

BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

A handbook
for Regions
and stakeholders



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EU-BELONG: An Intercultural Approach to Migrants Integration in Europe's Regions



EU-BELONG is a project co-founded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union (AMIF-2020-AG-CALL). The project has been coordinated by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) in the framework of its Intercultural Regions Network (IRN), and implemented in partnership with ten regional authorities from nine European countries: Arad and Timis, in Romania; Catalonia and Navarra, in Spain; Donegal in Ireland; Emilia-Romagna, in Italy; Leipzig, in Germany; Pomerania and Poznan, in Poland; Salzburg, in Austria; and two technical partners: ART-ER Attrattività Ricerca Territorio and Istituto Economico Cooperazione Internazionale (ICEI) ¹.

EU-BELONG draws from the positive experience of the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC)², with the aim of improving the socio-economic inclusion and migrants' sense of belonging by developing and testing regional integration strategies that apply an intercultural and a multi-stakeholder approach. With this in mind, the project also matches with, and contributes to, relevant European policies and strategic documents, above all the "Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027)"³.

The project aims to improve the capacity of the regional administrations to elaborate and implement effective integration policies in their territories, establishing a structured cooperation with relevant stakeholders and improving the coordination among levels of governance in order to effectively fulfil this role. It does so through a five-steps process:

1. **Promoting capacity building and mutual learning about interculturalism** among regional administrations and local stakeholders through: online training sessions addressed to a large group of stakeholders (150 in each region; 1,650 in total), and three-days in person learning-labs for twenty core stakeholders in each region. The stakeholders involved will be later engaged in the elaboration of regional intercultural integration strategies.
2. **Elaboration of a general framework for regional integration strategies** based on a collection of existing good practices among the partners' Regions, the assessment of the regional integration context, and the design of a final model.
3. **Multi-stakeholder co-design of the 11 regional strategies** starting from the setting up of the multi-stakeholder regional platform, which involves a total of 165 stakeholders (15 local stakeholders in each region); the organisation of co-design meetings that will bring to the elaboration of an intercultural integration strategy in each region.
4. **Testing the pilot projects** identified in the regional strategies.
5. **Modelling, dissemination, and mainstreaming phase**, which includes: the evaluation of the co-design and of the implementation experiences in order to modelling the overall process; the synthesis of the results in a comprehensive report; the dissemination of the results through knowledge transfer events and activities – online and in person - at regional, national, and European levels. Thus reaching other 40 European Regions and 15 international organisations working at the EU level in the field of integration.

The EU-BELONG project started in January 2022 and it runs till January 2025.

¹ Assembly of European Regions. How will an intercultural approach to migrant integration help Europe's Regions – The EU-BELONG project takes off <https://aer.eu/eu-belong-an-intercultural-approach-to-migrant-integration-in-europes-regions/>

² Council of Europe. The Intercultural Cities Programme <https://www.coe.int/it/web/interculturalcities>

³ European Commission, (2020). Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021 – 2027 https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files_en?file=2020-11/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf

Introduction

According to the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC), intercultural integration is a two-way process involving individuals, communities of individuals, and society as a whole. It consists of effective, positive, and sustainable diversity management policies, aiming to help society to benefit from the potential of diversity and manage its complexities, on the basis of reciprocal and symmetrical recognition, under an overarching human rights framework. The "intercultural integration" model requires a holistic approach which can guide co-ordinated and long-term policies in all fields and levels of governance in order to promote and ensure equality for all members of society, to foster a common pluralistic sense of belonging through valuing diversity and building social trust, community cohesion and meaningful interaction between people across their different socio-cultural backgrounds, and to facilitate their equal participation in and contribution to society¹.

Members of the Intercultural Cities network undertake to apply an intercultural lens to reviewing and adapting their public policies, which has shown several benefits within the local communities. According to a study of the Migration Policy Group (2017), cities with stronger intercultural policies report greater levels of citizens' satisfaction, particularly on dimensions such as safety, administration, jobs, and public services; and most the residents show a positive attitude towards immigration and migrants presence².

EU-BELONG brings and integrates the ICC intercultural approach in the regional decision-making level, with the purpose of improving migrants' socio-economic inclusion and sense of belonging in European societies; and fostering territorial social cohesion across Regions. European Union migrants' integration policy focus particularly on Third Country-Nationals (TCNs) migrants³.

Within EU-BELONG project, *Emilia-Romagna Region* and *ART-ER* coordinated a broad capacity-building activity aimed to improve mutual learning process among partners and their stakeholders. In coherence with a project's multi-stakeholder approach, the capacity-building program focused on public authorities, private and civil society stakeholders' engagement, providing them a common set of knowledge, tools and approaches for the effective planning and implementation of regional intercultural integration strategies. This process took place through the organisation of eleven online capacity-building programmes, and of

eleven 3-days multi-stakeholder learning labs, based on a common structure and learning methodology.

This handbook is a toolkit for public authorities' decision makers, personnel working in local services (public services, training centres, job agencies, NGOs, civil organizations, socio-cultural or migrants' associations), and for intercultural specialists, consultants and practitioners who are willing to learn more about capacity-building activity aimed at fostering integration through an intercultural approach. The contents and the practices contained in this handbook do not mean to be exhaustive. Indeed, they build on the experience of the online capacity-building program developed by the EU-BELONG project's partners, gathering Regions, regional experts' contributions, and by integrating main founding from research literatures, policy documents, tools developed by the Council of Europe ICC Programme and by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) in the context of the Includ-EU project⁴.

The EU-BELONG handbook is composed by four sections. The first one introduces practitioners to the main framework of intercultural approach to integration and its core principles (diversity, equality, interaction and participation), and to the implementation of a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to policy-making (Section 1). The second section explains the regional-based methodology employed for the development and for the organisation of the online capacity building programmes (Section 2). The third section introduces to twelve key policies' thematic areas, describing the main challenges connected to each policy's area, what stakeholders can be involved, and what topics to be covered during capacity building or intercultural training activities. It also presents several intercultural training modules developed by the EU-BELONG project partner Regions as examples of practices (Section 3). The fourth section shares some key recommendations for the organisation of similar capacity building activity, and others useful resources (Section 4).

¹ Council of Europe, Intercultural Glossary <https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-glossary/1680a836f2>

² Joki, A. L., Wolffhardt, A., & Huddleston, T., (2017). How the intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities. <https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-to-the-core-how-the-intercultural-cities-index-can-be-be/168076631b>

³ European Commission, (2016). Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0377&from=EN>

⁴ Includ-EU Project (AMIF) <https://includeu.eu/>

SECTION 1

AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH TO MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION



A ccording to Knowledge4Policy, the EU Commission's platform for evidence-based policymaking¹, the societal and political significance of migration has increased. Migration dynamics have become more complex in an interconnected world. In 2020, an estimated number of 281 million people were living outside their country of birth (3.6% of total world population). This number – defined as the global stock of international migrants – is almost twice higher than it was in 1990².

Although European societies have always been diverse, with the increase of immigrants new challenges have arisen, such as how to live together and how to acknowledge each other within democratic societies by respecting pluralism. Furthermore, evidence shows that there is a gap between locals and the population with a migrant background (particularly from outside Europe), in areas as education, employment and health and housing, which, in turn, hinders equality of opportunities³.

The complexity of societal challenges such as demographic changes, the need of skills for the future, climate change, building inclusive societies, requires a whole of society approach. This is necessary from a human rights perspective, as well as from a sustainability point of view. Thus, the need to improve the migration governance system at different levels, and enhance the support of regional authorities to undertake their fundamental role in facilitating the integrations of newcomers and creating inclusive communities.

What is interculturalism about?

Interculturalism is a policy model for ensuring equality and social cohesion in culturally diverse

Interculturalism, as a policy model related to migration and integration builds on the strengths and provides an alternative to the previous approaches, that for several years dominated the policy-makers' perspectives in managing diversity, the *assimilationist* and the *multiculturalism* approaches (Table 1).

According to the *assimilationist* policy model, when newcomers arrive in the host countries, they are expected to absorb the local culture and to give up to their cultural heritage to become part of the dominant culture⁵. The challenge with the assimilationist model is that people may feel resentful if obliged to deny their background, and reluctant to assume the values, rules and customs of the dominant culture, if this is imposed on them. Newcomers may disengage from society altogether.

Regions. It is a model applicable to different dimensions of diversity, such as gender, sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. It encourages mixing and interaction among people of different origins and cultural backgrounds to build a wider collective identity that embraces the European values of cultural pluralism, human rights, democracy, gender equality and non-discrimination⁴.

Interculturalism emphasizes commonalities and promotes contacts and positive intercultural interactions, thus to reduce the risks of divisive or identity politics as people from different cultural, faith or identity backgrounds get to know and trust each other.

The "Intercultural Approach" recognises that cultural identity is a dynamic concept that changes over the time and depends on one's personal circumstances; every person has multiple and intersectional cultural belonging. Positive intercultural experiences are the outcome of strong ambition and leadership, as well as of structured and implemented policies and activities at the local and regional levels.

¹ European Commission. Knowledge for Policy: Supporting policy with scientific evidence https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/home_en.

² European Commission, (2023). Knowledge for Policy: Increasing significance of migration https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/increasing-significance-migration_en.

³ Assembly of European Regions, (2019). AER political position "Towards an Intercultural Europe" <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AFzbRrkEgeBZ4DHuQ0QOJ8vN4m1sH6yj/view>.

⁴ Council of Europe, (2019). The intercultural city step by step <https://edoc.coe.int/en/living-together-diversity-and-freedom-in-europe/7982-the-intercultural-city-step-by-step-revised-edition.html> (ICC Intercultural city step by step guide).

The *multiculturalism* policy model, on the other hand, accommodates many cultural identities while generally failing to foster interactions among them. This model recognises that every cultural and ethnic identity deserves acknowledgement within the dominant political culture, and by doing so, it categorises minority groups by ethnicity, race or religion. As such, it risks to over-emphasise differences and power relations between majority and minority groups, and to enable diverse cultural groups to live side by side but without fruitfully interacting with each other. This can create circumstances leading to separation, marginalisation or segregation of diverse cultural groups⁶. Furthermore, nowadays it is well recognised that people's cultural identity is multidimensional, multifaceted, dynamic; it is influenced

Table 1. Integration Policies based on Individual Rights

	Economic rights	Civil & social rights	Cultural rights	Pluralistic common identity	
Assimilation	✓	✓			Rejecting cultural difference
Multiculturalism	✓	✓	✓		Over-emphasising cultural difference
Interculturalism	✓	✓	✓	✓	Cultural interaction as a basis of integration

Source: Adapted from Guidikova, I. (2015). Intercultural Integration: A New Paradigm for Managing Diversity as an Advantage. In R. Zapata-Barrero (Ed.), *Interculturalism in Cities. Concept, Policy, and Implementation* (pp. 136-151). London: Edward Elgar Publishing.

by the way in which attributes, such as age, gender, disability and class, intersect with other elements of people’s background (i.e. ethnicity, culture, language, faith etc.). The multicultural approach risks to classify people in one-dimensional label⁷.

If the assimilationist approach focuses primarily on equality and neglecting diversity, multiculturalism over-emphasises cultural differences; while, interculturalism bridges the diversity, equality and inclusion agendas through interactions.

⁵ Council of Europe, (2019). The intercultural city step by step <https://edoc.coe.int/en/living-together-diversity-and-freedom-in-europe/7982-the-intercultural-city-step-by-step-revised-edition.html> (ICC Intercultural city step by step guide).

⁶ Council of Europe, (2019). The intercultural city step by step <https://edoc.coe.int/en/living-together-diversity-and-freedom-in-europe/7982-the-intercultural-city-step-by-step-revised-edition.html> (ICC Intercultural city step by step guide).

⁷ Fanshawe, S., Sriskandarajah, D. (2010). *You Can’t Put Me in a Box: Super Diversity and the End of Identity Politics*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research, p. 11.

Four key principles: Diversity, Equality, Interaction, and Participation

The intercultural policy model builds on four key principles, which are both its starting point and its horizon:

- 1. Valuing diversity:** this means addressing diversity positively and putting in place policies and processes in place that can maximize its potential. The diversity advantage approach is a way of governing, managing and decision-making based on the idea that diversity can become a key opportunity, and a resource for the overall society development. The basic idea is that, when diversity is adequately managed, it is possible to achieve more positive results with diversity than without it⁸.
- 2. Real equality:** the concept of fundamental values includes equality before the law and equal rights as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights⁹ and the European Social Charter¹⁰. Yet, the concept of equal rights also requires pos-

itive action to ensure that rights are accessible to all¹¹. They need to be actively promoted as to build a shared understanding and belief in equality for everyone within the community.

