

Promoting and Assessing Migrants' Language Skills in Switzerland

A Project in the Making

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Premiss 1:

Integration measures – language courses in particular – are subsidised by the federal government.
 Focus lies on low-threshold offers for migrants with a modest school background or insufficient financial means

Premiss 2:

Decisions by the authorities on the status of residence, are based on the „state of integration“. Knowledge of the local language is 1 factor out of 5 that are taken into consideration.

Over-arching goals of the present initiative:

- In general: more transparency, coherence, and a „common language“ in a highly decentralized federal system
- More professionalism, better knowledge transfer and more efficiency in language provision
- Comparability and equal treatment in decisions having to do with migrants' language skills

Measure 1:

A framework curriculum addressing all subsidised language course offers

- ▶ Contains *rules, options, recommendations* on the following:
 - **Goals:** focus on contexts of actual language use and *context-specific can-dos*; also: inter-/socio-cultural aspects; learning to learn
 - **Contents:** in harmony with new goals(!); listening material re: Swiss German dialects, ...
 - **Methods:** action-oriented, task-based; lexical and chunk learning, reflective learning, ...
 - **Quality assurance** through innovation (objectives, methods, opportunities to learn), teachers' further training and a new assessment culture

Measure 2:

A general concept for the assessment and certification of migrants' language learning and proficiency

- ▶ Assessment in a wide sense is considered an integral part of all language course offers ...
 - ... as teacher-learner and learner-teacher feedback
 - ... as an element of the goal-setting-learning cycle
 - ... as a basis for **certificates** that inform the learner and bridge the gap between different course offers, different course providers and the authorities
 - ... as a basis for a learner's personal *Language Passport and Dossier*

Measure 2 (continued):

- ▶ The test-taker characteristics and related **validity and ethical concerns** are taken seriously with regard to requirements in status of residence-related issues.
- ▶ Possibly one minimum level (A2 or B1, depending on status decision) but **not one standard test:**

Migrant's degree of familiarity with formal schooling			
	low	intermediate	high
type of exam (or substitute)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Course-based assessment - Focus on Speaking - Oral test forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific test suite that meets the language needs and the test-taking skills of these migrants - Focuses on Swiss German accents and includes dialect modules as options for Listening and Speaking 	Generally available standardised examinations and diplomas (if quality evidence available)

Measure 3: Development and introduction of new instruments will be commissioned

- *Can-do* statements covering migrants' actual language use contexts and tasks
- **Assessment instruments and certificates** for use with/by migrants who are hardly familiar with formal schooling
- *Language Passport* and other portfolio elements/instruments
- **Video samples** of migrants performing at the relevant levels, etc.