# Introduction LAI

Our globalizing world has brought about some major sociological (amongst other) changes to the world we live in today. The growing number of migrants who build a new life in another country and even in culturally very different parts of the world induces a wide cultural diversity, language requirements, integration and socialization. The EU rightly points to the positive effect of L2 on diversity, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue as well as to effects on employability.

There are always different sides to the story of integration, social inclusion, fit in society, function,. There is language learning and there is becoming a citizen and belonging to the new society. There is a large heterogeneity amongst 2nd language learners: their age and nationality of course, but also their cultural, educational and language background. But they all have a common learning need: a continuous language use to be able to function in society, professionally, socially or otherwise. People with a migration background have to construct a new framework of reference and get to know the society. Moreover they have to acquire tools to function independently in the new environment, to earn a living or to develop in another way.

We know that 2nd language education as such plays an important role in the integration process. In this project we focus on the non-formal learning part of that process. Language learning in a formal classroom setting has been taken care of. We know how we have to do that efficiently and effectively But all too often our model of 2nd language acquisition still is: ‘go to school’. This ‘in school’ classroom situation is quite artificial. The purpose should be that learners use the language as a means, that language proficiency can be applied in everyday life. And that is where the non-formal learning comes in. Putting formal language learning first and practice in the outside world almost as an afterthought is quite detrimental. 2nd language learners learn in direct contact with their environment, in the outside world where all the language and opportunities to practice are available. Participating in society provides the 2nd language learner with meaningful language, relevant in that society. People with migration background literally live within their learning environment and learn in their living environment. Teachers don’t have to create a strong learning environment, society IS one. In this regard 2nd language learning is considered a process of ‘creative construction’. In this social constructivist view 2nd language acquisition is the result of interaction between the learner and the environment. The learner and the environment have their own specific role in this interaction. The environment provides the language require to function.. The learner captures the message and its meaning and gradually structures language out of the language context. Non-formal, outside the classroom learning is crucial. Commuting between the classroom and the outside world is key in 2nd language learning as part of the integration process.

Adults learn ‘only’ with a clear goal, an intrinsic motivation or because they have to. Often we notice that the learner’s perspective stays out of sight for too long. As a result the formal language courses have little to do with the place the migrant is headed to. This usually results in arduous progress, minimal level increase, little or no transfer to the labor market or to further education, loss of motivation, frustration and all too often drop out.

It is very important in integration that from the beginning onwards the perspective of the ’new comer’ is taken into consideration. Policy in integration training should be a shift towards career guidance and actions to be taken to support this process. The responsibility for this process is in the hands of the learner. By functioning in society the learner should be able to self-direct his road to his final destination. A certain language level is necessary, but being integrated should mean: having reached your chosen destination in society. Often this destination is work, but can also be further education and social participation e.g. volunteer work, hobbies, children going to school…

All these elements challenged us to take on Life, all-in. Through literature study, selecting good practices of non-formal learning activities, peer visits to partner countries and a scanning tool we wanted to find out how to construct the link between formal and non-formal learning as a bridge leading to social inclusion.