- 3. Meaningful interaction:** interaction is the cornerstone of intercultural integration, and it is what gives an intercultural community its distinctive value. Interaction means intentionally creating conditions for meaningful and constructive everyday encounters across cultural and other differences. Prejudices and discrimination can thrive where there is segregation, or lack of con-

⁸ Council of Europe. Intercultural Cities Programme, Intercultural checklist: Valuing diversity, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/intercultural-checklist-valuing-diversity>

⁹ European Convention on Human Rights (1950, rev 2017) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM:eu_human_rights_convention

¹⁰ Council of Europe, (1961 rev 1996). European Social Charter (Revised), European Treaty Series - No, 163 <https://rm.coe.int/168007cf93>

¹¹ Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme. Intercultural checklist: Real equality <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/intercultural-checklist-real-equality>

tacts and dialogue between people, even where protective laws are in place. Evidence has shown that, under the right conditions, the more contacts exist among people with different backgrounds and lifestyles, the less likely they are to think and behave in prejudicial ways¹².

4. **Participation:** the intercultural model seeks to achieve an equitable division of powers and responsibilities across different policies, and to increase the participation of all residents in decision-making processes affecting the life of the community. Participation is an essential element in order to increase the sustainability of local and regional policies, and to reduce the costs of

social exclusion and instability. This because, when people encounter barriers to participation, or choose not to participate, they may, passively, withdraw from social and public life or choose actively to live outside the prevailing social customs and law¹³.

¹² Council of Europe Intercultural Cities Programme. Intercultural checklist: Meaningful interaction <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/intercultural-checklist-meaningful-intercultural-interaction>

¹³ ICC Intercultural city step by step guide <https://edoc.coe.int/en/living-together-diversity-and-freedom-in-europe/7982-the-intercultural-city-step-by-step-revised-edition.html>

Intercultural Region Step-by-Step Guide

To foster intercultural Regions, a guideline can be found in the Intercultural City Step-by-Step Guide¹⁴. The steps-by-steps process outlined can indeed be applied also at regional level:

- **Creating spaces for interaction** among groups with different belongings. Policies and actions shall focus on creating spaces, moments, and engagement in both groups. I.e., going beyond the fact that

diverse groups may live in the same neighbourhood, as it does not automatically imply an interaction among them, and rather think about projects that are interesting for both groups and can be the starter of a connection among them.

- **Ensuring that everyone has access** to opportunities and to services to develop their potential. This implies going beyond the equal treatment foreseen by law; and work on overcoming visible and invisible barriers, as it can be the lack of language, mi-

Figure 1. The Intercultural Cities Index: Fields of Action



Source: © Council of Europe 2016 Intercultural Cities Index Indicators.

cro-discriminations that can be expressed in how a person talks or does not pay attention to what someone is saying due to a prejudice.

- ▶ **Sharing power** by engaging people from diverse origins in decision-making at all levels and in all fields. This can be done by having intercultural assemblies or committees composed of heterogeneous people that are consulted for the elaboration of policies, before their adoption. This process can facilitate reflection on the consequences that certain policies may have on different groups, and about which policy makers were not aware or did not consider.
- ▶ **Adopting an inclusive narrative** breaking stereotypes and promoting positive messages about diversity. This requires to intentionally have a positive narrative about diversity.
- ▶ **Building intercultural competences** among people, local and regional civil servants, decision-makers, top-managers, and other stakeholders.
- ▶ **Showing commitment** through both, speeches and actions, and intentionally.
- ▶ **Managing conflict** and face it as a positive development opportunity. This implies being aware that conflict is likely to happen when bring together people with different views of the world, what is needed are spaces for development, mutual-listening, and to find common grounds.

At the same time, Regions, like cities, need to act horizontally along several areas of interventions. The ICC identified twelve areas of interventions synthesized

in the Intercultural Cities Index (Figure 1)¹⁵. In order to develop effective intercultural integration policies, interculturalism shall be addressed cross-sectoral across all those policy fields, integrating the work in one area with that of the others, in spite of a sectoral policy process.

Assessment of cities and Regions' intercultural integration framework

These indicators are summarized in the ICC-Index questionnaire to support cities in assessing their intercultural integration context. EU-BELONG elaborated a specific *Regional Intercultural Integration Self-assessment Questionnaire* for Regions, thus they can map their existing integration policy framework as starting point for the development of their regional intercultural integration strategies¹⁶.

¹⁴ Council of Europe, (2019). The intercultural city step by step <https://edoc.coe.int/en/living-together-diversity-and-freedom-in-europe/7982-the-intercultural-city-step-by-step-revised-edition.html> (ICC Intercultural city step by step guide)

¹⁵ Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities Index <https://www.coe.int/it/web/interculturalcities/about-the-index>

¹⁶ EU-BELONG Regional Intercultural Integration Self-assessment Questionnaire https://drive.google.com/file/d/18JycWgx4dVUG-bt7k7lQUetuO2TY8yjRe/view?usp=share_link. The questionnaire was elaborated by the Government of Catalonia in cooperation with the AER. It is based on the MIPEX-R Index developed in the project REGIN: Regions for Migrants and Refugees Integration.

A Multi-Level and Multi-Stakeholder Approach

The integration process encompasses different aspects and socio-economic areas, and Regions can play a pivotal role as catalyst for change and can be multipliers of intercultural ideas and practices. Therefore, effective integration requires the activation and a coherent policy-makers approach across policy sectors, and at different level of governance; it requires all social and economic actors directly and indirectly involved with integration with specific policy areas.

Indeed, a multi-level approach to integration seeks to strengthen the role of the different government's levels, and to enhance the cooperation among them, in order to develop integrated policies and interventions, able to address communities' needs, but also to build

on diverse communities' potentials. Collaboration among local, regional and national administrations is needed, to create and implement effective policies, and to share and gather information between the different levels of governance, at local, regional, interregional, national and European level¹⁷.

On the other hand, a *multi-stakeholders approach* recognises that Regions have a major role in the facilitation of multi-stakeholders' communication and collaborations via spaces of dialogues, joint initiatives, and results' dissemination. This is based on a strong coordination among all levels of government, and other relevant organisations operating or having

¹⁷ See Council of Europe Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=0900001680a6170e

an interest in specific policies' areas. Indeed, stakeholders are all society's actors, internal and external to the regional public government, who can have a voice or interest in the policy-making, and who can be directly or indirectly impacted by the policy. Examples of potential external stakeholders include public and private local organisations; civil society organisations, including migrants' associations and communities' groups; economic and social partners, as employers and trade unions; associations focusing on youth, people with disabilities and gender mainstreaming; academies and education institutions; medias.

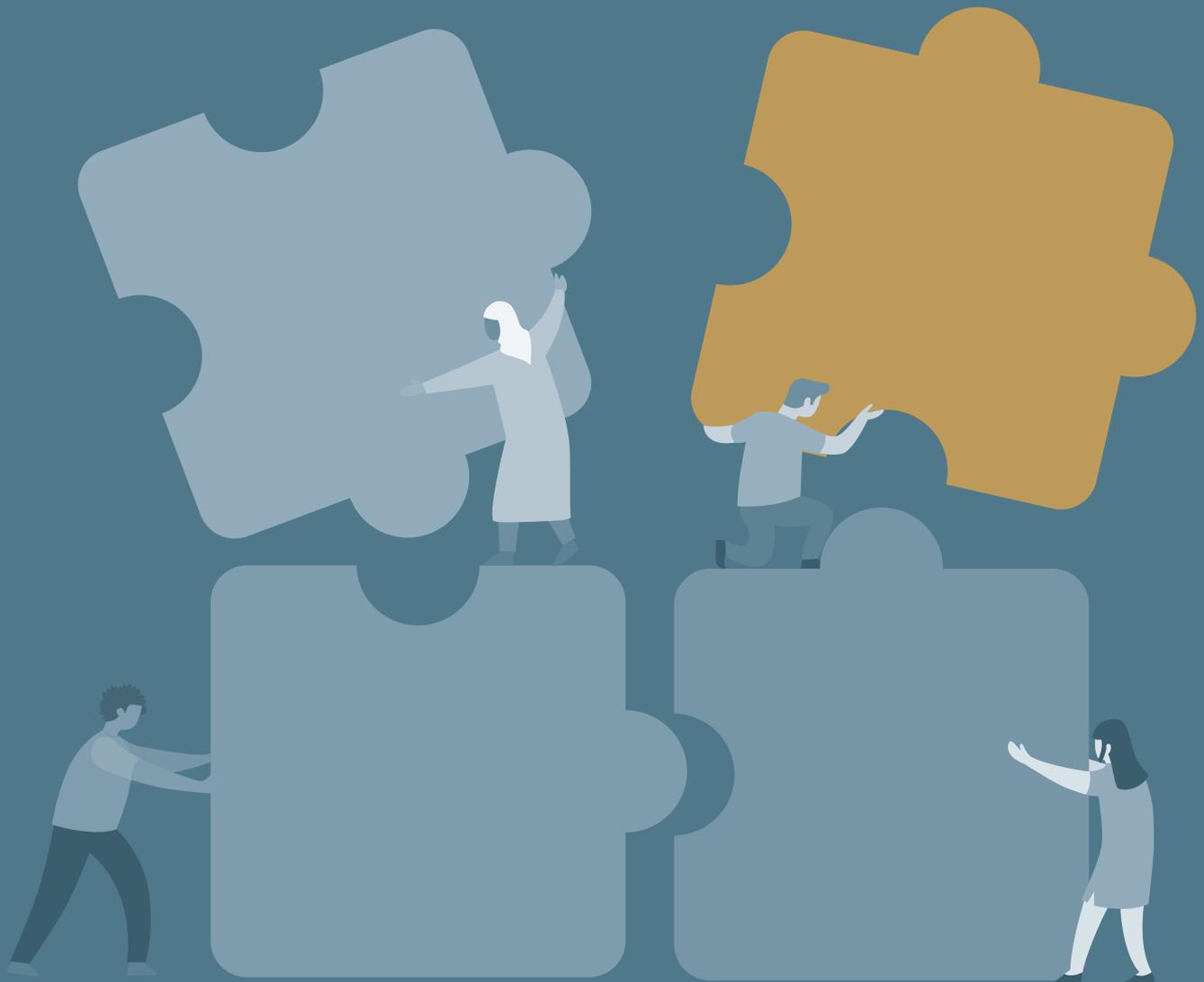
Migrants' integration policies are not restricted to one government's department or specialist area, and the intercultural policy model aims to address integration cross-sectoral. Interculturalism is mainstreamed across different policy fields or areas of competences that are directly and indirectly linked with integration (e.g., health, labour market, education, housing,

sports, culture, public services provision). Developing and implementing intercultural integration policies means to consult and dialogue with the different regional departments and public services involved (the "internal" stakeholders). Such dialogue requires transversal or cross-departmental collaborations to share, connect, re-interpret information, uncovering unseen areas, and embracing different viewpoints.

Stakeholders' engagement is a key element for the effectiveness and sustainability of policymaking. Particularly when it comes to inclusion issues, Regions have a political role in raising stakeholders' awareness and in engaging them in the definition of what desirable present and future they would like to shape. Promoting their participation in the policy process can both make integration policies more representative and better fitted to address different societal needs; and to ensure coherence and develop coordinated actions with other relevant policies and actors.

SECTION 2

PROMOTING INTERCULTURALISM THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING



Capacity building to develop intercultural competence

Intercultural competences are defined as the ability to mobilise and implement relevant psychological resources to provide appropriate solutions and effective responses to situations involving intercultural demands, challenges, and opportunities (Council of Europe, 2018)¹. They are a set of knowledge and understanding (about other languages, own and other cultures, intercultural relations and phenomena), skills or abilities (e.g., using different languages, to consider others cultural viewpoints, to interact or take consequently appropriate decisions), attitudes (as openness, respect, flexibility, tolerance of uncertainty) and values (including valuing cultural diversity, dignity, human rights and equality).

Intercultural societies require the development of intercultural competences among both the local and migrant population to foster social cohesion and positive intercultural interactions that can generate mutual learning, changes, and innovation.

The acquisition and development of intercultural competences is essential for people working in public administration, including elected officials². In this context, intercultural skills can provide the tools for more horizontal interactions and communications with citizens, in which unequal relationships are recognised and potential conflicts and divergences are better understood and managed. On the one hand, they are necessary for relations in diverse work environments; on the other hand, they are needed to relate with diverse citizens and to all people on equal terms. Likewise, intercultural competences allow politicians and practitioners to tackle some current challenges related to integration: as those derived from the arrival, settlement and rooting of migrants and refugees; as well as those related to racist phenomena, exclusion or invisibility of certain groups³.

Intercultural competences are also transformative. They aim to promote structural change in institutions (as local public administrations) to address the causes of inequality, discrimination, exclusion, the lack of recognition and respect for diversity, and the lack of spaces for interaction in contemporary societies⁴. In this sense, intercultural competences are necessary in order to design, implement and evaluate intercultural policies and to enable administrations to adapt their services to the socio-cultural reality of the local territory.

In the document “Intercultural competences for technical and political positions in local governments”⁵, the ICC proposes the following intercultural compe-

tence model to be developed towards public authorities’ officers and decision makers (Table 2).

Intercultural competences are not innate or automatically acquired; they must be learned, practised and maintained⁶. Capacity building processes can provide the context and the methodologies to develop these skills by organising training activities through different types of experiential learning methodologies (Section 4).

