Best Practices

Language Café

A language café, “Sproochecafé” or polyglot café is an excellent opportunity to bring together people from different backgrounds who want to develop their language skills through practice. These are conversation tables divided according to language. The organiser can propose one or more tables in English, Luxembourgish, Portuguese, French, German, etc. The choice of languages depends on the volunteers running the table and the number of participants wanting to practise the language proposed.

Topics can be pre-selected or discussed freely during the event.

The minimum level of language proficiency for participants should be A1 completed. However, it should be borne in mind that learners’ progress may vary and that A1 is only a reference.

Objectives

- Practise a language,
- Enrich vocabulary and improve oral expression,
- Facilitate links between residents,
- Discover and value the linguistic wealth of the participants,
- Help overcome the fear of speaking.
- A small group led by a volunteer facilitator to discuss a theme from everyday life.

Methods

- Designate a person responsible for organising a language café.
- Define a framework/strategy before the event (free speech or pre-selected theme).
- Propose fixed dates for an extended period.
- Offer training to find and train volunteers to man the tables (ASTI a.s.b.l. offers such training).
- Use all means of communication to promote the event (in several languages!)
- Offer registration for learners. (Mail or registration forms)
- Ensure that there is one (volunteer) facilitator per table.
- Offer one table per language spoken (e.g. a Luxembourg table, a Portuguese table, an English table, etc.).

Budget

500€ – 1000€ per year:

Costs for hiring a room and providing drinks and food.

Promotional costs (flyers, announcements on social networks, etc.)

Cleaning costs (room, venue)

Purchase of teaching materials to run the language cafés (ASTI has a list of materials that volunteers can use to run their tables).

Materials

Equipment: chairs, tables, drinks, snacks, projector, teaching material for running a conversation table: ASTI a.s.b.l. has a list of equipment for volunteers wishing to run a table.)

Venues: a local, community refreshment rooms, cultural centre, alternative public cafés, association clubhouses, online, outside during the summer,

Periodicity

Once a month (e.g. every 1st Tuesday of the month)

Evaluation indicators

Number of participants.

Number of conversation tables.

Number of languages offered.

Feedback from participants and facilitators.

Practical advice - DO's

- Provide a framework that allows everyone to speak (2-5 participants per table).
- The ideal duration is 90 minutes.
- Organise the café during evenings or weekends.
- Work with neighbouring municipalities to set up a joint language café, if you wish.
- Arrange public transport for participants who live in different villages in the commune and do not have their own vehicle (e.g. Citybus).
- Thank the volunteers (Informal, formal, etc...)

Practical advice - DONT's

- Don’t be discouraged if few people turn up for the first appointment. This is a long-term project.
- Don’t stop promoting after the first language café.
- Don’t stop looking for volunteers after the first Language Café.

Contact person/Possible partners

ASTI – Agence interculturelle (Training volunteers for language cafés)

Maison des associations (Organisation of language cafés)