

# “VOCATIONALLY ORIENTATED CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IN NEED”: THE OPPORTUNITY TO EDUCATE STATE BORDER GUARDS IN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

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**Abstract.** *The article introduces the project “Vocationally Orientated Culture and Language in Need” (financed by the European Commission) which aims to help law-enforcement officers to develop competencies in linguistic and cultural diversity that is facing (or will be facing) them in the communities they serve. This is a vivid illustration of the prognostic modelling.*

**Keywords:** *intercultural competences, linguistic issues, migrants, state border guard education, linguistic education.*

## Introduction

This article aims to introduce a project “Vocationally Orientated Culture and Language in Need “ (further “VOCAL in Need”), aimed at the development of intercultural and linguistic skills of persons having to deal first-hand with migrants coming from various parts of the world by developing an online teaching platform leading the learner through five different scenarios related to intercultural issues faced, when dealing with migrants, and an App for smartphones having readily usable first phrases in different languages: English, German, Russian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Italian, Arabian. The aim of the article is to present the idea of the project, its implementation stages and present situation. Quantitative analysis was used in the course of the project in order to reveal the needs of border guards for specific scenarios in the online teaching modules, and the answers are presented in the article. The project is being implemented from October 2017 to September 2019.

In 2015, the migration flows to the European Union have tested „the concept of the management of the external borders of the European Union and demonstrated its failure in the field of common policy, common approach, and solidarity between the Member States.“ (Pūraitė, Greičius, Seniutienė, 2017, p. 32). In 2016, despite the decrease of detections of illegal border-crossing at the external borders, it still remains a very pressing issue both at the European level and for separate states. „A total of 511 371 detections were reported by the EU Member States in 2016, representing 72% decrease compared with 1.8 million detections in 2015.“ (Frontex, 2017). Therefore, the need to properly address persons coming

from such different backgrounds and cultures is extra pressing. It can be illustrated by several examples.

In the Saxon University of Applied Police Sciences, the main method of teaching is class instruction and the usage of different visuals. The task of providing ICC training for more than 12 000 personnel of the Saxon Police Force put a strain on the staff of the Saxon University of Applied Police Sciences as at the moment there are only two qualified IC trainers. The short-term solution for this problem is employment of additional staff/freelance teachers. That requires extensive financial resources that are limited. The long-term solution is the usage of modern teaching methods such as e-learning. “Vocal in Need” can provide part of this solution.

Germany has seen an influx of over a million refugees in the last year. Integration of such a large number of people from a plethora of diverse cultures and nations represents a significant challenge for Germany as a nation. Furthermore, the brunt of this change is carried by those serving in the police and security services in close collaboration with those representing non-governmental organizations.

Furthermore, Italy is also facing huge number of immigrants and asylum seekers. The Italian partner of the project has, over the years, worked closely with local public administrations and has gained experience with the training of the Local Police officers, especially on intercultural issues. The Local Police have often to face intercultural issues when dealing with migrants and foreign people in the course of their service. Intercultural training and awareness is extremely important for them to be effective and culturally aware in the performance of their duties.

Finally, there are almost 4 million refugees from Syria living in Turkey now. In the VET school which is partner to the project, there are some Syrian students who have studied there since 2012. The teachers have experienced their requests, needs and expectations. So final beneficiaries are not only security staff, but also refugees and migrants.

### **“Vocationally Orientated Culture and Language in Need”: main aims of the project**

The project is funded through Erasmus+ programme, Action KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices, sub-action KA202 – Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training.

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme in the field of education, training, youth, and sports for the period 2014-2020 (European Parliament and the Council, 2013). Education, training, youth, and sports are able to make an essential contribution to help tackle socio-economic changes, the key issues and questions that Europe will be facing until the end of the decade and to

support the implementation of the European policy agenda for growth, jobs, equity, and social inclusion (European Commission, 2017). This program is funding more than 25 000 partnerships across 125 000 education, training, and youth organisations and enterprises. (European Commission, 2017a).

The current refugee crisis and the recent terror attacks in Europe demands innovative training for staff dealing with migrants, especially security staff. The events at the New Year's Eve in Cologne (Germany), for example, have highlighted the difficult role of German police: how to deal with the migrant community in an appropriate way. German police stepping down from their position was a direct effect of the criticism of the police's behaviour. The current crisis is a global phenomenon which requires a transnational response.