Capacity building to engage local stakeholders to draw and to implement integration policies and projects

Capacity building is also a key tool to engage stakeholders in policy-making processes and regional actions. Local stakeholders can be engaged, from the very beginning, in the definition of the capacity building programme as the identification of the training objectives and contents. Regions can ensure the relevance of the overall activity identifying the different stakeholders and creating a sense of ownership among the ones involved, thus setting the ground for their continuous participation in the process. With multiple government levels and multiple stakeholders involved, capacity building activities may focus on policy development, allocation of resources, and political advocacy efforts. Indeed, public policy decisions can affect the entire population, while partnerships, training, and skills development have the potential to challenge a range of systemic, practices and cultural norms.

At the same time, capacity building activities can have a powerful effect on raising public awareness and changing the public opinion on certain issues. By gathering different stakeholders together, decision makers can set common values and norms by mainstreaming interculturalism within their communities. This is particularly important when it comes to migrants’ integration issues being a matter that di-

¹ Council of Europe (2018). Reference framework of competences for democratic culture – Volume 1. Context, concepts and model, Strasbourg.

² Council of Europe (2022) Manual for the design of a training course on intercultural competence <https://rm.coe.int/manual-for-the-design-of-a-training-course-on-intercultural-competence/1680a948b1>

³ Council of Europe (2020). Intercultural Competences for Technical Political Positions in Local Governments <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a061c5>

⁴ Council of Europe (2021) Intercultural Cities Programme, Intercultural competencies applied to the development of public administration projects <https://rm.coe.int/guide-to-intercultural-competencies-/1680a10d81>

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 8

Table 2. Intercultural competences for technical and political positions in local governments

INTERCULTURAL RELATIONAL COMPETENCES	INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES FOR DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT	
	KNOWLEDGE	ATTITUDES AND SKILLS/RESOURCES
<p>VALUES such as human dignity, human rights and cultural diversity, pluralism of opinions and practices as an asset for society.</p> <p>KNOWLEDGE and critical understanding of one's cultural affiliations, perspective on the world, cognitive, emotional and motivational biases. Multiple identities and affiliations. Knowledge of languages and communication, of cultures and religions.</p> <p>SKILLS such as critical and analytical thinking, listening and observation, linguistic, communicative and multilingual skills (adapting and varying styles of communication) Empathy, flexibility and adaptability.</p> <p>ATTITUDES of openness towards learning about other cultures and other beliefs and practices, of respect and tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty.</p>	<p>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK of the different models of diversity management, with special emphasis on interculturalism and how they can be translated into local policy practice. The theoretical framework of discrimination.</p> <p>LEGAL FRAMEWORK produced by public international law that regulates the rights and freedoms of foreigners, social integration, inclusion and the fight against discrimination.</p> <p>CONTEXT: the social, cultural, demographic and economic reality of the diverse society, especially the situation of people with different socio-cultural profiles (level of equality, recognition in institutions, sense of belonging, social interaction and links etc.).</p> <p>POLICIES AND PRACTICES: the public policies on immigration, diversity and interculturality of the city/territory and their evolution, as well as those of the autonomous and state level. Likewise, to create awareness on the actions that are promoted from the municipal sphere related to diversity issues or that have an important impact on intercultural principles. Good (and bad) practices of other cities, both at state and international level, as well as the know-how accumulated by organisations and institutions related to these issues (e.g. ICC, RECI). Tools for the evaluation of intercultural public policies</p> <p>KEY ACTORS: knowledge of the actors, entities, organizations, etc. that exist in the territory and are involved in this issue as well as the experiences, initiatives and projects in the territory that directly and indirectly work on issues related to diversity</p>	<p>COMMUNICATING: knowing how to explain adequately what interculturality is and why it is important, its objectives and results. Incorporate the intercultural approach into the narrative.</p> <p>DIALOGUE: ability to listen, interpret and know how to transmit. This is important in order to convince (and seduce) the need to incorporate interculturality into the political agenda and public policies, but also with regard to technical staff in other areas. In relation to people from different origins and contexts, linguistic, sociolinguistic and discursive skills will be relevant, as well as knowing how to interpret their practices, values and beliefs.</p> <p>COLLABORATION: ability to cooperate and connect with civil society actors or staff from other areas. This will allow space for finding common grounds between agents with diverse interests and therefore generate alliances. This will require an empathetic attitude, open-mindedness and a spirit of adding and creating synergies.</p> <p>ADAPT(ING): skills of flexibility and adaptation to complex and/or changing, culturally diverse contexts and unknown or ambiguous situations. It also involves making a more inclusive (or less limiting) reading of, for example, legal frameworks.</p> <p>INNOVATE: skills to seek opportunities and solutions to new and changing challenges in society, making use of creativity, being proactive, being curious, etc. This will allow the identification of existing know-how in this area (for which knowledge on the English language will be very useful).</p> <p>QUESTIONING: a self-critical and humble attitude will facilitate the evaluation of intercultural policies and measures, the learning process and the improvement of these policies.</p>

vides politicians and the local population, and that can cause unwelcoming attitude, and, in some worst cases, discrimination or xenophobic behaviours.

The EU-BELONG methodology: A Regional-based Transnational Framework

Capacity building activities may serve different aims based on policy and learning needs, objectives of a specific territorial context, and existing level of knowledge and competences. This is especially true when it comes to Regions as they differ significantly among each other in terms of territory, competences, resources, and population. Thus, what works well in a region may not be applicable or effective in another region; hence, the need to consider the specific regional context and needs⁷.

EU-BELONG moves along two levels of interventions, which continuously feed each other. As shown in Graph 1, the methodology employed for the online capacity building programmes' definition combines the transnational dimension of the action (steps in **blue**) with the specific needs and priorities of each region (steps in **red**). It seeks to find synergies with Regions' ongoing work and existing structures, and it provides flexibility as to create value and maximise the relevance of the process within the region and the overall project's

scope⁸. Moreover, it involves local stakeholders in different phases of the process, setting the ground for their engagement throughout the EU-BELONG action.

A Identifying Intercultural Competences Needs

The development of Regions' capacity building programs started with a competences and learning needs' assessment, which involved regional administrators and local stakeholders⁹. The assessment considered:

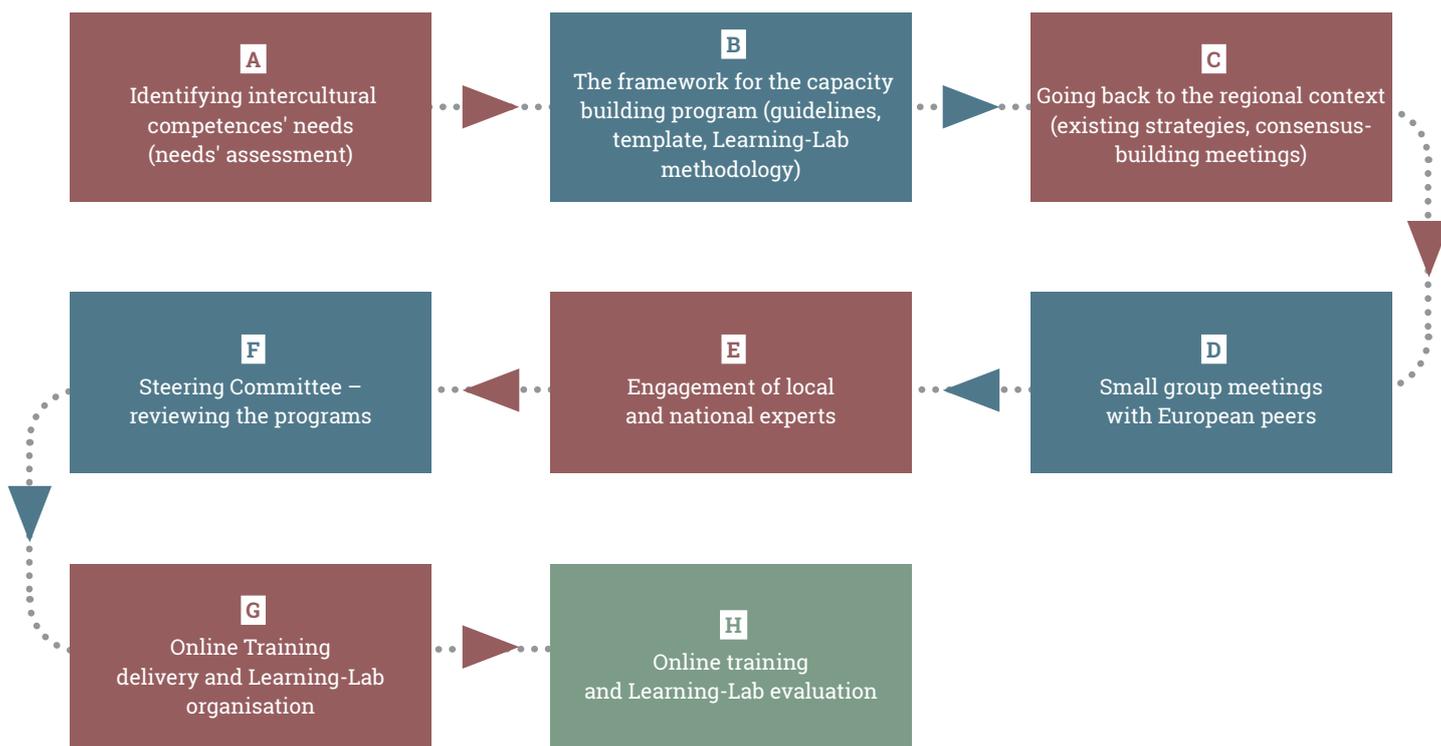
⁶ Council of Europe (2008) White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together as Equals in Dignity" https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf

⁷ Sandu B. & Pacevicius J., (2022). Knowledge Transfer Toolkit <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g8-729HE57Qs3nmyBWhkGTpuIB-Nihb3B/view>

⁸ The same approach is applied in the other activities of the project including the elaboration of the Regions' intercultural integration strategies, where the project seeks, where possible, to access with the intercultural and multi-stakeholder lenses already existing structures and ongoing/planned policy processes within the regional administrations.

⁹ The assessment was performed through a needs assessment questionnaire <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GEuqooMpnRdwT7maBH-B2aZaHz0K66yVL/view> developed by ART-ER, the Emilia-Romagna region, and Centro Interculturale Mondinsieme with the support of the EU-BELONG Advisory Committee. The questionnaire was run via Google Form from May until June 2022 collecting a total of 34 responses including 11 from the partner Regions and 23 from other local stakeholders (public organizations, NGOs, CSOs, academies, schools, and research and training centres).

Graph 1: Process for the definition and implementation of EU-BELONG capacity building programs



- a) If and what types of previous training activity on intercultural competences were previously carried out by the Regions;
- b) The existing level of collaboration between Regions and their stakeholders in the organisation of intercultural competences training activities;
- c) What themes and target groups are relevant to be addressed through the capacity-building program, in general, by the project, and particularly, taking in consideration the specific regional context.

It resulted that most Regions and local stakeholders, at different degrees, had already undergone through intercultural competences' training activities, addressing different target groups. Accordingly, four online modules were suggested based on Regions' different level of experience with trainings on intercultural competences¹⁰:

Module 1. Introduction to interculturalism and intercultural policies

An introductory module for all training activities to provide a shared understanding about the intercultural framework for all Regions, and theoretical and methodological tools to shape and understand the later modules. The module was recommended for all partner Regions.

Module 2. Intercultural communication towards migrants and TCNs

Regions were invited to include modules on intercultural communication, migration and anthropological knowledge about migrants and TCNs, how to facilitate migrants' participation in cultural and social life, how to improve intercultural dialogue to increase the feeling of security, access to neighbourhoods' facilities and cultural, social, and sport activities. The module was recommended for all Regions that have not organised previous trainings on these themes.

Module 3. Communication to policy actors and citizens about the value of diversity and inclusion

Regions were invited to include modules focusing on increasing awareness about racism, hate speech, processes of stereotyping, xenophobia, as well as improving intercultural competences among teacher promoting intercultural projects and educational curricula as to multiply the dissemination of these competences across the society. The module was recommended for all Regions that have not organ-

ised previous trainings on interculturalism, or these themes, or that did not address both target groups (policy actors and citizens).

Module 4. Improved coordination between different services and departments

Regions were invited to include modules with a particular focus on already existing experiences as to bridge the gap between different services, avoiding redundancies and optimise resources. The module was recommended for Regions who have already carried out significant training activities and need to proceed towards a further integration of their services and a more effective exchange of competences among them.

While the needs assessment's findings and recommendations were considered as the starting point to make an informed decision about the modules, target groups and methodologies, other elements were considered for an effective selection of the modules and organisation of training programmes through a series of co-design activities.

B Providing the overall framework for the capacity building programmes

This activity included the preparation of guidelines and of a template that supported the identification of the capacity building's objectives; stakeholders' target groups to involve; modules' topics and good practices; training methodologies; peers, local experts or organisations to be involved to deliver the online training activities¹¹. Moreover, an expert trainer on interculturalism was engaged to support the overall definition of the trainings, and their consistency with the framework adopted by the project.

Throughout the process there were continuous back and forward feedbacks on the training programmes outlined in the template, bilateral exchanges (mostly via email) and video-calls meetings' needs-based.

