for their hands, shoulders, back of their neck, etc. Many hold their pencil in a cramped and awkward position at first. It may be helpful to talk about all the things people can do with their hands, to get over the impression they may have of being very clumsy. To start with, they can write the letters very big. It may be helpful to practice together to get the correct direction of writing (upstroke, downstroke, left-to-right, etc.), way of holding the pencil, position of the paper, etc.—the teacher can hold the pencil together with the learner, and guide her hand. It may be necessary to start by practising drawing lines, circles, arches, crosses, dots, wavy lines, etc., initially drawing them very large and then gradually getting smaller and smaller.

A proven method is to work with alphabet cards. Participants can then use the letters they have already learnt and put them together to make syllables and later also words, can read them out or read them to one another, and then replace individual

letters by other letters. This method can be used to practise groups of syllables. The words made up in this way need not necessarily be words that really exist, what matters is to read them out correctly.

Only one new letter should be introduced at a time, and this should then be practised in combination with the letters already known. It is advisable to start by practising the sound, then to find words that start with this letter, and only after that to practise writing the letter.

It is useful to give an overview of all the letters, in the form of a poster and of a small card for each of the participants, marking the letters already learnt. This helps participants by giving them an overview of what they have already learnt and showing how many letters they still have to learn.

A distinction has to be made right from the start between the name of the letter, and the sound which it makes. For example, the letter M is called “em”, but its sound is just [m]. It is best to learn the name of the letter when learning the letter itself, but it is always important to pay attention to this distinction, as we use the names of the letters for spelling, but only the sounds for reading.

A lot of practice is needed to recognise the sounds in a word, and to hear whether the sound comes at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a word. The best way to do that is with worksheets showing pictures of objects. The worksheet has to indicate which sound to focus on, e.g. the letter A; participants have to enter a cross in one of three adjacent boxes, for example in the first box if the letter A occurs at the beginning of the word. This exercise can be used for every new letter introduced. At the same time, this exercise helps to increase or revise vocabulary.

It is very important to maintain a uniform style of writing for all learners and teachers, both in terms of the shape of the letters, and the direction of writing. Even small changes in the way a letter is written may make it difficult to identify. The correct way of holding the pencil for the individual letters is not self-evident, but needs to be demonstrated and practised. Many write words correctly from left to right, but write the individual letters from right to left as far as possible, leaving a gap for each letter and filling the gap from right to left.

The board should be used not only by the teacher, but all participants should be encouraged again and again to write on the board. One of the effects of that is that everyone can see they are not the only one whose writing looks like “children’s writing”. And many participants enjoy writing on the board and showing what they can do. To avoid creating a disagreeable situation for some individuals, it is also possible to get several participants to write on the board at the same time, or they can write on the board in a “hidden” position, and then open it up when they have finished.

Worksheets must be clearly structured. The size of the letters must not be too small, and the gaps for the learners to write in must be enormous, because it is very hard to produce small writing at the beginning. And it takes a lot of practice to write on the line. Ruled exercise books are useful for that purpose, ruled in sets of four lines, so that there are three spaces between lines, corresponding to the different heights of letters.

### 3.3.2. Teaching minors and separated children

Separated minors are defined as persons who have not completed their 18<sup>th</sup> year of life, except where majority begins at an earlier age under the law applicable to the child, “who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so.”<sup>6</sup>

It is estimated that some 5% of all asylum seekers in Europe are separated minors. There are about 50,000 separated children in Europe, according to a report of the programme “Separated Children in Europe”.<sup>7</sup>

Separated minors have a very difficult life situation as refugees. Many of them are orphans or have lost one parent, or no longer have any knowledge about what has happened to their relatives in their home country (e.g. following civil war). In many cases they have been subjected to difficult situations not only in their home country and during flight<sup>8</sup>, but also in the host country, where their situation is often characterised by difficult circumstances. The social isolation to which young people are exposed in the host country is an additional emotional stress factor, alongside the separation from their family. Many of these young people also have to live with insecure, unclear future perspectives.

As with adult refugees, traumatic stress disorders are also likely to occur in separated minors (see also Section 3.3.4). Young people may be affected in different ways by these difficulties, depending on their personal background and on their specific life conditions. In order to cope with these circumstances before and after flight, and to work through their first impressions in the host country, children and young people need appropriate support and guidance by people with whom they have a strong relationship, and who can help them to build up their resources and to develop new perspectives for the future. Educational programmes may have a positive impact on the development and mental attitudes of young refugees, and have a stabilising and orienting function.

#### **Structure of programmes**

It is the responsibility of the school system to teach the local language to children and young people moving to the host country. Whether separated child refugees get systematic support in overcoming language barriers, and if so when and how, depends very much on the legal provisions of the host country and on the local teaching resources, and also on the attitudes and commitment of those who organise these educational provisions.

#### **Educational pre-requisites**

Not all separated child refugees are sufficiently motivated, and not all have the necessary pre-requisites, to take up educational programmes such as language courses. That applies in particular where the real purpose of coming to the host country is to earn money, in order to relieve their own economic distress and to support relatives in their home country. Some of the young refugees may be in relationships of obligation or dependence which do not permit them to concentrate on or to take up educational provisions. On the other hand, there is a great deal of pressure from high expectations

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<sup>6</sup> Refugee Children – Guidelines on Protection and Care; UNHCR Geneva, 1994

<sup>7</sup> Ruxton, Sandy: Separated Children Seeking Asylum in Europe: A Programme for Action, 2000

<sup>8</sup> Detailed information on the reasons for flight by minors are given in the “Training Guide” for Separated Children in Europe, at [www.savethechildren.net](http://www.savethechildren.net)

on the part of many of the young people, because good education, including good mastery of the language, is often seen to be the pre-requisite for successful life abroad.