### **Focus of the project and key competences targeted**

The focus of the project VOCAL in Need is the training for security staff and agencies who are dealing with refugees/migrants. Transnational mobility is growing both between EU member states and from other parts of the world. Security services are therefore increasingly confronted with people with another cultural background and an inadequate command of the national language. The goal of the project is relevant and high-quality skills and competences as well as creation of a greater understanding and responsiveness to social, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity as well as increasing their competence in foreign languages. Using specific real-life scenarios as training modules is a work-based approach and will ensure relevant skill sets. During the project, the partners are in the process of developing 2 online training modules for security staff (for example, police), 2 online training modules for agencies, who deal with refugees/migrants, and one module which touches upon intercultural issues arising in contact with migrants. The partners' task is to involve the target group in each partner country right from the beginning, performing the needs analysis, as this approach proved already to be successful in the previous project "Overcoming language and communication barriers in the healthcare sector" ([www.vocal-medical.eu](http://www.vocal-medical.eu)). A range of different languages are included – German, Lithuanian, Italian, Bulgarian, Turkish – as we have partners in these countries. Due to the linguistic background of many refugees, we have included Arabic and Russian as well.

The Bruges Communiqué on Supporting Vocational Education and Training in Europe sets out a vision for vocational education and training in 2020. Central to this vision, is a vocational training system that is modern and attractive to learners. It also argues that learners need to be able to acquire skills and knowledge which can be used immediately in role of an

employed or self-employed person. (European Commission, 2010). This project will contribute to the vision by providing appropriate training modules

The following key **competences** are addressed during the activities of the project:

- Communication in foreign languages. Eight languages are included.
- Social and civic competences. These include personal, interpersonal, and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict, where necessary. The project partners would like to support staff that deal with refugees/migrant in appropriate behaviour, when interacting with people from a diverse cultural background.
- Cultural awareness and expression. It is essential to understand the cultural diversity of refugees/migrants in order to have successful encounters.

### **Objectives of *VOCAL in Need***

The objectives of VOCAL in Need are to produce five multi-lingual and intercultural on-line training modules and an application. Possible themes were foreseen:

- 1) application for asylum (public order authority);
- 2) reporting an incident (police station);
- 3) interview/ interrogation (crime investigation);
- 4) problems in a refugee camp (NGOs, administration and security services).

The partners also intend to create a more detailed Inter-Cultural Communication module than previous projects and finish it with an awareness test so that it could be used it as an e-learning module for students at third level.

The target groups of the project are mainly security forces, but also personnel working in non-governmental organisations assisting migrants and refugees. The training modules and app for security staff will support appropriate behaviour when dealing with refugees. The target group is involved right from the beginning of the project with the needs analysis and will continue to be involved until the testing/piloting phase at the end of the project.

This project is also complementary to the [www.vocalproject.eu](http://www.vocalproject.eu) *LdV ToI* project as it will follow the same methodology and structure.

The results will be five on-line training modules and one software application. It is innovative as it addresses a new target group in the current proposal; while applying a tried and tested successful methodology.

The application will follow the scheme designed in the transferred project *VOCAL-Medical* and each of the training on-line modules will have the following sections:

- vocabulary;
- useful phrases;
- scenarios/virtual tours;
- exercises;
- cultural information.

The original VOCAL project has developed the use of scenarios/virtual tours (3 per each module) in order to allow learners to go beyond the study of text-based materials and engage in real-life situations using the target language, therefore achieving better results.

Former partners of the VOCAL project provide their assistance in transferring the idea and structure of [www.vocalproject.eu](http://www.vocalproject.eu) and [www.vocal-medical.eu](http://www.vocal-medical.eu) to the security staff sector. One of the strengths of the VOCAL project was the localization/contextualisation provided by each partner's knowledge of the relevant vocational sector within their country, and this feature will now be transferred to the security sector, where partners have already established stakeholder contacts.

The intercultural aspect has been an important feature of the linguistic modules created in the original project, and this will be extended further in the new project through the creation of a dedicated intercultural module. The intercultural aspect is seen as fundamental to the development of practical language skills in this context. The original project has been innovative in its use of on-line technology. The new project will extend this further in developing an application that is focused on mobile phones.