¹⁰ Sbriccoli, T. (2022). "EU-BELONG An Intercultural Approach to Migrant Integration in Europe's Regions: Needs Assessment for Capacity-building and Mutual-learning on Interculturalism."

¹¹ Programme Template for organisation of online capacity-building training on interculturalism & 3-days regional multi-stakeholder learning lab: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_nP0ywL9pgyb-HT4QbzG-DJ9oawuHymf1/edit?usp=share_link&oid=1094310179298800190&rtpof=true&sd=true

C Going back to the regional context

During this stage, existing strategies and operational plans have been evaluated. Some Regions considered their ongoing work on inclusion and/or their integration strategies or their operational plans as a starting point for the identification of relevant training modules; thus addressing already identified needs and objectives with an intercultural lens. This was the case, for instance, of Navarra, Catalonia and Donegal Regions.

In other cases, Regions organised ad-hoc consensus building meetings with representatives of their local authorities' and of their stakeholders. The meetings were aimed to discuss regional and local needs, and the results of the needs assessment; hence, they jointly agreed on the training modules to run. This was the case, for example, of Poznan region, who organised five roundtables in the five sub-Regions; and of Pomerania Region.

In some cases, this step took place after the following step d) *Small-group meetings with European peers*.

D Small-group meetings with European peers

During this stage a series of small-group meetings were organised between the coordinators of the capacity building programme, Emilia-Romagna Region, ART-ER, AER, the expert trainer and groups of two or three Regions' representatives. The meetings were aimed to: exchange about Regions' proposals about the training activity, bringing knowledge and ideas together; learning about what their peers were doing; and jointly address challenges and exploring possible synergies.

This stage was a key moment for the development of the capacity building programmes.

E Engagement of local and national experts and trainers

Each Region engaged local or national experts on interculturalism. The experts supported them in the training content's preparation, adapting it to the spe-

cific needs of the regional context; and in the facilitation of the sessions.

F Steering committee meeting – reviewing the programs

During the first EU-BELONG Steering Committee meeting, which involved all partners, the finalised programs were presented, discussed, and evaluated according to their intercultural dimension, in order to provide final recommendations before the kick-off of the training sessions.

G Online training delivery

Training activities were delivered online in each partner region; with a total duration of about 10 hours. They included:

One first training session, transversal to all Regions.

AER, with the support of an ICC Network's expert trainer, organised a first online transversal training session on *"Introduction to Interculturalism and Intercultural Competences"* with the aim to align on the main basic concepts of interculturalism, and to share a common framework for its implementation at regional level. The session was addressed to all partner Regions, and to a group of 20 stakeholders in each region; it was delivered in English¹².

A series of specific training sessions organised by each region.

Following the first transversal session, every region, with the support of local experts, organized 3 or 4 further online sessions addressed to around 150 stakeholders in each region. The modules were based on the programmes co-defined by each Region and delivered in their official language. Some Regions partnered in the organization of common sessions due to the sharing of a common language (e.g. Leipzig and Salzburg Regions). Only one region (Donegal County) organised asynchronous online training activity by using an e-learner provider specialised on intercultural contents.

¹² Assembly of European Regions - Introduction to interculturalism and intercultural competences: <https://aer.eu/interculturalism-for-intercultural-regions-to-be/>.

Create inclusive learning environments

When organising training activities, either online or in-person, it is useful to design and to run them having in mind the following questions:

Ask yourself	Consider
Is the training organised in a way that allows for everyone to take part or is anyone excluded for some reasons?	Schedule; days; total amount of hours
	Format and tools used, and if they are accessible by all the participants (particularly in case of online training)
	Language and terms used should ensure understanding from everyone
	Space and accessibility
Is the trainer prepared to deliver this kind of training?	Trainer self-reflection ability; awareness of their own prejudices
	Experiences
Were special conditions taken into consideration during the preparation? Are all the activities possible to be implemented with everyone (e.g., blind or deaf people, people with low mobility, introverts, etc.)?	Ask participants if there are special needs to be taken into account before the training (e.g. using the registration form).
	If not, all activities are possible to be implemented with everyone, do you have a plan B?
	Be aware of participants needs. Ask inclusion-related questions in the enrolment process.

Source: Carla Calado - Coordinator of the Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network. Presentation on "Intercultural Competence" at the "Introduction to Interculturalism and Intercultural Competences" training session (05/10/2022)

H Online training and Learning-Lab evaluation

An online evaluation questionnaire was elaborated by ICEI and it was then translated by each region in their official language. Following each module, each region circulated the questionnaire among the participants to gather information about their perceptions of the session, the contents covered, the training methodologies, the relevance of the contents for their work, and about the improvement of their competences.

The other step of the capacity building: The 3-days Multi-stakeholder Learning Labs

While online capacity building aimed to provide a first introduction on the main basic concepts of interculturalism and its application across several areas (illustrated in Section 3-), the capacity building process was brought further through the organisation of three-days multi-stakeholder learning lab. This activity was gathered in person and it involved 20 local stakeholders in each region, with the objective of promoting mutual learning among them; to engage them in the action by creating a first space

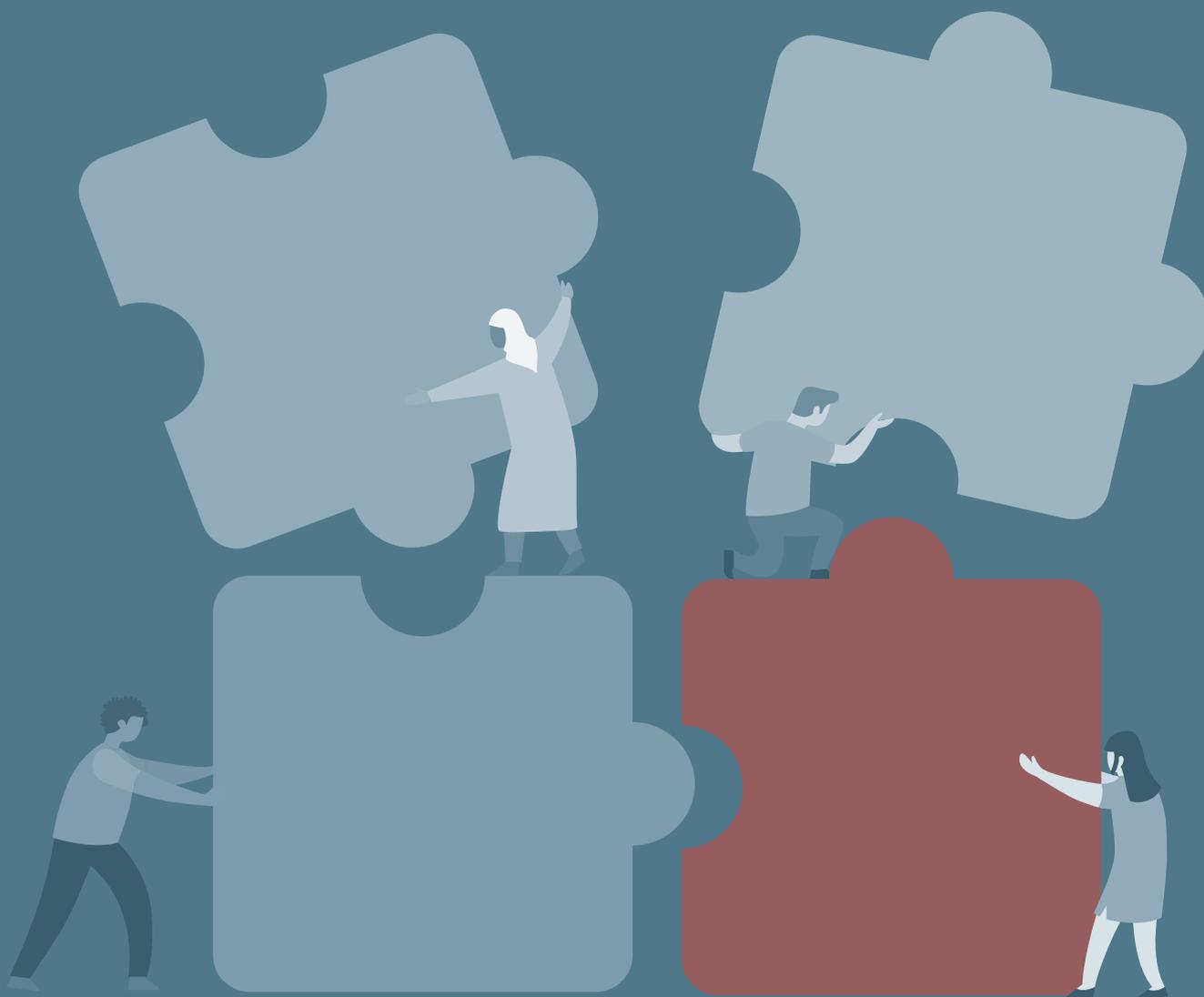
to meet; and to discuss about the forthcoming multi-stakeholder co-design of the intercultural integration policy.

Learning-Labs were developed in parallel to the online capacity building programs (see Graph 1.). Moreover, their organisation was based on a specific methodology titled "*Structure and Methodological Support for the 3-days Regional Multi-stakeholder Learning Lab*"¹³.

¹³ *Structure and methodological support for the 3-days multi-stakeholder learning lab* https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L5Z2yFu-7JfGg9AGBiH3IAzdmHJVamQUZ/view?usp=share_link

SECTION 3

KEY THEMATIC AREAS FOR INTERCULTURAL TRAINING



This section presents the policy challenges related to core thematic areas for intercultural integration. It provides practical information on specific policy's areas that have been identified by the EU-BELONG Regions, the challenges to be tackled, training topics to be covered and

target groups to involve, and examples from the regional experiences in the project. Thus, anyone who wants to organize capacity building activity aimed to develop intercultural competences in specific areas can find practical support.



Challenge

In more and more diverse societies, interculturalism and intercultural competences should be mainstreamed among cities' population, apart from public administrations, services and private sector employees. Promoting the development of intercultural competences among policy makers, administrations and stakeholders' employees, and the resident population is one important step in the process of building Intercultural Regions.

A person is considered interculturally competent if they can successfully communicate and relate with people from other cultural backgrounds. According to European Commission (2007), intercultural competences are a set of attitudes, skills and knowledge to face, act and intervene effectively and appropriately in a variety of contexts, where cultural, socio-economic, ethnic, and other layers intersect and can lead to situations of intercultural conflict that can, in turn, damage social cohesion¹. Intercultural competences can be acquired through life experience, particularly in diverse environments, but they can also be trained and practiced.

Intercultural competences are today a widely recognised key competence for making our diverse democratic societies work. This is supported by numerous international policy papers and recommendations, such as the Council of Europe (2012), UNESCO (2013), OCSE (2018)², and intercultural competences are also taught at school levels. Many studies have shown how intercultural competences are linked with the success of migration stories, because they leverage the cultural adjustment and integration process. Furthermore, intercultural competences are today included in the competence's models of several companies and professions, especially when dealing with intercultural relations or working in multicultural environments. Intercultural competences are also required for successful integration strategies as they require a mindset change in both politicians and public administrators that enables them to understand cultural differences and modulate their responses accordingly³.

Considering the level of decision-making and relevant policy competences, politicians and decision makers should also be trained to apply the intercultural approach in policies' development and implementation. Considering Regions' capacity of gathering multiple stakeholders, they can have a meaningful role in supporting the development of diverse territorial stakeholders and citizens' intercultural competences. Intercultural inclusion requires citizens to translate in their daily actions their commitment to a common set of values, to a shared sense of belonging and to a pluralist local identity.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Public sectors' employees
- ▶ Newcomers/migrants
- ▶ Career counsellors, employment recruiters and selectors of employment agencies
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, schools' teachers and staff
- ▶ Local and migrant students at different levels of education
- ▶ Entrepreneurs, managers, HR personnel of local businesses and companies



Training topics

- ▶ Interculturalism and its key principles
- ▶ Intercultural integration key policies principles
- ▶ Ethno-centrism vs. ethno-relativism attitudes and the risks of the lack of intercultural competences
- ▶ The relevance of intercultural competence today
- ▶ How to develop intercultural competences' components
- ▶ How to train others to develop their intercultural competences
- ▶ Diversity as an advantage and as a source for mutual learning and innovation



Interculturalism and Intercultural Competences

To kick-start the capacity building programmes for all 11 partner Regions, the AER, with the support of an ICC expert consultant organised an introductory online module titled "*Introduction to Interculturalism and Intercultural Competences*"⁴.

The session was transversal to all Regions, with the aim to create a common understanding about interculturalism, and to provide each region with a framework and guidance for the further organisation of other training activities involving local stakeholders' groups. It was a first moment to gather the whole EU-BELONG broader community, including all partners Regions and their stakeholders, introducing the overall project's framework.

The duration of the session was of 2,5 hours. The language used to lead the session was English, the common language used among all project's partners.

Over 150 participants attended this online session, between representatives of partners' Regions and their main identified stakeholders.