In previous school education, there are only a few young people who have a continuous record of school attendance which was not subjected to major interruption by events related to their flight. Many separated minors have had little or no school and vocational education in their home country. That means, among other things, that many of them have very poor reading and writing skills, or that they are completely illiterate at this point in time.

The permanent stress situation to which they are exposed by separation from the family, and also their status as an asylum seeker and the resulting difficult accommodation situation, may cause unaccompanied minors to have symptoms such as difficulty in concentrating, irritableness, depression, and psychosomatic problems such as headaches.

### ***Preparing the school for unaccompanied minors***

In view of their educational background and the effect of their life circumstances, these young people generally need targeted support programmes for successful school attendance in the host country. It is important to examine what programmes are appropriate for them, on a case by case basis. Supplementary language teaching may be a key element.

Language teaching for unaccompanied minors should start as soon as possible after their arrival in the host country.

Language tuition also has a major impact on their mental attitudes in the first few months. If such children rapidly acquire at least elementary knowledge of the local language, that will help them to become more articulate, giving them more scope of action. Joint attendance at a language course increases solidarity among child refugees, and encourages them to engage in further exploration of their new environment.

In view of this importance of language teaching for minors, it is not only necessary for teachers to be well trained in teaching methodology, but also to have a high degree of empathy.

Other important elements to support teaching and learning are class size of learning groups and cheerful looking classrooms, helping to create a positive learning atmosphere. Examples of such helpful elements are:

#### **Tip:**

Post welcome signs in many languages.  
Designate a small quiet room for religious observations and obligations.  
Put up an intercultural calendar in all classrooms.

### ***Learning Supports***

School-aged children are dependent on role models for their attitudes to social duties, to work and to learning. The situation for them is different from that in language courses for adults, because for them the language teacher has a more important role as a person to relate to. A strong contact between the teacher and the caregivers and others who have the confidence of the young person is particularly important here. They should work together to identify the needs of the young person. Only then is it

possible to fill in the knowledge gaps of the young person in an effective way, and to familiarise them with unfamiliar ways and methods of learning, and to get them accustomed to the rules of school procedure.

Tip: Keep contact lists with therapists, doctors and support organisations; it may also be appropriate to provide the participants in your course with these lists.

Cultivation and recognition of the mother tongue is particularly important for minors, creating an important basis for their educational success and development of their personalities. And, not least important, it should be borne in mind that neglect of their mother tongue reduces their chances of maintaining contacts with parents or other relatives, particularly in the case of unaccompanied minors. Teaching of the mother tongue should therefore be a regular part of their schooling.

Tip: Encourage the students to become experts in their mother tongue. For example, students can prepare small learning units in their own mother tongue for the others in the course. They could also present music from their country of origin, etc.

In selection of your teaching materials, always give attention to subjects which are relevant to the everyday lives of your students. That will simultaneously increase their independence, and show them that what they are learning is relevant to their everyday activities.

You should also be careful to design your teaching in a way that is appropriate to the age of the students. For example, it may be helpful to use materials aimed at young people, such as the lyrics of current pop songs, young people's magazines, etc.

To enable young people to work on school subject matter, it may sometimes be helpful for them to have a chance to express their experiences in the form of pictures and stories, to help them cope better with stressful experiences and personal difficulties. But these steps should always be taken in consultation with the responsible carers and/or therapists.

Tip: As a teacher, you should take enough time to talk to your students about their educational background and goals.

For example, you could set up a *study skills class*, focusing on concepts and practical exercises on *time management, concentration, organisation, memorisation, reading and writing methods, revision, exam techniques, and library skills*. This takes account of the fact that many of these young peoples are not accustomed to continuous learning because of the break in their educational biographies, and they first have to familiarise themselves with this and work out effective learning strategies.

### 3.3.3 Teaching women

Why is it so important to run courses and training activities for women only? What are the advantages, in terms of learning theory and subject matter, and in terms of atmosphere and teaching approach? What experience has been gained with women's courses? These points will be considered in greater detail here. But first it is important to note that, while this refers to "women" in general, women are evidently not a homogeneous group. They differ greatly in terms of their experience, their aspirations, goals, educational background, age, social class, and in the way they cope with their

own situation. Nevertheless, there are some common problem situations and needs, resulting from structural barriers and limitations to their scope of action.

Migrant and refugee women have to deal with a double disadvantage – as migrants in a society with racist tendencies, and as women in a patriarchal society. Women are subject to exclusion and discrimination in many areas of society. Their situation of dependency on their husbands can be exacerbated by the regulations under law of the country where they seek asylum. If they are victims of violence or other conflicts within their marriage, they have little real opportunity for an independent and self-determined life. So women may need special support to compensate for these structural disadvantages, which include the educational area.

