

LANGUAGE POLICY FOR ACTIVE SOCIAL INCLUSION

Laura Varžinskienė, Violeta Ivanauskienė, Jorūnė Vyšniauskytė-Rimkienė

Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Lietuva | Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

The relationship between language and access to democratic processes is of the utmost importance: a democratic language policy could potentially play a key part in enabling active citizen participation (Christiansen, 2006). Citizens should be able to participate actively in democratic forums and have the option to engage in debates, discussions, and dialogue. In everyday life, citizens should not be hindered in their personal and professional fulfilment by language barriers. The main policy areas that have most impact on language policies are those supporting education, youth and culture, with specific regard to competitiveness of European industry and enterprises. On the other hand, multilingualism and language learning are not 'mainstreamed' across a spectrum of European policies. Language learning is also promoted by national policies, and several types of projects across Member States have been carried out to promote language learning in groups at risk of exclusion: however, no common action has yet been undertaken to this aim (Cullen, 2008).

Language learning fosters active social inclusion, which is in its turn a fundamental element favouring employability. For instance, one of the first steps towards employability of migrant citizens is no doubt constituted by the knowledge of the basics of the language of their host country. In this sense language policy intersects and should connect with both social policy and labour policy.

Therefore, when talking about language policy all of the aspects that go beyond language learning and that respond to the needs of the target groups should be considered, by targeting: businesses, individuals and society. In order to help these target groups collaborate an INCLUDE network was created (funded by the European Commission, EU Lifelong Learning Programme, Project no: 530938-LLP-2012-IT-KA2-KA2NW Grant Agreement no: 2012-4255). The INCLUDE Network aims at promoting positive CHANGES in attitudes, perceptions and beliefs; knowledge, social awareness and language skills.