Due to the large number of participants, the format used for the conduction was mostly based on an instructor's presentation and participants' interactions led through questions and answers sessions, and some practical exercises with the support of digital interactive tools such as Slido.

During this online module the following topics were covered: what interculturalism is; what ethnocentrism vs. ethno-relativism are; interculturalism's key principles, the steps and areas of interventions to foster regional intercultural integration policies. Whereas, the second part of the training was dedicated to the understanding of intercultural competences, how to train them and how to organise intercultural training activities.

¹ Council of Europe (2020). Intercultural Competences for Technical Political Positions in Local Governments <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a061c5>

² Hube, J. (2012). Intercultural competences for all. Preparation for living in a heterogeneous world. <https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-competence-for-all/16808ce20c>; Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (2013). Intercultural competences: conceptual and operational framework. UN-

ESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000219768>; OECD, Global competency for an inclusive world. 2018. <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

³ Council of Europe (2020). Intercultural Competences for Technical Political Positions in Local Governments <https://rm.coe.int/0900001680a061c5>

⁴ This module was run by the ICC Expert Carla Calado



Challenge

Migration affects countries, communities, migrants and their families in very different and sometimes unpredictable ways. As stated in the UN Global Compact for Migration (2018)¹ migration has been part of the human experience throughout history. It can be a source of prosperity, innovation and sustainable development in our globalised world, and these positive impacts can be optimised by improving migration governance. In order to achieve safe migration on the one hand, and social and economic cohesion on the other hand, it is essential to better understand migration phenomena.

Both, in case of emergency management of migration flows, and in case of mid-term and long-term integration processes, it is important that politicians, social workers and staff services understand migrations phenomenon, the challenges and the different aspects of integration process.

At government level, the degree to which these various support measures can be coordinated and effectively delivered will have a major impact on how the person settles and integrates. On the other hand, at the community and interpersonal levels, open and welcoming attitudes toward newcomers are better performed when media broadcasts transmit a positive and aware image of the migration phenomena. This also enables the local population to empathise with migrants because they understand the reasons of migration, they went through a similar experience, or they understand the challenges or hopes connected with the risks of leaving the home country.



Target groups

- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Public sectors' employees
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, schools' teachers and staff
- ▶ Health professionals and welfare services' employees
- ▶ Leaders, opinion makers, journalists



Training topics

- ▶ Past and current migrations fluxes and migrants' data
- ▶ Reasons for migrations and legal status
- ▶ Migrants' main challenges at the arrival and in the integration process
- ▶ Welcoming and integration: Successful experiences and solutions



Understanding Migrations

The Austrian Salzburg region organised one online training session on “*Flight: Causes, Challenges and Solutions*” aimed to better understand migrations and to raise the awareness about the causes and effects of migrations movements.

It was addressed particularly to representatives of the regional and local public authorities, including staff working at the front desks and managing services; regional and local politicians and decision makers; social workers and civil servants; employees of public sectors working with refugees and TCNs. The duration of the session was of three hours.

The session was organised and facilitated with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Austria office, which, with their experts² helped to cover the following topics: current migration fluxes in the country; data about migrants and ethnic and cultural minorities groups in the country; main integration challenges faced by the different minorities groups; legal status and rights, such as access to housing, health, education, and employment; successful welcoming and integration measures.

The methodologies used to conduct this training session included traditional lectures with instructors-centred approach; questions and answers interactions and plenary discussions through which participants could share their own experiences; some practical exercises.

¹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?OpenElement>

² This session was conducted by the UNHCR Austria representative and by the International Center for Migration Policy Development’s representative.



CONSIDERING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND DIVERSITY

3



Challenge

When developing intercultural competence, the first step is not about learning about other cultures but becoming aware of our own cultural identities, of how our own culture/s do/es impact on our behaviours, and how we manage relations with others.

The intercultural approach recognises that people's cultural identity is multidimensional, or intersectional, and dynamic. Indeed, cultural identity is influenced by the way in which people associate meanings to characteristics such as ethnicity, culture, language, but also age, gender, disability, class, religious beliefs, and so on. This first step of own cultural identity self-awareness is fundamental to recognize that one's own culture and worldview is not the only one, and that others may have different cultural perspectives. It is the prerequisite of diversity recognition and of the possibility to respect diversity. In this stage, it is important to ask questions as: *"Why do we do things this way and not that way?", "Why do we perceive each other in a certain way?", "How does our cultural perspective impact on newcomers and residents' relations?"*

While, at governmental level, an intercultural integration strategy should not ignore mapping the needs and aspirations of newcomers and of language, ethnic or cultural minority groups. An intercultural strategy should explicitly consider what response is given to different cultural groups, and whether their needs are addressed. Some ethnic groups may have similar needs to others while others may have specific needs, particularly on issues such as schooling, education provision, employment, faith, and places of worship. Groups' cultural identity recognition is necessary to activate any consultation / participation processes or to search for representatives on specific issues. At the same time, marking cultural identities can have the risk of creating separated boundaries between insider "we" and outsider groups "them/not us". This is something that need to be carefully managed because it could create the lack of a common sense of belonging and conflicts.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Public sectors' employees
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, schools' teachers and staff
- ▶ Health professionals and welfare services' employees
- ▶ Leaders, opinion makers, journalists
- ▶ Medias' and communication departments' managers and staff
- ▶ Business institutions (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)



Training topics

- ▶ What culture is
- ▶ How culture does influence our behaviours and perceptions
- ▶ The definition of culture in intercultural relationship contexts



Cultural Identity and Diversity

The Arad region in Romania organised an online training session titled “*Cultural Identity and Diversity*”¹ and a second module on “*Identifying one’s own cultural identity landmarks, by referring to various cultural reference systems*”².

Each session had a duration of three hours each and addressed diversified group of stakeholders. They included decision-makers from regional and local authorities, social workers offering migrants’ welcoming services, NGOs’ employees working with migrants, academia and research centres, media and communication departments, and employees of the Chamber of Commerce.

The sessions aimed at helping local authorities, practitioners, and policymakers to implement intercultural diversity and inclusion practices by fostering transcultural teamwork and cooperation with other professionals who provide services to migrants and involved in relevant public services. Further, it developed some cultural awareness about the healthcare services’ model adopted and tried to foster intercultural competences in the delivering of healthcare services.

¹ This session was organized with the support of the University of Arad.

² This session was led by Asistentă Socială și Protecția Copilului Arad.



EMBRACING EQUALITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

4



Challenge

Discrimination occurs when people are treated less favourably than other people in a comparable situation based on elements as ethnicity, culture, origin, religion, language, sex, age, disability, and so on. Other times, it may be due to standardised norms, sometimes even legislation, that do not consider specific groups' situation.

Discriminations are often the result of prejudices and stereotypes toward certain groups. People and organisations can hold more or less conscious stereotypes and prejudices, and these mechanisms can prevent people of a certain group from developing their skills, or from accessing work opportunities, health or education services, housing or other public services and opportunities.

Intercultural integration strategies need to prevent or counter these mechanisms. European legislation¹ recognises that embracing "equality" means, in some cases, defining or implementing differential treatments towards certain group members as initial conditions or the access to opportunities are not necessarily the same for all².

Unequal conditions for certain group's members can often be due to historical rooted or systemic prejudices. For these reasons, and in order to enjoy equal rights, some group members might need a different or a special treatment compared to others. This principle of equality can be actualised with "quota systems" or with diversity and inclusion strategies targeted to members of historically excluded or disadvantaged groups designed and implemented in different private and public organisational contexts.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Public sectors' employees
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, teachers and schools' staff
- ▶ Health professionals and welfare services' employees
- ▶ Leaders, opinion makers, journalists
- ▶ Medias' and communication departments' managers and staff



Training topics

- ▶ Human rights concepts and public services' obligations
- ▶ Stereotypes and prejudices
- ▶ Racism and xenophobia
- ▶ Direct and indirect discriminations
- ▶ Hostile behaviours, microaggressions, hate-speeches
- ▶ The anti-racist perspective
- ▶ Anti-discrimination and anti-rumours strategies
- ▶ Diversity, equality, and inclusion strategies



Equality and Human Rights in the Public Services

In 2022, the Irish Donegal County launched the “*Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion Strategy*” (BAME Strategy) for 2021-2026³, marking an important moment for intercultural integration policies in the County. The strategy seeks for inclusion for all, based on equality and human rights values, which are reflected across all territorial stakeholders.

Within this contextual framework, the region organised bespoke Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty training sessions for local authorities’ staff. Particularly, the training addressed personnel working in all seven Directorates of the County (Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services; Community Development and Planning; Finance, Roads and Transportation; Economic Development, Emergency Services and Information Systems; and Water and Environment).

The module highlighted and raised awareness of the different concepts and understanding to promote respect, equality and diversity which subsequently promotes Public Sector Equality. It introduced tools, skills and analysis of staff to address racism, promote inclusion and equality in their work. It gave Staff the conditions for open dialogue to collectively engage with topics such as human rights, equality, discrimination, Public Sector duty and other intercultural concepts. “The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty” introduced the relevant equality and human rights legislation in Ireland (Section 43 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014) and its implementation.

The bespoke training were run in person with two facilitators, which allowed participants to attend and complete the course during the working hours and which included interactive learner-centered modalities. Indeed, the module included case studies and critical scenarios, and practical exercises.



Intersectional antiracist perspective

The Catalonia region in Spain organized two online training sessions to increase the understanding of international migrations, the areas of inequality in which public intervention is needed, and to develop intercultural communication skills at interpersonal and inter-institutional level.

This initiative was developed as part of the broader process led by the General Directorate of Migrations, Refugees and Anti-Racism. It started with the participatory process of Catalonia’s Law against racism, and with the design of the Intercultural Plan and the Shared Dignified Life.

Both training sessions addressed diverse groups of stakeholders, including: civil servants working in regional and local authorities; representatives of civil society and private sector’s organizations, and staff working in the academia and research institutes.

The module “*International Migrations and Racism*” focused on deepening the knowledge on migrations and multicultural societies. It analyzed difficulties and discriminations affecting migrants through an anti-racist perspective. Moreover, it addressed racism as a structural societal phenomenon with a focus on understanding how it originates, its manifestations and consequences for migrants.

The second module “*Cultural Competences with an Intersectional Anti-racist Perspective*” looked at an intersectional perspective as a framework to understand and to intervene on the difficulties affecting migrants, especially those in more vulnerable situations as women and youth. This module aimed also to develop cultural competences, identifying power and privileges with the purpose of enabling a more culturally sensitive work across policies’ fields, such as education, health, and labor.

The two online training sessions consisted of five hours, each split into two sessions of two and a half hours. They were run twice, to better meet the availability of regional and local stakeholders.

¹ This principle is embodied into Positive Actions measures at European and national level <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/positive-action>

² This principle is embodied into Positive Actions measures at European and national level <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/positive-action>

³ Donegal County Council (2021), Black and Minority Ethnic Inclusion Strategy (BAME Strategy) for 2021-2026 <https://www.donegal-coco.ie/media/donegalcountyc/community/pdfs/socialinclusion/Black%20and%20Minority%20Ethnic%20Inclusion.pdf>



Challenge

One of the aspect of newcomers and migrants' integration is the ability to communicate and to interact effectively by using the local language. For this reason, all welcoming activities, but also most of the school and labour integration services, include teaching the local language.

Intercultural communication occurs among people who speak a diverse language and hold a diverse cultural background. Intercultural communication skills are related to the capacity to communicate effectively with people with a different cultural background, often by using a second or intermediation language, by simplifying the use of language, or by making the meanings clearer. These competences are needed among both, migrants and locals, and particularly when it comes to professionals providing migrants' welcoming and supporting integration services, and, in general, to those that have direct contacts with public services' users.

Intercultural communication skills are tied with the ability to understand and to interpret verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication coherently with communicators' cultural backgrounds. They include competences as listening and observation, adapting and varying communication styles, linguistic, communicative and multilingual skills as well as empathy, flexibility and adaptability. Written and visual communication are also important to create communication campaign for public and private services that achieve different population targets.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Public sectors' employees
- ▶ Police officers
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, schools' teachers and staff
- ▶ Health professionals and welfare services' employees
- ▶ Leaders, opinion makers, journalists
- ▶ Medias' and communication departments' managers and staff



Training topics

- ▶ Teaching effectively the local language as second language
- ▶ Verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication
- ▶ Self-reflection on the personal use of language
- ▶ Communication strategies for language simplification and to ensure mutual understanding
- ▶ Examples of questions and phrases that can be used to simplify understanding with second language learners



Strategies to Communicate Culturally Sensitive in Counselling for Migrants

Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig GmbH in Germany organised an online training session titled “Strategies to Communicate Culturally Sensitive in Counselling for Migrants” with the aim to improve social workers’ intercultural communication skills, and therefore, their work with migrants and minority groups’ members.

This online training session was organised in collaboration with the education and training association Sächsischer Volkshochschulverband e.V., providing training activities on intercultural competences and integration . Participation was also open to public authorities and local stakeholders from the other German-speaking partner region, Salzburg.