Women's courses empower participants, encouraging them to stand up for their interests, take a more self-confident stance, and defend themselves against racist and sexist discrimination. "Women-only" courses give them an opportunity to meet one another without the influence and dominance of men, to exchange ideas, to learn together, to develop strategies for coping with certain problems, and to assert their own interests. They can often build on the basis of their life experiences and women's counselling services in their countries of origin. And "women only" courses can meet the needs of participants to exchange ideas and discuss problems with other women, to get help from them, and to learn from them. There is clear evidence of the essential need for these functions. Even at ministerial level, it has now been recognised that more attention has to be given to empowerment of women and mothers, within the framework of family policy and equal opportunities, because these have a key role to play in progress and integration of families from a migration background.

Tip: Childcare facilities are indispensable to women's courses, because otherwise many women are not able to attend.

Plan your course units in such a way that participants can drop off or collect their children at the school or kindergarten before / after lessons.

Make sure during the assessment and application procedure that the husband does not make all the arrangements for the participant; get the woman to speak for herself, ask her own questions and express her own wishes.

Refugee women may have witnessed or been victims of violence before or during their flight. Violence normally comes from men (regardless of country). That is another good reason for setting up courses for women only. And it is also a good reason for having female teachers, preferably with a migration background of their own. That enables the women to take their orientation from female role models, and to benefit from good learning experience.

A subsidiary argument for segregated teaching is the desire of some women with a Muslim background not to meet men in their courses. This moral/religious reason has to be taken into consideration but it is not a major reason, in terms of learning or teaching theory, to call for women-only courses.

All available experience shows that women's groups are more effective for participants. One of the main reasons is the differences in speaking behaviour that exist in most cultures between women and men. Teachers who have taught both in mixed classes and in women-only classes can confirm that the learning atmosphere and communication in women-only classes is more relaxed, less inhibited, more intimate, and free of fear. The women make more verbal contributions, and what they say is more spontaneous and bolder – they are more willing to try things out, and take a more prominent part than they would do if there were male participants. So the

presence of men can have a negative impact on the learning success of women. The lively atmosphere in all-female courses shows the high motivation of the women, who see the courses as a chance to develop for their personal lives and for work.

Learning success is also enhanced by inclusion of subjects that are clearly related to the real life experience and situations of participants. Women's courses can include gender-specific subjects which would not be possible in mixed classes— such as exchanges of views on gender roles, sexuality and family planning, pregnancy, family structures and family life, healthcare issues, raising children, questions of dependency in terms of economic situation and residence status, rights in matters such as divorce law, custody of children, problems in the marriage and family, etc.

In summary, the provision of women-only courses firstly meets the needs of refugee women by focusing specifically on their concerns (that in itself is reason enough, in terms of participant orientation); and secondly, it gives clear benefits in terms of teaching and learning theory, as clearly demonstrated by the experience of teachers and evaluators. It gives better learning results, and also increase the self-confidence of participants, their initiative and their ability to organise their own affairs and to stand up for their own interests.

Courses should also be staffed by women teachers with a - if possible - migratory background. Thus women have a chance to model themselves on feminine authority and can profit from the positive experience that these have gained.

### 3.3.4 Teaching traumatised students

The vast majority of refugees arriving in Europe have lived through traumatic situations.

It is therefore indispensable for teachers in language courses to have an understanding of trauma, its symptoms, and its possible consequences for their teaching. The purpose of this Section is to communicate empirical values from teaching, and to give indications on possible crisis situations that could develop. That is, of course, no substitute for therapy (for the traumatized) and supervision (for teachers).

#### What does trauma mean?

The Manual of the American Psychiatric Association describes trauma (from the Greek word for “wound”) as an experience of extreme anxiety, powerlessness and helplessness, associated with a feeling of being overwhelmed<sup>9</sup>. This extreme experience of existential threat to life, bonds or autonomy causes a deep crack in the mental structure, i.e. the individual feels under attack in his or her very existence.

Four types of traumatisation may be distinguished, based firstly on duration of the traumatic event:

- a) single, or short-duration traumatic events (Type I trauma) and
- b) repeated and/or long-lasting traumatic events (Type II trauma).

A further distinction is made based on cause:

- c) traumatic events triggered by human beings (“man-made” disasters such as war, torture, rape, etc.), and
- d) traumatic events not directly caused by human beings, that is natural disasters.

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<sup>9</sup> American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, DSM-IV-TR, Fourth Edition, Washington DC 2004

The most serious forms of traumatising are regarded as those caused by human beings, and lasting over a long period, because they fundamentally shake confidence in human relations.

In work with refugees, **trauma has to be regarded as a process** and not as a single event<sup>10</sup>. The period following flight and the beginning of life in the host country is regarded as the most important phase in terms of coping with trauma.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the specific **conditions of life in exile** contribute to whether the traumatic state is reinforced, or whether the individual can cope with it.

A decisive aspect of trauma is the sense of powerlessness and lack of self-determination. Where there is a lack of life perspectives in the host country, and where there are major restrictions in life conditions, that not only means continued traumatising, but also a risk of chronic traumatising and retraumatising.

