



# Workplace-based Language Exchange Toolkit

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# Worldplaces

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# 1. Worldplaces: workplaces working with migrant women

## What's Worldplaces?

Worldplaces is an European-wide network co-funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund that is being developed by a consortium of 7 partners from 5 member states.

With Worldplaces we aim to bridge the gap between the organizations from the public, private and social sector that are committed to supporting low-skilled migrant women to become closer to the workplace through 4 specific pillars: 1) life-long learning, training & leadership; 2) life and community soft skills; 3) language and culture and; 4) sense of self and identity.

## Our mission

While workplaces are often seen as the final destination of migrants' integration journey, they are in fact formidable hubs for fostering integration. Low-skilled migrant women, however, have less access to workplaces and hence less chances to integrate through the labour market.

As gender divides and gaps widen, communities lose human and economic capital too, because migrant women - regardless of their intellectual or educational background - are drivers for integration.

In this program, SPEAK will work with companies, non profit organizations and the public sector to implement language and culture groups that, through games and activities, allow that participants learn the local language and also build relationships of friendship and trust with inspiring professionally active women that can inspire them to join and stay on the labour market.

## The problem we're trying to solve

These are some of the biggest challenges faced by migrant women:

### **(1) Language barrier:**

The language level is one of the biggest predictors of the probability of a migrant to obtain and keep a job, as well as their salary.

## **(2) Cultural barrier:**

Understanding the local culture and work culture plays a key role in keeping a job in the long run as there can be many miss-communication.

## **(3) Better understanding from employees:**

In some situations the lack of understanding from the side of the potential employee can seriously hurt the probability of a woman to access the labor market.

## **SPEAK's methodology**

SPEAK's methodology and approach deploys language learning as a means to an end, rather than as a goal in itself. Through our language groups and events, participants build meaningful relationships that will work as a support network in their new city, while learning a language in an informal, fun and effective way.

Therefore, the SPEAK's sessions, in the context of the Worldplaces project, have an informal approach and methodology.

## **The SPEAK terminology**

Due to SPEAK's informal approach to language learning, we also have our own terminology:

- We offer "language groups" instead of "courses".
- We host "sessions" instead of "classes".
- We have "participants" instead of "students"; and "buddies" instead of "teachers".

As a buddy, you'd be leading a language group, sharing your language and culture with others.

## 2. Being a buddy

### Being a buddy

By becoming a buddy, you just took the first step towards having a positive impact in your local community by sharing your own world, language and culture with others.

Anyone can be a buddy. This means that buddies are not necessarily qualified “teachers” or “professors”. Buddies are individuals like YOU and I. The only thing you need is the passion and motivation to meet and connect with new people, and to share your language and culture with them.

### Share your language and culture

As a buddy you’d be leading a language group, sharing your language and culture with the participants who join your group.

Language groups will be targeted at low-skilled migrant women. The goal is to help migrant women learn the local language and also build relationships of friendship and trust with inspiring professionally active women that can inspire them to join and stay on the labour market.

### Informal and fun sessions

The main idea is to use the sessions to create a safe and informal environment for participants to learn your language in a fun and dynamic way, as well as to share about each other’s cultures.

Therefore, it’s important that you make your sessions informal: we are not a language school and we don’t do too much grammar -- we want participants to talk, learn from one another, develop themselves and have FUN!

## Guides and resources for buddies

If a participant asks you a question during a session and you don't know the answer, it's completely ok to say you don't know and that you'll get back to them during the following session – nobody expects you to be an expert!

We'll provide you with different tools and resources that'll help you lead amazing sessions and make the best out of this experience. You'll have access to guides and materials for buddies, which include ready-to-use activities, tips, examples and suggestions for each and every session. We've got you covered!

## The sessions

You'll host an offline language group, with face-to-face sessions.

Each language group consists of 12 sessions of 90 minutes each, which will take place once a week (1 session per week during 12 weeks).

You'll lead a small group that will be composed of 5 participants, all of them low-skilled migrant women.

### 3. Language groups: working with migrant women

#### Important to keep in mind during your sessions

**We don't know their story or what they have been going through:** We are not equipped to help participants on a deeper level, except helping them learn the local language and this way make them have a better start in their new country.

**Some topics can be delicate and sensitive:** When talking about family, for example, don't ask specific questions - Help them make sentences with examples.

**Focus only on the language learning process:** We're here to help only in the language learning process. If they ask for help in other areas, we don't have the power to do anything.

#### A few tips as a buddy

Treat your participants from equal to equal, as any other participants you may have.