It focused on the following topics: migrants’ difficulties with learning German as a second language; communication strategies to simplify the use of language when communicating with people whose first language is not German; self-reflection on the personal use of language; questions and phrases that can be used when communicating with people with a migration background to ensure mutual understanding and prevent information from getting lost through translation.

The time dedicated to this session was of six hours. Training methodologies adopted included: expert’s presentations; real-life examples to reflect on the influence of cultural background differences on learners’ behaviours and worldviews; practical exercises aimed at the use of simple language and practices for mutual understanding; a handbook on communication strategies for later use in consultation activities; and plenary open discussions including participants’ questions and feedbacks.



Challenge

Media's messages and public authorities' discourses on migrations and diversity affect public opinions and determine, to a certain degree, people's perceptions, ideas and attitudes towards newcomers and migrants. Media and public discourses addressing newcomers as outsiders that pose a potential threat to the local community may feed ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours towards diversity and spread negative stereotypes and prejudices towards migrants¹.

In addition, at community level, prejudices towards certain group members are sometimes fed by rumours. These are stories, or pieces of stories, that might not be necessarily true, and that are spread through words of mouths. Rumours may become harmful and impact on how people interact with people of diverse origins and backgrounds. As antidote, public bodies can implement anti-rumours training programs, or anti-rumours communication strategies.

In the last years, media's attention to migration topics has increased and often through narratives linking immigration with crime, and threats to welfare, culture and employment. This has led to an increase of negative perception of migration as anti-immigrant and racist sentiments, hate speech, hostile behaviours and micro-aggressions. Such negative sentiments are major obstacles for integration by booming marginalization and undermining social cohesion.

Therefore, intercultural communication skills are also related with local authorities and medias' ability to communicate with the general public about issues concerning cultural diversity and migration, and to create counter discourses that contrast false rumours, negative stereotypes and prejudices towards newcomers and ethnic minorities groups.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Police officers
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Language teachers, schools' teachers and staff
- ▶ Leaders, opinion makers, journalists
- ▶ Medias' and communication departments' managers and staff



Training topics

- ▶ Generalisations, stereotypes and prejudices
- ▶ Rumours and hate speeches
- ▶ Public discourses about migrations, interculturalism and multicultural societies
- ▶ Analysis of medias' migrants' social representations and of the impacts of migrants' social narrations on the local population

- ▶ Anti-rumours strategies
- ▶ Social communication campaigns towards migrants and their impacts: successful and unsuccessful examples



Anti-rumours strategies for multicultural coexistence

In Spain, in continuity with the Navarra's Operational Plan 2022, Navarra's Intercultural Coexistence Strategy 2021-2026² and Navarra's Plan to Contrast Racism and Xenophobia 2021-2026³, who are driving the commitment of Navarra's region towards intercultural integration policies, the regional General Direction of Migration Policies, in collaboration with ZASKA, the Red Antirumores de Navarra (Navarra's Antitumor Network)⁴ organised a training program on anti-rumours strategies for multicultural coexistence.

The training consisted of four online sessions of two hours each. Attendees were civil servants working with migrants and participation was limited to a maximum of thirty people, thus to ensure an active participation.

The goals were: promoting participants' recognition of stereotypes, prejudices and of rumours in different social contexts; boost their understanding of migration phenomenon; guide the identification of hate speeches and of discrimination situations; and facilitate the implementation of anti-rumours and communication strategies, both in personal and professional contexts.

Training contents address included: stereotypes, prejudices, and rumours; hate speech and consequences on migration, social coexistence and discrimination; Anti-rumour Strategies; communicative and emotional strategies for rumours management; implementation of anti-rumour strategies in daily personal and professional life; and counter-narratives and alternative narratives.

Training methodologies were based on interactive and experimental methodologies, which included the use of audio-visual resources.

¹ Lecheler, Sophie, Jörg Matthes, and Hajo Boomgaarden. (2019) "Setting the agenda for research on media and migration: State-of-the-art and directions for future research." *Mass Communication and Society* 22.6. PP: 691-707.

² Estrategia de Convivencia Intercultural de Navarra (2021-2026)

³ Plan de Lucha contra el Racismo y la Xenofobia en Navarra (2021-2026)

⁴ Red Navarra de Lucha contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión Social <https://www.redpobreza.org/>



Challenge

Access to public and healthcare services can be linked to migrants' legal status and length of residency within the receiving country. However, the possibility to access to certain public services, such as the health system or welfare system for instance to provide foods, cloths, housing, etc. is also linked with the possibility to enjoy human rights and equity dignity of human conditions.

Depending on national legislation and on local resources for newly arrived migrants, asylum seekers or undocumented migrants might be excluded from accessing mainstream services. In some cases, local NGOs might intervene guaranteeing basic services.

According to the European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion¹ insufficient access to healthcare services can be a major obstacle to integration and inclusion. Migrants are indeed confronted with specific persistent barriers to accessing healthcare services, including administrative hurdles, legal status, fears linked to uncertainties about the duration of their stay in the host country, a lack of information and of familiarity with the healthcare system, and linguistic and intercultural communication obstacles that prevent them to communicate with public services' staff personnel².

Further, newly arrived migrants, especially if asylum seekers or undocumented, can be particularly vulnerable, with physical and mental health problems due to the circumstances they went through in the countries of origins, such as war, social unrest, extreme poverty; the traumatic experience they had along their journey; difficulties encountered at their arrival such as precarious living conditions, encampment, social isolation or discrimination, and uncertainty regarding their migration status. Mental health is critical to a society's capacity to thrive. And newcomers might need particular healthcare, welfare services, including psychological and mental health support.

Another challenge is represented by the fact that, very commonly, public services' staff do not receive appropriate training to manage frontline relations with services' users with a migrant background. They often lack multi-language skills, while public services do not necessarily provide multiple languages' translation for migrants' access and services' support.

In order to guarantee migrants' access to the services, it is important that public and healthcare services integrate an intercultural approach.



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Health personnel (doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists,)
- ▶ Healthcare front desk staff
- ▶ Public and welfare services' decision makers and staff
- ▶ Newly arrived migrants



Training topics

- ▶ Human rights and Equality in public services
- ▶ Accommodating services and services' communication strategies to adjust to migrants
- ▶ Intercultural approach and services users' perspective to public and healthcare service design
- ▶ Intercultural communication skills for public and healthcare services' personnel
- ▶ Public services' successful practices and measures to adjust to migrants' needs



Providing First Psychological Aid

The Regional Centre for Social Policy of the Marshall Office of the Pomerania region in Poland organised an online training session on *"First Psychological Aid - From the Perspective of the Person who is providing Help to the Perspective of the Person to Whom the service is provided"*.

The session was addressed particularly to employees of the local and regional public administration, the regional migration policies' team, NGOs' employees, and members of civic society organisations and of the local community.

This module offered a first introduction about first physiological aid offered to newcomers to respond to their needs, and it explained the phases and limits of the offered assistance. Additionally, it addressed aspects as social workers' mental health, and how they can take care of their own mental health and wellbeing while being empathetic with different target of aid services' users.

¹ European Commission (2020) Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0758&qid=1632299185798>

² International Organization for Migration (2022) Briefing on "Access to Healthcare" https://includeu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IncludEU_Briefing_Access-to-healthcare.pdf



Challenge

Migrants make up a significant part of the European workforce, representing about 17% of European workforce (ILO, 2021). According to Eurostat (2021) 39,6% third country nationals' employees are overqualified for the job they are doing¹. They might arrive with the skills level needed by the European labour market, but they often face difficulties in having them valued, and in finding jobs that reflect their skills' level.

What is observable is a *labour canvas ceiling*²: systemic and multi-level challenges at individual, organizational and institutional level, that obstacle particularly third country nationals', in accessing to labour market, employment opportunity, education and social inclusion outcomes. The causes are multiple: low understanding of the local job markets and its access mechanisms; lack of social workers and job career counsellors' knowledge about the labour market needs or intercultural skills for providing effective career counselling services. Moreover, companies' recruitment, selection and induction practices, unless do not embrace a diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) strategy, can suffer of unconscious bias and not support migrants' labour inclusion³.

Intersectional discriminations are common: cumulative effects of multiple forms of discriminations (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect in the experiences of some marginalized groups. Migrants' women are at particularly high risk of being over-qualified for their job. They tend to face greater obstacles and more limited access to support. Similarly, migrants with disabilities face obstacles to participate in the labor market. According to the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027, young migrants (18-24) born outside Europe were much more likely (21%) than natives (12.5%) to be NEET (Neither in employment, nor in education and training), especially migrant women (25.9%)⁴.

To facilitate the integration and inclusion of migrants, particularly of third country nationals in the workforce, and for Regions and cities to achieve the diversity advantage, societies need to ensure not only equal rights, but also equal opportunities for all, including in the economic sphere. Regional and local governments can help realize this potential by means of innovative and inclusive economic policies tackling:

- ▶ Perception of diversity
- ▶ Multistakeholder collaboration between key labour market actors and the migrants themselves
- ▶ Access to support for entrepreneurs
- ▶ Skills assessment and support to upskilling and reskilling



Target groups

- ▶ Social workers, civil servants
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Career counsellors and recruiters and selectors of job public and private job agencies
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Local and foreigners' businesses owners and entrepreneurs
- ▶ Companies' HR personnels and managers
- ▶ Economic and social partners, including employers and trade unions, business umbrella organisations (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, industries networks)
- ▶ Newly arrived migrants



Training topics

- ▶ Perception and challenges of diversity at work
- ▶ Labour market actors' multistakeholder collaboration to facilitate migrants inclusion in the job market
- ▶ Migrants' skills assessment and support for upskilling and reskilling, considering local labour market needs and job market positions or skills' demand
- ▶ Career counselling services to migrants, and particularly to migrants' women
- ▶ Migrants' support to language and professional skills acquisition
- ▶ Language and intercultural competencies development for all personnels who deal relations with migrants or who work in multicultural work contexts
- ▶ Corporates' DEI strategies and practices to valorise and benefit from migrants' work integration
- ▶ How to become migrants' entrepreneurs



Intercultural Competences at workplace

Several Regions organised online training activities aimed at improving intercultural competences in work related fields by addressing different needs.

In Germany, the Aufbauwerk Region Leipzig, in cooperation with Volkshochschul-Verband Sachsen held a module on "*Introduction to Intercultural Competence at the Workplace*" with the particular aim of training intercultural communication; addressing possible conflicts that can occur in multicultural working environments; and facilitate social workers and employers' self-reflection on their own cultural backgrounds and values.

The Polish Regions of Poznan and Pomerania organised training modules focused on the importance of intercultural communication for the labour market. In Poznan the focus was on "*Intercultural Communication as a Tool for Well-functioning Labour market and Successful Cooperation*", while in Pomerania on "*Intercultural Communication in the Labour Market Sector, Public Administration, and Everyday life*".

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20230309-3>

² Lee, E. S., Szkudlarek, B., Nguyen, D. C., Nardon, L., Unveiling the canvas ceiling: a multidisciplinary literature review of refugee employment and workforce integration, in "International Journal of Management Reviews", 22(2), pp.193–216, 2020 <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12222>

³ "Intersectional discrimination" refers to the complex, cumulative

way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism), combining, overlapping, or intersecting experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

⁴ European Commission, (2020). Action plan on integration and inclusion 2021 – 2027 https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files_en?file=2020-11/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf



Challenge

Education is an essential factor for equal opportunities, participation in society, and for building plural, democratic and inclusive societies. Newly arrived migrants face disadvantages in accessing schools and training, mainly due to their legal status or for language barriers.

Newcomers' needs are often insufficiently considered: learning opportunities, contents or teaching modalities are rarely tailored to different types of ethnic language or cultural needs. Multilingualism or some language and cultural mediation services are barely implemented in classrooms for incapability or for scarcity of economic resources. One of the risks along the integration process, also considering second and third migrants' generations, is that educational institutions may risk to reproduce social and economic inequalities and segregations between social groups.

Different school levels and teachers are a recognised "*change agents*": they have a powerful influence in fostering students' intercultural competences and to nurture future "global citizens", with openness, curiosity, challenging prejudices, and learning to learn attitudes.

However, teachers and education professionals do not receive sufficient or adequate training when it comes to intercultural competences or in intercultural pedagogy. These competences would allow them to teach effectively in multicultural learning contexts and to adapt contents and teaching strategies taking in consideration specific migrants or language minorities groups' needs.

Furthermore, develop teachers and schools' intercultural competences can support the promotion of intercultural projects and the adoption of intercultural educational curriculum to disseminate as much as possible such competences in the society at large.



Target groups

- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Public Administration Education Department's decision makers and staff
- ▶ Active policies and training centres' trainers
- ▶ Schools' directors, teachers and educational professions at all levels
- ▶ Academic and research centres' personnel
- ▶ Students of all levels



Training topics

- ▶ The role of education in today's multicultural societies
- ▶ Multilingual and multicultural recognition in educational contexts
- ▶ Combating intolerance and ethnocentric attitudes and behaviours
- ▶ Intercultural pedagogy, intercultural projects and intercultural curriculum
- ▶ Developing teachers' multi-language and intercultural competences
- ▶ Teaching in multicultural learning contexts
- ▶ Developing students' intercultural and global citizens' skills



Combating Intolerance at School through Intercultural Education

The department of External Relations and Projects of the Timis County Council, in Romania, in collaboration with the Intercultural Institute of Timișoara (IIT)¹ organised an online training session on “*Access to Local Services and Facilities: Schools and Education. Improving Intercultural Competences through Teachers’ Training, Promoting Projects, Educational Curriculum, and Providing Language Courses*”.