### Consequences and symptoms of traumatising

The physical, mental and social consequences of traumatising may differ very widely<sup>12</sup>, so just a few frequently occurring phenomena are listed here:

- Flashbacks (recall attacks, that is re-experiencing past events) and intrusions, i.e. a sudden feeling of “being overwhelmed” by traumatic memories, or a feeling that the traumatic experience is just happening
- Nightmares
- Avoidance behaviour (avoiding thinking and talking about the extremely stressful experiences in the past)
- Extreme sleep disorder (insomnia)
- Dissociative states, e.g. mental distance or absence during a conversation, so that the individual is “detached” from reality
- Concentration disorders (in reading, learning, working, and in performing everyday tasks)
- Memory and recall disturbance (no longer remembering a whole period of time; avoiding contact with the past)
- Nervousness, tension, internal pressure, restlessness (constantly on the lookout for danger)
- Extreme apprehensiveness (i.e. jumpy at the smallest noises or movements)
- Extreme mood fluctuations (becoming depressed or angry at minor events, sudden attacks of weepiness or crying fits, irritableness, attacks of rage)
- Fear of “no longer being normal” (fear of losing control, going mad, suddenly acting differently from the person’s own perception of him/herself)
- Extreme mistrust and sense of isolation (feeling that no-one can understand or help them)

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<sup>10</sup> The term “sequential traumatising” was developed by Keilson. He divided traumatising into three phases: primary, secondary and tertiary traumatising. The third phase refers to the capability and necessity of establishing a new life with a sense of security and stability in the social environment, following the traumatic experience. Keilson, Hans: *Sequential Traumatization of Children* Jerusalem: The Magnes Press. 1992. Pp. 463. German edition: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1979

<sup>11</sup> Keilson’s model has been further developed by Dr. David Becker with respect to flight. Cf. transcript of interview (in German) with David Becker: “Flüchtlinge und Trauma“ (Refugees and Trauma”), at [http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~wolfseif/verwaltet-entrechtet-abgestempelt/texte/becker\\_trauma.pdf](http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~wolfseif/verwaltet-entrechtet-abgestempelt/texte/becker_trauma.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. basics (Ed.): *Praktischer Ratgeber für die Flüchtlingsarbeit mit traumatisierten Menschen*, Hamburg 2004, pp.11-18 (Practical Advice on Refugee Work with Traumatised Persons)

- Brooding (constantly worrying about the past, what has been lost, the present, and the question “Why me?”)
- Slowing down and numbness (low level of activity)
- Vegetative symptoms (trembling, respiratory complaints, tachycardia, pains in throat)
- Various physical aches and pains (headache, migraine, pains in the body and limbs, cardiovascular problems, gynaecological complaints)
- Adaptation disturbance
- Depression
- Severe anxiety
- Somatisation disorders

Tip: Develop awareness of your own fears, weak points, and your own experiences of loss and grief. Awareness of these is the only way to understand the grief of others, and to respond in an appropriate way.

Tip: Be aware that you cannot heal the suffering, and you cannot eliminate the conflict. What matters is to recognise the suffering, to bear it, and to give it space and time. What is not helpful is pity, because no-one wants to be pitied. Refugees are not only victims, but also “survivors” and “survival artists”.

### **Traumatised students in second-language learning**

What does that mean for teaching?

Every course programme has to provide a high degree of external security and transparency, as perceived by participants. That makes it important to give participants as much information as possible about the institution they are in, about its goals, and about its attitude to subjects like flight and migration. It is also important for them to know about the funding of the programme, and about the political goals behind it. To create an atmosphere of maximum reassurance, it is also important to give information on who has access to the rooms and to the files, who belongs to the team, and how confidential information is treated within the team.

Stability and continuity in the course are also important to give participants reassurance. People who are in a generally insecure life situation need a dependable framework, which may become a kind of “anchor” for them. There is also a certain need for binding obligations, in order to ensure continuity in the programme. Though refugees have to be absent more often than other students to go to official appointments at administrative departments, to meetings with lawyers, counsellors, and possibly therapeutic institutions, etc., a binding programme does give them a sense of security and orientation.

Tip: Talk to the participants right at the start of the course about what they want and expect from the course. Set these out in writing on a poster. And do the same with rules which are to apply for running the course. Get the participants to work out these rules together, get everyone to sign them, and hang them up in the teaching room. They should include matters such as regular attendance at the lessons, punctuality, reliability, respect in relations with one another, etc. Joint development of these rules means that the participants can determine and influence the group relationship themselves. You should come back repeatedly to the subject of expectations, rights and rules during the course. In doing so, you should make it clear that, while you can be an understanding “private individual”, at the same time you are also the representative of the institution with its educational purpose, and you are responsible for successful fulfilment of that purpose.

As some participants in your course will probably be people with traumatic experiences, you have to be prepared for the fact that some of them may have difficulty in following the course – they may have learning difficulties, be unable to concentrate, or only be able to attend on an irregular basis. That means you have to be patient, you have to give enough time and make the atmosphere as relaxed as possible, without pressure. And you also have to expect that there may be unforeseen situations, as shown in the following example from second-language teaching:

*The atmosphere in the class is positive. Participants are looking forward to a special course unit because it is to be presented by one of the participants. On this particular morning, she is giving an introduction to her mother tongue. In the course of this little teaching experiment, the woman starts by giving some information on her country of origin. That includes a brief explanation of the colours of her country's national flag. She explains that the colour red stands for "blood". But the word "blood" sets off a whole negative chain of association in another participant, recalling her traumatic experiences. She completely breaks down, crying uncontrollably, and complains of severe breathing difficulty. She is desperate, and it is almost impossible to get through to her.*

This example is intended to show that even the smallest incidents may be enough to trigger recall of negative experiences in traumatised people. Neither the traumatised person nor the teacher is capable of controlling this, and they have no idea when such situations may arise. Often the teacher does not even know whether a woman is traumatised or not. There may be some signs that point in that direction, but there is no certainty. Even if a teacher suspects that there may be such terrible events under the surface, and tries to be as "careful" as possible in teaching, it is still uncertain if and when some experience of this kind may break through.