The partnership for this project includes representation from a wider range of countries, allowing geographic transfer of innovation to a wider range of member states.

The partners of the project are:

- 1) The applicant institution – Partner 1 (P1) – the Institute of Technology, Tralee (ITT);
- 2) Partner 2 (P2) – the University of Applied Police Sciences in Saxony, Germany;
- 3) Partner 3 (P3) – *Danmar Computers*, Poland;
- 4) Partner 4 (P4) – assist International HR, a medium-sized Human Resource Development organisation, based in Paderborn, Germany;
- 5) Partner 5 (P5) – Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania;

- 6) Partner 6 (P6) – *FormAzione Co & So Network* (FCN) is a consortium of 11 cooperatives working at the regional level to provide vocational, education and training services;
- 7) Partner 7 (P7) – the University of Plovdiv “Paisii Hilendarski”, Bulgaria;
- 8) Partner 8 (P8) – the Esenler Vocational School, Turkey;
- 9) Partner 9 (P9) – Die Berater Unternehmensberatungs GmbH from Austria focuses on adult education vocational training and human resources development.

P1 as the coordinator is responsible for the overall management of the project and the needs analysis stage. P2 is responsible for the prototype of three modules for security officers, also responsible for transfer into German and Russian. P3 as IT partner will look after the development of online training modules and the App for smartphones. P4 will be responsible for the ICC prototype and the proofreading of the English content. P5, P6, P7, P8 will do the transfer of the prototype. P8 will be responsible for Arabic. P9 will design one further prototype in testing and evaluation phase of the modules. P4 and P6 are responsible for Quality Management (P4) and for dissemination (P6).

### **Expected project results and impact**

The expected project results include:

- five online training modules and one app;
- focus on the design of a prototype training course with five online modules and the transfer of the prototype by partners;
- various reports about the needs analysis and the testing phase;
- dissemination records by each partner;
- detailed reports on the evaluation of the partner meetings and the overall partnership;
- reports to the NA by the lead partner;
- relevant paper work by each partner.

The partners in execution of the project will create significant awareness among those working in the fields of police, security forces and non-government organizations in the need for increased intercultural sensitivity and sensory acuity. They will also train and develop intercultural empathy and provide a hands-on tailor-made pragmatic software solution in our training modules.

The impact is guaranteed by providing our on-line linguistic and cultural modules and app (free of charge and user-friendly) to further up-skill staff members in the target group sector; this would enhance the communication skills by staff that are required to deal appropriately with people of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Due to the size of the partnership, availability of our on-line training modules to the target groups will be ensured. All partners will contact their target groups in their country in order to encourage them to make use of our on-line modules. The provision of contextualised language training material, including a wide range of languages, will be an improvement. The results of this project could be incorporated into each partners' national VET system and be used as a model of good practice.

The project will impact upon the security staff and staff of agencies by providing a better work environment and a better skilled work force. It will be guided by the needs analysis that all partners have conducted in their country; ensuring that the modules are addressing the needs of the target group and will have an impact on their needs of better communication skills (both linguistic and cultural) when dealing with foreigners. The impact will be a better relationship between, for example, between security staff and the migrant community and will be supported by the feedback received during the testing phase.

The project is intended as a first step towards creating a recognized language and cultural qualification focus on the sectoral needs. The partnership has a lot of academic staff who could aim at integrating the projects' on-line materials in their mainstream curriculum.

The training of security staff about intercultural and language issue is vital for effective interaction with the growing migrant population all around Europe. Many times, when dealing with migrant and foreigner, one of the main issues are the demanding challenges to understand each other and also different interpretation of facts can occur because of intercultural issues. It is then important to equip the staff with all the tools and competences that can improve the mutual comprehension and encounters with refugees and migrants.

