

## **SECTION 3**

### **RATIONALE FOR MEMBERSHIP OF A LANGUAGE TEACHER ASSOCIATION**

Many teachers often find themselves working alone as language teachers, having to fend for themselves without frequent contact with other colleagues. Most of them are looking for a group of like-minded people with whom they can create opportunities for communication, networking and training, both domestically and abroad. Training, meetings, and projects of various kinds offer them excellent opportunities to enhance their expertise and the quality of their own activities, as well as developing a sense of belonging to a large network.

Below are listed some benefits of membership in a language teachers' association. These appear in random order and do not suggest any prioritisation. However, they will be useful for associations looking to review their recruitment materials and to argue the benefits of membership.

#### **1. Networking**

- Multiple opportunities for professional debate, mainly through association events, but increasingly using new technologies.
- Intensive exchange of ideas, technical support and problem solving through interaction with colleagues.
- Access to databases with lesson suggestions, even the possibility of including one's own proposals and ideas.

#### **2. Advocacy**

- Promotion of languages and language education through the association acting as an advisory body to the education authorities.
- Increased collaboration of language teachers from different language groups, to strengthen their cohesion and to support plurilingualism.
- Dissemination and discussion forums on changes in curriculum and school system.

#### **3. Education, training and other events**

- Conferences, seminars, courses, workshops, speech days, etc., offer diverse opportunities for professional development and personal collaboration with colleagues.
- Reduced registration fees for conferences and other events.
- Opportunity to influence the focus of training as language teachers' associations need to respond to their members.
- Additional acquisition of new knowledge from experts (national and international) and in a team.

- The opportunity to present their own research on events and to receive feedback from colleagues.
- Scholarships for study tours.

#### **4. Information**

- The latest information on the association's work can be found on the websites of the organizations, as well as in reports and articles in newsletters or journals.
- Dissemination of information about events and activities through reports on the website, newsletters, videos, Internet web pages, etc.
- Extensive programme of events and projects.
- Information on new research results and pedagogical innovations, with online surveys on specific topics, including their results.

#### **5. Participation in projects**

- Competitions at national and international level (student- and/or teacher competitions).
- Research projects, for example the ELP curriculum, surveys of various kinds and presentation of the results of individual or joint projects.
- Chance to participate in international projects, e.g. the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, a Comenius Project of the European Union, etc.

#### **6. Publication (often at reduced prices for members)**

- Journals with practical tips for teaching, articles on innovations in language teaching and research, reports of training courses and conferences.
- Scientific research journals with articles on current aspects of foreign language teaching.
- Brief information sheets and newsletters.
- Didactic textbooks, linguistic research. Teaching and examination material.
- Online materials.

#### **7. International cooperation**

- Chance/possibility to attend meetings of international organizations.
- Extended networking opportunities with colleagues from other countries.
- Online forums with possibilities for direct participation by individual members.
- Participation in projects such as LACS (Language Associations and Collaborative Support), carried out by FIPLV, IDV and FIPF in cooperation with the ECML in Graz, etc., as well as other international projects such as APPEAL, REAL, AECLIL.

#### **8. International Associations**

Individual organizations are increasingly joining international associations as this brings

additional benefits to their members. It also benefits the individual associations' organizers and managers as it enables them to learn from other associations, sharing problems and solutions as well as offering them additional opportunities to share with their members.

On the homepage of the International Federation of Language Teacher Associations (FIPLV), we find a clear rationale for the increasing need for such organizations, along with ten good reasons for joining. All the text from the homepage is published as Case study 3.1, as it lists the benefits of membership in a very clear and logical order.

## **CASE STUDY 3.1**

### **RATIONALE: WHAT DO ASSOCIATIONS GAIN FROM MEMBERSHIP?**

#### **Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (FIPLV)**

An association of language teachers differs totally from any other professional association of teachers in that it is inconceivable without international links. In an age of increasing globalisation where communication is more and more influenced by rapid technological advances, it is important to be able to draw on the knowledge, experience, support and friendship of colleagues in other countries. As the language curriculum in some countries may have become, in the view of many, increasingly limited and instrumental, access to other ways of thinking and seeing the world becomes more, not less, essential. Apart from the importance of a sense of belonging to a network of colleagues “beyond their own backyard”, then teachers can turn to the experiences of their colleagues overseas, for example, to inform and extend their own practice and expertise, thereby contributing to each other’s professional development. The international dimension is, in short, a sine qua non of a languages association.