There is also a need for care when conducting relaxation exercises. At the physical level it is not possible to "lie", and there is no defence available. So if you have to include physical exercises, these should be kept as un-therapeutic as possible, and should have more the character of gymnastics. It is also better to conduct relaxation exercises in a sitting position than in a lying position. Leave it up to participants whether they want to join in the exercise at all, and whether they wish to close their eyes or not.

It is also advisable to avoid dream trips and guided fantasies, because they give rise to strong associations and recollected images, and may act as triggers for "flashbacks" (re-living emotional states previously experienced). A general rule is that a course leader should deliberately avoid the therapeutic level or any associated fields, e.g. should not ask participants to explore or express their feelings. It is important to keep things very specific and to stay in reality.

Tip: It is also possible to achieve relaxation by means of humorous language games, e.g. tongue twisters, by singing songs together (e.g. songs accompanied by certain movements), or by loosening-up exercises associated with movement.

Positive experience in relaxation can also be achieved by simple shoulder and back massage, using a massage ball – but only in purely female classes, of course. That helps the women to relax physically and mentally, and they can laugh together and get a sense of being part of a group (especially by massaging one another while standing in a circle), and can still keep a certain amount of distance by use of the massage ball.

A "flash-back" or "dissociative state" (state of mental absence) may occur with traumatised persons even if there is no particular reason for it.

Tip: It may be helpful to start each teaching day with a short introductory session in a circle, giving participants an opportunity (but not an obligation!) to say something about how they feel. The advantage of this may be that you and the other women find out right at the start of the lesson if one of the participants is feeling bad that day. However, feedback from participants shows that not all participants find this introductory session agreeable.

Basically, trauma means destruction – that is structural breakdown of the person. To avoid extending that experience, it is vitally important to maintain the structure of lessons and teaching. The framework of teaching must not be broken down, and certain limits have to be set. But if the structure of the teaching unit gets lost, you can talk about that quite openly in class, and make it a subject for the next lesson. This maintains the historical reality rather than denying it. Trauma breaks down continuity and history, so it is important to try to achieve/introduce perception of this process.

That means for example that you should always keep in mind the fact that you are teaching a group. If, for example, one of the women breaks out in tears, there is still a group situation to be maintained, so you must not focus exclusively on the one who is crying. The group and the interaction within the group are equally important. You should include the group – How do the other participants feel about what is happening? What is the best way to continue working towards the common goal, that is learning, without suppressing or diminishing the importance of what has happened? How does the participant affected feel about the others seeing her like this? The teacher can ask the woman affected whether or not she wishes to say anything about it, while at the same time making it clear that there is no obligation for her to say anything and that, whatever her response, it is acceptable. It may also be a need of this participant “just” to be able to cry, without having to say anything. The participant should be confirmed in her membership of the group, and her grief must be respected.

### Tips for particularly critical situations<sup>13</sup>

If a participant gets into a “dissociative state” as described above, any strategy is helpful to restore her reference to the “here and now”, to the present reality:

- Say who you are and what you are going to do next.
- It is better not to go deeper into the emotions. It is more helpful to provide “grounding interventions”, such as making eye contact, offering a glass of water, and talking to the participant in simple words and sentences.
- Try to establish contact with external reality. Describe where you are and ask the “dissociated” participant to look around and describe the environment in detail. Ask her to describe five objects in the room, and five sounds, and five physical impressions; then four of each, then three of each, then two, and then one.
- Be careful with physical contact. It is sometimes helpful to touch a person you know well (e.g. on the hand or on the arm), but you should always tell them first that you are going to do so.

### *Dealing with irritable/aggressive outbreaks:*

- Take people who are not involved out of the situation.
- Eliminate disturbing/annoying backgrounds (e.g. media, street noise).
- Keep physical distance and communicate in short sentences with de-escalating gestures.

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<sup>13</sup> These “emergency tips” are based on an advice book: basics (Ed.): Praktischer Ratgeber für die Flüchtlingsarbeit mit traumatisierten Menschen, Hamburg 2004, pp. 28 (Practical Advice on Refugee Work with Traumatized Persons).

- Keep calm, ignore any provocations, and make use of humour if the situation permits; establish a relationship with reality.
- Make suggestions, but leave freedom for decision (no “orders”!).
- If violence is involved, minimise the risk of injuries by getting out of the way, by non-violent defence, and if necessary by holding the person back.
- Even after phases of escalation, it is important to maintain dialogue with those affected, to ensure that the relationship with them does not suffer.

**Questions on methodological transfer:**

- How do we deal with the fact that we are sometimes working in a contradictory situation in the member states? On the one hand we are educating refugees, but on the other hand we are not integrating them but deporting them. How and where do we position ourselves?
- How do we deal in the course of teaching with the fact that we as teachers, and as privileged citizens, are a part of the traumatic process, a part of the traumatic situation in the host country?

