

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER FORUM MEETING 3

www.mime-project.org
» stakeholder_forum



21 June 2017
Latvijas Universitāte, Rīga, Latvia

Introduction

The FP7 MIME project (Mobility and Inclusion in Multilingual Europe) has adopted four principles for understanding European multilingual challenges and coming to terms with them: (1) built-in interdisciplinarity; (2) the linking up of micro-, meso- and macro-level perspectives; (3) a policy analysis perspective providing a framework for combining the findings from different disciplines and using them in the formulation of policy orientations; and (4) a regular contact with practitioners of multilingualism on various terrains, through the setting up of a Stakeholder Forum and the holding of yearly Stakeholder Forum meetings. The fourth principle is realized via the standing MIME Stakeholder Forum, whose meetings serve as a locus for exchange and debate between stakeholders and the project team, providing input and feedback from which the research teams benefit.

The third Stakeholder Forum meeting took place on 21 June 2017 at the University of Latvia, Rīga, Latvia. It has provided stimulating opportunities for interaction between the stakeholders and the MIME teams. The general, albeit not exclusive, focus of the third Stakeholder Forum meeting was on migrant integration with many cross-cutting issues linking integration to mobility, language learning, modes of mediation, and language policy issues.

The Stakeholder Forum meeting started at 10:00 with brief introductions by Prof. Ina Druviete, Vice-rector of the University of Rīga, Prof. François Grin, MIME project coordinator, Prof. Zaneta Ozolina on behalf of the Rīga hosting team, and Prof. Marija Omazić, MIME dissemination manager. The agenda included two invited stakeholder presentations: by Prof. Inta

Mierina of the University of Latvia and Prof. Antonella Sorace of the University of Edinburgh, and member of the AThEME research project, which is a “cousin” project of MIME under FP7. These presentations were followed by brief presentations of the stakeholders and a round table discussion.

Participants

The following 17 representatives of 13 stakeholder organizations participated in the Stakeholder Forum meeting:

1	Baiba Bela	<i>University of Latvia</i>
2	Vija Buša	<i>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia</i>
3	Svetlana Djackova	<i>Ministry of Welfare of Latvia</i>
4	Signe Groza	<i>European Commission Representation in Latvia</i>
5	Aleksandra Kjakste	<i>Latvian Association of Political Scientists</i>
6	Anita Kleinberga	<i>Ministry of Culture, Latvia</i>
7	Elita Kresse	<i>Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments</i>
8	Zaiga Krišjāne	<i>Faculty of Geography – University of Latvia</i>
9	Agnese Lace	<i>Center for Public Policy PROVIDUS</i>
10	Inta Mierina	<i>Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research, University of Latvia</i>
11	Bernadette O'Rourke	<i>COST Action “New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe”</i>
12	Uldis Priede	<i>European Commission, DG Translation</i>
13	Iveta Reinholde	<i>Department of Political Sciences – University of Latvia</i>
14	Guido Sechi	<i>Faculty of Geography – University of Latvia</i>
15	Antonella Sorace	<i>University of Edinburgh – Bilingualism Matters</i>
16	Dimitra Stafilia	<i>International Federation of Translators Regional Centre for Europe (FIT Europe)</i>
17	George Woodhams	<i>NaTakallam</i>

Short stakeholder and stakeholder institution profiles with contact details are attached in a separate document titled Stakeholder Profiles.

Plenary talks

The first plenary talk by **Prof. Inta Mierina**, Director of the Centre for Diaspora and Migration Research of the University of Latvia, outlined the results of recent unique surveys of Latvian emigrants and return migrants, focusing on the methodology of integration research, as well as on isolating policy effects. Prof. Mierina highlighted the methodological challenges of data collection, online surveys, working with big data, and issues with defining target groups and sampling frames. She further stressed the need to address the multivariate aspects of the issue at hand, including policy measures, characteristics of sending and receiving countries, but also the individual traits of migrants, such as transnational or liquid migrants, a feature typical of Eastern European countries. In order to collect representative data in cases when the sampling frame is not controllable, one should set a broad target group, have a longitudinal panel design, and co-create knowledge with social partners/stakeholders, an approach also adopted by MIME. Surveys need to be complemented with qualitative research to better single out the effects of policies. As the Latvian policy makers tend to focus on fostering return migration, the survey pinpointed the group of unstable nationals, who may choose to return to Latvia if the local conditions change. The study flagged language acquisition as the key integration skill.

The second plenary talk by **Antonella Sorace**, Professor of Developmental Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh and leader of Bilingualism Matters research and information centre, outlined the research results of the FP7 project AThEME, addressing the multilingual challenge predominantly from the linguistic and cognitive perspective, which may be viewed as complementary to the MIME approach, which focuses more on economic, political and social issues (also addressing some of the associated legal implications). The AThEME project aims to assess existing public policies and produce evidence-based results that can inform policy making. The project

focuses on developing strategies to maintain regional minority languages and heritage languages, which are sometimes undervalued and considered to have low prestige; on communicative impairments in bilingualism (e.g. consequences for health-care through over- or under-diagnosing); and on the effects of being multilingual on spoken dialogue, accent perception, cognitive functions, flexibility, attention, and control. The results obtained so far are invariably in favour of multilingualism, showing increased mental flexibility, cognitive reorganization and patterns of cooperative alignment in dialogue between native and non-native speakers in multilingual contexts. The AThEME project, like MIME, acknowledges the benefits of working with local stakeholders and conducting cross-methodological research.

