



Lifelong  
Learning  
Programme



**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

# FINAL NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT



**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants  
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The hereby material was developed as a part of the project "**Host Country Languages for Migrants**", realized under the LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME

Project's website: <http://www.l2paths.eu/>

**Project coordinator:** Translex Ltd. (Ireland)

**Project partners:**

- The Language Center (Italy)
- Iberika Sprachschule (Germany)
- Baltic Bright (Latvia)
- Folkuniversitetet (Sweden)
- VCAT Consulting GmbH (Germany)

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

## **Content**

1. Introduction
  - 1.1 About the project
  - 1.2 Aims of the research
2. Methodology
3. Findings
  - 3.1 Stakeholder group 1 – L2 Students
  - 3.2 Stakeholder group 2 – L1 Nationals
  - 3.3 Stakeholder group 3 – L2 Teachers
  - 3.4 Stakeholder group 4 – Universities
  - 3.5 Stakeholder group 5 – Adult Education Institutions
  - 3.6 Stakeholder group 6 – Vocational Education Institutions
4. Results of the Focus Group meetings
5. Requirements and specifications for the establishment of language advisors, methodology and supporting tool

## Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 About the project

The project "Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants " (L2PATHS) is led by Translex Ltd., a diversified language services business based in Galway, Ireland. The consortium of the project consists of 6 organizations from 5 EU countries: The Language Center from Italy, Translex Ltd. from Ireland, iberika Sprachschulen from Germany, Baltic Bright from Latvia, Folkuniversitetet from Sweden and VCAT Consulting GmbH from Germany.

All partner institutions are experienced education providers, IT developers, and/or economic stakeholders that bring extensive knowledge, experience, and relationships to the consortium. The partnership of L2PATHS does not only cover far-reaching parts of Europe geographically and linguistically but also different economic sectors which are related to the aims of the project in terms of content. The consortium consists of private providers of education, an adult education provider, education institution providing immigrant support, and a technology partner, which will enable the consortium to successfully accomplish the overall objectives. The project is realised with the support of the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme, KA2.

The key to successful integration in a new country is mastery of the host country language. While this is important for social integration it is essential for accessing education and employment generally but particularly for education and employment at a higher level. In learning the host country language immigrants face the following problems:

- Lack of awareness of the available options
- Free courses are often too basic or of insufficient depth and quality
- Language school courses are expensive
- General language courses whether free or paid are by definition, general, thus may not be specific enough to particular vocations, professions, or studies
- Time & transportation are limited
- No teacher or coach to guide, encourage, and monitor them

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

- Lack of confidence
- A belief that adequate is enough
- A poor basic education
- Lack of ITC literacy

Immigrants who have mastered enough of the host country language to get by often do not realize the importance of further improvement. In the case of immigrants with lower educational levels the first step to attaining higher levels is sufficient language proficiency to enter the educational system of the host country. Immigrants with higher educational achievement, say third or fourth level qualifications, often come with relatively good language skills; however they work below their skill levels because their language competence, though adequate, needs to be excellent for jobs at the professional level.

The innovatory aspect of this project is to bring together a number of disparate developments, standards, systems and practices to solve the problem of the effective integration of migrants with respect to mastery of the host country language.

A migrant moving to a new country faces the problem of not knowing where to go for advice; where to find out what the options are for learning the host country language; and how to find the right combination of learning resources that fit their personal and professional needs.

This project aims to draw on already established standards such as the CEFR and Euro-Pass, to standardise a needs analysis format, to create a unified classification system for the different language learning pathways, to create a methodology for providing language advice, to train 35 professional Language Advisers, to set up at least five Language Advice Centres, to create a system called Path-finder, and to link all of these together in order to enable a migrant to draw on the diversification of learning pathways now available to create an individualised personal learning plan for the host language.

With these requirements in mind the aims and objectives of the project are:

1. To produce two research reports, one describing the background, needs and issues with regard to obtaining language learning advice in the partner countries,

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

and the other detailing user requirements for the Path-finder language resource and planning system;

2. To provide Guidelines for setting up a Language Advice Centre;
3. To establish Language Advice Centres in five partner countries;
4. To create a format for depicting a personal (language) learning plan that will include graphical representations of goals and progress;
5. To create the Language Pathfinder System that will enable an adviser or a student to navigate through the learning choices based on their ability, goals, preferences, time, and location; then help them to plot a Pathway for achieving their learning goals;
6. To train 35 Language Advisers (7 per each advice centre);
7. To provide 250 migrants with language advice (50 per each advice centre);
8. To attract at least 500 visitors to the project website and use of the Path-finder system;
9. To produce dissemination materials, and to execute dissemination actions with special emphasis on social networks; to attract the attention of other Europeans by engaging them in the planned competition;
10. To make decision makers, educators, and publishers aware of the Language Adviser methodology and the Path-finder tool;
11. To conduct a valorization conference at the end of the project