The module was especially addressed to teachers, educators, NGOs’ staff providing services to migrants within the region. Due to the interest raised by the topic, teachers from across Romania signed up for the online training course.

The objective of the session was to promote intercultural education in schools by developing teachers’ intercultural competences, and by promoting dialogue and respect as core elements in the education processes. At the same time, it intended to suggest concrete actions and recommendations that teachers can apply in their classroom.

This module had a duration of two hours. It combined theoretical and contents’ presentation based on extensive research, together with case studies and participants’ open discussions. The use of case studies was particularly appreciated as it provided participants with the opportunity to share their personal experiences and practices.

¹ Intercultural Institute Timisoara <https://www.intercultural.ro/en/home-page/>



Challenge

Active participation in society, such as in sport, social or cultural associations or local civic society organisations, is an important step towards migrants' inclusion.

Participation in sports activities or associations, arts and music groups or events, religious groups, or nature-based activities may reinforce the feeling of belonging and of cultural identity by giving people the opportunity to express their cultural values and traditions. The active involvement in these activities has positive impact on people's well-being and physical and mental health too. Furthermore, the time that people allocate to leisure activity may be a good opportunity for them to encounter and engage with locals, as well as with other well-established migrants. Thus, active participation can enable the creation of a social network and can facilitate exchanges with the host community.

Newly arrived migrants are normally less active in sport and cultural activities as they may lack language skills, awareness of the local opportunities available, and sometimes time. Reinforcing newcomers' participation in sport, cultural and civic society activities can also be a means to empower them. Yet, if leisure teams are composed only by people of the same culture and there are no ways for mixing or for promoting interactive exchanges with others, the risk is to reinforce separation. Therefore, integration policies that foresee enhancing migrants' active participation to sport, social and cultural activities need to take in consideration both opportunities and risks, and find ways through which these activities can be vectors not only of cultural expressions, but also of intercultural and positive generative interactions.



Target groups

- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Sport, Youth and Active Participation, Culture and Leisure Department's decision makers and staff
- ▶ Directors and staff of sports, culture and leisure local organizations and local associations
- ▶ Representatives of local NGOs in charge of migrants' welcoming services
- ▶ Representatives of civic societies and of local migrants, social and cultural associations
- ▶ Newly arrived migrants



Training topics

- ▶ Sport and social participation as migrants' integration strategy
- ▶ Opportunities and risks of multicultural and monocultural leisure groups
- ▶ Strategies and practices to play sports and social participation a mean for intercultural interactions and for enhancing exchanges, cohesion and innovation in multicultural societies



Enhancing Sport and Social Activity's Youth Migrants Participation

In Italy, the Emilia-Romagna region's Department for Social Integration Policies, in collaboration with ART-ER and the Intercultural Centre Mondinsieme¹ organised an online training session on "*Sport and Interculture*".

The session was mainly addressed to local authorities' personnel, particularly from the Social Services, Youth Policies, and Sport and Culture Departments'; decision makers and staff personnel of local NGOs', third sectors organisations and intercultural centres; sport associations at local and regional level (such as Comitato Regionale CONI Emilia Romagna, UISP – Unione Italiana Sport per Tutti, CSI – Comitato Sportivo Italiano, Comitato Provinciale US Acli Bologna aps, AICS Comitato regionale Emilia-Romagna), and the Italian Paralympic Committee.

This module aimed to promote good practices and methodologies' exchange among territorial stakeholders about how to adopt an intercultural approach in Sport policies.

The contents covered were the following: how to facilitate migrants' integration, intercultural dialogue and intercultural competences development through sport activities; sport initiatives and good practices to promote migrants' inclusion and intercultural dialogue; how to combat social exclusion, discrimination and violence; and how to ensure sport inclusion when it comes to disabilities. The session highlighted how the intercultural approach can respond and can be applied to different kinds of vulnerabilities (including different disabilities and genders). On the other side, it also emphasised how citizenship's recognition for youth with a migration background can remain one critical point for the full inclusion.

¹ Centro Interculturale Mondinsieme <https://www.mondinsieme.org/>



Challenge

The level of neighbourhood cohesion is an important indicator of integration and of positive attitudes towards diversity. However, empirical results supported by the *contact theory* show that demographic diversity in mixed neighbourhoods, schools, public spaces, and organisations do not necessarily positively correlate with social cohesion and security¹. When the conditions for positive and constructive cultural differences encounters are not created, diversity within residents of the same neighbourhoods and ethnic concentration may increase the possibility of socio-emotional conflicts and of urban violence.

Whereas, when these conditions are created and managed, people living in cities or neighbourhoods with a high degree of heterogeneity perceive more similarities with members of different groups and are more likely to identify themselves with others from all of humanity. People act more “pro-socially” towards others and are more concerned about global human rights².

For this to happen, it is not necessarily a perfect statistical mix among diverse residents, but some degree of integration. Particularly, second and third generations of immigrants, and ethnic enclaves do not create barriers or the perceptions of insecurity. Therefore, it is important that integration policies at urban level encompass housing or accommodation distribution when third country nationals arrive, avoiding the creation of ghettos. Urban policies should focus on building neighbourhoods' cohesion and community development by providing facilities and spaces for physical meetings and interactions. Several studies inspired by Florida's work showed that demographic diversity and the exchanges that can occur in multicultural urban environments can positively correlate with high level of creativity, dynamism, and innovation³.



Target groups

- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Urban Planning and Regeneration Department's decision makers and staff
- ▶ Urban planners
- ▶ NGOs and third sectors' decision makers and project managers
- ▶ Intercultural centres, and cultural and migrants' associations/organisations
- ▶ Academic and research centres in urban planning



Training topics

- ▶ Intercultural perspective to urban planning
- ▶ Intercultural approach and methodologies to urban planning
- ▶ Interdisciplinary collaboration among a diverse pool of experts
- ▶ Urban planners' intercultural mindset and skills



Mainstreaming the Intercultural Approach in Urban Planning

The Department for Social Integration Policies of the Emilia-Romagna Region in Italy, in collaboration with ART-ER and the Intercultural Centre Mondinsieme, organised one online training session focused on “*Urban Regeneration and Intercultural Approach*”.

The module was developed for local authorities’ personnel from several departments, urban planners, third sector organisations’ representatives and social cooperatives’ staff.

The aim was to share and to exchange good practices about adopting an intercultural approach to the design of urban planning policies. For these reasons, participants at this session were asked to share their practices and experiences.

The contents included: intercultural urban planning policies; migration dynamics and urban plans; how to adopt and to promote a participatory approach in urban and spatial design; and good practices about participatory processes involving migrants in the definition of urban and spatial planning.

The session highlighted some key factors in spatial planning as the need to strengthen synergies between social and urban policies; and the relevance of involving local authorities being able to connect locals and migrants, thus reducing the risk of creating ghettos (e.g., in the context of social housing policy).

¹ Allport, G. W. (1954). The nature of prejudice. Cambridge/ Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

² Nai, J., Narayanan, J., Hernandez, I., Savani, K. (2018). People in More Racially Diverse Neighbourhoods Are More Prosocial. *Jour-*

nal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114(4), 497–515. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000103>

³ Florida, R. (2022). The rise of creativity class. Basic Books.



Challenge

As highlighted in the previous sections, migrants' integration crosses various aspects of socio-economic inclusion and participation, requiring appropriate governance and synergy among different administration levels, institutions, and local organisations.

Migrants' integration is not the responsibility of one single dedicated department or officer. It encompasses all functions, and it is a strategic cross-sectoral and inter-departmental objective. Adopting an intercultural vision does not necessarily mean adding new policies, structures, or initiatives, but revisiting what a region already does through an intercultural lens. Meaningful changes are more likely to occur when public authorities and different public policies and services are connected and mobilised towards a comprehensive vision, and when strategic clear cross-sectors goals are settled and achieved.

This requires the recognition of diversity as an asset value, a political leadership and commitment and the explicit embracement of the value of diversity and of its constitutional principles into all policies and into the whole society. This includes elements such as: programmatic documents, strategic and executive committees, organisational structures, declarations and communications, activation of dialogues and decision-making consultations with different actors and organisations (especially immigrant-led organisations and NGOs), the development of specific projects.

Moreover, embracing interculturalism into a comprehensive integration strategy requires that all regional public departments and services embrace and apply an intercultural lens to their policy and working area. This means starting from the collection and analysis of local data on equality and integration, gaining information about criticalities and opportunities for improvement, and working with the different departments in the definition of coordinated strategies and actions.

Target groups

- ▶ Policy and decision makers of local and regional authorities
- ▶ Local and regional public authorities' technical official and staff
- ▶ NGOs and third sectors' decision makers and project managers
- ▶ Representatives and staff of NGOs and civil society organizations
- ▶ Intercultural centres, and cultural and migrants' associations/organisations
- ▶ Academic and research centres in public policies planning

Training topics

- ▶ Embracing an intercultural perspective to policy makers
- ▶ Collecting data and activating consultation or participative decision-making processes
- ▶ Cross-departmental collaboration: mid-set and skills
- ▶ Defining and executing a comprehensive intercultural integration strategy
- ▶ Successful intercultural integration strategies: elements and key tips



Intercultural Approach in Regional Migration Policy

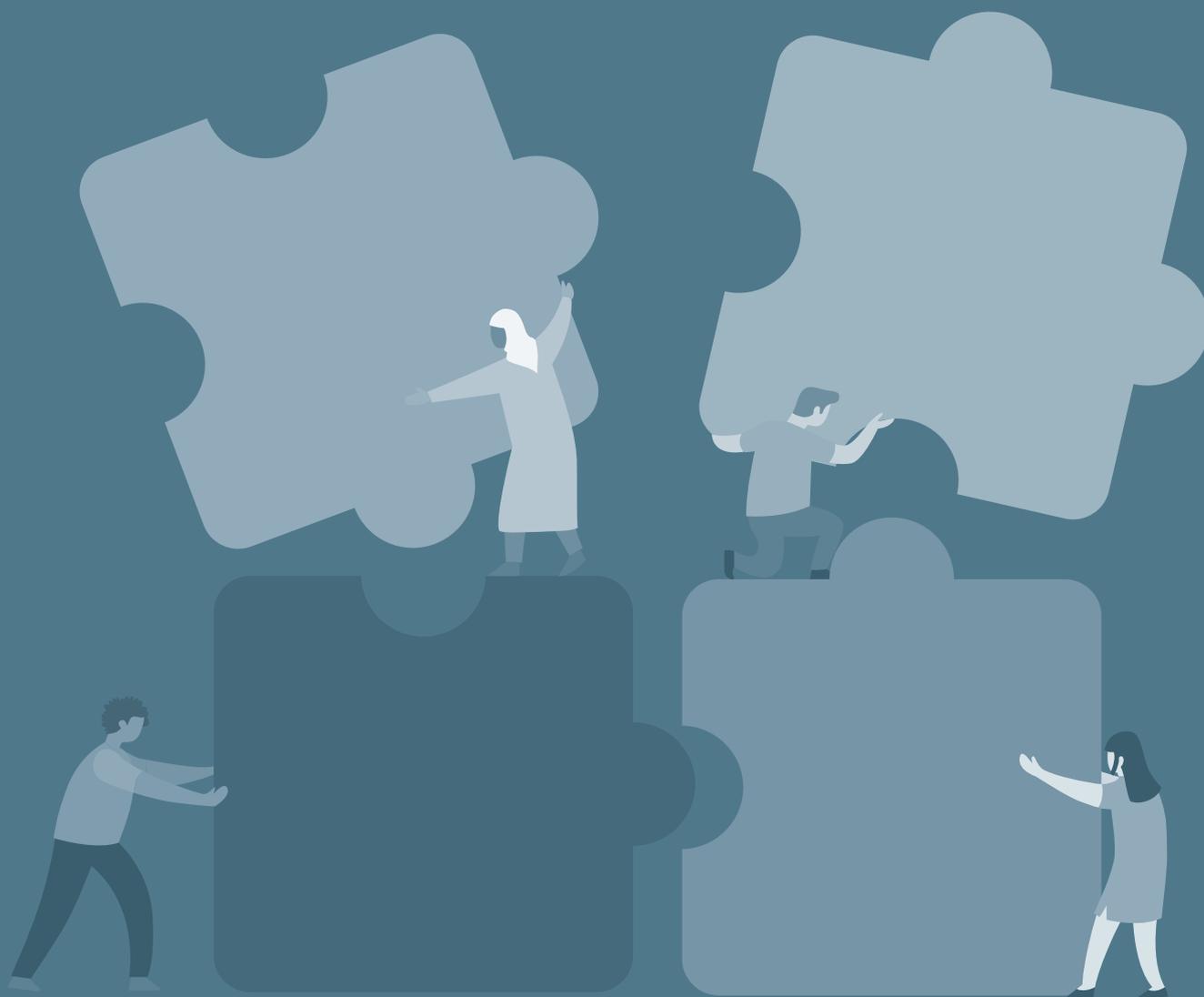
The Regional Centre for Social Policy of the region Poznan (Poland) organized one training session focusing on the "*Design and Implementation of the Regional Migration Policy: First Steps*". The objective of the session was to support local authorities in the region in understanding the concept of intercultural policies and setting the ground for the development of a regional intercultural integration strategy. Participants focused on how the process of designing and implanting of migration program may look like and what results from it may be brought in the long and short-time perspectives, what is needed to finalize diagnosis and what are the milestones in designing the regional migration policy, what obstacles may appear in both phases.

