

PUBLIC SERVICE AND INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Minutes from the preparatory work undertaken by working group ‘C’ ‘Cultural and Linguistic Integration of Migrants’

This document has been drafted by a small group of CESI participants representing different trade unions, countries and sectors and is intended to serve as a basis for the exchanges which will take place during the Vienna symposium.

As a reminder, CESI is focusing its work here on the integration of legal migrants, dealt with here in their capacity as users of the public services in the host country in question.

An intercultural approach would appear to play a decisive role when it comes to the integration of migrants. It aims, first of all, to promote an environment which lends itself well to interaction between migrants and nationals and, consequently, helps migrants integrate into a local context and considers their cultural heritage in a favourable light. Many professionals from a very wide range of sectors (education, health, employment agencies, security) need to take account of the intercultural dimension as they go about their daily work. In this regard, different measures can be put in place both on the side of the public service providers (broadening or deepening the professional, cultural and linguistic skills of those officials who come into direct contact with migrants, offering training courses which deal, for example, with regulations on immigration or cultural/religious issues, recruiting distinct professional profiles, such as intercultural mediators, for example) as well as on the side of the ‘users’ (e.g. language courses, courses in civic education).

Using these factors as their point of departure, a working group met in order to prepare the workshop ‘Cultural and Linguistic Integration of Migrants’ which will take place at the Vienna symposium. This gave participants in this working group the opportunity to present the situations in their respective Member States and explore three questions in detail:

- Why and how can an intercultural and linguistic approach support the integration of migrants in the ‘host society’?
- What are the main ‘catalysts’ for cultural and linguistic integration?
- What measures can be taken by public services in order to support the cultural and linguistic integration of migrants? (examples of good practices)

The participants highlighted the fact that when a migrant first arrives in the host country, he is often confronted with a twofold problem: first, he needs to master the language of the host country without getting out of practice in the language of his home country (not forgetting the need/desire to pass his language on to the next generation) and he also needs to acquire and

respect the cultural codes in the host country whilst remaining the bearer of his original culture.

For their part, public service employees are often the first people that newly-arrived migrants speak to, with the latter taking a very strong first impression away from the encounter which can play a decisive role in how willing they are to integrate.

This is why communication is so important and mastering a common language is crucial, with this language being, in order of priority, that of the host country.

This is why, when it comes to catalysts, **education systems** and teaching are so important.

And here, we are referring first and foremost to the impact such systems have on a child's upbringing. If children are successfully integrated, we can observe a greater level of success with parents. Participants reminded us of this issue, pointing out that the work begins with the children.

Something which was also highlighted was the importance of rapidly offering supervision to the migrant (giving him the possibility to participate in language classes or attend school) during the first two years following arrival.

Given the fact that integration depends, to a large extent, on economic factors, it is important not to overlook **professional integration** when listing catalysts. In order to make this a reality, technical and sector-specific language classes, adapted to suit the needs of those looking for a job or executing a profession in a given sector should be offered to migrants. Enabling a migrant to integrate into a working team promotes his/her linguistic and cultural integration.

Another important catalyst is the **civic education of migrants**.

Participants underscored the need for absolute clarity when it comes to the rules to be applied to migrants:

- Rights regarding his/her (the migrant's) own culture
- Duties (in terms of the goal of integrating and taking account of the rules which prevail in the host country)

Civic training should be provided by institutions in the host country within the framework of a training course for adults. For their part, migrants should commit themselves to learning the rules and codes of the host country, respect these rules and make them their own ('personal responsibility of the migrant').

Finally, **the culture of welcome** provided by the host society would seem to be a condition for migrants to integrate well.

Indeed, integration presupposes the existence of receptiveness on the part of the host society with regard to the people it encounters, so that these people are seen as offering 'added value' rather than being perceived as posing a threat. Seen from this angle, the host country has the obligation to promote intercultural dialogue. Above and beyond linguistic and legal skills, it is also necessary for public service employees to be sensitive to the needs of an intercultural public, when dealing with an ever broader range of users and sometimes working alongside new co-workers from an immigrant background.

In response to these catalysts, a certain number of best practices were presented by the participants and two experts, representing employers (city of Vienna and DG Education from the French community of Belgium) invited to attend the last meeting.
(see the boxes below)

These concrete measures are targeted both at migrants and at public service employees.

For the last category, the best practices cite initiatives in terms of training offered to public service employees. It should be pointed out that in most cases, the success of these best

practices has to do with the involvement of a number of parties, which means the public service but also other parties, such as organisations representing migrants, local and territorial bodies, and even centralised administrations (embassies).

Below are some examples of best practices presented within the framework of the working group:

The programme ‘Langue et Culture d’Origine’ (LCO), Belgium

The LCO (Language and Culture of Origin) programme is the fruit of a partnership between the Belgian French community and seven countries (Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Turkey, Portugal, Romania). It aims to teach the language and culture of origin to children from immigrant families and make it easier for them to integrate into the host society. Other partnerships are currently being looked into with China and Poland.

In specific terms, the programme offers two types of course:

- Free and optional **courses in the language and culture of origin**, held at school but not during the school day. These courses are addressed as a priority at children whose families are from the countries concerned but are also open to pupils from other backgrounds.
- **Cultural awareness courses**, integrated into the school timetable and given in the language in which classes are taught (FR) to all pupils in the class, regardless of their origins. These courses aim to educate people in the notion of intercultural dialogue.

These courses are given by ‘LCO teachers’ who are recruited and paid by the countries of origin. In 2010-2011, 193 school establishments (primary and secondary) included the LCO programme in their set of classes.

For more information: www.enseignement.be/lco

The ‘Start Wien’ programme, Austria

Every day, the city of Vienna welcomes 4000 migrants.

If we take as our point of departure the observation that integration does not happen all by itself, what is needed for it to happen is for the host society to assume its responsibilities, for one thing, and ask immigrants to assume their responsibilities for another (personal responsibility).

For this reason, the city of Vienna has put in place a programme entitled ‘Start Wien’, a package of measures addressed to those newly arrived in the city and aiming to help the migrant integrate both economically and professionally:

- ‘Start Coaching’ :

First interview with the migrant, offered in 18 languages.

At this interview, the integration pact in particular is explained to the migrant and we also discuss the German courses available to him, how he can find his way about the city, the various job centres and the schooling system for children.

- Training passport in Vienna :

Delivered if the migrant has participated in language courses, courses providing information on the city or undertaken professional training for which he receives training cheques.

- Information modules

These modules are given in 15 languages and aim to help the migrant get his bearings in the city. (Health, Housing, Education, Employment, Practical Life)

- Second level coaching

This coaching is aimed at people who need more information.

To date, 7200 people have obtained a training passport in Vienna and 15,500 people have participated in the information modules. For more information: www.startwien.at

Other examples of best practice were also cited and presented in the working group:

- EQUAL programme (projects promoting, amongst other things, the social inclusion and integration of migrants)
- Coaching or administrative support of the employer vis-à-vis the migrant employee
- Intercultural dialogue for young people (PT)
- 'Mundo Mix' festival (PT) <http://www.mercadomundomix.com.pt/>
- CLAI network (PT): local centres to help immigrants integrate
- One-Stop-Shop (PT): will be the subject of a presentation at the Vienna symposium
- The EMIGRANT Association in Czestochowa (PL): <http://www.akademiaemigrant.pl>
- LCO programme (B): Language and Culture of Origin (see box above)
- 'Start Wien' programme (A) (see box above)