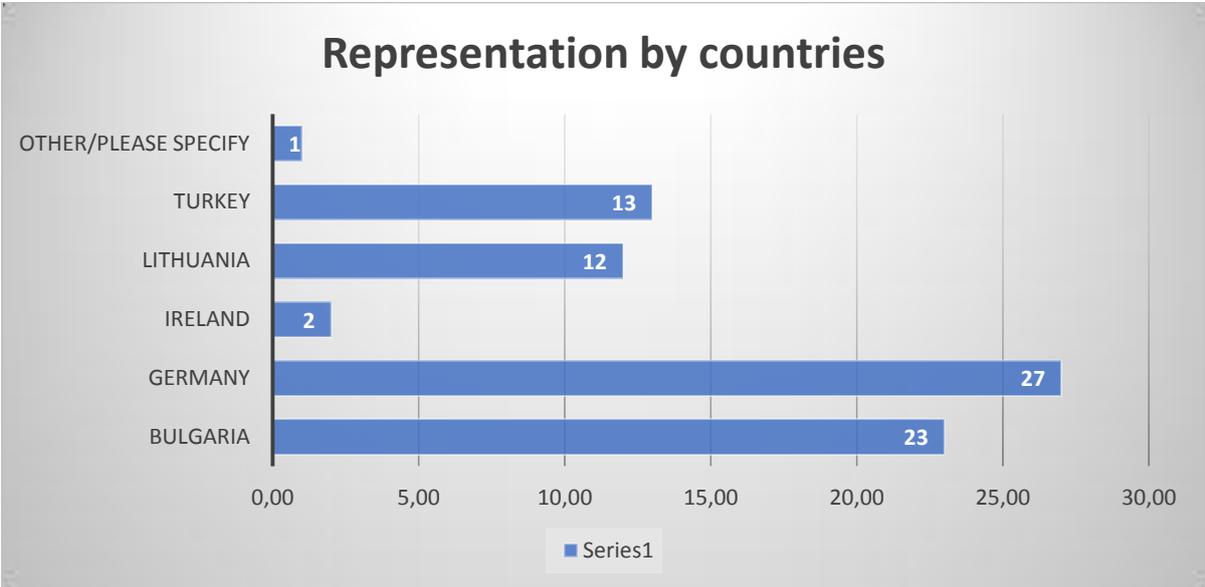
- participants: the final users of the tools (security and agency staff and educators) will have significantly improved in the performance of their services; making it easier for them to interact with foreigners;
- migrants (other stakeholder): also, the migrants will benefit from our project results, since it will be make easier for them to make themselves understood in the European countries.

### **First step of implementation of the project - needs analysis**

The *VOCAL in NEED* project aims to assist and support security and agency staff (police, border control, porters, job coaches etc.) to better interact with migrants and refugees through the development of a multi-lingual and intercultural online training and an App for smartphones,

therefore the first step of the implementation of the project and the first intellectual outcome (IO 1) is the survey of professionals working in security field in order to determine what situations are encountered by the target group in working with migrants and what exact dialogues and scenarios should be provided by the project partners in the final outcome of the project. All partners participated in reaching the target groups. This survey looked at possible both language and cultural challenges when interacting with migrants and refugees and will help to formulate the online tools that will be created. This section will review the main results of the needs analysis of the answers provided by the security staff, the other part of the results relating to the answers from NGO sector will not be analysed.

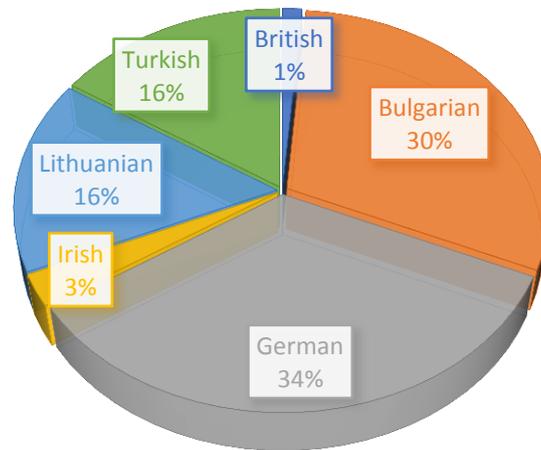
78 replies of security officers from different countries were obtained.



**Figure 1. The country represented by the respondents**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “What country are you working in”, the biggest number of respondents answered Germany (27) and Bulgaria (23), then Turkey (13) and Lithuania (12), and Latvia (1).