The session was developed following five in-person meetings with public authorities and key local stakeholders to identify their needs and best examples of good practices. It included an expert presentation and case studies from Sweden and Poland (Gdansk Model of Immigrant Integration, Multicultural Library project). Participants were working in plenary and in small groups. The presence of migrants in this session was also the added value; they shared their points of view on the situation we have now and what can be changed in small steps from both sides to use the full potential of the work we have just started.

This session was run by SWPS University and Foundation for the Development of the Education System.

SECTION 4

RECOMMENDATIONS



This handbook does not need to be intended as an instruction manual. It is a toolkit from which other Regions, public authorities or practitioners can select, implement or adapt practices or suggestions, to fit into other local circumstances and to organize similar capacity building process. The overall aim of this handbook is to support and to engage relevant stakeholders into an intercultural perspective applied to integration policies or projects, as to develop decision-makers and relevant stakeholders' intercultural competences. Regions can apply an intercultural lens to different integration thematic areas, and possibly start reflections around a comprehensive intercultural integration strategy.

Drawing from the experience of the EU-BELONG online capacity-building program and from the existing literature, this section provides final recommendations to support to organize similar programs in other Regions and territories.

Which stakeholders to engage

Adopting a multi-level and multi-stakeholders' approach to capacity building activities means to carefully assess which stakeholders to involve in the capacity building process and why.

EU-BELONG project developed a questionnaire to define the main stakeholders to be involved in each region. The suggested stakeholders listed in the key thematic areas in Section 3 can support this process. However, the identification of the main stakeholders can be done also through a stakeholder's analysis, applying for instance the stakeholders map methodology.

It is important to remember that stakeholders are meant to be "internal" or "external" to the local authority. Which means to adopt an inter-sectors approach including other government departments or different public services' representatives, together with a multi-level approach which includes different government levels.

To be able to adopt a multi-level and multi-stakeholders' approach to design and to implement intercultural integration policies, it is relevant that decision-makers and officials develop intercultural competence and a mindset that can lead the process in the first place, and then empower other people along the process. According to the intercultural competences model presented in Section 2, this implies that the development of intercultural values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Among these we can include: respect, dialogue, collaboration, adaptation, innovation; and knowledge such

as theoretical frameworks about interculturalism and diversity management, legal frameworks, examples of existing policies applying an intercultural lens.

To guarantee the creation of an inclusive environment, it is also important to pay attention to the selection of engagement modalities, considering in some cases groups' attitudes to openly express ideas, and to participate to events or public debates based on their cultural tradition and familiarity with these inclusive methods.

Local and regional governments can use a participatory "co-design" approach and techniques to help ensure that their programs are designed to meet the needs of current and potential users, or of specific target groups. A training needs' assessment, involving local authorities and different stakeholders, can be a tool that supports a co-design approach.

Select integration policies' thematic areas to work on

Depending on the stakeholders involved or the main integration challenges, Regions need to provide intercultural solutions. It is important to focalize the policies' areas they want to work on, developing specific intercultural competences and knowledge. This means that Regions need to understand their priorities, what is already in place, what works well or what does not work well, and what could be improved. In this phase, EU-BELONG project used an online questionnaire distributed among each Regions and their main stakeholders, as well as consensus building meetings across the Regions. But other methods that can be used in this phase are, for instance: the collection and analysis of primary data, that can also be done by universities, research centers, consultants, etc.; the use of direct observations, surveys, in-depth one-to-one or group interviews, etc. The selection of thematic areas on which to build specific capacity building activities can be based also on the analysis of secondary data, e.g., published by official public data institutions, observatories, research centers recognized expert in the field. Furthermore, the integration challenges described in the twelve thematic areas in this Handbook's Section 3 are also intended to support this process.

Define training objectives

In the definition of capacity building program, training objectives should not be mixed with training contents or with training methodologies.

It is important to consider that training objectives need to consider the skills' gaps that need to be bridged. This means to define specifically and concretely what set of knowledge, capabilities and attitudes the training activities should develop. Examples of "knowledge" to be developed are: "learn about the interculturalism and diversity management frameworks"; or, "improving self-awareness about their own bias, stereotypes and prejudices towards migrants"; or, "learning about best practices in the field of youth participation, sport and cultural activities". Whereas, examples of training goals are: "facilitate the implementation and the transferability of best practices in the field of youth participation, sport and cultural activities"; or, "become able to adjust health public services in order to consider newcomers and migrants' specific health needs".

Use experiential training methodologies

Developing intercultural competences involve working on people's attitudes and behaviours across intercultural interactions. It means to pursue a change of people's attitudes, encouraging trainees to question the basic assumptions of their respective cultures. For these reasons, experiential learning methodologies can better support intercultural competences development (Piaget, 1977; Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1997)¹.

Considering Kolb's learning cycle (1984), training activity aimed to develop intercultural competences should go through four phases. Accordingly, for each phase, some questions can support you understanding whether your training activity is facilitating participants' learning:

- ▶ *Experience*: Does the proposed training activity help participants to build knowledge on their existing experience feeding off intercultural experiences, on the experience of diversity inside or outside the training group, or on examples from their lived experience?
- ▶ *Reflection upon the experience*: Does the proposed activity offer the opportunity to reflect and to connect with participants' personal learning journeys, understanding their own and others' reactions and viewpoints in those experiences?
- ▶ *Conceptualization*: Does the proposed activity support participants in examining a concept or framework, making sense of the reflection by connecting it to existing intercultural or cultural specific concepts or frameworks?
- ▶ *Experimentation*: Does the proposed activity help learners to apply a concept in a pragmatic and relevant way that generates new experiences to reflect

on? For example, trying out a new model of conflict resolution, or practising a new behaviour to better adapt to another culture, or showing up in a different way to a similar situation, therefore moving forward in our competence.

Primary experiential learning tools include small group activities, exercises, games, simulations, teamwork projects, storytelling and self-reflection activities, good practices, or case studies analysis, etc. Small and large groups interactions and conversation activate and make use of training participants' diversity and of intercultural dialogues, thus to stimulate the development of their intercultural competences (Di Mauro, Bolzani, 2020)².

Plan carefully online training activities

Recently, the use of online training formats is becoming more and more frequent. They allow to facilitate participation of people located in different geographical areas, reduce the costs of the training, and organize shorter sessions (e.g., two hours instead of one full day in-person training).

When deciding to use online learning methodologies, it is fundamental to consider elements as participants' availability and speed of internet connection, availability of IT devices, and the level of digital skills and familiarity with the proposed digital tools.

In online setting, trainers and organizers need to carefully plan the activity coherently with the expected learning outcomes. In online synchronic learning environments, there is a high risk of using an instructor-centered approach, especially if trainers are not familiar with digital learning environments, digital tools, and online interactive methodologies. Within an online training, experiential learning can also be facilitated through open and guided discussions among all participants, small groups exercise in break-out rooms, and open and multiple-answer questions through interactive digital tools (e.g. Slido, Mural, etc..).

On the other hand, the risk with online asynchronous learning modalities is that attendees may passively watch video-lessons with no form of engagement (such as self-reflection about own cultural identity, or

¹ Piaget, J. (1977). The Development of Thought. Equilibration of Cognitive Structures. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience at the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall. Dewey, J. (1997), Experience and Education <https://www.schoolofeducators.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/EXPERIENCE-EDUCATION-JOHN-DEWEY.pdf>

² Di Mauro, M. & Bolzani, D. "Neighbourness" competences: A literature Review. April 2020 http://mauradimauro.weebly.com/uploads/5/5/6/4/556436/neighbourness_competences._a_literature_review_io1_report_final.pdf

own ways to deal with cultural diversity) that guarantees that the transferred knowledge is transformed in capability (Bennett, 1986)³.

Select the right trainers/experts

It is important that trainers are not only experts in their field but that they are also intercultural sensitive and possibly with some expertise on intercultural training methodologies.

Trainers play a key role for the training's outcome. Indeed, their role is fundamental to:

- ▶ Structure and offer to trainees' experience as a stimulus, engaging them in all three dimensions of the attitudinal-change triangle (cognition, affection/ emotion, and behavior);
- ▶ Draw upon attendees' experiences to deconstruct and facilitate their own inter-cultural awareness. Participants' reactions, their own cultural identity discovered across interactions, the awareness of multicultural group dynamics, and how participants or groups interact with one another can become material for reflection and source of learning with an instructor-led reflection.
- ▶ Lead debriefing group sessions showing openness and respect for different opinions and viewpoints, validating or reframing, while suspending judgments and facilitating a reflection on participants' experiences⁴.

Within EU-BELONG project, Regions selected their experts/trainers by referring to qualified national or regional research centers on migration issues or intercultural studies; intercultural local institutes; academics who have extensively studied certain topics or who are involved in certain fields; non-governmental organizations who operate in the field of welcoming migrants and provide different services; national training centers; the ICC Network. These are recommended contexts to look for the right experts and trainers.

Evaluate the goals' achievement

Within the capacity building, a prerequisite is to plan adequately the training activity, but it is also important to include an evaluation at the end. An evaluation of capacity building should focus on the capacity building efforts and should not be an evaluation of whether the project is meeting its goals.

Follow-up evaluation or feedback modalities may be conducted at the end of the online training activity or afterwards (e.g., via an online email questionnaire)

in order to understand the following issues: whether participants perceived the training activity useful; self-evaluation of participants' skills' increase; application of the training contents in their work; further topics they would like to deepen; and any suggestion to improve the training contents or modalities.

Other useful and applicable evaluation methods consist in the analysis of migrants integration projects or policies developed, following to the capacity building activity; direct observations (e.g. of services delivered to migrants), users' surveys, in-depth interviews or focus groups. To evaluate the goals' achievement, measurements of changes, as improvements in the relevance, quality, usefulness of services provided can be observed. The number of crimes, the number of multicultural creative start-ups, the number of intercultural events and of events' participants, etc. are other examples of indicators that can be measured to evaluate the effectiveness of the intercultural projects developed.

Within EU-BELONG Monitoring & Evaluation Plan, an online evaluation survey was elaborated and shared by ICEI with each partner to be applied in local language at the end of the training. Evaluation was meant to detect the level of satisfaction of training participants (for both online training courses and learning labs), focusing on:

- ▶ Experts
- ▶ Training Materials
- ▶ Contents
- ▶ Organization
- ▶ Learning Experience
- ▶ Suggestions of Improvement
- ▶ Additional Training Needs

Regarding the general results of the evaluation process, Regions did consider interculturalism and intercultural competences as a key topic in terms of contents planning and training sessions had a very positive reception in terms of active participation. The vast majority of the trainees indicates as good or very good the improvement of their competences and declared they were going to use them in daily work/activities. Finally, the evaluation results showed a strong interest among the very diverse target groups/stakeholders involved to work with their Regions to strengthen an intercultural approach to migrants inclusion planning and strategies.

³ Bennett, M.J. (1986). "A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (2), 179-95. See also: IUPUI, Barger. *What Is Ethnocentrism?*

⁴ Assembly of European Regions - Introduction to interculturalism and intercultural competences: <https://aer.eu/interculturalism-for-intercultural-regions-to-be/>

Additional tools and resources

EU-BELONG website
<https://eu-belong.aer.eu/>

[EU-BELONG] Intercultural Competences - Needs Assessment Questionnaire
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WZForSfnahJL9I_s1Ltf1wNDMGDhfoaH/view

[EU-BELONG] Program Template for organization of online capacity-building training on interculturalism & 3-days regional multi-stakeholder learning lab
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_nP0ywL9p-gybHT4QbzG-DJ9oawuHymf1/edit?usp=share_link&oid=109431010179298800190&rtpof=true&sd=true

[EU-BELONG] Structure and methodological support for the 3-days multistakeholder learning lab
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1L5Z2yFu7JfGg9AGBi-H3IAzdmHJVamQUZ/view?usp=share_link

[EU-BELONG] Regional Intercultural Integration Self-Assessment Questionnaire
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/18JycWgx4dVUGbt-7k7lQUeTuO2TY8yjRe/view>

AER Knowledge Transfer Toolkit
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1g8-729HE57Qs3nmy-BWhkGTpuIBNihb3B/view>

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www.iom.int

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<https://includeu.eu/third-includ-eus-briefing-participation/>

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www.centerforinterculturaldialogue.org

SIETAR (Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research) Europa
www.sietareu.org

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