

Language teacher associations: benefits and models of collaboration

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International Federation of Language Teacher Associations
Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes

- A federation of multilingual and unilingual, national and international teacher associations
- An NGO of UNESCO and the Council of Europe

Mission Statement: What we believe

- languages enhance both individual and national potential
- there is no single global recipe for good language teaching
- we can all learn from each other
- ideas are for sharing and information should be a 'free good'
- all languages and their speakers deserve equal respect
- language diversity is essential to the human heritage
- each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people
- the loss of a language is a loss for all humanity

What we do

- contribute to the professional development of language teachers
- disseminate the latest international research to our member associations
- enable professional associations of language teachers worldwide to learn from each other
- support members at a national level, e.g. to gain recognition, to build collaborations

What we do

- represent language teachers internationally and support national campaigns to promote languages
- campaign on issues of concern - e.g. promoting language learning, language policy, plurilingualism and multilingualism, class sizes, less commonly taught languages
- advise/represent UNESCO and the Council of Europe, where requested, e.g. on Linguapax, language rights, multilingualism, endangered languages

LEARNING THROUGH LANGUAGES

Promoting inclusive, plurilingual and intercultural education

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Promouvoir une éducation inclusive, plurilingue et interculturelle

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LACS 2

Empowering Language Networks



Language Associations and Collaborative Support

LACS



Questionnaires to LTAs

- Functions of the LTA
- Strategies to support teacher development
- **Strategies to influence policy**
- Information on policymaking bodies on which the associations have been represented
- **Barriers to influencing policy**
- Sources of funding
- Projects
- Main challenges for the LTA



Learning from each other: A handbook for language teacher associations.

Lamb, T.E., Atanasoska, T., Hepp, M., Jönsdottir, S. and Zielinsky, J.
<http://lacs.ecml.at/Folder/tabid/2643/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

Definitions of and rationale for membership of a language teacher association

Member recruitment and retention activities

Dissemination through events

Association websites

Publications

Involvement in policy

Involvement in research

Fundraising activities

Useful collaborations

Evaluation





Major theme: Benefits of collaboration

- Sharing teaching ideas
- Organising in-service training events
- Representation on policy-making bodies
- Campaigning to promote language learning
- Campaigning on other issues that affect all language teachers, e.g. assessment, exams
- Sharing some tasks to make more economic use of limited resources
- Accessing funding to develop resources or carry out research and development projects



1. Policy influence as a vital function...

Need for solid teacher voice

“the nature of policy making in Australia, being both centralised and decentralised makes it important for a solid voice to represent the trends and practices.” (Australia, Multi)



1. Policy influence as a vital function...

English is not enough...need to value all languages

“...il faut que les autorités linguistiques et éducatives développent et/ou soutiennent des programmes liés à la mise en pratique du multi- et plurilinguisme... Ceci permettrait de remplacer l’attitude „au lieu de...“, qui prédomine toujours lors du choix des langues d’enseignement et de recherche, par l’attitude „à côté de...“ (Russia, French)



1. Policy influence as a vital function...

Teacher support

“Being a federation of foreign language teachers in Finland it is our task to safeguard and to try to improve the rights and well-being of our members, the Finnish foreign language teachers and at the same time to keep a high standard of language teaching in our country.” (Finland, Multi)

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2. Main barriers to your association influencing policy (external)

No history of involvement

- L'Association ne possède aucun pouvoir de décision et d'influence sur les politiques linguistiques (Macedonia, F)
- Les associations, même professionnelles, ne font pas partie à des organes de décision, ne sont pas partenaires obligatoires pour le Ministère. (Czech Republic, F)



3. Main barriers to your association influencing policy (internal)

Membership issues

- The number of members is not adequate to influence politicians and policymakers in general (Italy, M)



3. Main barriers to your association influencing policy (internal)

Membership issues

- Die finanziellen und personellen Ressourcen sind beschränkt, da wir ehrenamtlich tätig sind und keine öffentliche Unterstützung bekommen. (Switzerland, G)

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5. Main challenges for your association

- Challenges related to decline in language learning, either generally or specifically e.g. challenge of English
- Falling or aging membership
- Financial needs
- Cooperation with other unilingual or multilingual associations

Models of collaboration

- One multilingual association for ALL languages, with separate language committees or Special Interest Groups led by volunteers, plus generic and language specific publications and events; shared website with language areas; teachers are direct members; e.g. South Africa, UK
- As above, but focusing only on the university sector; e.g. Czech Republic
- As above, but with separate language teacher associations as well; teachers have to join each one separately; e.g. Sweden, USA