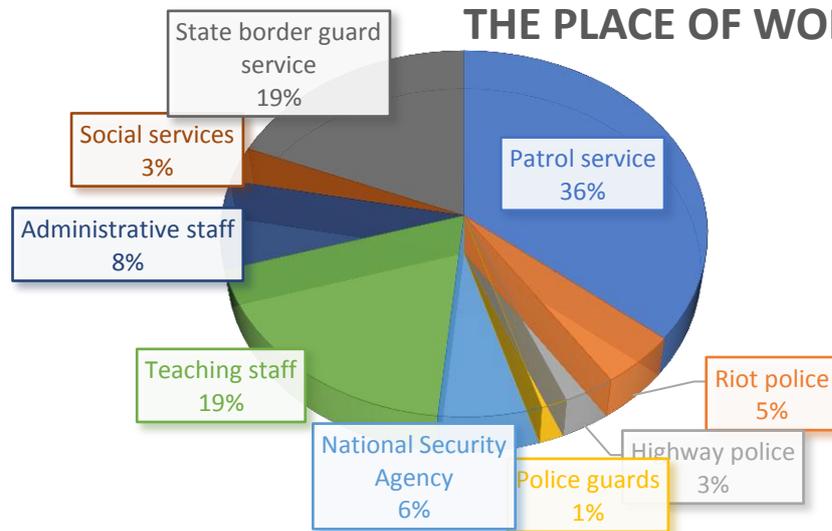
## NATIONALITY OF SECURITY OFFICERS



**Figure 2. Nationality of respondents**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “What is your nationality?”, the biggest number of respondents answered – German (27), Bulgarian (23), Lithuanian (12), Turkish (12), Irish (2), British (1).

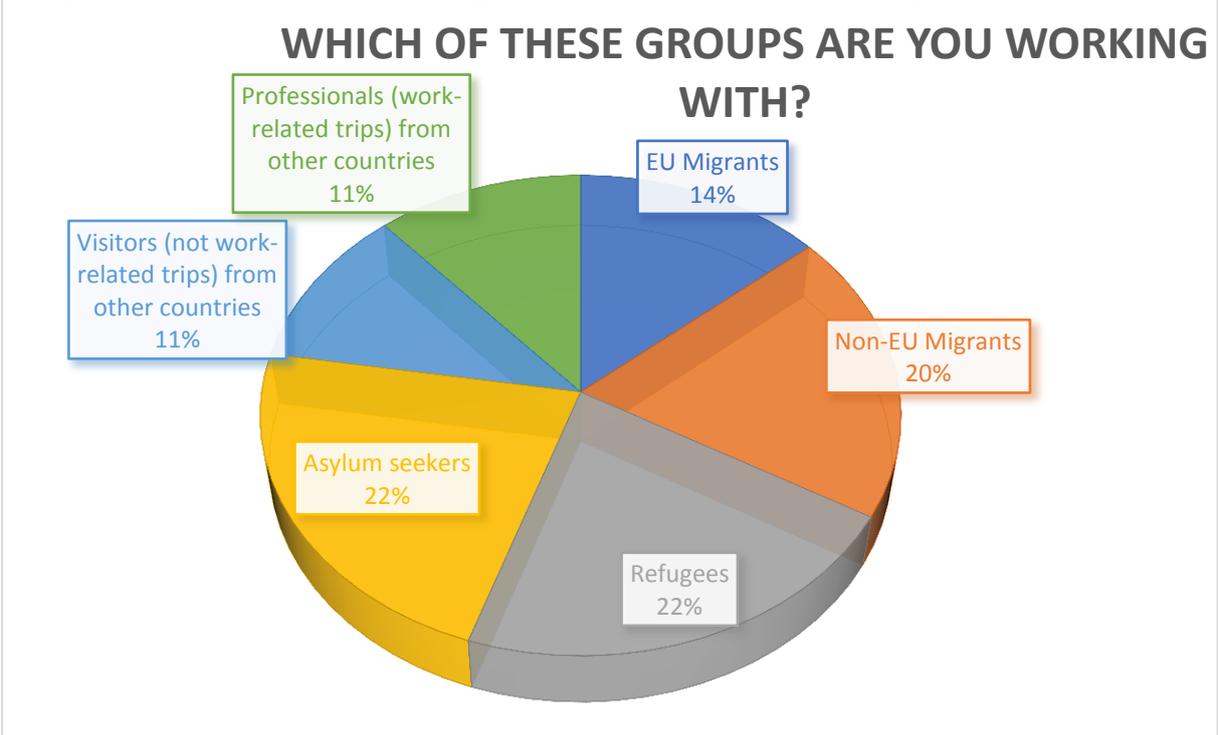
## THE PLACE OF WORK



**Figure 3. Place of work of the respondents**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “Where do you work?”, the biggest number of respondents answered – patrol service (23), State border guard service (12), teaching staff (12), administrative staff (5), national security agency (4), Riot police (3), Highway police (2), Police guards (1)