## 4. Recommendations

In many member states, adult asylum seekers and refugees are still excluded from state educational and language learning programmes, and are not included in the planning of educational programmes or the allocation of resources.

The 2003 Council Directive likewise makes no provision for stipulation of minimum standards for reception of asylum seekers in the member states, to regulate access to language teaching for refugees at the European level. It only covers the opening of school education programmes to child refugees and access to the labour market and vocational training. But regardless of age, second-language promotion for asylum seekers and refugees is the key to integration in society and the labour market; it should be reflected in the minimum standards mentioned above, and in their further development as set out in the Green Paper submitted by the EU Commission on 6 June 2007, on the future Common European Asylum System.

Educational policy in the member states must recognise refugees as subjects of education, and implementation has to take account of the life situation of asylum seekers and refugees. That also means it is necessary to recognise that asylum seekers and refugees normally do not have a linear progression in their learning biography. They have to make up some gaps in their education and, regardless of age, they are dependent on obtaining the necessary language support for acquisition of formal vocational qualifications. That implies that educational units and programmes have to be designed flexibly enough to provide movement and lateral entry opportunities, and to provide well matched perspectives to follow up.

The key to teaching concepts and materials is to develop and disseminate authentic teaching materials that are appropriate to the target group, and also to the specific life situations of asylum seekers and refugees. To ensure long-lasting success in learning, it is advisable not to arrange a progression of grammatically oriented lessons, but rather to focus on learning and communication strategies.

Existing test methods, as specified by the CFR, are only of very limited relevance to the target group of asylum seekers and refugees. It is recommended that methods should be developed and tested for evaluation, based on the portfolio approach and thus more appropriate to the varied educational backgrounds of the target group. It is also important to develop appropriate assessment tools for literacy and numeracy.

To permit effective learning, second-language teaching programmes have to be designed for easy access, i.e. providing information in the language of origin, posting course programmes at places of refugee accommodation, maintaining cooperation with multipliers, e.g. migrant self-help organisations, facilitating attendance (travel cost), and providing parallel counselling – these are essential for successful conduct of such programmes, as are accommodation, and availability of a quiet place for learning and preparation.

The contents and concepts of second-language teaching programmes should be designed right from the start to take account of the relations to the labour market, and to inform participations of the legal framework conditions and of their rights and obligations as employees, and to give them access to vocational skills and the communication skills needed in the labour market.

The initial and further education of second-language teachers should be implemented in the framework of intercultural learning, including provision of information on the legal circumstances and life situations of asylum seekers and refugees. Language courses for refugees should become an obligatory field of practice for everyone preparing to teach such courses.

As for further education in general, educational work with refugees must conform to regular quality standards. That includes in particular professionalisation of course teaching – this may be supplemented, but not replaced, by voluntary work on the basis of charity commitment.

## Links

It is worth mentioning that the following list is neither complete nor comprehensive as many of the services offered to refugees and asylum seekers are provided on a local basis. The following links however serve as a good tool to better understand the scenario of the organisations working with and for refugees and asylum seekers.

### Germany

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge: <http://www.bamf.de/>

#### Refugee Councils

Münchener Flüchtlingsrat	<a href="http://www.muenchner-fluechtlingsrat.de">http://www.muenchner-fluechtlingsrat.de</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Baden-Württemberg e. V.	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-bw.de">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-bw.de</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Berlin	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-berlin.de">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-berlin.de</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Hamburg	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-hamburg.de</a>
Hessischer Flüchtlingsrat	<a href="http://www.fr-hessen.de">http://www.fr-hessen.de</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen	<a href="http://www.nds-fluerat.org/">http://www.nds-fluerat.org/</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Nordrhein-Westfalen	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-nrw.de">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-nrw.de</a>
Saarländischer Flüchtlingsrat	<a href="http://www.asyl-saar.de">http://www.asyl-saar.de</a>
Sächsischer Flüchtlingsrat	<a href="http://saechsischer-fluechtlingsrat.de">http://saechsischer-fluechtlingsrat.de</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Leipzig	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-lpz.org">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-lpz.org</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Schleswig-Holstein	<a href="http://www.frsh.de/">http://www.frsh.de/</a>
Flüchtlingsrat Thüringen	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsrat-thr.de">http://www.fluechtlingsrat-thr.de</a>

#### Organisations

Amnesty International Deutschland	<a href="http://www.amnesty.de">http://www.amnesty.de</a>
UNHCR Deutschland	<a href="http://www.unhcr.de">http://www.unhcr.de</a>
Pro Asyl	<a href="http://www.proasyl.de">http://www.proasyl.de</a>
Asyl.de	<a href="http://www.asyl.de/">http://www.asyl.de/</a>
AK Flüchtlingsfrauen – Psychosoziales Zentrum für Flüchtlinge	<a href="http://www.fluechtlingsfrauen.de/psz.htm">http://www.fluechtlingsfrauen.de/psz.htm</a>
Human Rights Deutschland	<a href="http://www.humanrights.de">http://www.humanrights.de</a>
BAG Asyl in der Kirche	<a href="http://www.kirchenasyl.de">http://www.kirchenasyl.de</a>
Jesuiten Flüchtlingsdienst Deutschland	<a href="http://www.jesuiten-fluechtlingsdienst.de">http://www.jesuiten-fluechtlingsdienst.de</a>
Bundesfachverband Unbegleitete Minderjährige Flüchtlinge	<a href="http://www.b-umf.de">http://www.b-umf.de</a>
Forum Menschenrechte	<a href="http://www.forum-menschenrechte.de">http://www.forum-menschenrechte.de</a>
Interkultureller Rat in Deutschland	<a href="http://www.interkultureller-rat.de">http://www.interkultureller-rat.de</a>

