

## FIPLV

# Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes – International Federation of Language Teacher Associations

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**Abstract** The International Federation of Language Teacher Associations (FIPLV) is an international multilingual association of teachers of languages. Its aim is to promote the teaching and learning of languages and to make this teaching available to all. It has operational relations with UNESCO.

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### 1 Introduction

The Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes or FIPLV was founded in Paris in 1931 and it is the only international multilingual association of teachers of languages.

It has non-governmental organisation (NGO) 'operational relations' status with UNESCO and has representation as an NGO with the Council of Europe. Its story can be found in the FIPLV website ([www.fiplv.org](http://www.fiplv.org)) and is reported by three former Presidents: Josef Hendrich (Czech Republic), Edward Batley (United Kingdom) and Denis Cunningham (Australia) in R. Freudenstein (ed.), *History of the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes*, Tübingen, Narr, 2006, which includes an overview of the 22 World Congresses of the Federation.

FIPLV is currently leading the LACS (Language Associations and Collaborative Support) Project with the ECML, where language teacher associations from Europe and Canada are involved.

### 2 Philosophy and aims

FIPLV believes that languages enhance both individual and national potential, that language diversity is essential to the human heritage, that

each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people and that all languages and their speakers deserve equal respect; as a consequence, it believes that the loss of a language is a loss for all humanity.

As far as language teaching is concerned, FIPLV believes that there is no single global recipe for good language teaching, that we can all learn from each other and that ideas and information should be a 'free good'.

On the basis of the beliefs above, what FIPLV members want in future is to impact more significantly on individual teachers, to foster and increase links between associations of language teachers, to help our teacher associations in countries where working conditions leave a great deal to be desired, create links with international humanitarian, industrial and business communities. More precisely, the aims of FIPLV are:

1. to promote the teaching and learning of languages in order to facilitate and improve communication, understanding, cooperation and friendly relations among all peoples of the world;
2. to develop, support and promote policies designed to diversify the languages taught, to improve the quality of language teaching and make this teaching available to all;
3. to develop the continuity and cohesion of multilingual education in primary, secondary, further, higher and adult education;
4. to improve the professional training and development of future and practising language teachers in all sectors of education;
5. to help and advise on the founding of professional associations of language teachers;
6. to coordinate and develop the work of its member associations;
7. to encourage members of different language associations in the same country to cooperate with each other to promote the teaching of languages and language policy based on principles of multilingualism;
8. to support nationally and represent internationally the views of member associations;
9. to provide a vehicle of international solidarity for language teachers from different regions of the world.

### **3 Actions**

FIPLV exists for the worldwide support, development and promotion of languages through professional associations. It is active in over 100 countries and cover several hundred thousand teachers of languages worldwide and it contributes to the professional development of language teachers by collecting and disseminating the latest international research

to its member associations; it enables professional associations of language teachers worldwide to learn from each other.

FIPLV campaigns on issues of concern – e.g., language policy, multilingualism, class sizes, less commonly taught languages – and represents language teachers internationally through their national and international associations; moreover, it represents UNESCO, where requested, on Linguapax, language policy, language rights, multilingualism, endangered languages and related matters.

Also in collaboration with UNESCO and its centres, FIPLV was represented on the relevant committees for Linguapax, the World Languages Report (*Words and Worlds*), the World Congresses on Language Policies ([www.linguapax.org](http://www.linguapax.org)) in 2002 and 2004, and the expert meeting to develop a position paper on languages for UNESCO (*Education in a Multilingual World*). FIPLV assisted the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations to organise the international workshop of Linguapax V in Melbourne (Australia) in 1995 and organised a UNESCO International Conference in Melbourne in 2001.

FIPLV also participated in the international conference of language rights that took place in Barcelona (Spain) in 1996 where the *Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights* was adopted – and in another meeting in Barcelona (Spain) to further action on the issue.

#### 4 Structure

The key authority of FIPLV is the **World Assembly**, which brings together the representatives of member associations every three years. The **World Council**, which is comprised of representatives of the international unilingual associations, Regions of the Federation and national multilingual associations, meets annually.

The **Executive Committee** of the Federation, composed of five officers elected for three years, meets biannually. For the current triennium of 2010-2012, the officers are: President – Terry Lamb (UK); Vice president – Paolo Balboni (Italy); Secretary general – Denis Cunningham (Australia); Treasurer general – Kirsti Santaholma (Finland); Editor of publications – vacant.

In line with the FIPLV Statutes, FIPLV has undertaken a process of regionalisation, which allows more concrete cooperation between neighbouring associations in different areas of the globe. FIPLV also encourages associative relations among teachers of different languages in areas of the globe where it has fewer members (e.g., Africa, Asia, Latin America).

## 5 Members

Members of FIPLV may be either international unilingual associations or federations of language teachers, national multilingual associations or national unilingual associations where their language is not represented by an international unilingual federation on the FIPLV World Council. Of the first category, there are currently AEDA for Arabic, LATEUM for English, ILEI for Esperanto, FIPF for French, IDV for German, Rete AIM for Italian, SIPLE for Portuguese and MAPRYAL for Russian. There is also provision for associate membership.

Of the second category, national multilingual associations, which unite teachers across languages at the local level, FIPLV has around twenty-five members from all continents, such as AFMLTA (Australia), ALL (UK), ANILS (Italy), APLV (France), ASEC (Bulgaria), FUPL (Uruguay), KMF (Czech Republic), LALT (Latvia), LMS (Norway), LMS (Sweden), LTAL (Lithuania), MAG (Georgia), MANYE (Hungary), MLA (USA), MLAN (Nigeria), MLTASL (Sri Lanka), PTN (Poland), RALMLT (Russia), SAALT (South Africa), STIL (Iceland), SUKOL (Finland), VLLT (Netherlands), WAMLA (West Africa).

What do associations gain from membership?

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. While teachers of languages need input from fellow professionals overseas, and to feel a sense of belonging to a network of colleagues 'beyond their own backyard', teachers in other countries rely on the experiences of their colleagues, for example, to inform and extend their own practice and expertise. 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 *Lingupax 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:

1. Participation: membership of the only internationally recognised Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representing language educators, which brings together eight other international associations of language teachers, possibility of hosting and attending international conferences or events of other member associations, input and access to surveys on language teaching at the international level;
2. Networking: links with UNESCO through FIPLV ‘operational relations’ 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 etc.), international collegiality enabling discussions with teachers from many parts of the world, 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 with the ECML 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., LACS, Professional Development, the Teaching Profession, Multilingualism etc.), and 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) and 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. Professional Development: access to triennial and international multilingual congresses addressing the needs of teachers, to international speakers at the cutting edge in the field of language teaching and to international workshops organised by FIPLV (e.g., Linguapax Workshops in Melbourne and in Graz etc.); members receive FIPLV publications (e.g., FIPLV History, Linguapax V, project reports etc.) and can access to content of publications of other member associations through the FIPLV website.