## **1.2 Aims of the research**

The objective of the needs analysis was to establish:

- if and to what degree the concept of language advice and the role of language advisors is understood in the partner countries
- to understand what students teachers and language institutes think a language advice service entails and what modifications and improvements they suggest

## **Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**

### **Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

- to find out which methods are being used to determine the language level of a student

In addition, this research also aimed at establishing a loose network of teachers, students and key personalities within the language learning world and building up a know-how in relation to language advice and language advisors.

## **2. Methodology**

The stakeholders were outlined in the project description and were more closely defined during the kick-off meeting in Galway. While planning the research phase, the partners decided to include L1 Nationals as well. The group of stakeholders are separated into 6 main groups:

1. L2 students;
2. L1 nationals;
3. L2 teachers;
4. Universities;
5. Adult Education Institutions
6. Vocational Education Institutions

Prior to the research all partners received questionnaires for each group of stakeholders. The questionnaires consisted of 4 to 7 open questions and were translated into the national language by the partners.

The partners contacted a total of 131 stakeholders with the help of telephone interviews, face to face interviews, desk research, a questionnaire and common e-mail contact. The research phase took place mainly from the beginning of February until mid-April.

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

Table I: Stakeholders who filled out questionnaires

Partner	L2 students	L1 nationals	L2 teachers	Universities	Adult Education Institutions	Vocational Education Institutions	Questionnaires received
The Language Center	8	6	11	4	4	2	28
Translex	8	5	9		1	1	24
iberika	4	4	4	4	4	4	24
Baltic Bright	8	5	7	4	4	5	33
Folkuniversitetet	5	3	4	2	4	4	22

Interestingly, the e-mail contact lead to no result at all in Ireland and Germany. Even though the project was described to the stakeholders and they commented positively on the project's aims, both partners did not receive any questionnaires via this channel and have had to fall back on other research methods. Consequently, most results in these two countries were achieved through telephone and face to face interviews, desk-research and personal contacts.

All stakeholders commented positively on the project and were willing to contribute to the research. However, universities, adult education institutions and vocational education institutions in some partner countries were very reluctant to give information on how they conduct language advice or structure their courses, since they felt this information to be confidential and feared that the information they were giving could get into the wrong hands or be used by their competitors or simply for fear of giving 'wrong' answers. In Latvia it turned out at the very beginning that the stakeholders were not familiar with the term 'language advisor' since something like this does not yet exist in Latvia.

In addition to the questionnaires, each partner held a focus group meeting between February and March 2014. In each partner country between 4 and 8 people attended

## Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

the meeting. The focus groups consisted of L2 students, L2 teachers, project staff and representatives of the partner organisations, L1 nationals and impartial persons.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Stakeholder group 1 – L2 Students

The stakeholders in all partner countries agreed that knowledge of the host country language is important in order to enhance integration and employability. However, the research revealed that there is a big difference in how L2 students receive information about language courses. In almost all partner countries, L2 students did not know who could help them. For this reason all L2 students interviewed for this research welcomed the idea of language advice centers and language advisors.

In Sweden and Latvia for example it seems that L2 students do not receive advice about course options or only receive very basic advice about their language level and appropriate courses. If they had received some form of advice it had usually been given by either teachers or administrative staff. Given this situation, it is understandable that many students in Sweden, for example, feel forced into the *Swedish for Immigrants* programme and attend courses with mixed feelings. The situation seems to be a little different in Germany. Here migrants can get a list from the Jobcenter with names of course providers and their contact information. However, it is still up to the students to contact these institutions and find a suitable course.

In Germany and Italy there seems to be some form of language advice system. However, the person giving the advice is usually a teacher, language coordinator or director of the school. A language advisor as defined in this project who takes care of students and helps them define learning goals and find learning pathways does not exist in any of the partner countries. For this reason, the concept of language advice and the role of the language advisor were unknown in almost all countries which resulted in the L2 students having a very unclear idea of what sort of person a language advisor should be and what his tasks should comprise. All L2 students agreed that the personality of the language advisor is very important. This person should be friendly and patient and make students feel at ease. Most L2 students also feel that the language advisor should have good communication skills which for most of them included knowledge of different languages. Students in Italy and Germany also said that that the

## Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

language advisor should get to know his clients and find out what their learning goals are and by when they want to have achieved them. For all L2 students the advice session should include a placement test, information on course options and prices. A student attending an advice session should also receive information on the enrolment process, study materials and their prices, starting dates and learning resources.