Refugium-Flüchtlingshilfe	<a href="http://www.refugium-braunschweig.de">http://www.refugium-braunschweig.de</a>
Refugio Kiel	<a href="http://www.refugio.de">http://www.refugio.de</a>
BAFF - Bundesweite Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Psychosozialen Zentren für Flüchtlinge und Folteropfer	<a href="http://www.baff-zentren.org">http://www.baff-zentren.org</a>
asylumlaw (Netz von Rechtsanwälten, die sich auf Asylrecht spezialisiert haben)	<a href="http://www.asylumlaw.org/">http://www.asylumlaw.org/</a>
Diakonisches Werk der EKD – Hilfe für Flüchtlinge	<a href="http://www.diakonie.org/de/html/hilfe/550.html">http://www.diakonie.org/de/html/hilfe/550.html</a>
Deutscher Caritas-Verband	<a href="http://www.caritas.de/">http://www.caritas.de/</a>
Caritas international	<a href="http://www.caritas-international.de/">http://www.caritas-international.de/</a>

### Information and Research

Asylforschung in Deutschland	<a href="http://www.asylforschung.de">http://www.asylforschung.de</a>
Europäisches Forum für Migrationsstudien	<a href="http://www.uni-bamberg.de/~ba6ef3/ins_d.htm">http://www.uni-bamberg.de/~ba6ef3/ins_d.htm</a>
Institut für Migrationsforschung	<a href="http://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/">http://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/</a>
Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration	<a href="http://www.ffm-berlin.de">http://www.ffm-berlin.de</a>
EMZ Europäisches Migrationszentrum - Institut für vergleichende Sozialforschung	<a href="http://www.emz-berlin.de/start/animation.htm">http://www.emz-berlin.de/start/animation.htm</a>
Bund online - Informationen zum Zuwanderungsgesetz	<a href="http://www.zuwanderung.de">http://www.zuwanderung.de</a>
Netzwerk Migration in Europa, Migration und Bevölkerung	<a href="http://www.migration-info.de">http://www.migration-info.de</a>
Informationsverbund Asyl / ZDWF	<a href="http://www.asyl.net">http://www.asyl.net</a>
Informationsplattform Migrationsrecht	<a href="http://www.migrationsrecht.net">http://www.migrationsrecht.net</a>
Deutscher Anwaltverein Ausländer- und Asylrecht	<a href="http://auslaender-asyl.dav.de">http://auslaender-asyl.dav.de</a>
Informationen rund um das Ausländerrecht	<a href="http://www.info4alien.de">http://www.info4alien.de</a>
Asylnetz	<a href="http://www.asylnetz.de">http://www.asylnetz.de</a>
Arbeitshilfen zum Ausländerrecht	<a href="http://www.aufenthaltstitel.de">http://www.aufenthaltstitel.de</a>
News zum Thema Flüchtlinge, Asyl und Migration	<a href="http://fluechtlinge.kommunikationssystem.de/">http://fluechtlinge.kommunikationssystem.de/</a>
Adressen von Gruppen, die Flüchtlinge in Abschiebehaft und gegen Abschiebung unterstützen	<a href="http://www.asylnetz.de/seiten/information/abschiebehaft/gruppen.html">http://www.asylnetz.de/seiten/information/abschiebehaft/gruppen.html</a>
Linkliste Asyl	<a href="http://www.asyl.org">http://www.asyl.org</a>

### Second Language Training and Learning - Useful addresses:

Goethe-Institut	<a href="http://www.goethe.de">http://www.goethe.de</a>
Zeitschrift Deutsch als Fremdsprache	<a href="http://www.uni-leipzig.de/daf/">http://www.uni-leipzig.de/daf/</a>
Zeitschrift Fremdsprache Deutsch	<a href="http://www.hueber.de/sixcms/list.php?page=pg_zeitschrift_fsd">http://www.hueber.de/sixcms/list.php?page=pg_zeitschrift_fsd</a>

DaF-Portal	<a href="http://www.daf-portal.de/sonstiges/info.php">http://www.daf-portal.de/sonstiges/info.php</a>
Deutscher Bildungsserver	<a href="http://www.bildungsserver.de/db/fachlist.html?fach=268">http://www.bildungsserver.de/db/fachlist.html?fach=268</a>
Verlage:	<a href="http://www.hueber.de/daf/">http://www.hueber.de/daf/</a> <a href="http://www.langenscheidt.de/">http://www.langenscheidt.de/</a>