3. Presentations of other stakeholders and round table discussion

The round table discussion was structured around these core questions:

- » **Identifying different groups of migrants and mobile EU citizens and third country nationals and different temporalities:** communication needs on arrival, communication needs for shorter stays and communication needs for a more permanent integration.
- » **Identifying different groups of migrants and mobile EU citizens and third-country nationals and different temporalities:** communication needs on arrival, communication needs for shorter stays and communication needs for a more permanent integration.
- » **Defining the challenges:** What are the main challenges of the linguistic integration of different types of migrants in Europe from the perspective of your organization (NGO sector, state, service providers, and different types of migrants)? What are the challenges of migrant service and language provision and requirements (for getting a visa or a work permit) in terms of cost, speed, efficiency and sustainability?
- » **Identifying opportunities:** What languages do migrants bring where in Europe today? How does

this contribute to the strength of the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe? How can this contribution be further optimised?

- » **Identifying dangers:** What are the linguistic problems migrants are facing? Are there gaps in the national legislation of MSs regulating entry, residence or citizenship that affect the linguistic integration of migrants? Does the existence of such national legislation and of language proficiency programmes in itself guarantee integration? Does language proficiency testing serve inclusion or rather cause exclusion – does it help or hinder migrant inclusion? How does the pressure of social inclusion and cohesion affect linguistic diversity and linguistic and social integration of migrants? Are there appropriate language learning opportunities? Are there appropriate certification procedures for language skills (including inter-comprehension) and for intercultural communication skills? Are there appropriate opportunities for leisure and social activities for temporary migrants?
- » **Looking into the future:** How can the linguistic integration of migrants be made more efficient in terms of resources spent and results obtained? Efficient for whom? How to practically validate migrants' skills, qualifications, competences and rich linguistic repertoires beyond focusing only on their proficiency in the majority language of their host country?
- » **Joining forces:** How can the solutions and outcomes of the EU, national, local state and non-state linguistic integration policy and practices be improved and advanced? How to optimise chances for successful linguistic integration of migrants as a two-way process?
- » **Reaching a consensus:** Reflections on cross-cutting issues related to the linguistic integration of migrants of particular relevance to practitioners, researchers, citizens, and policy makers. What are, in your opinion, the three or four most relevant policy documents providing synthetic yet targeted information and ideas about the effects of migration on the challenges for the management of multilingualism in Europe?

The following feedback and policy recommendations were put forward by the attending stakeholders, emphasising the need to:

1. Accept mobility as the new reality and incorporate research results and recommendations on managing multilingualism into integration and language policy design on national and local levels of government.
2. Address the challenges of a fragmented, project-based approach to migrant integration and lack of funding by providing a more systematic, consistent and coordinated framework that may secure the desired end result of integration.
3. Provide more systematic political and practical solutions and support for the maintenance of heritage and host country language(s).
4. Provide tried and tested solutions.
5. Recognize and properly address different needs of migrants and refugees.
6. Specify the legal framework and integration guidelines for incoming migrants, as opposed to refugees.
7. Learn from both best practice examples and policy failures.
8. Provide integration solutions targeted for migrants that go beyond individual projects: proper language support, courses in the local language(s), speaking groups, civil society activities, and mediation.
9. Provide more intensive and comprehensive language courses for both migrants and refugees, providing advanced language competence that may secure future employment, access to all services, and meaningful political participation; establish services of language mentors or teachers in the workplace, complemented with other measures of social and economic integration.
10. Provide ample opportunities for the integration of children as bridges for better integration of their families, by creating language communities and social get-togethers.
11. Make room for internal local differences when providing global integration solutions.
12. Complement language policy and support with

other integration measures, such as recognition of qualifications, coordination of pension schemes, representation in local and EU administration, etc.

13. Provide translation and interpreter certification schemes to make sure service providers and migrants get quality mediation service.
14. Invest in machine translation solutions.
15. Work more closely with local NGOs in refugee and migrant support.
16. Harness modern language and communication tools and technologies (such as language learning applications, communication platforms, social media, online and distance learning solutions) to complement real interaction and to reach more isolated communities.
17. Build partnerships between migrants, refugees and local administration and universities to create innovative language-learning projects building on their rich linguistic repertoires and providing a means of livelihood.
18. Work on changing the perception of the local population towards migrants and refugees.
19. Raise awareness among doctors, teachers and social workers of the specific requirements of working with different groups of migrants.
20. Enhance communication on available solutions to migrant groups.

4. Wrap-up and conclusion

The meeting came to a close at 17:00 with conclusions from Prof. Tom Moring, President of the MIME Advisory Board, and Prof. François Grin, MIME project coordinator. The MIME stakeholders who participated in the MIME Stakeholder Forum meeting 3 come from diverse professional backgrounds (EU, governmental, private and public sectors), face different realities, have different needs and practice different, sometimes entirely innovative, solutions to the integration challenge.

There was a wide consensus that learning a local language is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for integration and that language learning efforts need to be supplemented by a number of complementary measures to facilitate efficient integration into the host society. The stakeholders expressed the need to fine-tune language and integration policies and find innovative solutions to maximize their scope, efficiency and impact, as well as their readiness to implement innovative approaches in practice. There are, however, some open questions, such as how to strike the right balance between preserving diversity yet achieving integration; what the actual integration capacity of a society is and how that affects integration efforts and outcomes; and how to design and operationalize a policy that would suit both the needs of migrants and the host society. Any policy design would benefit from a more visionary approach – policy-makers should ask themselves what kind of society we want to live in 20 or 50 years from now and design flexible policies that need to tackle the shifting and sometimes unexpected nature of mobility with that goal in mind.

To continue the discussion beyond the Stakeholder Forum meetings, the project administration has set up a stakeholder mailing list of the MIME website, which should serve as an easy contact point for MIME researchers and stakeholders to engage in active discussion and exchange regarding the practical needs of the different groups of stakeholders and their constituencies.