To the request to describe your job/role in your organisation, various answers were given, such as: “State Police College offers to acquire a profession of the medium commanding police officer, supported by appropriate specialization. Qualification meets the acquisition of the 4th level qualifications and professional standards.”; “Teacher for police students in the police academy, Trainer and consultant for police stars and readers in the field”; “Preparing students to be able to speak English while working “; “Court, proof, argument, case, process”; “English Language Teacher”; “Clerical, housing, facilitative, civil servant “; “Working on a contract basis” ; “Immigration Officer”; "Train police staff for interacting with asylum seekers, refugees etc. specifically from Arabic/Muslim cultures."; “Organisation, coordination and control of procedures and decisions related to migration processes”; „I teach migration law for future officers”; „Prevention and control of illegal migration.”; „Implementation of state control on migration processes” ; „My duties are for the prevention and control of illegal migration”; „I am a specialist working in the field prevention and control of illegal migration”; „Investigation of documents”; „Organisation of state border protection”; „Work with migrants”.

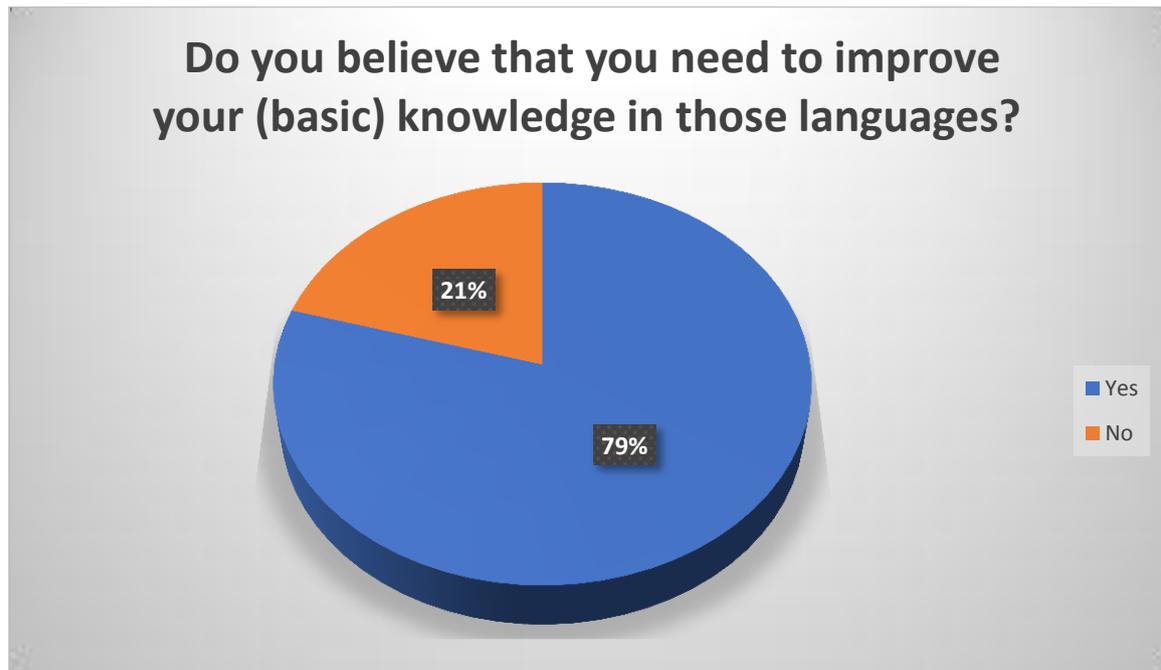


**Figure 4. Groups of migrants the respondents are working with**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “Which of these groups are you working with?”, 24 respondents answered – with EU migrants; 34 – with non-EU migrants; 38 – with refugees; 39 – with asylum seekers; 19 – with visitors (not work-