Bear in mind that their circumstances might make sessions a bit more challenging. For example, participants might have a shorter attention span or lower attendance ratios.

Also, consider that most of the participants only speak their native languages (e.g. Arabic, Farsi, etc.), so communication might be slow - Try to use non-verbal communication and gestures to support your explanations.

Avoid asking for details of their past life, if they don't expose those events by themselves. In conflictive topics (e.g. politics & religion), if needed to speak about them, be factual and avoid engaging in discussions with personal opinions.

Try to avoid sharing details on personal high-standards of life (e.g. sailing this weekend) far from their reality. It doesn't mean that you can't create bonds through your personal day-to-day experiences, but keep in mind the different standards of relationships that they may have depending on age, gender, etc.

## During the sessions

**Create a routine and a structure**, providing a sense of control to participants:

- Revision of previous session
- Introduction to new topic (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation)
- Practice through games and activities
- End of the session

**Build community:** Break down barriers & establish trust that fosters a learning environment of respect, dignity, and humanity.

**Be animated:** Change your tone of voice and make gestures. This will keep participants interested and it will be more difficult for them to be distracted.

**Encourage creativity through different practice activities:** Music, drawings, images...

**Choose activities and materials that engage and target specific skills:** Pictionary, wording games, songs (what words can you recognize?), repetition, mimics...



## 4. Language levels

### Language levels

We work with the following language levels: Basic I, Basic II, Basic III and Conversational.

These are designed as a journey from Basic I to Conversational, so participants can start from scratch and progress throughout the journey level by level.

We'll provide you with specific guides and ready-to-use materials adapted to the language level that you choose to share with participants.

### Basic I, II & III groups

**Basic I** groups are targeted at participants who have never had any contact with the language before. In short, participants joining Basic I groups are learning your language from scratch.

**Basic II** groups are targeted at participants who have little knowledge of the language and need to learn more basic vocabulary and grammar to meet specific day-to-day needs.

**Basic III** groups are targeted at participants who are familiar with the basics, but need to expand their vocabulary and grammar to have conversations on topics that are familiar to them.

### Conversational groups

Conversational groups are for participants who already feel comfortable with the basics of the language and they just want to practice as much as possible to boost their confidence and be able to talk more independently with native speakers.

Buddies leading Conversational groups use only one language: the one you are sharing, so that participants can practice as much as possible.

## 5. How to structure your sessions

### First session: Greeting and presentations

We recommend you make a distinction between the very first session and all the others.

The first session is the first time that you and your group interact with one another. We encourage you to spend as much time as you want or need on getting to know each other, feeling comfortable with each other and breaking the ice.

You can start the first session by introducing yourself as the buddy of the group and sharing something interesting or fun about yourself. Then, encourage participants to do the same. This is also a great opportunity for you to understand the participants' expectations, challenges and motivations to learn the language.

### Other tips for your first session

If you're leading a Basic group, you can spend part of this first session helping participants introduce themselves in the target language by introducing very simple sentences, such as:

- "My name is..."
- "I come from..."
- "I am X years old".

If you're leading a Conversational group, you can either let conversations happen organically -- as participants are already comfortable with the basics -- or, alternatively, you can use any of the other ideas and suggestions from the guide for buddies.

### Main structure for your sessions

From Session 2 onwards, we recommend you divide each of the sessions into three main parts:

- The start (15-20 minutes).

- Into the theme (50 minutes).
- End of the session (15-20 minutes).

## Part I - The start

We recommend you start each session with a simple and fun activity that allows participants to review the main takeaways from the previous session.

This will help them remember the main vocabulary items and sentences that they practiced in the previous session, and will also let you understand if participants are keeping up with the pace of the sessions.

You'll find different ideas for this first part of the session on the guides for buddies.

## Part II - Into the theme

This is the main part of the session, where you will introduce the new topic to the participants and share with them some of the main vocabulary items and useful expressions related to that theme.

After that, you should always include a couple of games or activities for participants to practice the new vocabulary in a fun and informal way.

On the guides for buddies you'll find plenty of ready-to-use activities, including conversation starters, role-play activities, games such as Taboo or Pictionary, and many more!

## Part III - End of the session

For the last part of each session, we propose a daily sharing with participants, in which we combine two main elements: the topic of the session and the cultural component that every participant brings.

You can do this by asking participants questions about how the topic of that session applies in their own cultures.

For example, if the session's topic is "Food and drinks", you can let participants share with one another which are the national dishes in their countries. This way, participants will keep practicing the new vocabulary while sharing with each other interesting facts and insights about their own cultures and countries.