### 3.2 Stakeholder group 2 – L1 Nationals

The research conducted among L1 nationals shows that their knowledge of foreign languages and their experiences differ considerably between the partner countries. In Ireland for example, none of the interviewees had learnt a foreign language. For this reason they had very little experience with language learning. In Latvia, Sweden and Germany, most of the interviewees had learnt a foreign language, in most cases either for professional reasons or during their studies. The main problems encountered were the learning process itself, putting the theory into practice and staying motivated.

Since hardly any of the interviewees in Ireland had learnt a foreign language, they clearly knew less about language learning than the L2 students and had never used the services of a language advisor either. In Sweden and Germany the L1 nationals seem to be a little better prepared than the L2 students since they have a better idea where to find courses and in general also know a few institutions providing courses.

Since the concept of language advice is unknown and language advisors do not exist in Latvia, none of the L1 nationals had ever spoken to a language advisor. For them a language advisor is more or less the same as a foreign language teacher. Thus it is not clear what a language advisor is and what his tasks are.

In Sweden and Germany, L1 nationals had used some form of language advice. Swedish L1 nationals had seen counsellors for advice on language skills needed for certain occasions. In Germany two out of four interviewees had spoken to a language advisor, one person at the self-study center and one person at a language school. They received information on different learning pathways and their advantages and disadvantages, were asked for their learning goals and knowledge of the language and a placement test was conducted. Both persons found the language advice very helpful and had thus a very clear idea of language advice and the role of the advisor.

## Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

All interviewees pointed out that the personality of the language advisor is the most important factor. They also stated that a language advisor should:

- be sociable, understanding, open and empathetic
- be a good listener
- have learnt at least one foreign language himself/herself in order to understand what it feels like and what problems can arise
- understand a person's motives for learning a language
- know different types of learners

The language advice session itself should at least include a placement test and information on course options. It should also give clients information on how to achieve their learning goals. Interviewees who attended advice sessions and found it helpful were also informed about course fees, study materials, exams and characteristics of different course types.

In general all L1 nationals welcome the idea of a language advisor. When seeing a language advisor face to face the research revealed that the personality of the advisor is very important to all potential clients. As far as an online system is concerned, all learners stressed that it should be easily accessible and understandable. Thus it may be a good idea to provide a short guide for users giving instructions on how to use the system in a few words and very simple language.

### 3.3 Stakeholder group 3 – L2 Teachers

The research revealed that very often teachers take over the role of language advisors. This seems to be the case in Italy and Latvia. In these two countries, teachers evaluate the learner's level and also create personal learning plans taking into account learning goals, ability levels and the student's needs.

The situation seems to be very different in Germany. In some institutions teachers also take over the role of a language advisor. In these cases, they also evaluate learners' levels and create a learning plan. However, if a teacher is not taking over the tasks of a

## **Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants** **Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

language advisor, teachers meet their students for the first time on the first day of class. This seems to be the most common case. In this case, teachers do not have any influence in the evaluation. When teaching group courses, there is a standard learning programme that teachers have to follow. For this reason, they have very limited possibilities for adapting the course to each learner. In these cases they can only use internal differentiation. When teaching one-on-one lessons, the teachers stated that the institution informs them about the student's level and learning goals. Based on this information they can create a personal learning plan and can adapt it after the first class when they got to know the student better.

All teachers stated that there are regular tests to monitor the learner's progress even though they may differ in formality and frequency between the partner countries.

Although responsibilities taken over by teachers differ considerably between partner countries, most of the teachers seem to be satisfied with the current system. As far as the level is concerned, most teachers think the students are placed in the right course. Latvian teachers said more time should be devoted to planning a course and to assessing a client's needs since this will greatly influence the learning outcomes. Some German teachers also felt that the individual needs of the learners should be assessed more thoroughly. They felt that clients may often be placed in a course that matches their language level but that may not be the right course with regard to their learning goals, course intensity and composition of the group in terms of age, educational background, time spent in Germany, etc.

For many teachers, the internet is an important resource of information. For this reason especially the Italian teachers consider the Pathfinder-system a very useful tool for language advisors.

### **3.4 Stakeholder group 4 – Universities**

The feedback from universities about language advisors differs considerably between the partner countries. Universities in Latvia, Sweden and Germany stated that in order to study at a local university the students will have to be fluent in the local language and that it is up to the students to prove their language skills through exams. In Latvia and Germany, universities do not organise language courses in Latvian or German for the students.

## Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP

The concept of language advisors seems to be unknown at Swedish and Latvian universities. In Latvia the concept of “language advisor” is associated with the role of a teacher which is in line with the perception by other target groups in Latvia. In Ireland, Italy and Germany there are members of staff who partly fill the role of a language advisor even though their job title is different. Interestingly, persons comparable to language advisors existed in Italy until a few years ago. Now their work is done by teachers, probably for financial reasons. In universities interviewed in Ireland there is a member of staff who is responsible for placing newly arrived students in the appropriate course and who can also point them in the direction of relevant learning materials. In Germany, there are members of staff working at the self-study centers who partly do the work of a language advisor. However, they only refer to self-study options and do not give placement tests or information on language courses. In Italy, a teacher is now doing the work of a language advisor which consists of doing placement tests and creating a learning program for each student.

Even though many universities do not organise courses in the local language, almost all of them organise courses in foreign languages for their students. In Latvia, there is a questionnaire to analyse the student's needs. In Germany and Italy there are placement tests to check listening, reading and writing skills. In Italy there is also an interview with each student. In these two countries the CEFR seems to be a well established level system for courses and materials.

Each university seems to have its own course system which may lead to universities offering different types of courses and using different teaching methods and materials. In countries where the CEFR is established it will be possible to compare test results and get certificates approved. It can be assumed that this may not be as easy in countries where there is no such system.

### 3.5 Stakeholder group 5 – Adult Education Institutions

In most partner countries adult education institutions seemed to be reluctant to take part in the needs analysis for fear of their answers getting into the wrong hands or giving 'wrong' answers. However, in all partner countries there are a number of adult education institutions and different types of programs are offered depending on the client's needs and expectations.

Adult education institutions in Latvia, Italy and Germany also provided information on how they evaluate a client's needs. Surprisingly, this process seems to be very similar in all three countries. The first contact between a client and an adult education

## **Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

institution is with the administrative staff. In all of these countries, the staff first goes through a set of questions to establish the client's needs and then asks the client to do a placement test. Evaluation of the tests is done by a teacher. In most cases there is also an oral test. Based on the test result, the client receives information about learning options, characteristics of different types of courses and information on course duration and prices. Adult education providers in Latvia and Germany also stated that they were mostly satisfied with this system and that very few clients are placed in the wrong course. The fact that three different countries use a very similar system seems to further confirm that this system is working well.

In Italy, the administrative staffs have a degree in foreign languages. In other countries requirements may not be as strict. In most countries, teachers are native speakers and have a degree or some other training in this field. However, none of the adult education providers offers the services of a language advisor. For this reason, clients will only get information on the courses offered by this particular adult education institution and will probably have to go through the whole process described above all over again if they contact a different course provider. This may be very time-consuming and frustrating for the clients.

Adult education providers in Latvia, Italy and Germany also conduct regular progress tests. However, the test format and frequency seem to differ even within the countries.

### **3.6 Stakeholder group 6 – Vocational Education Institutions**

The research among vocational education institutions showed that there are big differences between Ireland, Germany and Latvia on the one side and Italy and Sweden on the other side. In Latvia, Ireland and Germany vocational education institutions do not seem to be aware of their role in language advice. Thus, they do not conduct placement tests or organise courses to learn the local language for their students. Even though there does not seem to be a language advisor in Sweden and Italy, there are special courses in the local language in these two countries.

In Sweden courses in vocational Swedish are part of the training programme. These courses include reading, grammar, pronunciation, reading and listening comprehension and writing practice. The Swedish for Immigrants test (SFI test) is part of the course.

In Italy vocational education institutions conduct a preliminary placement test which is based on the CEFR and consists of open and closed questions. A teacher evaluates the

## **Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**

### **Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

test and creates a study plan for the student. Courses can be general or for specific purposes depending on the student's needs. There are regular tests and feedback sessions to monitor a student's progress. In addition to the entry test, there is a compulsory test after the first half of the course and a final test at the end of the course.

#### **4. Results of the Focus Group meetings**

Focus group meetings were held in all partner countries. The aims of the project and the concept of a language advisor were explained to all participants. All participants welcomed the idea of educating language advisors and creating an online tool. Basically, all participants agreed with the initial model for language advisors.

All focus groups also agreed on the fact that a specific training course is required in order to become a language advisor. Being a teacher can be helpful but should not be a requirement for language advisors. Language advisors should know about all learning options available (formal, informal and non-formal). Most focus groups also found it important for a language advisor to speak several languages, have good social skills, be interculturally aware and have a wide network of contacts in the local communities.