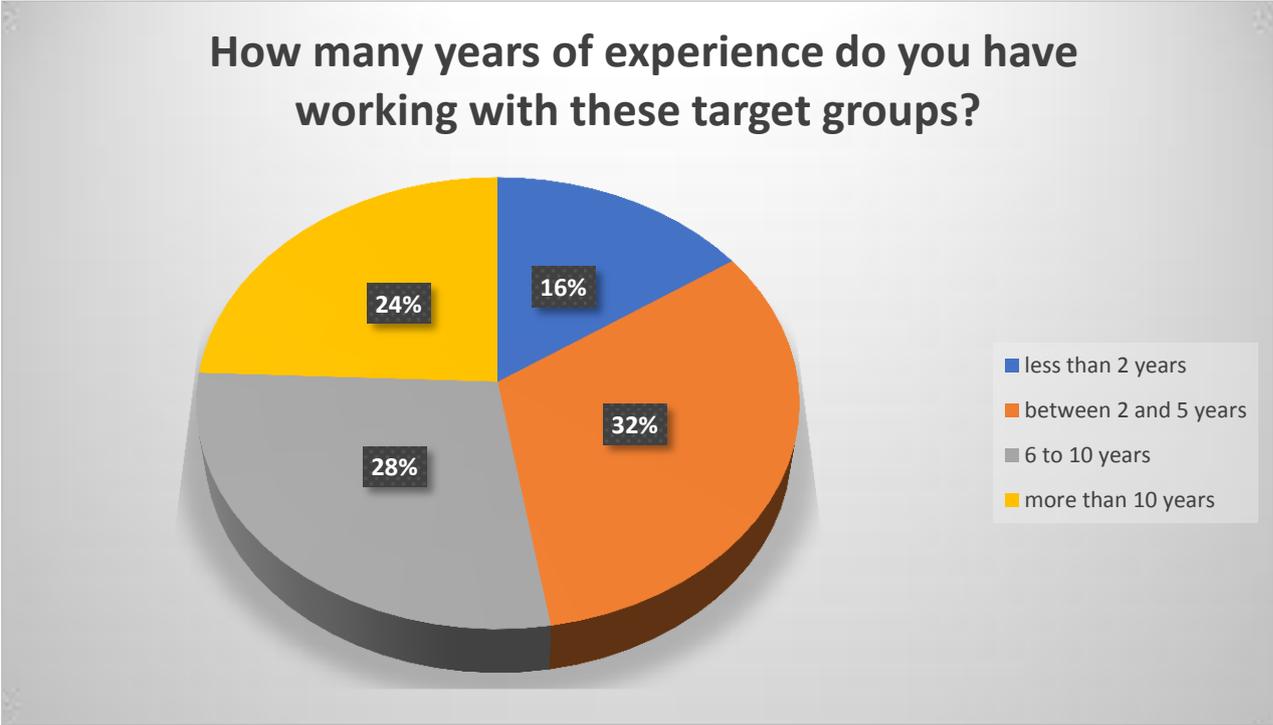
related trips) from other countries; 20 – professionals (work-related trips) from other countries.

To the question „Which languages do the target groups you are working with speak?“, the following answers were provided: Arabic (46); Czech (13); English (48); Farsi (12); French (15); German (26); Kurdish (16); Latvian (4); Lithuanian (10); Polish (20); Romanian (16); Russian (38); Ukrainian (12).



**Figure 5. Opinion on the need to improve foreign language**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “Do you believe that you need to improve your (basic) knowledge in those languages?”, 62 respondents replied positively.



**Figure 6. Experience of the respondents**  
(Source: compiled by the authors)

To the question “How many years of experience do you have working with these target groups?”, 12 respondents responded “less than 2 years”; 25 – “between 2 and 5 years”; 22 – “6 to 10 years”; 19 – “more than 10 years”.

