



# ITLS INTERNATIONAL TEACHERS FOR TOMORROW'S SCHOOL

SYSTEM CHANGE AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR INTERCULTURAL  
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MUTUAL LEARNING

## Introduction to the toolkit for international teachers

### Abstract:

For the specific target group of international teachers, the project consortium has chosen to design a toolkit with concrete working materials, supported and nurtured from existing materials and background information. In the following introduction, more background on the motivation for the toolkit design is provided, as well as some guidelines on the use of the toolkit.

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give background information on the toolkit

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## Introduction to the toolkit for international teachers

A professional re-entry as a teacher is particularly preconditioned by language barriers and is shaped by differences in teacher training and school practice. Challenges arise, for example, with regard to culture-specific pedagogical knowledge (Peeler & Jane, 2005). The transition to a new socio-cultural environment is thus a challenging task in addition to the demands of a change of school system (Benson, 2019; Collins, 2012; Xue & Yan, 2015). While on the one hand international teachers have to find their way in a society that is partly foreign to them and in a new educational system, they are at the same time exposed to high expectations of their professionalism (ibid., Peeler & Jane, 2005). If international teachers succeed in gaining access to the school, they can bring great potential for school development and cooperation with students, parents and colleagues (Georgi et al., 2011; Massumi, 2014).

At the same time, schools and the people who work and learn in them can benefit from the exchange and cooperation with immigrant teachers. They bring new perspectives, experiences, linguistic and cultural knowledge. In addition to their expertise, they bring potential as potential identifiers for students and can promote intercultural parenting in culturally and linguistically mediating activities (Massumi, 2014, 88f). Other studies suggest that teachers with a migrant background can contribute to the design of inclusive and multilingual reflective educational processes (Georgi et al., 2011). The increasing presence of international teachers could also help to develop a more positive image of minorities and plural forms of life in the migration society and contribute to the intercultural opening of schools.

The professional re-entry of international teachers is therefore closely linked to the promotion of intercultural oriented educational processes and successes of pupils with a migration background (Massumi, 2014). A society shaped by immigration makes it necessary to consider dealing with ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in schools as a matter of course. The International Teachers for Tomorrow's School (ITTS) project therefore aims to promote the professional re-entry of international teachers in a strength-oriented way, to make cultural, linguistic and professional potential usable in the sense of intercultural school development, and last but not least to enable professional perspectives for international teachers in schools.

The volume "International Teachers for Tomorrow's School - Opportunities and challenges of the professional re-entry of international teachers in selected European countries" (Schüssler et al., 2023), produced within the framework of the ITTS project, contains descriptions of the seven participating project countries Belgium, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey. It also presents the results of a survey of international teachers on their activities and experiences. The materials presented here are aimed particularly at international teachers themselves and offer a means of support in dealing with the challenges of re-entering the profession. In addition to materials for international teachers, ITTS has also developed a handout with counselling and reflection materials for school administrators and mentors, as well as a collection of concepts and seminar content for initial and in-service teacher training.

For the specific target group of international teachers, the project consortium has chosen to design a toolkit with concrete working materials, supported and nurtured from existing materials and background information. The result is a toolkit, consisting of the following parts:

## Overview of the materials

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Potentials of international teachers – experiences and examples
- 3 Materials to improve professional language skills for teachers in the new country: scenarios
- 4 Materials to improve professional language skills for teachers in the new country: vocabulary and phrases
- 5 Materials and methods for self-reflection
- 6 Community building and connection as an international teacher
- 7 Education systems and degree recognition: quick sheets
- 8 Further reading

## How to use the materials

The ITTS project deals with the professional re-entry of international teachers who have migrated from outside the EU to European countries. The focus is on teachers who have obtained their professional qualification in a non-European country and would like to start a professional life as a teacher again in their new country of residence. In developing this toolkit, this target group has been the basis, while also taking into account its transferability to general challenges faced by international teachers.

The toolkit includes materials on language, such as the chapters Scripts and Scenarios, Vocabulary and Phrases, as well as counselling and reflection materials. These materials are no instructions or compulsory specifications but suggestions and recommendations to support international teachers' re-entry to school. Against the background of different educational systems and regulations as well as diverse pedagogical approaches in school practice, it is important to understand the materials and situations presented here as exemplary, which require contextualisation in the respective individual situation.

## Materials to improve professional language skills for teachers in the new country

For the employment of immigrant teachers in schools, there are strict requirements regarding language skills in many European countries (Schüssler et al., 2023). Even once this formal obstacle has been overcome, language education remains an important component of professional integration.

Professional contexts are characterised by specific types of texts and language actions that differ from general language. Therefore, for professional action confident linguistic action in these specific communicative situations is necessary, especially for non-native speakers who aspire to professional participation (Jasche et al., 2022). In school life international teachers are challenged by specific language acts, e.g. formulating tasks and instructions, explaining, giving feedback, moderating student conflicts as well as functional grammar training.

A large part of this is everyday language, for example in counselling conversations with pupils, in dealing with classroom disruptions and conflict situations, spontaneous reactions and indications in lessons and in connection with classroom management. Furthermore, this also concerns the interaction within the teaching staff and the orientation in the school as well as discussions with parents. In addition, there are elements of educational and technical language, to formulate and explain tasks and instructions. International teachers are challenged by a variety of professional language activities in the areas of assessment, education, teaching and innovation.

With the Scripts and Scenarios, exemplary situations were selected in order to practise corresponding language actions in self-learning processes or alternatively in cooperation with colleagues and to work out a corresponding vocabulary. The scenarios can be used to deal with comparable situations and to simulate different roles. The focus is on language skills, written, oral and reading and understanding the scenes. Pedagogical and other practical action instructions are not learning objectives of the materials. The creation of the three project scenarios was based on the German scenarios of the IQ Network (2014). Furthermore, brief versions of the IQ Network's scenarios are included.

In addition, lists of Vocabulary and Phrases for International Teachers in German and English were compiled, with additional columns for both the language of the new home country and the mother tongue. They form a starting point for the collection of helpful professional language terms and phrases for international teachers.

## Self-reflection materials and community building

Counselling and reflection tools for international teachers are an attempt to support them in dealing with the challenges of the system change. These include, for example, tools for reflecting on the changed teacher role, classroom management, debriefing of lessons, dealing with irritating and possibly also discriminatory situations or collegial case consultation. The reflection approaches listed here can be adapted to different needs and contexts of application. The reflection materials in this toolkit can be used by an individual and/or as a starting point for further conversation with colleagues, mentors and others.

In the context of teacher's wellbeing and mental health, some initial thoughts on the importance of community building and connection have been collected as well, with recommendations for further implementation.

## Additional resources

An overview of the language requirements and degree recognition information per partner country is provided in the respective Quicksheets for the seven project countries. Finally, a further reading list offers additional resources and references.

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