The Irish focus group stated that the language advisor should not be bound to an office but should instead be mobile. Consideration should be given to language advisors being present in places visited by migrants such as Social Welfare offices as it would enable these institutions to refer their clients directly to the language advisor and thus to reach a wider public.

The Swedish focus group stated that a language advisor should also have knowledge of subjects relevant for migrants but not related directly to language learning such as inclusion, civic action and the labour market. For this reason it may be useful to also provide information on these and other subjects relevant for migrants. Since this is very country-specific, each partner country will have to consider if this is relevant for them and if so, to identify the most important topics.

All participants welcomed the idea of an online tool like the Pathfinder System. The online tool should be easily accesible and understandable. It should give users as much information on learning options as possible (for example formal, informal and non-formal learning options, starting dates for courses, course content and prices).

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

**5. Requirements and specifications for the establishment of language advisors, methodology and supporting tool**

The research showed that the concept of a language advisor is completely unknown in some of the partner countries while in other countries there are persons performing part of the tasks of a language advisor even though under a different name. If there is some sort of language advice, it is always restricted to one particular institution. The research also showed that language advisors do not get a special training. A standardized needs analysis format and a common model for language advisors would fill precisely this gap and would without a doubt considerably improve the way language advice is given.

The feedback from stakeholders in all partner countries shows that language advice should mostly be about presenting a learner with choices instead of prescribing activities or learning pathways. Having in mind the research undertaken by all partners and the results of the focus groups meetings, a language advisor should have the following qualities and fulfil the following tasks:

**Skills and Qualities**

- open, friendly and emphatic
- should have good social skills
- independent (know different education providers, learning materials etc.)
- personal knowledge of many students & their needs
- intercultural awareness
- be aware of the educational & societal background of the learner
- should have knowledge about language learning (teaching experience would be useful but is not mandatory)
- should understand a learner's language issues and background experience

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

- speak foreign languages in order to be able to communicate with migrants who do not yet speak the local language well and also be able to understand what it feels like to be a learner and which problems can arise
- should know many learning options (formal, informal, non-formal) as well as their advantages and disadvantages
- should know different types of learners
- should have a wide network of contacts (migrant communities, public service agencies, education providers)

**Tasks**

- analyse student's needs and learning goals, help learners identify goals
- assess language level
- assist in organising studies, create a personalised learning plan
- assist and oversee the autonomous learning and progression
- cultivate and guide learners' autonomous learning
- help students in discovering how they learn best (learner type)
- suggest suitable materials and strategies
- give information about official exams
- encourage reflection by the student in order to locate areas of weakness in the learners development of learning autonomously
- show learners strategies to cope with learning problems
- be a link between teachers and learners

**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

**Additional tasks (if relevant in the partner's country)**

- arrange tandem-learning sessions
- help find a suitable language learning partner
- be present and active at board meetings, be involved in policy making and the curriculum

**Country-specific adaptations**

- Mobility vs. Language Advice Centre: The research undertaken in Ireland showed that it might be more useful for the language advisor to be mobile instead of being office bound. Thus the language advisor could be present in places visited by migrants (like social welfare offices or community centres) and build up contacts with the target groups and also organisations that could refer migrant clients to him/her.
- Range of subjects covered by language advisors: While giving advice on language learning and learning options, monitoring progress and creating a learning plan are the key tasks of a language advisor it may make sense in some partner countries to also educate language advisors on country specific topics like inclusion, culture, civic action and labour market as recommended by the Swedish focus group.

One of the main tasks of the language advisors will be analysing a client's needs. A standardised **needs analysis format** should always contain the following elements:

- needs and goals (personal and linguistic)
- language level
- availability
- desired duration of the course (start and end date)
- personal background (time spent in the host country, knowledge of other languages, educational background in the home country)



Lifelong  
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**Pathways to Host Country Languages for Migrants**  
**Reference № 543020-LLP-1-IT-KA2-KA2MP**

- issues that could affect the learning process (for example no time or place to study at home)
- price range

Another important aim of this project is the creation of the Pathfinder System. From a user's point of view this system should be easily accessible and present as many learning options as possible and give as much information about these as possible (for example prices, starting dates, content, materials). Since a similar system does not exist in the partner countries it can be assumed that many users will not be familiar with such a platform. It should also be taken into account that many migrants have limited experience with computers and internet but may still want to use the Pathfinder System if no Language Advice Center is close to them. For this reason consideration should be given to issuing a short user's guide which provides instructions on how to use the system in a few words and very simple language.

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