Models of collaboration

- A multilingual umbrella organisation or federation, with separate language associations as members; a generic publication and website (multilingual), with their members producing specific ones; sometimes generic events to supplement their member associations' events; sometimes joint meetings on specific issues, e.g. national assessment; sometimes chairs of separate associations are on the Board; no individual members; e.g. Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands
- A multilingual association with a range of organisations as members (associations, universities, language schools etc), but also with individual members; range of publications and events as well as projects; e.g. Lithuania
- As above, but also with regional multilingual and national unilingual associations, plus some other agreements; e.g. Canada

Benefits and challenges

- The promotion of common interests of all language teachers is only possible when there is an umbrella association like SUKOL. In addition to that, it is important for the teachers of different languages to have the chance to gather in common training days with multilingual and pedagogical content. The challenge is to find compromises between the interests of teachers of different languages. (Finland)
- We are the voice of language teachers in the country, because we represent all languages taught and a group of prestigious institutions in education. The members of LKPA are invited to work in various educational boards in the country. Our conferences are organised in the premises of the Parliament and Ministry of Education and Science. LKPA offers variety of opinions, activities and partnership modules. Professionals appreciate mutually beneficial work on the EU and national projects. (Lithuania)

Benefits and challenges

- The major benefit is that you can take advantage of the number of members (some 3500) when it comes to public debate about languages and politics; they really have to take us seriously since we represent a considerable amount of language teachers (too few though) and that you can exchange ideas, approaches, strategies etc. For example the Papiaments section is supported by the Frisian section in their struggle for recognition as a national language. The main challenge is to avoid competition between languages, especially in secondary education: German, French and Spanish for example aim at the same target group....(The Netherlands)
- The challenge is division and lack of consistency. Separate associations for only two languages, and all of them rather local. For successful advocacy we need to pool all our resources. (Sweden)

Benefits and challenges

- I envy the Bulgarians their developing links between the FLT associations. In our country, there are various organizations but not a common one. The challenge is to promote FLT in general, and not English only, as the main rule should be respected: 1+2: The mother tongue and English, and the language of one of our neighbouring lands as well (German, Polish). In other words, to observe the state and the EU's language policy. (Czech Republic)
- With and through STIL we have a united voice. But by having independent members we can more quickly and easily address the needs and concerns of each language. We see no challenges in this approach. (Iceland)

Benefits and challenges

- The foundation of EFLT opened the doors to networks outside Estonia (we are members of NBR and FIPLV), and enables to meet colleagues and share experience outside Estonia (our representatives participate in ECML projects, programmes, FIPLV and NBR events) (Estonia)
- One of the major advantages is related to the fact that all together we decide on the methodology of language teaching, in order to bring it to a unified approach. The second point in favour of the Language association is that we help the Ministry of Education to carry out standards and programs of language teaching in the State. Also the association provides support to young specialists. The last point but not the least, is that we develop international and local projects for teachers and students to participate in. (Latvia)

Advice from some of our member associations

- Position yourself as the umbrella organization that can provide the niche that the teachers are seeking through Special Interest Groups or some way that teachers of that specific language can network. That's what people generally want. (USA)
- I would advise the Bulgarians to get united in one organization for the benefit of sharing knowledge, experience and increasing interest towards language learning. (Latvia)
- It is advisable to build an umbrella organisation, mostly because it can represent the interests of all language teachers – it is easier to have talks between public authorities and one umbrella association instead of several language associations. Additionally, it is possible to share costs (e.g. of member registers und training days) within an umbrella organization. (Finland)

Advice from some of our member associations

- I think the easiest way to start a multilingual association is to do it our way, by being a federative association. In that way everyone can get used to the idea of working together and at the same time keeping your independence. We have meetings with the presidents of the sections 6 times a year (in the ‘main board’), all the work is done by the executive committee. Each section has the same vote in the main board. (Netherlands)
- To start work by allowing the different monolingual Associations to remain independent but working together as we do in STIL. Later on, there might be a possibility to change into something similar to ALL. (Iceland)
- Experience tells me that an umbrella association of the non-English languages, in order to “defend” themselves, could create a second association in Bulgaria, parallel to the English one: and then a federation of the two could be the climax. (Italy)

Advice from some of our member associations

- They should observe the state and the EU's language policy critically and they should actively establish professional links to other European countries, especially with the former East block countries which face similar problems. (Czech Republic)
- Our advice is to actively support languages and to promote multilingualism and tolerance as far as is possible. (South Africa)
- Be clear on the goals and rig for cooperation rather than for competition between languages. (Sweden)
- **We wish you ENTHUSIASM and OPTIMISM....**if you are interested in something, no matter what it is, go at it at full speed ahead and you will achieve your aim. (Estonia)



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