

The Language-for-Work project held its first Network Meeting in Graz on 6 and 7 December 2012, attended by 20 specialists (including civil servants, university researchers, learning providers and trade unionists) from 12 European countries.

The meeting's primary aim was to consult participants on the project's proposed network. Day 1 activities focused on building relationships and establishing a common frame of reference between participants and included discussion of issues of concern to participants, reviews of concepts and practice in different European countries and a presentation on learning theory. Activities on Day 2 explored participants' views on the aims, objectives and structure of the proposed network and what actions should be taken next.

Participants endorsed the project's plan for a European learning network for professionals involved in work-related language development for adult migrants and ethnic minorities, including job-seekers, those in employment and those intending to migrate.

Issues of common concern to participants included national language policies, funding for activity, the role of employers, a range of workplace teaching and learning issues and professional development learning opportunities for those working in this field (e.g. workplace language teachers).

Participants expressed the view that a network would be useful to

- Raise awareness of this field of work
- Develop expertise by enabling sharing of experience and resources.

Participants identified the following objectives for the network:

- Lobbying, advocacy, awareness raising and promotion of the field at national and European levels
- Development of theoretical/conceptual models, practice models, quality frameworks
- Provision of expertise and resources
- Provision of networking and professional development opportunities

Values that participants felt should underpin the network included commitment to the concept of a European community; to diversity, equality of opportunity and social inclusion; to personal development and lifelong learning; and to openness and transparency.

Actions proposed by participants to develop the network included establishing a website, supporting contact between professionals working in this field, setting up special interest groups and holding regional meetings.

The LfW project team welcomed these suggestions and undertook to involve participants as fully as possible in its proposed work plan, including organising learning events, sharing knowledge on policy and practice in different European countries and developing a web site to facilitate network communication and sharing of knowledge and resources.

Next steps were agreed, including development by the LfW project team of

- Proposal for structure and procedures for participants to communicate and contribute
- Project web site (including a resource library and methodological tool-kit)
- Further country profiles (produced if possible by local correspondents)
- Glossary of terminology useful to understand local approaches to work-related language learning.

The project team also undertook to

- Facilitate the establishment of special interest groups
- Support interested participants to organise regional events in their own countries
- Liaise with other organisations, projects and individuals to ensure alignment and synergy.