FIPLV is unique in that it is the only organisation bringing together teachers of different languages worldwide. The benefits of membership are many and varied, and some appear more valuable at times than others. They are perhaps felt most keenly when concrete activities bring individual members of associations together with a common purpose, such as Linguapax V in Melbourne in 1995, the Symposium on Language Teaching and Peace in Graz in 1998, the UNESCO Conference in Melbourne in 2001, the LACS (Language Associations and Collaborative Support) Project in 2008-2011 and FIPLV World Congresses every three years.

The following is a synthesis of the benefits of membership as seen by members of the FIPLV Executive. The numbering is purely for convenience and does not indicate any particular priority.

#### **1. Participation**

- membership of the only internationally recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representing languages educators, which brings together eight other international associations of language teachers
- membership of an international forum of language educators
- possibility of hosting and attending international conferences or events of other member associations
- scope to contribute at an international level
- membership of FIPLV Regions and involvement in their activities
- input and access to surveys on language teaching at the international level

## **2. Networking**

- links with UNESCO through FIPLV official partner (consultative) status
- links with the Council of Europe and its Language Policy Division to support the development of new policy through NGO status
- links with major international unilingual associations through FIPLV (i.e., AEDA, FIPF, IDV, ILEI, LATEUM, MAPRYAL, Rete AIM, SIPLE)
- liaison with other international associations (e.g., AILA, ALTE, CercleS, EALTA, EAQUALS, ELC, etc)
- international collegiality enabling discussions with teachers from many parts of the world
- establishing international linkages to further personal growth
- identifying colleagues internationally who can assist you in your own teaching
- creating contacts for your students for postal, video, DVD, email, chat, blog, etc, exchange
- establishing networks through project participation (e.g., ECP in Europe, Linguapax Workshop in Graz, the LACS (Language Associations and Collaborative Support) Project and the Empowering Language Networks Project, both with the ECML, the EC-funded project Languages in Europe: Theory, Policy, Practice, etc.)

## **3. Projects**

- involvement in UNESCO projects (e.g., Language Policy, Multilingualism, Tolerance, Linguapax, Language Rights, endangered languages, etc)
- participation in FIPLV Projects (e.g., Empowering Language Networks, LACS, Languages in Europe: Theory, Policy, Practice, Professional Development, the Teaching Profession, Multilingualism, etc)
- membership of ECP Projects (in Europe)

## **4. Advocacy**

- access to international speakers to promote a cause (e.g., French Teacher Symposium in Israel)
- support for improved conditions (e.g., smaller class sizes in Portugal)
- support for and from international forums enhancing the intrinsic aims of language teaching (e.g., peace)
- support for and from international forums combating undesirable elements of humanity (e.g., racism, intolerance, ethnocentrism, monolingualism, discrimination, etc)

## **5. Learning**

- problem-solving at the international level
- discovering new ways to promote the teaching and learning of your language(s)

- potential for personal growth through FIPLV publications and activities
- access to ongoing professional development internationally

## **6. Professional Development: Conferences, Workshops and other Activities**

- access to triennial and international multilingual congresses addressing the needs of teachers
- access to international speakers at the cutting edge in the field of language teaching
- access to international workshops organised by FIPLV (e.g., Linguapax Workshops in Melbourne and in Graz, etc)

## **7. Publications**

- receipt of FIPLV publications (e.g., FIPLV History, Linguapax V, project reports, etc)
- access to content of publications of other member associations through the FIPLV website
- possibility of contributing to FIPLV publications

## **8. Information**

- details of FIPLV World Congresses and those of international unilingual associations
- details of other conferences which impinge upon language teaching
- access to state-of-the-art details of movements within the profession
- access to information contained in the FIPLV website ([www.fiplv.org](http://www.fiplv.org))
- email contact details of many associations and educators on an international level
- potential to distribute information received to international membership of national associations

## **9. Concessions**

- reduced registration fees for individual members of member associations of FIPLV
- reduced membership fees for those experiencing financial hardship
- consideration in the context of solidarity and potential support from other members
- potential sponsorship for participation in FIPLV activities

## **10. Inspiration**

- access to global horizons
- access to new ideas for implementation in personal environments