Furthermore, the respondents were provided a list of possible scenarios and were asked to evaluate the importance of situations/scenarios provided as examples, in the scale from 1 (very important) to 6 (not important). According to the needs analysis, the following scenarios were rated as the most important: scenario on explaining why the staff do what they do; why it is important to comply with the rules; what consequences to expect in case a person does not follow the instructions; what rights a person has. Moreover, second most important was the scenario on applying for Asylum: fingerprinting, photographing, and the follow-up interview; deportation of refugees: explaining why the deportation takes place, what is the procedure. Thirdly, the scenarios on communication between different genders in relation to religious norms; non-physical abuse of women that the victims may not recognise, and the other one on asking for documents: identity card, car papers, leave to remain, residence permit etc.; confiscating documents and items (weapons, drugs and stolen items etc.); getting an authorised mailing address were also rated as important or very important.

## **Further steps in implementing *VOCAL in Need***

Prototype module is in preparation at the time of the writing this publication. It will be the basis of the modules designed in each country's language. They will include vocabulary of words and phrases, dialogues on certain topic which the user will be able to switch from any language to any language, and as well the audio will be presented.

The next step – Intellectual Outcome 3 – is the transfer of the prototype module into regional settings and into all the indicated languages. Partners will compile lists of informative websites, agencies and contact numbers for the target group as tools to cope better with the demands of the job. Surveys, questionnaires and templates will be developed based on the expertise and experience of the partners. The application “Vocal in Need” should help this category of migrants to communicate with security forces and refugee camp workers."

The online training modules will consist of five distinguishable learning blocks, each of them following the same structure consisting of vocabulary, useful phrases, scenarios/virtual tours (3 per each module), exercises, cultural information. The training content will take advantage of various multimedia delivery methods supporting the learning process. These modules will act as a complete learning environment that can be accessed at any time and from any place. As the training modules will be developed with newest HTML5 technology, the only requirement to access them would be a typically used web browser. Since the online training modules will be created as a web-based system, it will be possible to use it from a variety of different devices (such as PCs, laptops, tablets). In order to make the learning process not only effective, but also engaging, up-to-date guidelines regarding the user interface and user experience will be applied, with a clean and easy-to-use look. In order to make sure that the access to online training modules is fast and easy, no requirements towards account creation or login/password will be put in place. The online training modules will be available in a number of interface languages, so that people from different countries will not have problems in accessing them and engaging in the learning process. On the other hand, there will be a few languages that will be taught. This approach builds on experiences from the previous project (*Vocal Medical*), but also takes into account slightly different learning requirements.

Another product of the project – the Mobile Assistant will be an application for smartphones and will act as a valuable source of useful key phrases and words that for example can be played through the speaker whenever such necessity occurs. In order to make this tool as useful as possible, the rule of the shortest path will be applied. This means, that

relevant resources will be available with as few clicks (or “taps”) as possible. The content (both text-based and audio-based) will be stored under specific hierarchical tree (category navigation) that will allow users to access the resource they need in a fast and efficient way. The Mobile Assistant will not be able to handle the whole communication with migrants/refugees, but instead it will act as a first step towards mutual understanding. Within this application, a set of key words and phrases with respective audio recordings (in foreign languages) will be accessible, so for example within a matter of seconds it will be possible to play sentences that will tackle the most basic language barriers. The Mobile Assistant will have to be quick and effective in order to be used by the target groups. Therefore, the content of the application will be carefully agreed on by project members and target groups representatives.

## Conclusions

Erasmus program is funding more than 25 000 partnerships across 125 000 education, training, and youth organisations and enterprises. Such organisations work with their peers in other countries in their own field and other sectors to develop, transfer and implement innovative education, training and youth practices. Therefore, it is an important tool in developing and enabling modern day societies in the European Union.

The project *Vocationally Orientated Culture and Language in Need* (financed by the European Commission) aims to help law-enforcement officers to develop competencies in linguistic and cultural diversity that is facing (or will be facing) them in the communities they serve. This is a vivid illustration of the prognostic modelling. Though, Lithuanian is still a very homogeneous society; the immigrants do not choose Lithuania as a destination country. However, our research showed that the awareness of police officers remains to be improved in the field, and therefore it was decided to join the application and then the project, even if at the moment the activities within the project seem far from the everyday life of a police officer. However, that will change in near future, and the community of Public Security Faculty feels it to be their responsibility to act pro-actively which is being done, therefore contributes to the creation of products that can help officers deal with people from different cultural backgrounds. .

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