## Italy

### Organisations

Amnesty International	<a href="http://www.amnesty.it">http://www.amnesty.it</a>
ANOLF - Associazione Nazionale Oltre Le Frontiere (National association beyond the frontiers)	<a href="http://www.anolf.it">http://www.anolf.it</a>
Arci Nuova Associazione	<a href="http://www.arci.it">http://www.arci.it</a>
Baobab	<a href="http://www.baobabroma.org/rifugiati.php">http://www.baobabroma.org/rifugiati.php</a>
Caritas Roma	<a href="http://www.caritasroma.it">http://www.caritasroma.it</a>
Centro Astalli	<a href="http://centroastalli.it">http://centroastalli.it</a>
Cestim on-line	<a href="http://www.cestim.org">http://www.cestim.org</a>
CIR - Consiglio Italiano per i Rifugiati (Italian Council for Refugees)	<a href="http://www.cir-onlus.org">http://www.cir-onlus.org</a>
ICS - Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà (Italian Consortium of Solidarity)	<a href="http://www.icsitalia.org">http://www.icsitalia.org</a>
IOM/International Organization for Migration	<a href="http://www.iom.int">http://www.iom.int</a>
Metropoli.it - il giornale dell'Italia multiethnica (multiethnic newspaper)	<a href="http://metropoli.repubblica.it">http://metropoli.repubblica.it</a>
Migra – Agenzia Informazione Immigrati Associati (Migrants' Press agency)	<a href="http://www.migranews.it">http://www.migranews.it</a>
Progetto Melting Pot EUROPA	<a href="http://www.meltingpot.org">http://www.meltingpot.org</a>
Save the Children, Italia Onlus	<a href="http://www.Savethechildren.it">http://www.Savethechildren.it</a>
Servizio Centrale del Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (Central Service of the Protection System for asylum seekers and refugees)	<a href="http://www.serviziocentrale.it">http://www.serviziocentrale.it</a>
Stranieri in Italia	<a href="http://www.stranieriinitalia.it">http://www.stranieriinitalia.it</a>
UNAR - Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali (Racial Antidiscrimination National Office)	<a href="http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/unar/index.html">http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/unar/index.html</a>
UNHCR – Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Unite per i Rifugiati (High Commissioner for Refugees)	<a href="http://www.unhcr.it">http://www.unhcr.it</a>

**Ireland**

Integrate Ireland Language and Training Ltd (IILT) (formerly known as the Refugee Language Support Unit)	<a href="http://www.iilt.ie">www.iilt.ie</a>
The National Adult Literacy Agency	<a href="http://www.nala.ie">www.nala.ie</a>
City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee	<a href="http://www.cdvec.ie">www.cdvec.ie</a>
SPIRASI - Centre for the Education and the Integration of Migrants (CEIM)	<a href="http://www.spirasi.ie">www.spirasi.ie</a>

**Slovenia**

Centre for Slovene as a second/foreign language	<a href="http://www.centerslo.net">http://www.centerslo.net</a>
Kljuc – Centre for Fight Against THB	<a href="http://drustvo-kljuc.si/">http://drustvo-kljuc.si/</a>
Amnesty International, Slovenia	<a href="http://www.amnesty.si">http://www.amnesty.si</a>
Peace Institut – Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies	<a href="http://www.mirovni-institut.si">http://www.mirovni-institut.si</a>
LIC - Legal Information Centre for NGOs	<a href="http://www.pic.si">http://www.pic.si</a>
MATAFIR - Society for intercultural relations	<a href="http://www.matafir.org/">http://www.matafir.org/</a>
Slovene Philanthropy Association for promotion of voluntary work	<a href="http://www.filantropija.org/">http://www.filantropija.org/</a>

**Europe**

UNHCR	<a href="http://www.unhcr.org">http://www.unhcr.org</a>
European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)	<a href="http://www.ecre.org/">http://www.ecre.org/</a>
IOM International Organization for Migration	<a href="http://www.iom.ch">http://www.iom.ch</a>
Amnesty International	<a href="http://www.amnesty.org">http://www.amnesty.org</a>
Human Rights Watch	<a href="http://www.hrw.org">http://www.hrw.org</a>
European Court of Human Rights	<a href="http://www.echr.coe.int">http://www.echr.coe.int</a>
European Reintegration Networking	<a href="http://www.reintegration.net/europa/index.htm">http://www.reintegration.net/europa/index.htm</a>
International Centre for Migration Policy Development	<a href="http://www.icmpd.org">http://www.icmpd.org</a>
International Association for the Study of Forced Migration	<a href="http://www.uni-bamberg.de/~ba6ef3/iasfm.htm">http://www.uni-bamberg.de/~ba6ef3/iasfm.htm</a>
PICUM International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants	<a href="http://www.picum.org">http://www.picum.org</a>
Internationale Liga für Menschenrechte	<a href="http://www.ilmr.de">http://www.ilmr.de</a>

Forschungszentrum für internationales und europäisches Ausländer- und Asylrecht	<a href="http://migration.uni-konstanz.de/german/Index.htm">http://migration.uni-konstanz.de/ german/Index.htm</a>
Jesuit Refugee Service - Europe	<a href="http://www.detention-in-europe.org">http://www.detention-in-europe.org</a>
The Refugee Council UK	<a href="http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/">http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/</a>
U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR)	<a href="http://www.refugees.org">http://www.refugees.org</a>
IRC International Rescue Committee	<a href="http://www.refugees.net">http://www.refugees.net</a>
International Committee of the Red Cross	<a href="http://www.icrc.org/">http://www.icrc.org/</a>

