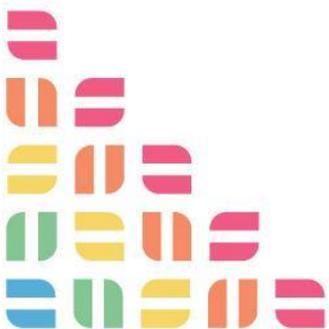


# **Briefing paper on survivor- centered language teaching and labour integration**

***Belgium***

June 2022



## Introduction and methodology

This Briefing Paper presents the main results from the two local roundtables that were implemented in Belgium within the framework of EU-funded AMIF project **WINGS – Supporting Women survivors of trafficking through a Comprehensive Integration Programme** (project number 101038321) by project partner [Payoke](#). The local roundtables had the aim to exchange needs, ideas and good practices among experts in the field of support to women and girls' survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence at an early stage.

The findings from the local roundtables will be used to develop the **WINGS generic framework on survivor-centred integration** which includes the implementation of a language course integrated with psychological support and an employment counselling programme for the integration of **women survivors of trafficking** into the labour market, and consequently **4 WINGS local Comprehensive Integration Support programmes** that will be run in Italy, Spain, Greece and Belgium in 2023.

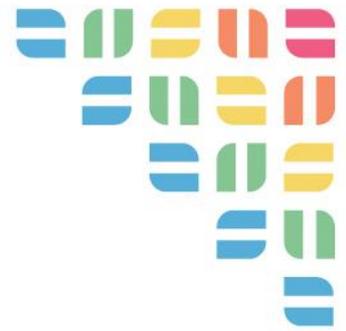
For more information about needs and good practices in working towards the social and labour integration of women survivors of trafficking Italy, Spain and Greece read the Briefing Papers at [www.socialhut.eu](http://www.socialhut.eu).

## Methods for language teaching to vulnerable groups

Third-country national women survivors of trafficking with low educational backgrounds often lack language proficiency also in their mother tongue. This can complicate the language learning process because they may have a hard time expressing certain concepts or thoughts. Assessing the mother tongue language proficiency first can be helpful to get an idea on the learning competencies of the person. By conducting an informal assessment the professionals can get an idea on literacy, communication skills and others. It's therefore crucial to **first focus on teaching main concepts in their own language** with a professional translator **before switching to the host country language**.

Language training through **nonverbal teaching methods** is frequently used with migrants with low educational backgrounds and language proficiency. The main methods mentioned by the professionals were:

- ⊗ **Total Physical Response** (TPR) is a method of teaching language or vocabulary concepts by using physical movement to react to verbal input. The process mimics the way infants learn to speak, it reduces inhibitions and lowers stress. TPR aims to create a brain link between speech and action to boost language and vocabulary learning. This method works best with concrete concepts but less with emotions.
- ⊗ **Using transparent words** is another frequently used method in teaching a new vocabulary. These are words where the meaning can be deduced by creating connections with words with a similar sound in other languages. By using transparent words in a certain context people with no local language proficiency can more easily understand the meaning because the words sound familiar in their own mother tongue.
- ⊗ **Dual learning trajectories** are key for the integration of third-country nationals. Combining language training with on-the-job learning allows them to access the labor market quicker and learn the



language through formal and informal education. More attention must be directed towards individual counseling based on the beneficiaries' needs.

In addition, third-country national women survivors of trafficking with low educational background often lack the **language skills for self-reflection**. It's necessary to start working with **symbols and visualizations** to get an idea of their mental well-being, as thoughts and views can be more easily expressed when using different methods of visualization.

## Gender and trauma-sensitive approaches in language teaching

Survivors of human trafficking often have been through a long period of physical and mental exploitation. Therefore it can be hard to integrate in the host society because of trauma. Trauma however can influence their learning trajectory. A lot of women victims of trafficking coping with trauma experience:

- ⊗ concentration issues and
- ⊗ learning difficulties.

The psychological dimension is often overlooked and women survivors of trafficking are blamed for lack of dedication, motivation and inadequate performance. Language training with integrated psychological support can make a difference. It's important to also **take into account the context and living environment** of the women because a lot of stress factors (which can lead to poor performance) can be linked to the context.

## Points to consider when implementing language course with psychological support

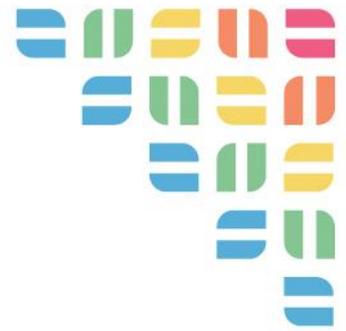
Women survivors of trafficking with poor language proficiency often lack the self-confidence to speak out in class or in public.

- ⊗ **Creating a safe environment** is crucial in language teaching.
- ⊗ Beneficiaries have to be **stimulated to practice the language**, and this can only be done when focusing on empowering them and creating a safe space of trust within the classroom.
- ⊗ A language teacher has to be aware **on his/her own language production** and the physical behaviors of the beneficiaries, as trauma and other psychological problems often translate into physical behaviors and using language by expressing emotions is also something cultural.

## The main skills and competencies for successful integration into the labour market

It's important to **conduct an individual assessment** with beneficiaries at first. Only then you can create an image of the barriers this person is experiencing in the labor market. Also, the beneficiaries' context must be considered:

- ⊗ *Does the beneficiary have children?*
- ⊗ *How many hours a week can this person work?*



The professionals noted that beneficiaries often **lack generic skills** and that it's important to first focus on **generic skill creation and only afterwards on technic and job specific skill training**. Many people who are not ready to enter the labor market need to follow a long lasting trajectory in order to prepare them to enter the regular economic circuit.

Moreover, aspirations often don't match with the competences and skills of beneficiary women. *For example, a beneficiary may want to become a nurse but did not have access to proper education in her home country.*

Reaching certain jobs is only possible when certain preconditions are met. Low educated beneficiaries, therefore, often find it impossible to land a job that fits their profiles. A solution could be to let them experience the sector of their choice but in a low-skilled job within this specific sector. In that way professionals can keep the job target of the beneficiary in mind and the beneficiary can build generic competences and more specific competences that could provide them with the opportunity to further educate themselves in order to find a job that matches their aspirations in the long term.

### Personalised job counselling of vulnerable groups

To get an idea as to whether or not a beneficiary's expectations are manageable within a certain timeframe it's important to conduct an **individual skills assessment**. This is a good way to get an idea on the capabilities of a beneficiary and the shortcomings to overcome to reach certain standards. When conducting an individual assessment the professional can easily see if a person is highly skilled or not. In that way you professionals avoid a highly skilled person getting demotivated in a job that they don't want to perform or that's just under their level. It's important when doing an assessment to take into account the **individual job target of a person**.

Therefore, professionals have to work on an individual basis and keep the job target in mind when looking for internship or labor opportunities.

Overall there is very little or no attention at all being paid to providing beneficiaries with psychological support during labor counselling. Labor counselling is primarily focused on an employment objective and how to reach it. Organisations within the social and regular economy don't have the time or resources to provide psychological support themselves. Of course, they invest a lot in individual follow up and try to support the beneficiary with individual problems but psychological care is not part of their service package.

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